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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj: Meeting in Brussels, a step forward (*RTK*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said that Tuesday’s meeting in Brussels between Kosovo’s state delegation and the EU High Representative Frederica Mogherini, is a step forward. “We have received some information, we think that it was expected and foreseen for the meeting to happen in that manner. Positions of both state delegation and EU institutions were presented, we think that it is a step forward, not to say very positive or good, but definitely a step forward,” Haradinaj said.

**Ahmeti: LDK and Vetevendosje, politically irresponsible (Kosova Press)**

Shpend Ahmeti, leader of the Social-Democratic Party of Kosovo and co-head of the negotiating team in the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, considers that the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and Vetevendosje Movement are politically irresponsible for objecting the Kosovo negotiating team. “It is a politically irresponsible action not to participate at the table. We are not talking about my matters or those of someone who is part of the delegation, we are talking about the Republic of Kosovo. If we think that we are not responsible, then I do not know why we decided dealing with politics,” Ahmeti asked.

Ahmeti also said that Kosovo delegation has sent a request to the President of Kosovo to receive the documentation related to the dialogue issue. According to him, Friday is the deadline for President Thaci to submit the material. Ahmeti did not express optimism about a reach of the final agreement with Serbia. Asked about correction of the border between Kosovo and Serbia, he said that to him, this seems to be more a speculation.

**Hoxhaj: Talks aimed at UN membership and recognition from Serbia (*RTK*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister and deputy leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), told ***RTK*** on Wednesday evening that the meetings of the Kosovo state delegation in Brussels on Tuesday were consultative. Hoxhaj, who is part of the Kosovo state delegation, said: “the meeting was important because we as a delegation presented our objectives in dialogue. Dialogue is not something new; this is the final phase of what began in 2011. In Brussels we talked about our planned timeline for the process,” he said. Hoxhaj said dialogue was initiated after a resolution at the United Nations. “The United Nations mandated the EU and dialogue must conclude at the United Nations … We have asked for timelines for dialogue on several occasions. Yesterday at the meeting we saw that the EU wants Kosovo to become a member of the United Nations and to have mutual recognitions between Kosovo and Serbia”. Hoxhaj said that in 2012 and 2013 there was a political agreement. “In 2018 we spent a lot of energy to reach the final phase. The capital issue with Serbia will be recognition and Kosovo’s membership to the United Nations,” he added. Hoxhaj welcomed the U.S. President Donald Trump’s involvement in the Kosovo issue and said that are other factors involved such as Russia and China. Hoxhaj said the Kosovo state delegation for talks with Serbia was voted in the Kosovo Assembly. “This delegation has solid support. This is part of a state-building process”. Hoxhaj said the final talks between Pristina and Belgrade will not include technical issues. “We will be working on historic topics. We will cover some issues, and President Hashim Thaci will cover other issues. In the end we will have a conference that will include the President, Prime Minister, Assembly President and the opposition. We will conclude the process in several days and we will have a text for the agreement in 3-4 months,” Hoxhaj said. Commenting on the 100-percent tariff on Serbian goods, Hoxhaj said the decision was not aimed against the process of dialogue. “Serbia waged a campaign against Kosovo’s membership to INTERPOL and UNESCO. Serbia blackmailed Kosovo Serbs that were part of the Kosovo Security Force. Serbia tried to undermine Kosovo’s statehood. We have used our internal sovereignty to strike back. The decision was not aimed against dialogue”. Hoxhaj said that EU High Representative Federica Mogherini said at the meeting on Tuesday that she will ask Serbia to stop its campaign against Kosovo on the international arena. “The tax was not introduced with the idea of forcing Serbia to recognize Kosovo. I gave the idea to set the tax. The idea was then supported by Prime Minister Haradinaj and Assembly President Veseli. The tax will remain in force,” Hoxhaj added.

**Shala: Worth considering land swap for agreement with Serbia (*T7*)**

Blerim Shala, advisor to Kosovo President Hashim Thaci, has readdressed the idea of border correction between Kosovo and Serbia as part of a final peace settlement between the two countries. Shala said in an interview to ***T7*** that he believes it is worth considering land swap for an agreement with Serbia. “Serbia wants territory in exchange for recognition,” Shala said, adding that Belgrade has not officially made the request.

**Serwer: Agreement to bring mutual recognition between Kosovo and Serbia (*RTK*)**

U.S. analyst on the Balkans, Daniel Serwer, told ***RTK*** on Wednesday that he is optimistic for an agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, but that he does not see a clear solution for Kosovo’s membership to the United Nations. “An agreement will result in mutual recognition and exchange of ambassadors, but for now I don’t see a solution to UN membership because of Russia,” he said. Serwer said both countries would be winners in the process. “The agreement will entail many details and it is difficult to foresee what these details will be. It will not be a simple agreement. The final point is that a solution must be found for mutual recognitions between the two countries,” he added.

**Commissioner Hahn hesitant to visit Kosovo (*Klan Kosova/Zeri*)**

Citing an unnamed diplomatic source in Brussels, the news website reports that EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn is hesitant to visit Kosovo because he doesn’t believe he can convince authorities in Pristina to rescind the 100-percent tariff on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. ***Klan Kosova*** reports that Angelina Eichhorst, Director of the European External Action Service, is planning to visit Pristina soon. ***Zeri*** quotes Hahn as saying that he hopes an agreement will soon be reached with Kosovo to rescind the 100-percent tax on Serbian goods.

**AAK MP: We won’t rescind the tax, regardless of what Thaci says (*KTV*)**

Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) MP, Donika Kadaj-Bujupi, said on Wednesday that the Kosovo Government will not rescind the 100-percent tax on Serbian goods, regardless of what President Hashim Thaci says. “We have separate powers, and this was an extraordinary decision by the government. After an aggressive campaign against Kosovo, Serbia has now stopped, and it is only talking about the tax because we have inflicted serious economic damages. Serbia has received the merited response for its aggressive campaign against Kosovo,” she added.

**Osmani: Limaj, Ahmeti legitimized Thaci and paved way for border deals (*media*)**

Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) MP, Vjosa Osmani, said on Wednesday that Fatmir Limaj and Shpend Ahmeti, the co-heads of Kosovo’s state delegation for talks with Serbia, do not represent a unity team. According to Osmani, they represent only the 59 MPs that have legitimized President Hashim Thaci’s efforts to make deals with Kosovo’s borders. She also added that the state delegation is nothing but a team that supports President Thaci.

**Vetevendosje’s Kurti calls on President Thaci to go to The Hague (*media*)**

All media report that Vetevendosje leader Albin Kurti called on Kosovo President Hashim Thaci on Wednesday to go to The Hague to defend the fight of the Kosovo Liberation Army. Kurti argued in a Facebook post that Thaci tried to claim credit for all of Kosovo’s achievements and successes thanks to the sacrifice of the people, the KLA and international friends. “But when it came to claiming responsibility, you denied the KLA, you turned your back on the people and you betrayed those that defended Kosovo on the international arena,” Kurti wrote.

**Haliti: Kurti’s statement about Thaci is low and unacceptable (*media*)**

Xhavit Haliti, Vice President of the Kosovo Assembly, reacted to a statement by Vetevendosje leader Albin Kurti who said that President Hashim Thaci should go to The Hague to defend the fight of the former Kosovo Liberation Army. Haliti said Kurti’s statement was low and unacceptable. “This is a moral degradation of an individual who wants to send a very important politician to prison for the fight he has done. This is totally unacceptable. I don’t think anyone should rejoice when people that have fought are sent to prison. If someone has committed crimes, if someone has killed innocent people after the war, that is another matter, but it is very low to tell a former colleague to go to The Hague. If they summon him [Thaci], he will go, he is not one of those men that refuse to go,” Haliti said in an interview to ***KTV*** on Wednesday.

**Trepca miners determined to continue their strike (*Koha/Zeri*)**

The paper reports in one of its front-page stories that no agreement was reached after a two-hour meeting on Tuesday between Economic Development Minister Valdrin Lluka and the Strike Council of Trepca mineworkers. After the meeting, Lluka told reporters that the government cannot dismiss the board and the management of the Trepca mining complex and that it cannot increase the salaries of mineworkers with taxpayers’ money. The paper comments: “Lluka forgot to tell the mineworkers how his boss, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, in late 2017 decided to use taxpayers’ money to increase by 100 percent his salary and the salaries of other government officials”. The mineworkers said on Wednesday that they will continue their strike until their demands are met. ***Zeri*** reports that the mineworkers are insisting that two out of their four demands are immediately met: the increase of their salaries by 20 percent and the dismissal of the supervisory board.

**Protest in Pristina against lack of visa liberalization for Kosovo (*media*)**

Several news websites report that the Student Parliament of Pristina University will protest today against lack of visa liberalization for Kosovo. The protest will be held in front of the National Library at noon.

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