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BiH State-related Issues

Council of Ministers adopts report on CIPS: total cost of the project is 30 million KM

At Thursday's session, the BiH Council of Ministers adopted the report on CIPS (Citizens Identity Protection System)

which was prepared by a special working group of the CoM. The report notes envisages the signing of the contract with Siemens about the delivery of the system necessary for the realization of the project. "The project is still being worked at, however, it is certain that it will cost about 30 million KM, and that the new identity cards will cost 10 KM, which includes the photo as well," explained Ante Domazet, the Minister of Treasury. (All media in Federation and RS reported on this item)

Lagumdzija leaves for Iran in an official visit

The chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers and BiH foreign minister, Zlatko Lagumdzija, left for Iran on Friday at the invitation of the foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kamal Kharrazi. Lagumdzija will head the BiH delegation on a two-day visit to this country, report most Federation media. It is envisaged that Lagumdzija will have a meeting with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, First Deputy President Mohammad Reza Aref, Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi and other top officials of parliament, the Finance Ministry and Economic Chamber of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Until his departure in the early afternoon, Lagumdzija attended the meeting with the High Representative and leaders of eight ruling political parties on constitutional changes in the entities.

BiH House of Peoples passes five laws, while seven were not supported by Serb delegates

The BiH Parliament's House of Peoples on Thursday passed five laws, while the remaining seven laws that were on the agenda were not supported by Serb delegates in the House. Out of several laws earlier imposed by High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch, the House passed the law on changes and addenda to the law on customs policy and law on establishment of an institute for accreditation. Petritsch's laws on administration taxes and tariffs of administration taxes, changes and addenda to the law on administration taxes, BiH Court and BiH human rights ombudsman were rejected by Serb delegates. (All media in the Federation carry the report)

Coordination Committee for economic development meets on Thursday

Members of the Coordination committee for economic development and European integration met on Thursday in Sarajevo to discuss the activities undertaken to combat corruption and improve business environment for domestic and foreign investments, as well as the implementation of the programs run by international finance institutions and the process of integration of BiH into the European Union. The first part of the meeting, convened by Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers and BiH Foreign Minister Zlatko Lagumdzija, was also attended by the heads of the Missions of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and USAID for BiH, and U.S. Ambassador to BiH Clifford Bond, as well as the Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays. (news agencies, Dnevni Avaz and Federation Television report on this item)

Parents of returnee-children to chose preferred curriculum

Under OHR auspices, RS Education Minister Gojko Savanovic and Federation Education Minister Mujo Demirovic, on Tuesday in Banja Luka signed an Interim Agreement on the educational rights and needs of returnee children throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. The agreement is a major step forward in resolving an issue which affects families throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Agreement stipulates that all children in both Entities will be taught all general subjects on the basis of the curriculum wherever they are currently living or wherever they and their families return to live. Parents can choose which curriculum they prefer their children to follow in the "national group" of subjects – language and literature, history, geography, religious instruction, and (in primary school) the subject of nature and society. This means that parents can opt for the curriculum of the Entity or Canton where they return, or choose another curriculum. As a

matter of priority, returnee teachers will be re-hired or engaged to teach the national group of subjects to minority returnees. (Dnevni Avaz and all news agencies carry the [OHR press release](#))

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Constitutional Reform

Eight Political parties to meet with the High Representative, discuss constitutional changes

Representatives of eight ruling political parties in the Federation and the RS are to meet later today (Friday) with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, for talks about the ongoing constitutional changes in the entities. Media in the Federation note that this should be the final meeting of this sort, during which party officials from the two entities will try to reconcile their positions and reach a compromise on constitutional set up in the RS and Federation.

Parties from the Federation, including the SDP, Party for BiH, HDZ, NHI and SDA, are unanimous in demanding symmetric solutions in both entities, most notably, the introduction of the House of Peoples in the RS as the main mechanism of protection of the vital national interest. RS parties (PDP, SDS, and SNSD) strongly object to this, claiming that special council or a commission could be an adequate guardian of this interest. Other contentious issues are the definition of the vital national interests as well as the formation of the executive authority on the basis of the 1991 population census.

Although, today's should be a crucial meeting in the series of attempt to reach a satisfying solution, most political leaders are skeptical about positive results. (Most Federation media report about today's meeting)

Haris Silajdzic hold lecture in Oxford: There can be no compromise about the implementation of the CC ruling

At a lecture titled "BiH from Dayton onwards: Evolution of the International Community", the former BiH Foreign Minister, Haris Silajdzic, talked mostly about the implementation of the Constitutional Court decision on the constituent status of all peoples in BiH. He stressed that this was a historic decision, and added that it need not be further discussed, but accordingly implemented. "Here, there can be no compromise, and if the International Community makes such a step and stands on the side of those who always said "no", then we don't need it here. Bosnia does not need the International Community which will stand by the genocide," Stressed Silajdzic in Oxford.

Mirko Sarovic: There will be no House of Peoples in the RS - Excerpts of the interview with OBN Telering

I do not believe that the idea on the House of Peoples in the RS will pass, because there are not enough political parties that would support this, but there should be one special Council for the Protection of National Interests. The House of Peoples is also unnecessary in the Federation and is the crucial obstacle in the parliamentary life because many processes are being stopped in this body. The Dayton established two entities – the Federation and the RS – so if the parties in the Federation agree upon the establishment of the third entity, we in the RS will have nothing against that, but it must be in accordance with some democratic processes. We must be aware of the reality that we in the RS live in BiH, while those in Federation must understand that the RS exists with the Serb majority. The sooner we all accept this the sooner we will overcome the crisis and start solving more important matters.

RS Socialist Party on constitutional changes: three issues disputable

Member of the Main Board of the RS Socialist Party (SP RS), Miroslav Mikes expressed an opinion that public discussion over constitutional changes was brought to an end in successful way. Glas srpski quotes Mikes as saying: "There are three more disputable issues to be resolved and these are: the issue of language, defining of vital national interests and participation in power." He expressed hope that a compromise will be reached and added that an imposed constitution would not be a good solution for none: the RS, international community nor the BiH politicians. However, Nezavisne novine quote Mikes as saying that he was not so optimistic about the possible compromise on three disputable issues.

Federation

(provided by OHR Mostar)

Ante Jelavic, the unrecognized HDZ President: We shall lead HDZ even if they imprison us

With regard to the session of the HDZ Central Board that is due to take place today, Jelavic stated that he believes that there will be no big surprises and that they will once again reiterate their stands regarding the constitutional changes. Jelavic said: 'We shall stress that in case of introducing of constituency on the whole BiH territory, it will inevitably lead to certain changes and amendments of the Constitution, especially to the abolishment of discriminatory provisions, from the name of the state through the election process, provisions for the BiH Presidency, Constitutional Court, House of Peoples, and perhaps of the Council of Ministers, as well as, harmonizing of the Election Law itself.

From the speech that you delivered during the ceremony organized on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Croat National Assembly, it could be concluded that you remain on the line of advocating the third entity if certain requests are not met?

No... I believe that these constitutional changes are really the last moment to make a significant step towards the consistent federalization of BiH, no matter which option it will be: the Cantonal organization of BiH or possible three Federation units. We, people from HDZ, are not concerned whether they will chose the first or the second option. In case that ethnically cleansed RS, in which about 96% Serbs live, survives and if the Federation, that I would call an ethnic state of the Bosniak people in which over 80% of the Bosniaks live, strengthens, then it is certain that the Croats, as Mr. Tomac stated, have a full legitimacy as a constituent and sovereign people, to raise the issue of a possible establishment of the Croat Federation unit, at our request and in an atmosphere of an all-Croat consensus. However, I still believe that everything should be done to implement the decision on constituency. I am aware that there is a big obstacle with regards to this issue when Serb politicians are in question, first of all because they did not show readiness to implement the decision. It can be a big problem, indeed. However, in that case, honestly, we are expecting from the HR to impose the decision.'

With regard to the HDZ registration, Jelavic stated: 'I have reiterated many times that I, personally, and HDZ BiH, respect BiH institutions, and thus judicial institutions and their decisions. In any case, we shall harmonize the registration of our party with the decision of the Cantonal Court within a set deadline, and, probably, we shall choose a person to represent the party. It is an issue of a technical nature for us. Certainly, a few of us from the HDZ leadership will not be an obstacle for the registration of the party and its running for the elections! Also, they have to be aware of the things that I said a few days ago, and that is that we shall formally or informally lead HDZ at the next elections and win a more convincing victory, even if they imprison us. In other words there is no withdrawing from politics. '

Asked about possible cadre changes within the party Jelavic stated that nothing important will change and the party functions normally.

With regard to the Mostar University Jelavic stated that they had a working meeting with the leaders of the Cantons with a Croat majority and the representatives from the University led by Frano Ljubic its Head. Jelavic believes that this meeting will result in a more systematic and transparent financing of the Mostar University and Students' Center.

With regard to the resignation of Mostar Mayor Neven Tomic and speculations that Dragan Covic might come to his position, Jelavic stated: 'We were not thinking about a candidate for the position of Mr. Tomic. I believe that this case has not been finished yet. Mr. Tomic submitted his resignation to the Mostar City Council and it is up to this body to accept or refuse the resignation. I am really not familiar with the background of his resignation. As we can see, the problem is not in the relation between the Mayor and his former party, but there are certain problems with regard to the illegal construction in the area of the Mostar Central Zone. From this position, I would not make any conclusions whether it is about a conflict between two construction lobbies or a struggle for the Rule of Law in Mostar. In any case, the time will show what it was all about, Jelavic concludes.

Republika Srpska

Kotorsko refugees protest in front of the OHR and BiH Common Institutions Building

About 120 Kotorsko refugees held peaceful protests in front of the building of the OHR in Sarajevo and the Common Institutions building, demanding from the authorities to stop the illegal construction on socially owned land in Doboj area. Refugees say that Serb authorities in Kotorsko are not complying with the High Representative's decision about the cessation of all construction on socially-owned land.

OHR spokesman, Oleg Milisic, told ONASA, and quotes Dnevni Avaz, that the OHR will investigate the claims about continuing construction. "If this is true, we will ask Doboj authorities to comply with the decision and prevent construction," said Milisic. (Dnevni Avaz, Oslobođenje, Glas Srpski, BiH Radio 1, Federation TV, ONASA report on Kotorsko residents' demonstrations)

International Community

UN Security Council adopts resolution on BiH, commends the engagement of the High Representative

The UN Security Council on Tuesday unanimously adopted a resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina welcoming the European Union's decision to take over the UN's police training and monitoring duties, from 1 January 2003. The Council also expressed its unanimous appreciation for the achievements of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, during his nearly three years in BiH. The High Representative informed the Council on Tuesday of his intention to leave his post at the end of May. The Council endorsed the Peace Implementation Council's nomination of Paddy Ashdown as the next High Representative.

(Front page of Dnevni Avaz today – the daily's main headline, carries the full text of the press release, Slobodna Dalmacija and Vecernji List carry excerpts from the HR's UN address and the [OHR press release](#))

Paddy Ashdown visiting BiH capital

Paddy Ashdown, arrived in Sarajevo on Thursday on his first visit to BiH since being formally nominated as the next High Representative. "I am fully aware of all the tasks facing me. However, I can tell you that my job will be simple: I will work with BiH people on the building of a prosperous and stable state," Ashdown said, adding that he will keep working on the foundation set by his predecessors, in particular, Wolfgang Petritsch. He refused to speak any further to journalists gathered at the airport in Sarajevo, saying that, this time, he is here "to listen, not to talk".

In the course of the day, Ashdown met with the chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Zlatko Lagumdžija, but refused to disclose what was discussed during the talks. "I will come back when I officially assume the post of the High Representative and then I will speak about my plans and hopes for the future of BiH. However, I intend to tell that first to the people of BiH through their Parliament," said Ashdown, who came to Sarajevo directly from Zagreb, where he was discussing the ongoing constitutional changes in BiH with Croatian officials. (Ashdown's visit was very prominently covered in nearly all Federation media, print and electronic; Nezavisne Novine)

Wolfgang Petritsch visits a woman's cooperative and gives roses for March 8

Dnevni Avaz carries a front page photo of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, as visiting Zene za Zene Int. cooperative. Petritsch gave roses to all present women and expressed his support to this woman's initiative. Oslobođenje also carries a large photo on the back page and [OHR press release](#).

Brcko District

Brcko, international authorities mark second anniversary of the District

Brcko Mayor Sinisa Kisić said on Thursday that over the past two years since Brcko had been declared a district, "significant results have been achieved in the development of this area through the revitalisation of the economy, establishment of the legal system, achievement of large number of returns and creation of a democratic environment in all segments of life on the District".

Speaking at the roundtable "With the District concept to face new challenges and create prosperous future", organized jointly by the Office of the European Union, Development Agency of the Brcko District and the District government, Kisić said these results had been achieved thanks to the "partnership between the government of the Brcko District and the international organizations, led by the Office of the High Representative in BiH".

Also participating in the deliberations of this roundtable was Brcko Supervisor Henry Clarke, who stressed that for the prosperity of the District the "cooperation with the parties that represent the interests of the citizens of the District and not those of the Entities is of utmost importance".

Speaking on the economic development as a priority, the international supervisor quoted, among other things, the example of the construction of the bypass road around Brcko, as well as bringing back into full operation the Brcko port facility.

Clarke expressed his hope that Brcko "will set an example in the economic prosperity in BiH".

By the Award of the Arbitration tribunal Brcko was declared district on 5 March 1999, and on 8 March 2000, when the statutes of the Brcko District came into force, the pre-war Brcko municipality begun its existence as a separate territorial and political administrative component of BiH, a condominium of both BiH Entities.

The High Representative says Brcko experienced significant progress in past two years

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the establishment of Brcko District, expresses his satisfaction with recent progress in the District, and optimism for its continued development. Brcko District was established on 8 March 2000 by a Decision of the High Representative in accordance with the Brcko Final Arbitration Award as a single administrative unit beyond the control of the Entities and under the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

News agencies also carry the [OHR press release](#) on the Brcko District anniversary.

Editorials

Dnevni List: Daily Commentary

By Marko Markovic

Dnevni List carries an editorial by its Editor-in-Chief Marko Markovic who says that the HDZ, despite being the most powerful, financially and intellectually superior to other Croat parties, cannot regain the confidence from one year ago. Markovic says that the media writings about the rifts within the party's pinnacle are not mere speculations because nobody denied them. "It would appear that the HDZ is not on top of the situation", says Markovic.

Talking to a friend of his, a Professor at the University of Mostar, Markovic is told by the Professor that it is incomprehensible that the HDZ first promotes some of its politicians who later on in a year or two renounce the HDZ and take credits for successes and accuse the party for all sins. "Neven Tomic has become the Mostar Mayor thanks to the HDZ, but he is having troubles nowadays because he is close to the HDZ HQ", says Markovic. The author also says that Miro Grabovac Titan, a favourite of the IC and a Brigadier, is allowed to be politically active, unlike Mijo Jelic and Stanko Sopta Baja who cannot get close to politics because they are, as the explanation reads, army officers.

The topical issue these days, says Markovic, is the election of a person who is going to represent the party (HDZ) and the issue of the HDZ's indecisiveness with regards to the "return" to the House of Peoples, the issues which will be rendered by the party's Central Board. "How can they return to somewhere they had never been at? In the chamber that was never convened. The party's pinnacle said that they did not want to go to Sarajevo because Barry's election rules were the beginning of reduction of the Croats to a national minority", says Markovic. The author also says that the HoP which was supposed to have 30 Croats in it, had only 14-non-IC-controlled-Croats and that the rest were Ibrahims from Bihac and Mustafas from Foca thanks to the election engineering. "Representatives of the IC call on the HDZ to fill up, as they put it, 16 positions allocated to the Croats in the House of Peoples, and when there are signals that the HDZ could indeed return, the same IC representatives say that only 14 seats belong to the HDZ. Why bother then if you cannot fight for your people's interests within the institutions?", says Markovic, reads Dnevni List.

Vecernji List: After Mostar Mayor Tomic offered resignation: American assistance questionable for the city without a Mayor

Apart from the things that Tomic stated as the reasons of his resignation, the offered resignation has been interpreted as his political strengthening so that he can put forward his candidacy for the BiH Presidency, with a support of the American Embassy. Some people even think that it is possible that Neven Tomic will withdraw the offered resignation. If there were no turnabouts, it is up to the City Council, to which the resignation was submitted, to make a move.

Milan Jovicic, the President of the Mostar City Council, stated that the consultations with Ante Vidacak, the Vice President of the City Council, have been underway regarding the steps that should be taken. Jovicic stated: 'We have agreed a meeting of Caucuses of Mostar City Councilors and the session of the City Council will take place soon and one of the items, that we shall discuss, will be Tomic's resignation.'

Jovicic explained that simple majority of the members of the City Council is necessary for the accepting of Tomic's resignation, while two-third majority is necessary for the request on a removal. Jovicic added that they will also discuss Tomic's request for the removal of Sead Pintul, the Head of the City Urban Planning Department, who resigned meanwhile. In the press release, in which Pintul explains the reasons of his resignation, he mentioned disappointment of the American Embassy over the fact that suspicious construction permits have suspended the progress, achieved in the reconstruction of the city, and this can be interpreted as the pressure that the American Embassy exerted with regards to his resignation, while, meanwhile, the works on the disputable facility have been suspended.

If they do not resolve this issue it will be questionable whether the USA will continue to help the reconstruction of Mostar. As far as political speculations about a possible successor of Tomic are concerned, according to the information coming from back corridors of the ruling party, Mirjana Dujmovic, the current Minister of Education of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, is the most serious candidate for a hot seat.

Headlines

Vecernji List

- Andrija Hebrang, an honorary citizen of Mostar Municipalities with a Croat majority: Racan is not interested in Croats in BiH
- Ante Jelavic: We shall lead HDZ even if they imprison us
- Due to embezzlement of Money in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Criminal charges filed against Prlic and 28 diplomats

Dnevni List

- 7 years after Croat General disappeared: Minister Anic, ask General Dudakovic who killed HVO General Vlado Santic!
- Criminal charges of Federation Financial Police: Dr. Prlic and 28 diplomats accused for embezzlement of a few million of Marks

Glas srpski

- Did Macedonia extradite two Bosniacs to USA: Arrested -yes, but where are they?
- Public Security Center in Doboj: "Hurricane" is going to The Hague
- Wolfgang Petritsch approved verification of contracts for disputed apartments: Privatization to end up in denouement

Nezavisne novine

- Newly appointed High Representative in visit to BiH: Ashdown getting introduced to the terrain
- Sarajevo: Kotorako residents protested in front of OHR building

Oslobodjenje

- General Sulejman Vranj denies allegations

Dnevni Avaz

- UN Security Council adopts resolution on BiH
- Petritsch gives roses for March 8