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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci: Government leaders must not use tax for other interests (*Klan Kosova*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci told ***Klan Kosova*** on Thursday that it was a right and honest decision to introduce the 100-percent tax on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but that now the tax must not be misused. “Now, three or four heads of government must not misuse the tax for their own interests that go against Kosovo’s state interests,” he said. “The Kosovo Government and EU authorities must discuss the suspension of the 100-percent tax. I hope this situation will be resolved in the near future so that Kosovo is not seen as an obstacle to dialogue or a country that does not respect the rules of dialogue and negotiations. I hope people will look toward the future. Serbia deserved the tax. The request came from Deputy Prime Minister Hoxhaj and Assembly President Veseli who proposed the decision to Prime Minister Haradinaj. The request was fair and honest. Now their patriotic honesty must not be misused, and a decision must be made based on state interests. The decision to remove the tax is not up to me. I will respect the decision of the Kosovo Government. I welcome the commitment of Assembly President Veseli and Prime Minister Haradinaj in their meeting with Ambassador Kosnett, and also in meetings with EU authorities”. Thaci also commented on the teachers’ strike saying that it is unacceptable and that pupils and their families are being damaged the most. He called on the government and the teacher’s union to meet and engage in social dialogue. “Through social dialogue they will find the best possible decision so that classes can resume, pupils can return to school and to protect the dignity of Kosovo teachers … The current situation is intolerable, unacceptable and I call on government authorities and the unions to meet and talk,” he said. Thaci also said a decision on visa liberalization for Kosovo is expected in June. “I want to hope that despite some reservations from certain EU member states, a decision on visa liberalization for Kosovo will be made in June,” he said.

**Veseli: 100-percent tax will not be lifted (*RTK*)**

Kosovo Assembly President and Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) leader, Kadri Veseli, said on Thursday that the 100-percent tax on Serbian goods should not be lifted and warned with reciprocity measures in every field if Serbia continues with its aggressive approach toward Kosovo. “The tax was set for the interest of Kosovo state and its citizens. Our strategic and eternal partners, the United States of America, did not request lifting of the tax because they do not want to affect dignity of Kosovo state. Our allies request from us to dialogue to reach a final agreement, which is recognition of Kosovo by Serbia and the seat at the UN,” Veseli said. “We will let Serbia know each day that without respecting the state of Kosovo, they cannot expect that the tax will be lifted. We will continue with complete reciprocity. If they block Kosovo goods, we will block Serbian goods. If they do not recognize license plates, we will not recognize Serbian license plates. They do not recognize the stamps of Kosovo state, we will not recognize Serbia’s stamps. So, we will go with complete reciprocity and the 100 percent tax will remain depending on Serbia’s behavior,” Veseli said. He ensured Kosovo citizens that no action will be taken that may affect relations between Kosovo and the U.S.

**Economic agreement in exchange for lifting 100-percent tax (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and European diplomats are agreeing on a reciprocity agreement between Kosovo and Serbia on all economic aspects in exchange for lifting the 100-percent tax on Serbian goods. EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn has offered to media the agreement and he has already presented this to Kosovo and Serbia Presidents, Hashim Thaci and Aleksandar Vucic, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

**Hahn meets Thaci and Vucic, discuss tax and dialogue (*Epoka*)**

The European Union Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn, met at the World Economy Forum in Davos the Presidents of Kosovo Hashim Thaci and that of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic. They discussed the dialogue and the tax on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to Hahn, both Thaci and Vucic are aware that a solution is required. “I presented a proposal in which we will treat all the relevant trade matters between Kosovo and Serbia. I am ready to lead such an interview,” Hahn said adding that he expects positive reactions from Vucic and Thaci. According to him, this would also mean resumption of the dialogue. According to Hahn, if a solution is found, then the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia could last until the end of this year.

**Arifi to Hahn: Prime Minister, not the President, decides on the tax (*Express*)**

Avni Arifi, Chief of Staff at the Office of Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, said on Thursday that President Thaci does not decide on the 100-percent tax on Serbian goods. He added that powers are divided and that the government will maintain its position on the matter. “There is no change in the position of the government. In Kosovo, the government decides [on the matter] and not the President,” Arifi said when asked to comment on EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn’s statement that he has discussed the matter with President Thaci and that he expects positive reactions.

**Mustafa: The tax was set to cover government’s failures (*Epoka*)**

Isa Mustafa, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), said on Thursday that his political party is engaged for eternal friendship with the United States and partnership with the EU. He added that the responsibility for affecting these relations belongs to the government and governing coalition. He made these comments while talking about the 100 percent tax imposed by Kosovo government on Serbian goods. According to Mustafa, the imposed tax is a populist and unthought measure.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina calls on Kosovo to lift import tax (*dailies*)**

Most papers and online media report on a meeting between delegations of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo regarding the tax authorities in Pristina have introduced on products from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to Bosnian media outlet ***Klix.ba***, the parties agreed to continue dialogue and find the best possible solution in the shortest possible time. The Kosovo side is reported to have insisted on political issues needing to be resolved before economic ones, namely recognition of certificates and visa liberalisation,” ***Klix.ba*** wrote. At the same, Bosnia asked for a temporary suspension of tax so that in the meantime seek a solution to the issues raised by Kosovo authorities which would be based on the model applied by other countries that have not recognised independence of Kosovo. ***Epoka e Re*** meanwhile quotes Durim Limaj, chief of staff to Kosovo’s Minister of Trade and Industry, who took part in the meeting with Bosnian delegation telling ***Al Jazeera Balkans*** that yesterday was the first bilateral meeting between Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina in ten years. He said they informed their interlocutors that the tax will be lifted if Kosovo demands are met. “They are asking for understanding because of the situation in which Bosnia and Herzegovina is with regards to divisions in the country. We said our understanding has run thin,” Limaj told ***RTV Dukagjini***.

**Thaci in Davos: Kosovo is a new country but with great potential (*Telegrafi*)**

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci said in a Facebook post from Davos where he is taking part in the World Economic Forum that Kosovo is a new country but has great potential. Thaci said he spoke about this potential and Kosovo’s commitment to contribute to peace and overall progress in forums attended by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Head of International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, prime ministers and ministers from countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, Singapore, Canada as well as representatives from leading businesses. “For Kosovo this is a great opportunity to meet leaders of the greatest and most important countries and international organizations and to forge new lines of cooperation and promote our potential for development,” Thaci wrote.

**Kosovo negotiating team to meet Mogherini next week in Brussels (*media*)**

The Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo Enver Hoxhaj, said in a press conference that Deputy Prime Minister Fatmir Limaj and leader of the Social-Democratic Party Shpend Ahmeti will be traveling on Tuesday for Brussels to hold the second meeting with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. During their first meeting which took place two weeks ago, they discussed the dialogue and the tax that Kosovo has imposed on Serbian goods. After the meeting, Mogherini spoke of the need for an agreement for complete normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia to be reached.

**EU on visa liberalisation: High-level corruption fight to continue (*Zeri*)**

With regards to visa liberalisation for Kosovo, officials from the EU Office in Pristina told the paper that Kosovo authorities need to continue fight against organised crime and high-level corruption. The EU office confirmed in a written response to the paper that the European Commission has concluded that Kosovo has met all criteria of the visa liberalisation roadmap and pointed out that it is now up to the EU Council of Ministers to decide on the European Commission’s proposal. EU officials also said that overall progress in the rule of law field will contribute to improving chances for a positive decision on visa liberalisation. European Integration Minister Dhurata Hoxha meanwhile stated that Kosovo institutions will soon launch a lobbying campaign for visa liberalisation and their first stop will be Austria. “We will start with Austria and then move on to every EU member state,” Hoxha said.

**Kosovo issues arrest warrant for Milan Radojicic (*Bota Sot*)**

Special Prosecution of Kosovo has issued an arrest warrant for Milan Radojicic on suspicion of involvement in the murder of the Kosovo Serb political leader Oliver Ivanovic. An international arrest warrant is meanwhile expected to be issued in the coming days. Prosecutor Syle Hoxha said the arrest warrant was issued on 21 January and Radojcic is being wanted as a suspect.

**Governments of Kosovo and FYROM to hold joint meeting in May (*Epoka*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), visited on Thursday Kosovo and met separately with Deputy Prime Minister Enver Hoxhaj and Minister for European Integration, Dhurata Hoxha. Hoxhaj informed that the joint meeting between the two governments will take place in May, when the parties are expected to sign several agreements.

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