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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj vows not to allow “experiments” with territory (*Koha Ditore*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj is reported to have admitted that the tax on imports from Serbia is a measure aimed at protecting borders on which Kosovo declared its independence in 2008. In his speech at a commemoration event marking the 29th anniversary of the murder of political activist Enver Hadri, Haradinaj said: “Today, 20 years after liberation and in the second decade of independence, dialogue for normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia was derailed by certain circles in Kosovo and Brussels, and turned into a dialogue for territories.” “The determination to uphold the right of 17 February Kosovo is an alignment on the right side of history and also the decision to block Serbian goods, the 100-percent tax, is also an action preventing formalization of a partition. Kosovo will not give land in exchange for recognition and if this is the price, Kosovo does not need Serbia’s recognition,” Haradinaj added. He further vowed not to allow “experiments” with the territory of Kosovo or its borders: “Kosovo is one and is that of 17 February and we only recognise one Constitution. Whoever tries to act otherwise is violating the Constitution and the laws and will be criminally prosecuted.”

**Thaci: I will resign if Assembly does not approve agreement with Serbia (*RTK*)**

The President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci, said Kosovo cannot undermine strategic alliance with the U.S. because of the hostility with Serbia. “No one imagined that Kosovo would contest U.S. advice,” Thaci said adding that Kosovo does not possess the luxury and should not dare to say no to the U.S. “Kosovo does not have the luxury to please opponents of the independence,” Thaci said. “Let us not think that we are epicenter of the World. Where would we be without the U.S. support?” he asked. He said the tax on Serbian products should be suspended and added that Serbian goods are being smuggled from Northern Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, anyhow. He also spoke about the final agreement with Serbia. “And critics should not think that I would violate the Constitution. I would never violate the Constitution, but to change it, yes. We can reach agreement, then propose to the Assembly of Kosovo, which can approve it or not. If Preseva, Medvegja and Bujanoc join Kosovo with an agreement and the Assembly does not approve it, I resign or declare a referendum,” he told the Albanian broadcaster ReportTv.

**Countries that support or oppose border changes (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports on the front page that the border correction idea as part of the final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia is being opposed by the entire political spectrum in Kosovo but the international community does not share a unified position on this scenario. The paper adds that the U.S. has said that the two parties have to come up with an agreement on their own and France has said it would support any solution the two sides agree to. Meanwhile, Austria has come out in support of Kosovo and Serbia exchanging territories in stark contrast with the position of Germany which has categorically opposed the idea. UK has also said it does not support the land swap option as has Croatia.

**Kocijancic: Efforts underway for a sustainable agreement (*Zeri*)**

European Union spokesperson Maja Kocijancic said that efforts are underway to reach an agreement between Belgrade and Pristina that would guarantee a sustainable solution. “Work is being done in achieving a legally binding agreement for full normalisation of relations that would bring about a sustainable solution to unresolved issues, a sustainable and realistic solution based on mutual agreement and in line with international laws and the EU, as well as acceptable for all EU member states,” Kocijancic said. She said such an agreement is urgent and decisive for both Kosovo and Serbia.

**Dialogue platform does not pass due to lack of quorum (*Epoka*)**

Kosovo Assembly Committee for Foreign Affairs, chaired by Vjosa Osmani, held on Monday a meeting to discuss the draft law on duties, responsibilities and competencies of the state delegation in the dialogue with Serbia as well as the platform for the final legally binding agreement. The MPs discussed the duties, responsibilities and competencies of the state delegation in the dialogue, however due to the lack of quorum, the platform for the final agreement for normalization of the relations with Serbia, did not pass.

**Vucic speaks about new discussions on Kosovo (*Kosova*)**

The President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, said on Monday that he will be discussing during the following days with the other Serbian political leaders about Serbia’s policy towards Kosovo and the messages of world countries. “If we fulfil 100 percent of the Brussels agreement while Albanians do not fulfil any, impose 100-percent tax and nominate private persons in the government, then our serious and responsible policy is the only possible response,” Vucic said at a press conference after meeting with the French Foreign Minister, Natali Loazo.

**Shala: Tax needs to be suspended (*media*)**

Blerim Shala, advisor to President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci, said in an interview for ***T7*** that the import tariff on products from Serbia and Bosnia needs to be suspended. “the position of the EU and the U.S. which has been made clear to us is that t he tax needs to be suspended to give a chance to the dialogue and the agreement between two countries,” Shala said noting that the measure has stalled the dialogue and has opened problems between Kosovo on one side and the U.S. and the EU on the other.

**Hoti: Terrible how Thaci’s entire staff lobbies for Kosovo’s partition (*Telegrafi*)**

Avdullah Hoti, head of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) parliamentary group, reacted to the interview President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci’s advisor Blerim Shala gave to ***T7*** saying Thaci’s entire staff is lobbying to justify the Kosovo partition idea. In a Facebook post, Hoti said it was terrifying to see that all of Thaci’s staff, paid for by Kosovo taxpayers, are “engaged in justifying the idea of their boss for crippling the state of Kosovo.”

**Vetevendosje requests full implementation of 100-percent tax (*Epoka*)**

Sali Zyba, MP from Vetevendosje movement, held on Monday a press conference, where he spoke about lack of implementation of 100-percent tax on products from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to him, there is no lack of Serbian products in Kosovo’s market, instead there is smuggling and abuse. “Minister of Finance, who comes from President Thaci’s political party, and who should be fighting smuggling, in a cynical manner tells us that smuggling in the north has increased. So, we have a statement which is a state denouncing or admission of state collapse,” Zyba said.

**Appointment of new Kosovo minister triggers fierce reaction in Belgrade (*dailies*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj announced yesterday the appointment of Dijana Zivic to the position of Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development. “I wished the new Minister success in her duty and assured her of my full support in service of the citizens of the Republic of Kosovo and fulfillment of the goals in this department of the government,” Haradinaj wrote on his Facebook account. ***Koha Ditore*** quotes reports from the Belgrade daily ***Danas*** saying that Zivic comes from the Independent Liberal Party led by Slobodan Petrovic and that President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic called the new Kosovo minister a “private Serb” not elected by anyone and that her appointment is an insult to Serbia. “Serbia will not accept this, it will preserve its dignity and its people and will try to maintain stability and peace at all cost, but we will not allow our people to be humiliated or God forbid, attacked,” Vucic is quoted as saying. Serbian List also reacted to Zivic’s appointment saying it will not extend its cooperation to her. “She did not come to the post through the will of the voters and the Serb people but through a Ramush Haradinaj’s decision and through his agreement with the opposition in Belgrade,” Serbian List said in a statement.

**Haradinaj pledges support for families of missing persons (*media*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj met yesterday families of missing persons and told them that reconciliation with Serbia will be difficult if the families of missing persons don’t “stretch out the hand of peace.” “This is a wound for all of us, regardless of ethnic background,” Haradinaj said adding that the issue of missing persons should be included in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. Haradinaj said that in the upcoming meeting of the government on Tuesday, he will propose a budget be allocated for 24 associations of missing persons.

**Another effort of Kosovo to join INTERPOL (*RTK*)**

Government officials confirmed that Kosovo has applied again for membership at the International Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the request is already received by this organization. Kosovo’s Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Izmi Zeka told RFE that the request was submitted on 31 January of this year. “It is also confirmed by INTERPOL that the request of the Republic of Kosovo was received. Now, it remains on Kosovo to through its diplomatic engagements, work on technical issues and political aspects,” Zeka said.

**Kosovo Police detains then releases eight Serbs in Brezovica (*Kallxo*)**

Kosovo Police detained and interviewed eights Serbs on 24 February on suspicion they belonged to illegal structures. The group was detained in the area of Brezovica ski resort and were released on regular procedure after being interviewed. The group told the police they were attending a seminar in Brezovica.

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