

Main Stories 22 January 2019

* **President Thaci meets Kosovo’s state delegation for talks with Serbia (*media*)**
* **Thaci: I would positively respond to Specialist Chambers, if called (*Zeri*)**
* **EU offers package in exchange for tax suspension (*Klan Kosova*)**
* **Haradinaj: Rescinding tax without recognition from Serbia, a mistake (*RTK*)**
* **Veseli, Haradinaj and Kosnett to meet on tax today (*media*)**
* **LDK MP: Listen to our great friend, the U.S., and suspend the tax (*RTK*)**
* **“Evaporation” of recognitions (*Zeri*)**
* **Meta, Djukanovic call for finalization of Kosovo-Serbia dialogue (*dailies*)**
* **Apostolova meets PDK, LDK officials (*dailies*)**
* **Teachers’ strike: Thaci calls for social dialogue (*Epoka e Re/Express*)**
* **Pacolli: Serbia promises arms and financial aid to African countries for retracting recognitions of Kosovo’s independence (*Bota Sot*)**

**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**President Thaci meets Kosovo’s state delegation for talks with Serbia (*media*)**

One of the leading stories in today’s media is Kosovo President Hashim Thaci’s meeting with the state delegation for talks with Serbia on Monday. Under the leading front-page headline ***Thaci’s dialogue in 9 points and 9 pages***, ***Koha Ditore*** reports that a nine-page informative document is everything that President Thaci offered to Kosovo’s state delegation for talks with Serbia. The paper claims to have secured a copy of the document and it reportedly highlights nine specific issues that were discussed with Serbian officials and EU High Representative Federica Mogherini. According to the paper, the document makes no reference to the “border correction” idea which President Thaci continues to promote in public statements and interviews to international media. The Presevo Valley is mentioned only in the context of reciprocity about the rights of Albanians living there and the rights of the Serb community in Kosovo. ***Zeri*** covers the meeting under the front-page headline ***Thaci opens “empty letters”*** and quotes Fatmir Limaj and Shpend Ahmeti, the co-heads of the state delegation, as saying that Thaci did not submit all the documents to them, but only a report and that “everything must start from scratch”. ***Epoka e Re*** quotes President Thaci on the front page as saying that he has agreed with the state delegation that the process of talks with Serbia, which requires societal and political consensus, must conclude with a comprehensive agreement that will ensure Kosovo’s recognition by Serbia and a UN seat for Kosovo. In a separate article related to the same issue, the paper notes that Thaci has assured Limaj and Ahmeti that there is no draft agreement with Serbia yet. ***Bota Sot*** reports that after the meeting, Thaci told reporters that he guarantees that “Mitrovica North, Gazivoda Lake, Trepca and Presevo Valley will be part of Kosovo”.

**Thaci: I would positively respond to Specialist Chambers, if called (*Zeri*)**

President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, thanked all former Kosovo Liberation Army members who chose to positively respond to calls by the Specialist Chambers in The Hague. Responding to a question from a reporter on whether he would personally testify if called, Thaci said he would do so. “At any given time when it reaches my address, I would accept with utmost responsibility and I urge the others to do the same,” Thaci said after the meeting with Kosovo negotiating team yesterday.

**EU offers package in exchange for tax suspension (*Klan Kosova*)**

As Kosovo Assembly President Kadri Veseli prepares to meet later today Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and the U.S. Ambassador Philip Kosnett to discuss the import tax on Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, ***Klan Kosova*** quotes sources saying that during his recent visit to Kosovo, the European Commissioner Johannes Hahn made a concrete offer to Kosovo institutions in exchange for suspending the tax. The offer includes removing the name UNMIK from the CEFTA agreement and renegotiation of trade relations between the involved parties to resolve disagreements over vehicle registrations. Head of the EU Office in Kosovo Nataliya Apostolova said another form of communication needs to be established between the neighbours. She dismissed allegations that only Kosovo is being pressured to take action. “The pressure is on everyone,” she said adding however that Kosovo acted unilaterally when introducing the tax thus violating CEFTA.

**Haradinaj: Rescinding tax without recognition from Serbia, a mistake (*RTK*)**

Kosovo’s Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, said on Monday that it would be a mistake for Kosovo to rescind the 100-percent tariff on Serbian goods if Belgrade does not recognize Kosovo’s independence. “It would be a mistake to suspend the tax without a recognition from Serbia. Don’t forget one thing, this mistake would be made by the same people that have brought us here, those that could not say ‘yes or no’ and that have left us in this position for 20 years now,” Haradinaj said.

**Veseli, Haradinaj and Kosnett to meet on tax today (*media*)**

All media report on the meeting that will be held today between Kosovo Assembly President and PDK leader, Kadri Veseli, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and U.S. Ambassador Philip Kosnett, on the 100-percent tax on Serbian goods. PDK officials said on Monday they expect the meeting to conclude in an agreement that would guarantee Kosovo’s relations with the U.S. are not impaired. Under the headline ***Will Haradinaj back down?***, ***Lajmi*** news website quotes Haradinaj’s advisor, Avni Arifi, as saying that the government will maintain its position on the tax. “For the time being, I see no changes in the government’s position. There is no indication that the government will change its position on the matter,” he said. Halil Matoshi, a political and media advisor to Haradinaj, told ***RTK*** on Monday that the government is not under international pressure to revoke the tax, “but there are suggestions by friends to rescind the tax and to create room for dialogue”. “For 20 years now, we have created room for dialogue with Serbia, but without any effect. The tax is a sovereign decision of Kosovo,” Matoshi added.

**LDK MP: Listen to our great friend, the U.S., and suspend the tax (*RTK*)**

Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) MP, Ramiz Kelmendi, said on Monday that following the request from the U.S., Kosovo’s authorities must rescind the 100-percent tax on Serbian products. Kelmendi wrote in a Facebook post that Kosovo’s institutions must seriously consider recommendations coming from U.S. officials.

**“Evaporation” of recognitions (*Zeri*)**

The paper on the front page writes that the ‘brutal’ campaign of the Serb diplomacy has resulted in certain countries suspending recognition of Kosovo with the most recent example involving the Republic of Palau pending the outcome of the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue. Serbian officials said four more countries are expected to soon follow suit while Kosovo’s Foreign Ministry has disputed reports and said it has not received any notification from Palauan authorities. At the same time, analysts point out that the international law does not contain the notion of de-recognition although they do admit that Serbia’s lobbying efforts are damaging Kosovo.

**Meta, Djukanovic call for finalization of Kosovo-Serbia dialogue (*dailies*)**

President of Montenegro Milo Djukanovic and Albania’s Ilir Meta agreed in a meeting in Podgorica that the outcome of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue should result in an agreement that would not undermine stability in the region. “I want to stress the importance of the final outcome of this dialogue strengthening and consolidating co-existence not only between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and Serbia but co-existence in the entire region and particularly strengthen integration processes in the Western Balkans as the only way for the region to prosper,” Meta said.

**Apostolova meets PDK, LDK officials (*dailies*)**

Head of the EU Office in Kosovo, Nataliya Apostolova had separate meetings yesterday with the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) leadership and discussed Kosovo’s legislative agenda for this year, reforms, European integration process as well as Pristina-Belgrade dialogue. PDK deputy leader Memli Krasniqi expressed the party’s commitment for broad political consensus regarding dialogue with Serbia. At the same time, LDK said in a statement that the meeting with Apostolova focused on the process of dialogue, public administration reform, education, air pollution, election reform.

**Teachers’ strike: Thaci calls for social dialogue (*Epoka e Re/Express*)**

President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, has called on the government of Kosovo and representatives of teachers union to engage in dialogue for resolving outstanding issues. Thaci said he understood the decisions of the government of Kosovo and also respects the right to protest but said disagreements need to be resolved through dialogue and not through unilateral actions. Meanwhile, ***Express*** quotes MP from the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), Donika Kadaj-Bujupi, saying that the teachers’ strike has been organised as a way to weaken Ramush Haradinaj-led government.

**Pacolli: Serbia promises arms and financial aid to African countries for retracting recognitions of Kosovo’s independence (*Bota Sot*)**

Kosovo’s Foreign Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, said on Monday that Serbia is promising arms and financial aid to African countries in exchange for withdrawing their recognitions of Kosovo’s independence, the paper reports on page six. “From what I have learned, some smaller and poorer countries have fallen prey to such promises,” he said.

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