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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Kosovo leaders meet to discuss final stage of dialogue with Serbia (*media*)**

Kadri Veseli, President of the Assembly of Kosovo, invited to his office yesterday President Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and Deputy Prime Minister Fatmir Limaj. **Gazeta Express** learnt that the reason of the meeting is the 100 percent tax on the goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the meeting, **Klan Kosova** reported that members of the dialogue delegation, Enver Hoxhaj and Visar Ymeri also participated at the meeting. It further noted that they discussed the final phase of the dialogue, with a special stress on the platform of the dialogue, which is expected to be approved by the Assembly of Kosovo soon. The participants of the meeting agreed that all representatives of the institutions of Kosovo from the government and opposition should unite in support of the platform of the dialogue and stressed that unity of the Kosovo political scene strengthens Kosovo’s international position in the process of the dialogue. ***Koha Ditore*** meanwhile reports that the meeting was dominated by Veseli and Thaci requesting the tax on imports be lifted to give dialogue a chance but that Haradinaj resisted such calls.

**Haradinaj: Whosoever undermines Kosovo borders is an enemy (*Zeri/Bota Sot*)**

Speaking to families of martyrs from the Decan municipality, Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj reiterated his position against any agreement with Serbia that would mean border changes. “If we open the borders of this Kosovo, we open the graves of those we have come to pay tribute to today, their wounds and their suffering. Whosoever undermines these borders is an enemy of Kosovo,” Haradinaj said. ***Bota Sot*** quotes Haradinaj as saying that he has respect for leaders in Kosovo and Albania but he does not agree with anyone who proposes border changes. He said the same applies to all other countries that support such an option.

**U.S. puts in motion measures against import tax (*Koha Ditore*)**

The paper reports that the U.S. has begun to put in motion measures against the decision of the Kosovo government not to suspend the import tariff on products from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. After Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj was not issued a U.S. visa to attend the National Prayer Breakfast, the most recent consequence is the cancellation of a U.S. Army general’s visit to Kosovo. The paper reports that the U.S. measures are expected to be stepped up if the government of Kosovo persists on not lifting the tax and that these will be most visible in the process of Kosovo Security Force transition. Haradinaj meanwhile insists the tax will be lifted only when Serbia recognises independence of Kosovo.

**Haradinaj not aware of the reason for annulment of U.S. general’s visit (*Kosova*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said he has not received any official information about the annulment of the visit of the U.S. General Timothy Orr, to Kosovo. Kosovo Security Force (KSF) officials said that they have received a notification that General Orr has annulled his visit due to the dissatisfaction with the decision of the government of Kosovo to impose a 100 percent tax on the goods imported from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. KSF commander Rrahman Rama, informed about this President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci through a letter, which also stresses that U.S. officials informed his that Washington is considering other measures, including suspension of the training and educational programs for KSF.

**LDK: Cancellation of the U.S. general’s visit, deeply concerning (*Zeri*)**

The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) said the cancellation of the visit of Iowa National Guard Commander, Major General Timothy Orr, to Kosovo as a result of trade measures Kosovo government has imposed on Serbia is deeply concerning. LDK MP Naser Rugova said the government of Kosovo should take a step back and “calmly” reevaluate its actions as Kosovo does not need populist measures that weaken relations with the U.S.

**Limaj: Platform to be sent to the Assembly by the end of the week (*Bota*)**

Fatmir Limaj, Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo who is also co-head of the negotiating team, told the media that the negotiating team held a meeting on Monday afternoon to harmonize and finalise the platform for the dialogue with Serbia. “We have worked a lot today and in the past days. We will be working again tomorrow, there are some details that we have to work on. We are speaking about a very important document, very sensitive and we have to be careful about each word that we put in the platform. We will continue to work tomorrow… and one thing is for certain that this platform will be addressed to the Assembly by the end of the week,” Limaj said.

**Kosovo’s Academy of Arts and Science opposes border change option (*media*)**

Ahead of Kosovo’s anniversary of declaration of independence, the Kosovo’s Academy of Arts and Science has come out with a statement expressing serious concern over the current political discourse regarding the final stage of dialogue with Serbia. “Lack of a unified state platform and controversial and divisive positions between main Kosovo institutional leaders are unacceptable,” the statement reads. The Academy says it is convinced that international allies like the U.S. and EU would continue to support independence and sovereignty of Kosovo and that this support is particularly important at a time when “diplomatic correspondence” trumps up the idea of “painful compromise” between Kosovo and Serbia for individual interests and fails to recognise consequences such a scenario would have in the Balkans. “This possible change of course would be a setback to two-decade-long international efforts for creating peace and stability in the region and in Europe,” the Academy warns.  “The Republic of Kosovo should conduct the final stage of dialogue with the Republic of Serbia within the applicable constitutional and legal order and in line with constitutional competencies of state institutions. The Republic of Kosovo should conduct the final stage of dialogue through implementation of internationally accepted obligations in line with UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/298 of 9 September 2010 acknowledging the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in respect of Kosovo which paved way for the inter-state dialogue with the Republic of Serbia, facilitated by the European Union. The Republic of Kosovo should conduct the final stage of dialogue with Serbia or third parties only as an independent, sovereign and internationally recognised by 115 countries and confirmed by the International Court of Justice,” the statement reads. The Academy of Arts and Science called on Kosovo leaders and legislators to remain “unwavering” in protecting Kosovo’s territorial integrity and sovereignty.

**Limaj: Missing persons issue to be discussed in Brussels (*Insajderi*)**

Fatmir Limaj, Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister and co-head of the Kosovo Negotiating Team, told Insajderi that the issue of missing persons will be included in the dialogue with Serbia. “Apart from the central topic – recognition of Kosovo – one of the main topics of discussion will be that of missing persons; it will have a place in the comprehensive agreement and we think the issue of missing persons can be easily resolved if there is will,” Limaj said. He added that he is convinces Serbia has information on the fate of the missing persons and these can be found in the archives of the Serbian intelligence service. “One of the things we will demand is opening of state archives,” he said.

**Ahmeti: Kosovo and Serbia should reach agreement this year (*Epoka*)**

Ali Ahmeti, leader of the Democratic Union for Integration in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) told the paper that conclusion of the contest between Skopje and Athens and signing of the protocol for NATO membership of his country, are extraordinary achievements. He praised his political party for these historic achievements. He also said that Kosovo and Serbia should reach an agreement for mutual recognition this year.

**Specialist Chambers summon former KLA fighter, Lahi Brahimaj (*media*)**

Lahi Brahimaj, former KLA fighter has been summoned by the Specialist Chambers in The Hague, media report. Brahimaj confirmed to the media that he is to travel to The Hague for an interview with specialist prosecutors in March. Brahimaj was convicted by the ICTY on war crimes charges.

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