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BiH State-related Issues

BiH SCMM adopts platform for the Presidency members' talks with NATO representatives in Brussels

According to Oslobodjenje, at its session in Sarajevo on Monday, the BiH Standing Committee for Military Matters (SCMM) fully agreed on a platform for upcoming BiH presidency members' talks with the NATO officials in Brussels. At the invitation of NATO, the Presidency members are expected on Wednesday to meet with NATO Secretary-General George Robertson and attend session of the North Atlantic Council (NAC). The adopted platform concerns the pre-conditions BiH has to fulfill before the accession to the Partnership for Peace Program. Nezavisne Novine also reports on a BiH delegation visit to NATO HQ in Brussels. The BiH Delegation is comprised of the members of the Presidency, military advisors to the members of the Presidency, the entities' Defense Ministers and Commanders of the RS and Federation Army. The platform for the talks with NATO, which was adopted by the BiH Presidency and the SCMM, according to the newspaper, offers solutions to problems of BiH foreign and interior policy and underlines the importance of the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. The military part of the platform points out the role of the Presidency, the SCMM and its Secretariat in the control over the armed forces, coordination of all armed forces in BiH, as well as the need to downsize and restructure the armed forces. The BiH delegation will be headed by the Chairman of the BiH Presidency, Beriz Belkic.

The BiH Presidency members meet with leaders of the BiH, RS Trade Union Associations

According to Oslobodjenje, the members of the BiH Presidency met in Sarajevo on Monday with the leaders of the BiH Trade Unions Association and the Trade Unions of the Republika Srpska, Edhem Biber and Cedo Volas, the discuss the current social situation in the country. The trade union leaders announced at a press conference following the meeting that they would form a common body at the state level to coordinate work of the two trade union associations and establish their cooperation with the state in international bodies. However, Volas emphasized that it is not about the establishment of a single trade union association in BiH.

The Alliance for Change to organize a conference on the return process

According to Oslobodjenje, the Alliance for Change will in cooperation with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, his Office and other relevant international organizations organize a conference to discuss the process of return, with a special attention to be paid to the current situation in this process and perspectives. Husein Vojnikovic, the Chairman of the Alliance Coordination, told journalists in Sarajevo on Monday following the regular session of the Alliance leaders that BiH Minister for Human Rights and Refugees Kresimir Zubak, BiH Federation Minister for Urban Planning Ramiz Mehmedagic and BiH Federation Deputy Minister for Refugees Mijat Tuka were tasked to coordinate activities in the organization of the conference.

AFP: BiH lodges protest after arrest of two citizens in Macedonia

The BiH Foreign Ministry said Monday it had asked Macedonia for an explanation after two BiH citizens were allegedly beaten in police custody in Skopje last month. Omer Avdusinovic and Asim Sefer were arrested in Macedonia while en route to Jordan where they study. The two were detained for three days during which time Sefer was "physically abused", the ministry said. "Asim Sefer stated that he had been physically abused to such a degree that at one point he fainted...Sefer was hit to his back, head and right leg," the statement said. After being released on February 16, the two Bosnians continued their trip to Jordan. On the arrival, they contacted the BiH Embassy there to give statements on the events in Macedonia. An unnamed senior Macedonian official said last week that the two BiH citizens and two Jordanians, who had also been arrested in Skopje, were recorded having a conversation about plans to "destroy the devil and the axis." The official said the phrase was a reference to the United States, Britain and Germany, but did not disclose the names of the arrested suspects. The BiH Foreign Ministry said it was surprised by the "treatment Bosnian citizens received" in Macedonia, adding that the incident could harm relations between the two countries. "We believe that this does not contribute to the development of

good relations between BiH and Macedonia,” the ministry’s statement said. It added that an official explanation had been requested from Skopje.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Interview with Beriz Belkic, the BiH Presidency Chairman

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

How likely is it that the High Representative will by his Decision amend the current Republika Srpska Constitution?

Should Petritsch be forced to impose the constitutional changes for numerous reasons that have now come to the surface, it would be good if that solution is not a half-way or a compromise solution which has often been the case so far. Namely, amendments to the Election law, the issue of accession to the Council of Europe and, finally, why not say it, holding of elections are linked to the consistent implementation of the Decision of the Constitutional Court on Constituency of all the three peoples on the entire territory of BiH. Therefore, should the High Representative be forced to impose a solution, I hope that the solution will be in conformity with the European standards.

Local media, but the ones in Croatia also, have lately been often emphasising that the relations between BiH and Croatia have deteriorated. They are assessed to be more complex and burdened than they were at the time of the former authorities?

When one would like to engage in malevolent way of thinking, and there are those who only see the dark side, one could make such a conclusion. Namely, the combination of various recent events and circumstances can lead one to thinking about whether the current official policy of the Republic of Croatia has changed its positions and the clearly defined principles according to which they would like to cooperate with BiH, which was welcomed and accepted here.

personally, I am not prone to believe that there has been a shift in the general policy of the Republic of Croatia towards our country and it is my assessment that all that has been happening lately is a combination of unfortunate circumstances and a reflection of internal turmoil that are on in the Republic of Croatia. I am also of the opinion that these, conditionally put, incident cases must be a warning to the authorities in Croatia that things can also be interpreted in a way that is of no benefit to anyone.

The Presidency has, therefore, while considering the conclusions of the last meeting of the Inter-State Council for Cooperation, recommended to our Foreign Minister to urgently engage in organising a meeting on the level of the BiH Chairman of the Council of Ministers and the Croatian Government’s president.

What is your comment on verbal advocating of the current authorities of the idea that it is domestic political forces that need to take the responsibility in the country and, at the same time, they wait for the High Representative to make decisions?

We are hypocritical. Not only are we hypocritical but we also lack courage. We curry favour to the International Community and tell them what they want to hear. The International Community sent a signal a long time ago that they expected the local authorities to take full responsibility – like, you know, this is your country, you are responsible for it. The we, politicians, say we are ready for that, and while facing the first problem, we run away having no courage to face it. We actually want the decisions to be imposed by the High representative so that we can have an alibi before the domestic public.

Although I have a positive position on the House of Peoples, I do not think it to be the only way of the national protection. I believe that the fundamental issue here is the one of the political culture, i.e. the understanding of the terms such as human, national rights, religious, cultural rights etc. We can legalize all the possible solutions but, unless we develop political culture, the spirit of certain principles and the awareness of our own country, all this will be in vain. We can prescribe that everyone has the same rights all this can fail just because of one local civil servant and his understanding of “equality”.

Constitutional reforms

Reactions to the Dodik's statement: the political parties from the Federation did not give up their demands

Dnevni Avaz reports that eight political parties participating in the talks on the constitutional reforms in BiH are according to the available information close to the agreement about the protection of the vital national interests. SNSD leader Milorad Dodik claims that the demand of the parties from the Federation for the establishment of the House of Peoples in the RS as the national interests protection mechanism is not anymore in the game. "These are just impressions of Mr. Dodik. The political parties from the Federation have not given up their demand that a body in the RS to protect vital national interests must have authorities of a parliamentary house," President of the Party for BiH Presidency Safet Halilovic told the newspaper.

The Party for BiH supports NHI Anic's idea on the abolishment of the cantons, entities

According to Dnevni Avaz, the Party for BiH support an idea of NHI Vice-president Mijo Anic about the abolishment of the cantons in the Federation and than the entities. "We are glad that other political parties also realize a need for the transformation of the BiH administrative-territorial organization," President of the Party for BiH Presidency Safet Halilovic said in a statement with the newspaper.

The BiH Federation Parliament expected to discuss draft amendments to the Entity Constitution on Tuesday

According to Jutarnje Novine, the deputies to the BiH Federation House of Representatives are expected on Tuesday to discuss the draft amendments to the Entity Constitution. Three versions of the amendments have been sent into the procedure, and it is about those proposed by the Croat representatives caucus in the House, the BiH Federation Constitutional Commission and the BiH Federation Government.

Mikes: Amendments to the RS Constitution might be passed by March 25

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The President of the RS Constitutional Commission, Miroslav Mikes stated to Nezavisne Novine that, by the end of this week, or early next week, he would convene the session of the RS Constitutional Commission, after which, in the next seven days, a session of the RS National Assembly might be held. Mikes expressed expectations that the procedure on the adoption of constitutional amendments to the entity Constitution might be completed by 25th March.

Federation

The BiH Federation Government adopts draft law on the Entity Intelligence-Security Service

At its session in Sarajevo on Monday, the BiH Federation Government adopted the draft law on a single Entity's Intelligence-Security Service (FOSS) thereby proposing the abolishment of one of the last parallel structures in the Federation. According to Oslobođenje, the draft law foresees that the current two services (AID and SIS) will cease their work two months following the passage of the law at the latest. The work of the FOSS will be supervised by a permanent body to be established and headed by the BiH Federation President and Vice-president as well as by a body to be appointed by the Federation Parliament. The Government also adopted the draft law on concessions, as one of the most important transition laws, and sent it into the parliamentary procedure. Dnevni List carries that the Federation Government also discussed the information on the reconstruction of the bridge in Capljina and judged as inappropriate the act of the Capljina Municipal Council to name ((Franjo Tudjman) the bridge without a prior agreement with the Federation Government. The Government also expressed its regret that the Government, learnt about the opening of the bridge from media and from the invitations sent to some members of the Government. The bridge is expected to be opened on Tuesday.

HDZ's Niko Lozancic sends letter to Petritsch

In regard to a statement recently made by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, according to which the BiH Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) was more dealing with its own problems than with the issues of a historic importance for the country and the people, the HDZ BiH Vice-president, Niko Lozancic, sent an open letter to Petritsch describing his statement illogical and unproductive. (All Sarajevo dailies carried the Fena report)

AFP: Two Bosnian Croat war crimes suspects surrender

Two Bosnian Croats indicted for war crimes against Bosniaks during the country's 1992-95 war surrendered on Monday to local authorities in southern town of Mostar, BiH Federation TV reported. Petar Matic and Ante Kresic were charged last year by Mostar's public prosecutor for war crimes alleged committed in 1993 against Bosniak prisoners in the southern town of Stolac, the television said. The Mostar court will prosecute the pair, under agreement signed in 1996 between the UN war crimes tribunal in the Hague and the nations of the former Yugoslavia.

Acting FENA director resigns

Oslobođenje reports that the acting Director of the Federal News Agency (FENA), Emir Efendic, resigned following five months in the office. Efendic submitted its resignation to the President and members of the FENA Steering Board. As concrete reasons for the move, Efendic specified the parallelism and the ethnic exclusivity in the Mostar branch of the agency, wrong approach of the Federation Government in resolving FENA legal status, poor interest in the current problems of the agency and the re-appointment of certain FENA Steering Board members he had once accused of parallelism. Efendic told the newspaper that for ten days now, FENA has also been working without its Editor-in-Chief, since Zeljko Ivankovic had found a new job.

Republika Srpska

SDS Congress elects Dragan Kalinic as new party's President

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Both Banja Luka dailies report on Monday's SDS Congress, held in Banja Luka, in Banski Dvor premises. By secret voting, Dragan Kalinic was elected President of the Party and Dragan Cavic was elected his Deputy. Kalinic has so far performed the duty of the SDS Presidency Chairman. Out of 350 delegates, 339 voted for Kalinic and Cavic, eight were against and three ballots were invalid. Out of 164 candidates nominated, SDS Main board was elected. After the re-election, Dragan Kalinic stated that the party, not the individuals won at this inner party election. He added: "Our inner party unity has won. That is a proof that after so many problems and traumas we had in the period behind us, we managed to consolidate the party. A new sense of reality and political pragmatism won, despite wishes of our political opponents that SDS would self-destruct." Explaining SDS program principles, Dragan Cavic stated: "The state and political goal of SDS in BiH is coming out from the Dayton Peace Agreement and it encompasses entity structure of BiH and functional BiH as a state with complex structure, able to accept and implement all internationally recognized standards necessary for the approach to inter - state integration and association." Nezavisne Novine report on the open letter sent by the SDS Main Board member, Mirko Banjac to the SDS Congress. In his letter Banjac warned that, in the last few months, he was a subject to incorrect and malignant attacks against him. For those attacks, Banjac accused individuals and groups who approached SDS and expressed regrets that party did not investigate the situation and sanction those who damaged the party. He said that all the attacks were carried out through two newspapers which were controlled by the SDS, financially and editorially. Banjac added that he requested the Party President to clarify his situation and since all his attempts remained fruitless, he decided to resign to all the posts he was assuming. SDS President, Dragan Kalinic, stated however, that he had no direct conflict with Mirko Banjac.

International Community

LDS' Kadic meets with Ashdown

Oslobodjenje learns that Paddy Ashdown, who is expected to assume duties of the High Representative to BiH at the end of May this year, met on Sunday at the residence of the British Ambassador to BiH with the BiH Liberal-Democratic Party (LDS) President and the BiH Deputy Minister for the European Integrations, Rasim Kadic. According to the newspaper, the meeting and a dinner, which lasted three hours, were organized at the end of the Ashdown's seven-day visit to the region. Kadic and Ashdown discussed the reflection of the development in the neighboring countries to BiH, the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, constitutional reforms, the return of refugees and displaced persons and the cooperation between the BiH entities.

The Federation Presidents receives Ashdown

Oslobodjenje reports that the BiH Federation President, Safet Halilovic, received in Sarajevo on Monday the future High Representative in BiH, Paddy Ashdown, to discuss the current political situation in BiH. Halilovic and Ashdown expressed their common commitment to building strong and functional BiH state institutions, which would ensure the development of a stable and efficient economy to be oriented towards the European integration, according to a press release issued by Halilovic's office.

EU Foreign Ministers appoints Sven Christian Frederiksen as the head of the EU police mission to BiH

Jutarnje Novine reports that, at a session in Brussels on Monday, the European Union Foreign Ministers started

implementing plans for the establishment of the EU police mission, which is expected to replace the current IPTF at the beginning of next year. The Ministers appointed Sven Christian Frederiksen from Denmark as the Head of the mission. He will assume his duties on January 1, 2003. The Ministers also appointed Paddy Ashdown, the next High Representative of the international community in BiH, as the EU Special Envoy in the country.

EU to invest 18 million EURO in reconstruction of house in BiH in this year

Dnevni Avaz reports that the European Commission in this year plans to invest 18 million EUROS in the reconstruction of the devastated houses in BiH. Out of these funds, five million will be allocated as a support to the spontaneous returns in order that people would not be in a situation to live in the tent settlements. Frane Maroevic, the Spokesman for the EU Mission to BiH, told the newspaper that the funds would become operational mid this year, after the EU representatives reach an agreement on the issue with the BiH Council of Ministers. Locations (sites) at which the housing fund will be reconstructed have still not determined, and the lists of priorities will jointly be made by the OHR's RRTF, UNHCR, Refugee Ministries in the both entities, as well as other institutions dealing with this problem. "In the Federation and RS, approximately 65,000 housing units needed to be reconstructed, and the OHR has therefore initiated a meeting of the representatives of the local institutions with the international donors," OHR Spokesman Oleg Milisic said in a statement with Dnevni Avaz.

Delimustafic to be extradited to BiH

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Belgrade press reported and Glas Srpski carried that the Belgrade District Court has established that conditions have been created for the former BiH Interior Minister, Alija Delimustafic, to be extradited to BiH. Several proceedings against Delimustafic have been launched in BiH for economic crimes. Delimustafic's lawyer, Momcilo Bulatovic stressed out that his client would probably decide not to fill an appeal to this decision, "because he wants to go to Sarajevo".

Editorials

Oslobodjenje and Dnevni Avaz

In the Oslobodjenje In Focus column, Mirko Sagolj wrote that the leaders of the eight political parties in BiH had not at their last week's meeting in the OHR building in Sarajevo removed obstacles to the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court's ruling on the constituency of the peoples. "The talks will be resumed in a day, and this time, the High Representative is expressing a bit more optimism about the final outcome," Sagolj wrote. He said that the positions among parties were the most different when it came to the issue of the peoples' representation in the authorities. However, according to Sagolj, another fact is disastrous for the democratic destiny of BiH, and it is about a poor mentioning if at all of "the others," meaning Jews, Romany and members of other ethnic minorities, or the ethnically indifferent citizens in the current phase of the constitutional reforms. "Examine from the ethnic equality is not being passed on the major peoples, but on the ethnic minorities," Sagolj concluded. Sead Numanovic wrote in the Dnevni Avaz Commentary of the Day that the election of Dragan Kalinic as the SDS President and Dragan Cavic as his Deputy represented support to the continuity of the SDS post-Dayton policy.

Dnevni List: On Tuesdays from the right - Kalimero

Written by Marko Tokic (Provided by OHR Mostar)

DL carries an editorial by Marko Tokic in which he says, in relation to the constitutional changes, that the Serbs want Facelift, i.e. how to please the form and disregard the essence, that the Muslims want Symmetry, i.e. to introduce protection mechanisms thus abolishing entities and if that's not possible to turn the Federation into a Republic and that the Croats want the Mission Impossible, introduction of protection mechanisms in both entities the way they operate at BiH level. Tokic says that the Serbs will get what they want and that the Bosniaks' political goals are harmonized to their partner's ones and that the IC has least troubles when dealing with the Croats. Tokic says that in the end the entities will not be abolished and that would leave Petritsch happy when he leaves the country because "he did not do injustice. Even if he did, it was the Croats who are at fault. Jelavic, HDZ, Cardinal Puljic...It is only He, Wolfgang the Great who is honest and honourable. He would have done everything for them had they known to bow to the Majesty. He would have helped. That's why Wolfgang hopes that the parliaments will take justice into their hands in which one people has an absolute domination and in the other, the domination has been realized though political violence", says Tokic. Finally, Tokic is being ironic saying that he (Tokic) will not hear Kalimero (a cartoon character) saying "this is injustice" but Petritsch who will say that he is pleased to leave without having to take such an important decision such as a decision on the constitutional changes and that Paddy Ashdown is arriving to provide more help to politicians.

Nezavisne Novine: RTRS serves citizens or government?

Written by Gavriilo Antonic (Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

After the RS Government openly expressed its desire to control judicial system, universities and other areas of public life, it became their side activity to discipline the media, too. In such a way the politics influences a 'final product' of RTRS, which is the most important tool for a three-member coalition.

It took more than a year for the RS Government to present to the members of the Peoples Assembly of the Republic of Srpska a draft version of the law on RTRS, although the Prime Minister in his inaugural talks promised to have this law passed as soon as possible. For more than a year has been going on the agony of the employees of this media outlet, as their status, the financial problems (salaries haven't been paid for months), technical capacity and other problems still haven't been resolved.

Together with enormous delays regarding adoption of the Law on RTRS, the government from the very beginning chose an option to cut the funds from the budget dedicated to public informing. The amount of 5 millions in the year 2000 was cut to 3 millions for the last year and then to 2 millions allocated to this year. Tightening of the belt (some say of the hang rope) is contrary to the publicly proclaimed care for survival of "one symbol of Republika Srpska", as it may be often heard from the ruling coalition.

The public knew about the misunderstandings with OHR for more than a year which was served to the public as a reason for delay. When the Government finally, in the year of Parliamentary elections, "heroically" went out with its version of Draft law on RTRS, notwithstanding the disagreements with the OHR, it became obvious that the major difference was about the definition of the "public service". In other words, how should it look like and who should elect the steering board of that public service? Both proposals agree only on one matter: that the future steering board should have nine members. The differences showed up when it came to appointments. OHR considers that it is sufficient that the Assembly appoints four members, and that the rest are appointed by journalist associations, Union, University, private undertakers and Bar Association.

Still, Government believes that all the members should be exclusively be appointed by the Assembly, which in practice means that the ruling Assembly majority while the aforementioned associations and communities may appear only as proposers. It does not take too much brains to conclude that from this instance begins the line of political or party influence on the "final product" of this important media house, that is being seriously counted on by the ruling three-member coalition. It is also not a secret that there is dissatisfaction in the ruling majority and with it also the pressures for change in editorial policy of RTRS.

If this law is adopted, in the form the Government proposed, it is more than clear that it would bring an end to the accomplished level of editorial autonomy of this media house, which was more a result of the efforts of its employees than a result of this or that government will. From this instance to the party journalism and perception of journalists as a socio-political worker is a short path that will be crossed by the ruling majority (SDS, PDP and SPRS) easily before the public, "covered" by the vigorous opposing by OHR and so-called protection of national

interests, which are not actually threatened by anyone.

If the RTRS workers even have the freedom to choose, the range of possibilities is sure not wide, but the decision is hard: sacrificing of the accomplished level of professionalism and independence for more secure material state. According to the headlines from the Government, money will be available, but only after the law is adopted and after the beginning of its implementation. Financial worn out RTRS workers will solve this dilemma the way they have to?

And what about the democratic reforms? After the unhidden ambitions of the authorities in RS to establish the political reform over the judiciary, University and other fields of public life, whose realization already started, disciplining of media comes as a side activity. Good old socialism is banging on our door harder and harder. Does anyone know when the "stafeta" will happen this year?

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- AID and SIS (two parallel intelligence services in the BiH Federation) to be abolished

Dnevni Avaz

- BiH Mission in New York: A BiH diplomat (Darko Trifunovic) loses the BiH citizenship status

Jutarnje Novine

- Representatives of the Trade Unions meet with BiH Presidency: Unstable social peace

Glas Srpski

- Nova Banjalucka Banka (The New Banja Luka Bank): More credits, lower interests
- Risto Jugovic assassinated

Nezavisne Novine

- Director of Serb Insurance Company "Jahorina", Risto Jugovic, assassinated in Pale: Who minded Risto Jugovic?
- SDS Congress: Mirko Banjac resigned all his posts
- Problems of refugees in BiH: Twice a year, they prove that they have no houses

Dnevni List

- Cardinal Kuharic: Torchbearer of Croatian freedom
- Two Croats turned themselves in to Mostar Court
- Establishment of roof Intelligence-Security Service in BiH?

Vecernji List

- Croats and Catholic Church have lost great man: Cardinal Kuharic died
- Capljina bridge, which was named after first Croatian President: Political conflict because of Tudjman's bridge