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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj: Border change in Balkans, Putin’s agenda (*dailies*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said on Tuesday that opening of the issue of borders and territories in Balkans is an agenda of the Russian President Vladimir Putin. He said Kosovo needs strong international guaranty of recognition of Kosovo’s statehood by Serbia as well as exclusion of the possibility of border change. He said no one can guarantee what happens after borders open. Speaking about the 100-percent tariff on products from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haradinaj said Kosovo needs a contract. “We have said it several times, and we hope that the day of annulling the tax and the agreement of free trade between Kosovo and Serbia will come as soon as possible, however this requires a contract, with all its chapters of mutual recognition. A contract which is not based on change of borders and territories and which is not based on Republika Srpska or a third power, Dodik Republic as we are used to say,” Haradinaj said.

**Leaders with two versions on the length of Kosovo-Serbia border strip (*Koha*)**

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci and Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj have given two different versions regarding the length of the Kosovo-Serbia border strip with the president claiming it is 430km long while the prime minister saying it is 381. In several instances, Thaci has said that Kosovo need to mark the borderline with Serbia which is 430km long but yesterday Haradinaj presented a document with maps brining the length of the border strip to 381km. The document states that the borderline depicted in it corresponds to that of 31 December 1988 as that of then Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo and the same was confirmed in the Constitution of 1974. Furthermore, the document adds that the same borderline was recognised by the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999. “Kosovo has defined borders with Serbia, succeeded and reconfirmed on the day of declaration of independence on 17 February 2008. These are Kosovo’s borders with Serbia, internationally accepted and recognised,” Haradinaj said yesterday when he presented the document. “These borders cannot be changed unilaterally, they are marked, coordinates of all zones are here,” he added. Haradinaj said Kosovo has no territorial pretensions towards anyone: “If the price for recognition is giving away territory, we can wait, we can do without agreement too.”

**Platform to be voted after the draft law on dialogue (*Zeri*)**

Although it has been reported that the platform for dialogue with Serbia will be voted at the Assembly of Kosovo in the coming days, this is not expected to happen before the draft law on dialogue is voted by MPs. Sources from the Assembly told the paper that even if the platform is reviewed by relevant committees, it will not be put on the Assembly’s agenda until the draft law on dialogue, which is now at the second reading stage, is approved.

**“No secret talks with Serbia, border demarcation positive” (*Klan Kosova*)**

In an interview with ***Klan Kosova***, Ardian Arifaj advisor to President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci, said there is a new momentum for an agreement between Kosovo and Sebria to be reached as the international focus has returned to establishing peace in the Balkans. “What is considered the final stage has begun, despite the setbacks because of the tax. This means a new, very favourable momentum has been created, both in the region and internationally, in favour of a final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia,” Arifaj said. He however denied reports that there were secret talks with Serbia. “There are no secret talks, there are no secret agreements. Any agreement that will be reached needs to be ratified with two-thirds of MPs votes. There can be no secret agreement imposed on the citizens,” he said. Arifaj further noted that demarcation of border with Serbia can only be positive for Kosovo and the region. “Dialogue has caused concerns with all communities but it is important to continue. A peaceful agreement will have a transformative role for our society. It will have a transformative role for overcoming ethnic divisions. Communities will not perceive one another as a threat but as fellow citizens,” he noted.

**Mustafa: Serbia not interested to normalise relations with Kosovo (*media*)**

Isa Mustafa, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) claims that Serbia is not interested to normalize relations with Kosovo, and even less to recognize Kosovo as a state. “Serbia’s actions, especially those for unrecognition of independence of Kosovo by some countries, just as the campaign against Kosovo’s membership at Interpol, speak that this neighboring country is not interested to normalize relations with our country and even less to recognize Kosovo state. Serbia is bragging about the harms that it is causing to us in the international arena. Policies of good neighborly relations, peace and stability, for which countries of Western Balkans pledged. are in contradiction with such behavior. This kind of behavior has nothing in common with the request of the EU and the U.S. for the reach of the final agreement with mutual recognition either. Therefore, it would have been good to leave aside the inherited hostile mentality and to work on cultivation of an environment in which we work for prosperity of citizens,” Mustafa wrote on Facebook.

**Hoti: AAK should support resolution against violation of territory (*RTK*)**

Avdullah Hoti, caucus of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) has requested from PM Ramush Haradinaj and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) to support the resolution of the opposition which stresses that no one has the right to discuss the territory of Kosovo. “Let me remind everyone about a fact. The resolution of the opposition dated 4 September 2018, with a single point which says, ‘Kosovo’s territorial integrity is inviolable and no one, and neither the President of the country can dialogue about the territory of the Republic of Kosovo, was not voted by AAK and NISMA, even though they publicly said that they support it,” Hoti wrote. According to him, if Haradinaj is serious about defense of the territory, then his political party should vote the resolution.

**Finland wants to see Kosovo-Serbia agreement reached soon (*Zeri*)**

Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini called on Pristina and Belgrade to reach an agreement as soon as possible. According to Soini, this would help Kosoov join international organisations, including the Council of Europe. “If there is a solution within a certain period of time, I am optimistic there will be no hesitation of those that have not recognised independence of Kosovo,” said the Finnish chief of diplomacy at a conference on artificial intelligence in Helsinki, organised by the Council of Europe.

**“Agreement with Serbia, new momentum for Kosovo’s CoE membership” (*Klan*)**

Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland is quoted as saying that a final agreement between Serbia and Kosovo would give Kosovo a possibility to become the newest member of the Council of Europe. “If there is an agreement, there will be a new situation/momentum,” Jagland told ***Klan Kosova*** from a conference underway in Helsinki. This new momentum, according to Jagland, would also be taken into consideration by CoE member states which have not recognised independence of Kosovo.

**Pack: Change of borders in Balkans should not be allowed (*RFE/Epoka*)**

Former EU MP Doris Pack told ***RFE*** that change of borders in Balkans should not be allowed. She said current EU politicians were not part of politics in the nineties, therefore they do not understand the situation, or they do not know it. “If you are really aware of what happened in those countries during the past years, then you should not allow change of borders. If this happens, it will mark the beginning of an end. We know what happened in this region,’ she said. “Those who are aware of what happened there, who now the region and mentality, should be very careful,” she added. She said she is surprised that Presidents of Serbia and Kosovo are pro this policy. “What is being played right now is not interest of Kosovo. 95 percent of citizens of Kosovo are against change of the borders. I hope that the solution will be found, but not by changing the border,” Pack said.

**KDI presents scenarios if tax remains or is suspended (*Koha*)**

The Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI) presented today possible course of events if the import tariff on products from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina remains in place and those if the measure is suspended. According to KDI, if the tax is not suspended, it could have a positive effect in the sense of Kosovo exercising state sovereignty towards Serbia, return of attention to the implementation of agreements reached so far in the dialogue and Kosovo being in a position to impose relevant issues to the dialogue. The negative aspect of keeping the tax involves Serbia’s conditioning the process of dialogue with the lifting of tax.   “With regards to Kosovo’s relations with international partners, a positive effect was identified in the increase of the U.S. involvement in the process of dialogue while the negative effect was said to be the quivering international partners’ support for Kosovo,” said Eugen Cakolli from KDI. As far as the internal political aspect is concerned, Cakolli said the tax has ignited the debate on the need for general consensus for building Kosovo’s unified position on dialogue while at the same time has polarized the relations between the president of Kosovo, the government, coalition partners and other political parties. In the economic aspect, the main effect of the tax is the increase of local product consumption while the negative side includes the increase of prices of certain items and contraband.  Jeta Krasniqi, also from KDI, said that if the tax was to be suspended, the main positive effect would be resumption of dialogue for normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina but at the same time the dialogue would continue without a unified position of the Kosovo’s political spectrum and would present risks to an agreement involving an unfavourable compromise for Kosovo. Citizens of Kosovo, said KDI officials, would welcome preserving good relations with international partners, the U.S. in particular but at the same time suspension of tax would lead to the decline of citizens’ trust with Kosovo institutions.

**U.S. delegation to visit Kosovo today (*RTK, T7*)**

The U.S. Principal Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council John Erath and Director for European Affairs at National Security Council William Berkley will be visiting Kosovo today. Ardian Arifaj, adviser to the President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci told *T7* that the delegation is expected to discuss with Kosovo leaders about the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue. “The focus of the visit is dialogue. Resumption of the dialogue is the intention of the visit,” Arifaj said. According to him, U.S. officials will be discussing the final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia. The U.S. delegation met on Monday in Belgrade with Serbia’s Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic.

**Telecom could be privatized by a company close to Haradinaj's people (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on the front page that the Kosovo Telecom has unlawfully signed a confidentiality contract enabling the U.S.-based firm “Artillery One”, which the paper says has ties to people close to Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj, full access to financial records following which the company has announced it will offer a bid for privatization of the Kosovo Telecom. The U.S. company is being chaired by Daniel P. Cannon who the paper says has a “dark past” and also co-owns a business with Haradinaj’s family members. “Artillery One”, adds the paper, is co-owned by Ryan Zinke, former U.S. Secretary of Interior under the Trump Administration. Minister of Economic Development Valdrin Lluka however said no one had the right to sign a non-disclosure agreement for financial records and that access to them was not granted after it was considered it has no legal basis.

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