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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj: Tax not related to U.S. but to Serbia and Russia (*media*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj reiterated that the 100-percent tax on Serbian goods will not be lifted without recognition of Kosovo by this neighboring country. During his visit at Privatisation Agency of Kosovo, Haradinaj said the tax is not related to the U.S. but to Serbia and Russia. “We will remove it today if there is an agreement for recognition, otherwise, not in February, but we might never lift it if Serbia is not ready to recognize us. This does not have to do with America but Russia and Serbia,” he said. “We are in border with Serbia and Russia. You will be able to see Serbia’s face tomorrow with Putin in Belgrade. And you know which our face is. Do not worry about this,” he said.

**U.S. Embassy urges suspension of import tax (*Klan Kosova*)**

The U.S. Embassy in Pristina urged again on Wednesday Kosovo authorities to revoke tax on Serbia’s goods saying that Kosovo benefits nothing from the tax. “Our position on tax has not changed. The U.S. continuously asked Kosovo leaders to immediately suspend the tax on goods from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. As we early stated, we don’t think Kosovo benefits anything from this measure,” it is stated in an answer of the US Embassy to ***Klan Kosova***.

**EU Commissioner Hahn to visit Kosovo today (*media*)**

The EU Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn will be visiting Kosovo today. The Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj, scheduled on its agenda the meeting between Haradinaj and Hahn. ***Klan Kosova*** reports that Hahn’s visit is related to the import tariff on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the continuation of the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue. Sources from the government are quoted as saying that the tax could be lifted only if Hahn provides strong guarantees that the EU grants visa liberalisation to Kosovo or that Serbia recognises independence of Kosovo.

**NATO: KFOR to remain unchanged despite KSF’s new mission (*Bota Sot*)**

NATO Military Council decided on Wednesday that its engagement in Kosovo will continue to be the same, despite transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into an army. “NATO looks after security in Kosovo through KFOR for 19 years now. Our position remains unchanged and in our mission in Kosovo we continue to operate under a United Nations mandate which is not affected by any change in the transition of the Kosovo Security Force,” said the chairman of NATO’s military committee Stuart Peach.

**Negotiating team violates Resolution on Dialogue (*Koha Ditore/Zeri*)**

***Koha Ditore*** reports on the front page that the Kosovo negotiating team for dialogue with Serbia has violated Assembly Resolution on Dialogue which stipulates that the team had to draft a platform on dialogue within one month from the time when the Resolution was passed. Furthermore, adds the paper, as the negotiating team continues efforts in drafting the document, it is doing so without the presence of one representative from the civil society which is also stipulated in the Resolution. ***Zeri*** also reports that the negotiating team has broken its promise to vote the platform on dialogue on Wednesday. Yesterday, after the meeting of the negotiating team, its co-chair Fatmir Limaj said he believed the platform will soon be ready and sent to MPs.

**Haradinaj to Putin: Russia destabilises the Balkans (*Koha*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj has responded to the statement made by Russian President Vladimir Putin ahead of his visit to Serbia saying the U.S. is a destabilizing factor in the Balkans. In a Facebook post, Haradinaj said that the more presence of the U.S. and NATO in the Balkans the more peace, stability and prosperity in the region. “An active Russian presence in the Balkans has an opposite effect,” he said.

**Russian flags adorn Kosovo’s north ahead of Putin’s visit to Serbia (*media*)**

***Koha*** reports that Russian flags and posters of the Russian President Vladimir Putin have been put up in the northern part of Kosovo ahead of Putin’s visit to Belgrade today. In the posters Putin is hailed as the “savior” for the support Russia provides to Serbia. At the same time, ***Kosovapress*** reports that the Russian flags and posters of Putin were put up in the north of Kosovo by people close to Milan Radojicic, who is wanted in connection to the murder of Kosovo Serb leader Oliver Ivanovic.

**Hoxhaj: Our aim was not recognition when we imposed tax to Serbia (*Telegrafi*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo Enver Hoxhaj, told ***RTV Dukagjini*** that it would not be realistic to expect Serbia to recognize Kosovo after imposture of the tax. “When we made the decision on tax, we did not have such an aim. Our aim was to harm Serbia economically…we did not have such a logic, that we are going to set the tax and through tax we will gain recognition from Serbia,’ he said. “The idea of the tax was to stop Serbia’s aggressive campaign towards Kosovo, which we consider made its impact.” Hoxhaj said.

**Limaj: We stand by Haradinaj’s position on tax (*Klan Kosova*)**

In an interview with ***Klan Kosova***, Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo Fatmir Limaj said he supports the position of Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj regarding tax on imports from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Limaj said Serbia has so far not shown signs it wants to sit and discuss with Kosovo a solution to the situation. “Serbia needs to stop its hostile actions against Kosovo and express will to sit down and reach agreement,” Limaj said.

**Mustafa: LDK will not become part of the negotiating team (*RTK*)**

Isa Mustafa, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), said in no option and under no conditions would LDK become part of the current government. “It does not become part of this negotiating team. This government should be brought down as soon as possible. LDK is the biggest political party in the country. LDK is in opposition. It is united, and it does not have two different voices. From opposition, LDK supports the dialogue with the criteria defined at the LDK General Council. I am reiterating LDK’s position, known to everyone, but that they are trying to manipulate it in order to harm LDK,” Mustafa wrote.

**Thaci’s secret “hideout” (*Zeri*)**

For several days now, President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci is reported not to be in Kosovo and according to the paper his whereabouts are unknown. Unofficially, Thaci is said to be having meetings in Brussels but his office did not confirm this. Thaci’s absence was noted in several events that took place in Kosovo over the last few days, including the meeting of the negotiating team for dialogue with Serbia and the commemoration ceremony on the anniversary of the Recak massacre. Analysts meanwhile say that the agenda of the Kosovo president should be public while opposition considers Thaci’s undisclosed whereabouts as cause for suspicion.

**Thaci: A liberator is unjustly interviewed in The Hague (*media*)**

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci said today that the former KLA commander Sami Lushtaku was “unjustly” being interviewed by the Specialist Prosecutor in The Hague. In a Facebook post, Thaci listed war crimes Serbian forces committed in the region of Drenica saying: “Serbian police and military forces killed and massacred hundreds of other innocent civilians across Drenica and Kosovo but international justice has not even begun tackling these crimes. A liberator is today being unjustly interviewed in The Hague while Serb criminals continue to roam freely in Serbia and the world. A great injustice in being inflicted on our liberators in the name of international justice.”

**At The Hague, Lushtaku exercises right to silence (*Koha Ditores*)**

Former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) commander Sami Lushtaku has exercised the right to silence in his interview with the Specialist Prosecutor in The Hague, the paper reports quoting its sister outlet ***KTV*** which went on to quote sources from the Specialist Chambers saying this was the reason why Lushtaku’s testimony took much less than that of his former combatant Rrustem Mustafa-Remi. While Lushtaku did not reveal at what capacity he was called by the Specialist Chambers, the paper writes that the fact he opted to exercise right to silence is an indicator that he is a suspect.

**Another KLA commander called by Specialist Chambers (*Zeri*)**

Ismet Tara, former KLA commander for Rahovec, has been invited by the Specialist Chambers, the paper reports. Tara has been invited to give testimony before the prosecutors in the capacity of a suspect and is expected to travel to The Hague on 17 February.

**Bahtiri: Assembly will support petition for unification of Mitrovica (*Epoka*)**

Agim Bahtiri, mayor of Mitrovica, expressed optimism that initiative for unification of Mitrovica will succeed. He said the Assembly of Kosovo will support the petition which he submitted on Wednesday to the Assembly President Kadri Veseli. He said that he is not alone on this initiative and added that he has the support of both, the government and opposition. According to him, Mitrovica will be one municipality, with one mayor, with the office in Mitrovica north and it will serve all citizens, no matter their nationality.

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