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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Pristina irritated over EU’s request to include Trepca in dialogue (*media*)**

Among the leading stories in the media on Tuesday evening and this morning are reactions in Kosovo to a statement by EU spokeswoman Maja Kocijancic who said that the status of the Trepca mining complex should be discussed in dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. ***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page that the Kosovo Government said in a reaction that this position by the EU threatens Kosovo’s sovereignty and that it is clearly aimed at dividing Kosovo. Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said in a statement that this is “a call for instability in the region”. He said the EU’s reaction is proof that Brussels “has lost its way” and “this is an unprecedented and unacceptable position and as such, it undermines Kosovo’s sovereignty”. Haradinaj further argued that Trepca is not an open issue between Kosovo and Serbia and that Kosovo’s people and institutions will never allow false issues which are clearly aimed at Kosovo’s division. Assembly President and PDK leader, Kadri Veseli, said that with this position the EU is ruining every chance for dialogue and good neighborly relations. Veseli also said that “Trepca was not and will not be an open issue in the dialogue with Serbia” and that “Trepca is a natural right of the state of Kosovo, now and forever”. Meanwhile, Kosovo’s Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli in a Facebook post wrote that the status of Trepca is not negotiable. “Trepca belongs to Kosovo and its residents,” he said adding that he was carefully following “pro-Serbian” statements on this issue. “Dialogue should only relate to recognition between the two countries,” he added. Deputy Foreign Minister, Enver Hoxhaj, also reacted to the EU’s statement on Trepca mine. In a Twitter post, Hoxhaj said that he was shocked by the statement of spokesperson Kocijancic: “Absolutely unacceptable to see EU officials releasing immature statements that can harm the process of dialogue with Serbia,” Hoxhaj wrote. Kosovo’s Minister for Trade and Industry, Valdrin Lluka, told ***RTK*** on Tuesday that the Trepca mining complex is functioning well in the technical aspect and that there is readiness from the Serb side too, but that “the situation would change if politics gets involved”. “I don’t think politics should be involved in the Trepca case,” Lluka said. “There is readiness among all parties to move forward and investors are interested in Trepca”. Former Prime Minister and LDK leader, Isa Mustafa, reacted harshly too saying that Kosovo’s political parties must jointly oppose any initiative for discussing issues related to Kosovo’s sovereignty and state integrity. LDK MP Lumir Abdixhiku said in a reaction that “such EU officials cannot be mediators in dialogue … they are biased and lack credibility, moreover, they don’t even represent the individual positions of EU member states. Their mediation has been compromised and this is why Kosovo should reject their mediation until this position is clarified”. Albulena Haxhiu, Vetevendosje MP, also reacted to the EU statement calling it unacceptable and scandalous. “We cannot under any circumstance allow the ownership of our national resources, in this case Trepca, being disputed or put up for negotiation. Such an approach on the part of the EU needs to urgently change,” Haxhiu said for ***Kallxo.com***. AAK MP Muharrem Nitaj said Kosovo’s negotiating team must reject all meetings in Brussels until the latter clarifies if Kocijancic’s remarks are her personal opinions or if they represent the position of the EU. The leader of the union of Trepca workers said in a reaction on Tuesday that “discussions about Trepca are a direct threat to the sovereignty of the Republic of Kosovo”.

**Thaci: Reaching agreement with Serbia will not be easy (*Epoka*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci said on Tuesday that the support of the United States of America to reach a comprehensive agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, is vital for Kosovo. In his address at the “Council on Foreign Relations” in Washington, Thaci said that a comprehensive peace agreement between Kosovo and Serbia will bring peace to Kosovo, peace and stability to the region and will have a transformative role in our society. “The reaching of the agreement between Kosovo and Serbia will be no easy process, but it is the only way forward to avoid turning back into tensions and conflicts, Thaci said and added that the main purpose of the agreement is the recognition of Kosovo by Serbia and Kosovo’s membership into the United Nations. Explaining why the circumstances are favorable for a comprehensive agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, Thaci stated that this time it appears that Serbia is also interested in reaching an agreement with Kosovo, while even Russia seems ready to accept an agreement that would be reached between Kosovo and Serbia. “Whenever Kosovo has been united with the United States, it has resulted to be victorious. Even if the made compromises seemed tough at first, it later proved to be the best strategic decisions,” Thaçi said adding that Kosovo will not accept an agreement that is not acceptable to Washington as well. [*https://bit.ly/2SeQIEo*](https://bit.ly/2SeQIEo)

**Serwer to Thaci: Next time invite friends who oppose your idea (*Klan Kosova*)**

The U.S. Balkans analyst, Daniel Serwer, has reacted to the announcement of President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci that he would at the Council on Foreign Relations about engagements to reach a comprehensive peace agreement between Kosovo and Serbia. “Next time, also invite friends who think your proposal on territories is a bad idea,” Serwer said to Thaci.

**Haradinaj doesn’t change position on tax (*Zeri*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, has reaffirmed his position that the import tax on Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina will not be lifted. “We have explained our arguments on the tax. It is unacceptable to condition the dialogue. Dialogue must resume, not only Kosovo loses without it but also the region. The tax will remain until the recognition, I believe there is no more dilemmas on this,” Haradinaj said. He accused Serbia of using the issue of tax to ‘blackmail’ continuation of dialogue: “We will not return to dialogue with blackmail; they are not even conditions but blackmail.” He said Kosovo never conditioned dialogue even when its recognitions were revoked by certain countries or when it failed to gain Interpol membership. “If we make a list of conditions, we would have demanded Serbia’s apology for crimes it committed in Kosovo, we would have asked for the return of missing persons and so on. The tax is here to stay until recognition,” Haradinaj noted.

**Veseli: I will stay in coalition with Haradinaj until the end (*RTK*)**

The President of the Assembly of Kosovo and leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) said he will stay until the end in coalition with Ramush Haradinaj. He said he gave his support for Haradinaj to become Prime Minister. “Only ethics and correctness keep me in my life,” he said. “And this coalition is working, this Prime Minister is working. We are making joint decisions. Imagine only the increase of salaries that we did in a situation when majority of the countries around us as in economic crisis. I have only one concern: Ramush Haradinaj’s genuine sincerity and patriotism. Some liars use his sincerity to make him oppose western partnership, the U.S. and the EU. I think that he is doing a good job, but in politics one should not fall in the trap of those who will leave you in in a lurch tomorrow,” Veseli said.

**UN publishes latest report on Kosovo (*Zeri*)**

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in the quarterly report on the situation in Kosovo expressed concern over the increasing of tensions between Kosovo and Serbia and called on the sides to refrain from steps that would threaten the situation on the ground. “Tensions between Belgrade and Pristina continued to rise, affecting the prospects for a productive dialogue,” the report reads. Guterres said the 100-percent tax on imports from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the key problems in relations between Belgrade and Pristina and urged the parties to avoid actions that could contribute to further increase of tensions. ***Zeri*** writes that the report has been sent to ambassadors of the UN Security Council member states but that it is not yet certain whether a session on Kosovo will be held in February.

**Limaj and Ahmeti travel secretly to Brussels (*Koha/Gazeta Express*)**

***KTV*** reported on Tuesday evening that Fatmir Limaj and Shpend Ahmeti, the co-heads of Kosovo’s state delegation for talks with Serbia, travelled without any announcement and secretly on Monday to Brussels, to discuss the course of dialogue. ***KTV*** tried to contact both officials but they were not available for comment. ***Gazeta Express*** reports that following his return from Brussels, Limaj told reporters at Pristina Airport that they “went there to shape dialogue”. “The tax was mentioned too. We need to get back to the table and discuss open issues. The next meeting will be held soon,” Limaj said. “We hope that the platform [on dialogue] will be sent to the Assembly next week. We are shaping dialogue. This dialogue must lead directly to a final agreement, including the conditions that we have for Serbia”.

**Meta: Kosovo – Serbia agreement will have U.S. and EU as guarantors (*Epoka*)**

The President of Albania, Ilir Meta, said during his speech at the U.S. Senate that the final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia will produce peace, stability and long-term security for the region, by having the U.S. and the EU as guarantees of the process. Meta said the final results of this agreement would mean that Kosovo is recognized by Serbia as an independent state and a member with full rights at the United Nations. “The only border change that we have to work for night and day, is complete enlargement of EU in Western Balkans,” Meta said.

**Haradinaj: Bahtiri’s statement on war, exaggerated (*Telegrafi*)**

Kosovo’s Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj commented on the statement made by Mitrovica Mayor Agim Bahtiri that there would be a war if Mitrovica is “touched” saying it was exaggerated. “Bahtiri as Mayor of Mitrovica often makes such statements and it is not good for anyone to exaggerate them. I don’t see a tendency for destabilisation, the only threat are the plans for trade with territories and borders,” Haradinaj said.

**Kurti begins preparations for “Albanian spring” (*Zeri*)**

The paper writes on the front page that Vetevendosje leader Albin Kurti has recently increased calls for protests and in one of the Assembly sessions he said his party would call “mass” protests if President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, continues to support the idea of border correction between Kosovo and Serbia. Most recently, in a debate with Tirana students, Kurti said that the current situation calls for Kosovo and Albania to prepare for what he said would be an “Albanian spring”. “President Thaci and his men are insisting of trade with territory. Let them know that if they decide to bring us before a fait accompli through an agreement that affects the territory of Kosovo, not only will protests reoccur but they will be even more massive,” Kurti said.

**Ahmeti: Kosovo-Serbia mutual recognition, beneficial for entire region (*Epoka*)**

Ali Ahmeti, leader of the Democratic Union for Integration (BDI) in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) discussed during his meeting with the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to FYROM Rachel Galloway, also about Kosovo. He spoke about the need to conclude demarcation and mutual recognition between Kosovo and Serbia, adding that the entire region would profit from this.

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