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BiH State-related Issues

BiH Council of Ministers withdraws draft law on use of the succession money from the parliamentary procedure

Saturday's Oslobođenje reports that, at its session in Sarajevo on Friday, the BiH House of Representatives did not discuss the new draft law on the use of the succession money prepared by the BiH Council of Ministers. The Council withdrew the draft from the parliamentary procedure due to an initiative of a deputy to the BiH House of Peoples, Ivo Divkovic. Divkovic initiated an immediate holding of the House's session and consideration of one other amended draft law on the issue, which might help overcoming of the current situation. According to BiH Treasury Minister Anto Domazet, the Council supports an approach that the House of Peoples adopts the law first. Domazet said that Divkovic essentially proposed the same changes as did the Council of Ministers.

Zubak says 76,000 minority returns realized in the first ten months of the year

BiH Minister for Human Rights and Refugees and Chairman of the State Commission for the Refugees and Displaced Persons Kresimir Zubak told journalists in Sarajevo on Friday that approximately 76,000 minority returns had been realized in the first ten months of the year, with 64,000 persons returned to the Federation and the rest returned to the Republika Srpska. According to weekend edition of Jutarnje Novine, Zubak also expressed his satisfaction with the 80-percent realization of the property claims in the course of the year.

Krizanovic responds to Kadic

Chairman of the BiH Presidency Jozo Krizanovic responded to LDS BiH leader Rasim Kadic's letter in which he had criticized him for taking part in the BiH 2001 Sportsman of the Year Contest organized by the Banja Luka daily Nezavisne Novine. According to Saturday's Oslobođenje, Kadic said that this contest negated the state of BiH continuity because it claimed to be the first event of this kind organized in BiH. However, in his response, Krizanovic said that he had accepted to be part of the event with pleasure, since he believed it was contributing to strengthening of the country through re-establishment of the confidence and tolerance among its peoples.

Vecernji List: Poll - Personality of the Year

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Vecernji List is launching an opinion poll for the Personality of the Year in 2001. The telephone number for citizens who wish to vote, will be published on 2 January and the final results will be published in the paper's edition of 8 January. The list of candidates contains 20 names, and the candidates are: Dr. Zdenko Herceg (Herzegovinian scientist who discovered a cancer-countering gene in Paris), Zlatko Lagumdžija (Chairman of the Council of Ministers and, by many evaluations, the most powerful politician in BiH), Desnica Radivojevic (Srebrenica Mayor, Bosniaks nominated him for the Personality of the Year for advocating returns of Srebrenica citizens), Toby Robinson (the Provisional Administrator of Hercegovacka Banka), the Kupreskics, Fra Jozo Zovko (a Franciscan priest, Medjugorje parson of the first days of Virgin Mary's apparition), Mladen Ivanic (RS Prime Minister, whose mandate has seen the strongest requests for abolishment of the RS), Danis Tanovic (BiH film director considered the major European contender for Oscar award), the High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch (the daily says the

most powerful man in BiH, who creates life with his decisions), Zeljko Obradovic (described as the Mayor of Stolac who made the international officials admit that there is a very positive trend ongoing in the town), Hasan Salihamidzic (a player of Bayern), Ante Jelavic (whom the daily describes as the HDZ and HNS President who left the position of Croat presidency Member and established Croat self-rule), Mehmed Ahmic (a Bosniak from Ahmici who kept saying that the Kupreskics had nothing to do with the Ahmici crime), Izet Sarajlic (a famous writer from Sarajevo), Mijo Anic (the Federation Minister for Defense who introduced pork in the army menu), Mijo Brajkovic (the Director of the Aluminij, the economic giant that he raised from the dust), Zeljko Kopanja (the owner of the Banjaluka-based Nezavisne Novine whose editorial policy differs from the current policy in the RS), Mirko Banjac (SDS President, a radical who ousted Karadzic and Krajisnik from the party), Muhamed Mesanovic (a secondary school student from Tuzla who speaks 12 languages) and Sefer Halilovic (Minister charged with war crimes against Croats, on a pre-trial release).

Federation

SDA says change of the state and entities' Constitutions necessary

SDA President Sulejman Tihic addressed the party's New Year press conference in Sarajevo on Saturday. He emphasized that SDA would advocate for the abolishment of the entities if the obstructions of the Serb political parties to the functioning of the BiH state institutions continue, as well as if they continue supporting RS as an entity of the Serb people exclusively. According to Sunday's Dnevni Avaz, Tihic said that the party would request change of the BiH and entity Constitutions because it was obvious the state and the entities organized in such a way could not function. He emphasized that SDA saw BiH as a de-centralized state of multi-ethnic regions with or without entities depending on how persistently the BiH Constitutional Court's decision on the equal constitutional status of all three peoples throughout the country would be implemented. Commenting on the results of the Alliance for Change work, Tihic said that it had not fulfilled pre-election promises. He also criticized the performance of the international community saying that the time has come for the international organizations to use their mandate and take over the role of a responsible factor instead of irresponsible protector. Tihic informed journalists that SDA Honorary President Alija Izetbegovic had left for Saudi Arabia for medical treatment due to certain health problems.

Vecernji List: Interview with Sulejman Tihic, the President of the SDA BiH

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Vecernji List carries an interview with the SDA BiH President, Sulejman Tihic. In answer to the question as to whether the SDA initiative of restoring the name 'republic' might be understood as an act of advocating a unitary BiH, Tihic said it is a reasonable danger, but the restoration of the name 'republic' also means abolishing of the name Republic of Srpska. Tihic says their advocating of a unitary BiH is out of the question because they are aware of possible consequences. In his words, the RS can survive in the future only in the form of a multi-ethnic entity where all peoples will be equal.

In his opinion, the Alliance is doing nothing because they think all of Bosnia is Sarajevo. He thinks it would be logical for the SDA to return to power. He expects the SDA will grow stronger and the ratings of the SDP and other Alliance parties will drop.

In answer to the question about possible implicit agreements for destruction of the Alliance between the SDA and the HDZ, Tihic said: "Believe me that there have been no agreements, nor have there been any official contacts between the SDA and the HDZ and I have no need to justify the fact that we sometimes vote the same way the HDZ members do."

BPS requests that Sefer Halilovic re-assumes ministerial duties

A source close to the BiH Patriotic Party (BPS) told Saturday's Oslobođenje that retired BiH Army General Sefer Halilovic would appear in his office of the BiH Federation Minister for Social Welfare, Refugees and Displaced Persons on January 3. Halilovic was indicted for war crimes by The Hague Tribunal but temporary released from custody until the beginning of his trial. "General Halilovic and Federation Prime Minister Alija Behmen agreed that Halilovic be on vacation until the date," the source said. According to the source, only after Halilovic's return to the office his future status in the Federation Government will be resolved. "The BPS fully supports Halilovic's re-assumption of the ministerial duties," the source emphasized.

Jelavic announces HDZ will participate in the next elections in the framework of a Croat political block

The dismissed HDZ BiH President, Ante Jelavic, told ONASA that the HDZ would participate in the next elections in the framework of a Croat political block, which is most likely to be titled the Croat National Assembly (HNS). According to Saturday's Dnevni Avaz, Jelavic emphasized that the HDZ, as the strongest Croat political party in BiH, would certainly take part in the elections if "someone does not prevent it from registration."

Slobodna Dalmacija: Politicians' wishes for New Year

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Ante Jelavic, (unrecognized) President of the HDZ BiH, expects 2002 not to be a year of humiliation of Croats as this year has been. "We want Croats to be a constituent and sovereign people in a sovereign BiH. Therefore, I expect that the Constitutional Court Decision on the Constituency of Peoples be finally implemented and that constitutional reforms ensure a realistic constitutional equality for Croats in BiH. Since the general elections will be held in the year of 2002, I expect yet another victory for the HDZ BiH, even more so for the fact that we are coming up with a clear economic and social program. If we run in the elections as a part of the Croat political block, our victory will be even more convincing," said Jelavic.

Neven Tomic, the Mayor of Mostar, hopes the year of 2002 will be marked with further building of city institutions and expects the Federation and Cantonal Governments to make the necessary steps and pass the necessary laws to this end. He also expects the city infrastructure will be built up through the realization of the infrastructure projects with the help from the International Community and the domestic authorities. He also expects to see the first results of the privatization process, i.e. the arrival of the strategic partners. Tomic hopes that the citizens will be enabled to repossess their property and that the city authorities will be able to help those whose property was devastated.

Mijo Anic, the Federation Minister for Defense, wishes all members of the Federation Army the best of luck as 10,000 of them will really need it because the Army components will be reduced. Anic says he will see to it that the reduction process be as painless as possible.

Kresimir Zubak, the BiH Minister for Human Rights and Refugees, expects the number of returns will rise to 800,000 of the total number of 2 million refugees. He also expects a larger scale of Croat returns to the RS as a significant number of Bosniaks have already returned, and in this respect, he expects assistance from the International Community.

Dnevni List: Croat National Assembly (HNS) addresses Croat people home and away

(provided by OHR Mostar)

Croat National Assembly addressed the Croat people home and away using the same rhetoric as before saying that

in the year 2001, the Croat people have been deprived of their rights and got humiliated (...) “We wish that 2002 not be like 2001 but to be a year of our rise and affirmation of ideas we advocate for, which won’t be detrimental for any other people or citizens of BiH. We feel righteous before the God and before people because of our ideas. We shall not allow abolishment of the HVO as long as there is the Army of the Republic of Srpska. The rigged processes cannot lead into a better and more righteous future”, reads the HNS address adding that they would have acted the way they did if the same scenario repeated all over again i.e. they would have established the HNS and enact the Travnik Declaration and the Mostar Platform, reads Dnevni List.

Dnevni List: Interview with Stipe Maric, man from “the pillar of shame of Hercegovacka Banka”

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List carries an interview with Stipe Maric, former Head of Mostar’s Municipality South-West and one 112 persons who have according to Toby Robinson’s report submitted to Mijo Anic taken preferential loans. Regarding the “generals’ loans”, Maric says that in his case it is a lie aimed at discrediting him as a person adding that that was not the first time he was attacked ever since he was removed from the position of the Head of Municipality South-West two years ago. On the other hand, Maric admitted to have taken a loan from the Hercegovacka Banka, but in his own words that loan is a commercial one (did not want to mention the amount) with a 12% interest rate attached to it adding that he had been paying back the loan until the raid into bank promising that he would continue doing so when everything is back to normal. When questioned whether he was a member of the removed management of the Hercegovacka Banka Maric says: “I was not a member of the Hercegovacka Banka management. The truth is that I was a member of the Management, but I do not know who has appointed me a member of the bank’s management, neither I know who has removed me from the position (?)”. Stipe Maric also admitted that he has taken a loan from the Hercegovina Osiguranje, where he works as an executive, saying that that is normal practice in other companies and that he would pay it back (...) Maric concluded the interview by saying that there were three (Croat) political lobbies in BiH. The first one gathered around Postanska Banka, which is being run by (Jadranko) Prlic and (Neven) Tomic, who have control over infrastructure that deals with oil business, construction companies etc. The second is the Zubak-Stojic one, around the Dubrovacka Banka and the infrastructure they had, also being involved in the oil business. “The third lobby, conditionally speaking, is the lobby around the Hercegovacka Banka that is allegedly being run by the HDZ. You do not have to be really smart to conclude that if you want to run certain politics that you need concrete logistics. If the IC does not hide its intention aimed at destroying the HDZ, it is normal that they would go against its financial source. Taking into consideration the fact that 80% of the BiH Croats support the HDZ, the attack on the bank represents the attack on the economic system of the BiH Croats. Apart from the political motive, one can talk about the desire to decrease the competition in BiH. It soon showed that the one who struck on the Hercegovacka Banka brought people from Austria to buy out Postanska Banka and to establish Hypo and Reiffeisenbank”, said Stipe Maric, reads Dnevni List.

Dnevni List: Political reality in Stolac

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List reports that a Bosniak councilor in the Municipal Council of Stolac said: “We will be implementing democracy in Stolac once we reduce the Croat nation to a minority.” Then he “bit his tongue” and claimed he was just joking. Regardless of whether he was joking or not, one can conclude on the basis of the realistic situation that the essence of the political and general activity of Bosniak representatives in Stolac could be reduced to the aforementioned statement. This is also evident in the sessions of the Stolac Municipal Council which are never brought to a close and which resemble a discussion of deaf persons.

Striking is also the fact that the six Bosniak councilors (five of the Coalition, one of the SDP) of the 17 Municipal councilors, regularly come up with big requests that they would not give up in spite of numerous breaks and staged consultations. On the contrary, as sessions go on, their “appetite for a piece of the power cake” only grows bigger and more insatiable, although they have no right to it, says the daily.

Bosniak councilors Suad Sefo and Ramiza Boskailo are particularly outstanding in this regard, whereas the newly

appointed President of the Municipal Council, Zoran Turkovic, often stuttering and having difficulties in trying to complete a sentence, plays the role of Don Quixote, fighting windmills, while the party representatives are sitting aside resembling the character of Sancho Pansa.

An especially controversial character in the political reality of Stolac is Suad Sefo, the Head of the Municipal Department for Economy who, in the 'Dileme' show of the Sarajevo Television that pretentiously calls itself Federation TV, was saying all the worst about his Croat neighbors, using much too strong words. At the last session, the wolf turned into a lamb and the named "gentleman" was all humble and said that gaps and "ditches" between Croats and Bosniaks in Stolac are still too deep, stressing, on that occasion, that they expect a gesture of good will and attention from the Croat side and requesting that the hatches be buried so the life can go on.

The daily also says that Sefo put forward an ultimatum request for the President of the Municipal Election Commission to be a Bosniak.

PTT BiH to divide its operations as of January 1

Saturday Oslobođenje reports that, as of January 1, the ten years old PTT BiH Public Enterprise will divide its work on the postal and telecommunications services. According to a decision on the issue made by the BiH Federation Government last Thursday, the Enterprise will transform into the two completely new companies: BiH Post Office and BiH Telecom.

Republika Srpska

Kalinic's bodyguard raises gun at Sulejman Tihic

According to Saturday's Oslobođenje, a bodyguard of Republika Srpska National Assembly Speaker Dragan Kalinic raised gun at the Assembly's Deputy Speaker and SDA BiH President, Sulejman Tihic, during a recess of the Thursday's parliamentary session, which was discussing the amendments to the RS Constitution. A few Bosniak deputies say that the bodyguard said he had two bullets in his gun out of which one was reserved for Tihic. Escorted by the RS and BiH Federation policemen, Tihic returned to Sarajevo on Friday. He told Oslobođenje that he had informed Kalinic about the incident. However, Spokesman for the RS Interior Ministry Zoran Glusac told Fena news agency on Saturday that the entity police had not been informed about an alleged attempt attack against Tihic, neither its members had escorted Tihic through the RS territory on his return to Sarajevo. According to Tihic, Adil Osmanovic, the deputy to the RS National Assembly, informed Kalinic, Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic and representatives of all political parties about the gun threat at the session of the Collegium on Thursday. But, in a statement with the Sunday's Dnevni Avaz, Head of the SDP/NHI caucus in the RS parliament Zekerijah Osmic denied that Tihic or anyone else had informed the Collegium about the alleged incident. "This represents an unnecessary spreading of fear in time when the discussion is underway on the amendments to the RS Constitution, that should ensure the equality of Bosniaks in the entity," Osmic said.

Ivanic even not thinking about abolishment of RS

Republika Srpska Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic told Banja Luka Alternative Television late on Thursday that one should not take seriously allegations about the abolishment of RS. "There will be certain changes, which must be made as a product of the time and circumstances, but there will be no strategic changes in terms of the RS abolishment," Ivanic emphasized, according to Saturday's Oslobođenje. He said that the RS would exist all until the people believe it should exist.

Sarovic says recent Silajdzic's visit to the United States was aimed at abolishment of RS

According to Sunday's *Oslobodjenje*, Republika Srpska President Mirko Sarovic told RT RS late on Friday that lobbying for the abolishment of the RS had been the only aim of the Party for BiH founder Haris Silajdzic's recent visit to the United States. Commenting on the constitutional reforms in the entity, Sarovic said that nothing spectacular would happen neither the RS would change in a way some wish by the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court's decision on the equal constitutional status of all three peoples throughout the country. Speaking on his recent meeting with High representative Wolfgang Petritsch, Sarovic said that he had reiterated to Petritsch Serbs had accepted BiH only because they get RS.

SNSD requests Kalinic and Tihic to reveal names of people who are changing the RS Constitution

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Weekend edition of *Nezavisne Novine* carries a press release, issued by the Party of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), which states that the SNSD requests RS National Assembly Speaker, Dragan Kalinic and Deputy RS NA Speaker, Sulejman Tihic to inform the RS public on identity of persons who are trying to change the RS Constitution behind the closed door. Deputy RS NA Speaker and President of SDA, Sulejman Tihic admitted himself that the discussion at the RS NA session was only a show for public and that views of both sides are not so opposite and that the solution will be found by two or three persons. By justifying the unconstitutional and illegal decision of the RS NA to forward all materials, regarding the BiH Constitutional Court ruling on constituent status of all three peoples, for public discussion Tihic definitely unmasked the SDA-SDS coalition, which worked together on adoption of the amendments to the RS Constitution.

Kalinic says protection of entities means protection of BiH

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Monday's edition of *Glas Srpski* quotes RS National Assembly Speaker, Dragan Kalinic, as saying that BiH can only stay calm and stable if the needs of its entities and joint institutions are taken care of at all times, even in the event that its internal structure should change. "The RS wished to present its new, democratic face as a free country which asks as much freedom as it is willing to offer to the other two peoples," added Kalinic at the constitutive meeting of the Trebinje SDS municipal assembly. He expressed the expectation that no double standards would be adopted in that respect. Kalinic demanded that all peoples, in the RS as well as in the whole of BiH, be treated equally. He added that ahead of the forthcoming elections particular care needed to be taken that the best representatives from the RS be elected to the joint bodies and institutions of BiH, since that was where the interests of the RS had to be defended. By preserving the SDS as the "strongest and most vigorous party in the RS" the interests of the RS and the Serb people were protected, said Kalinic. The SDS's new Trebinje municipal committee, numbering 34 members, has also been elected at today's assembly meeting.

Petritsch to arbitrate in deciding on the amount of budgetary funds to be allocate for supporting return to the RS

Republika Srpska Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic told journalists following the Friday session of the RS National Assembly that the talks had failed with the Bosniak members of the entity Constitutional Commission on the part of the draft Budget for the next year related to the financial support to refugees and returnees. According to Saturday's *Dnevni Avaz*, Ivanic said that the High representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, would therefore be called to arbitrate in this dispute. Since the Bosniak members of the Constitutional Commission vetoed the adoption of the Budget, the RS Parliament on Friday passed a decision on the entity's temporary financing.

RS Prime Minister comments on Bosniaks' veto on proposed budget

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Weekend edition of Glas Srpski quotes Republika Srpska Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, as saying that the decision of Bosniak members of the RS National Assembly's Constitutional Commission, who are members of the SDA and SBiH, has nothing to do with concern for returnees. "It is more likely that they are interested in creating a chaos in the RS. We have tried to explain that out of 21.2 million KM that is earmarked for refugees, DPs and returnees, that half is earmarked for disbanding of collective centers and alternative accommodation and the other half is for returnees. Out of 10.6 million KM, 6 million KM is earmarked for return of Croats and Bosniaks to the RS, and 4.6 million KM for Serb returnees to the Federation. As a compromise solution, the RS Government proposed additional 4 million KM to be allocated for returns of Croats and Bosniaks to the RS. Bosniak members of the RS NA Commission did not recognize the funds that we spent on returns of Serbs to the Federation, using as an excuse that obligations towards returnees have not been met during this year", said Ivanic. Due to such decision of SDA and SBiH members of the RS NA Constitutional Commission, the Prime Minister dismisses the possibility of reaching the compromise. According to him, the negotiations about the funds for returns to the RS will go back to their starting point, that is 5.3 million KM. "We had to forward the proposed budget to the OHR for further arbitration. I do not believe that he will be of the opinion that this is about jeopardizing of vital national interests", said Ivanic.

Representative of the Party for BiH Dzevad Osmancevic said the RS Government had no courage to admit the mistake due to which the 2002 budget proposal had not been adopted. He pointed out that in the last two years only KM1.3m had been spent on the return, although the last year's budget had provided for that purpose a sum of KM5m, and in this year a sum of KM7m. "It is discrimination against a population faced with difficult and complex situation," Osmancevic concluded.

Representative of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) Dusan Stojcic said that the Bosniak parliamentarians can exercise their right to veto, but that it "is not good that such a major, primarily economic issue, is treated as primarily political issue and to block in a way the work of the Parliament in passing this most important act - the budget - that under the current regulations needs to be passed by the end of the year".

Representative of the Party of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) Krstan Simic said that the party's parliamentarians voted for the decision on provisional financing, because they are still acting as a constructive opposition within the Parliament. He stressed that failure to adopt the decision on provisional financing would have blocked the institutions of the RS, adding that the 2002 budget should be adopted as soon as possible.

The Washington Times: Displacement continues long after guns went silent

"Since the war ended, perhaps the biggest task for international and Bosnian authorities is to help people move back into their own homes. Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs fled en masse from areas where they were minorities. But for one family to regain its home usually means kicking out another family of a different ethnic group. And its original home is also usually being lived in, and so on. "And eventually, there's always someone at the end of this chain whose house was destroyed," said a foreign official in Banja Luka. As a result, only about 37 percent of the roughly quarter-million or so people who want to return to their pre-war homes in Bosnia have been able to do so. The figures are especially low in the Republika Srpska, where only 27 percent of displaced people have returned. Part of that is due to the fact that Croatian Serbs face enormous obstacles to getting their homes back. But much of the blame, many of those working on refugee issues say, belongs to Republika Srpska itself," said the [article](#) in the Sunday's Washington Times carried by the BiH electronic media and Oslobodjenje.

An SPRS source says serious reshuffle of the RS political scene after February 22 - SPRS will stop supporting Ivanic

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Weekend edition of Nezavisne Novine quotes an anonymous source close to the Socialist party of the RS (SPRS), as

saying that the SPRS will stop supporting the RS Government because it (SPRS) is dissatisfied with the work of RS Prime Minister, Milan Ivanic. The same source also says that the SPRS has decided to make this move because the RS Government has not fulfilled the promises it made when they took power. "Ivanic did not gathered experts as he promised. His ministers displayed extreme ineptness. At RS government sessions they promise they will do something but they never do", said the source. The source also says that the SPRS is satisfied with work of only two ministers – Petar Kunic (RS Minister of local administration and self-governance) and Branko Dokic (RS Minister of traffic and communications). The source tells that serious reshuffle of the RS political scene can be expected after the February 22nd, when the SPRS congress is taking place. "Serious changes are expected to happen at the SPRS congress. Tihomir Gligoric and Petar Djakic are mentioned as persons who could take Radisic's place, while vast majority of SPRS members does not want to see Dragutin Illic in their ranks. The SDS will also turn its back to the Prime Minister after February 22nd. The Prime Minister is hoping that the SDS will support his candidacy for the BiH Presidency. The SDS will jump out of that train and distance itself from the bad results that this government has achieved so far. They (SDS) will probably say that they have never been in that government and that Ivanic himself said on several occasions that all ministers in his government are experts. The SDS does not want to put at risk the results they might achieve at the next elections", said the source.

Serb Orthodox leader says human rights violated in Federation

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Both Banja Luka dailies report that Head of the Serb Orthodox religious community in BiH Metropolitan Dabrobosanki Nikolaj on Sunday rejected calls for his Orthodox Christmas greetings to be broadcast via the media. At the same time, the metropolitanate and the archiepiscopate of the Serb Orthodox Church issued a statement in which they explained why they did not want the central Christmas sermon by the metropolitanate to be broadcast live by the media. The metropolitanate states that the Orthodox Church does not want to be a part of the media's portrayal of an untrue image of multiethnicity and that the Serb Orthodox Church has been consistently discredited by the media. "Many times in the past we have experienced and are still experiencing various attacks on the Serb Orthodox Church in the BiH Federation. Sadly, nothing has changed so far. That is why, not wanting to bear historic responsibility towards our believers, we can say that after the signing of the Dayton peace accord we have had our churches destroyed or damaged, our cemeteries desecrated, our priests and believers physically abused and maltreated and our property destroyed. We have tried to talk to legitimate representatives of the authorities in the Federation, demanding that they return to us at least that part of our property which has not been nationalized (confiscated after the WWII). We have also appealed to international organizations but received no reply. The Office of the High Representative, although briefed about this issue, has not used the powers it has in BiH. With the last ounces of strength we are trying to keep, our real Serb Orthodox Serb returnees – but even we ourselves have been thinking about leaving the BiH Federation together with Metropolitan Dabrobosanski Nikolaj as we cannot exercise the minimum of our basic human rights", reads the press release.

RS Prime Minister's Advisor for cooperation with the ICTY says Pandurevic in The Hague in January

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Monday's edition of Nezavisne Novine quotes RS Prime Minister's Advisor for cooperation with the ICTY, Sinisa Djordjevic, as saying that after the January 5th it will be definitely known whether former general of the RS Army, Vinko Pandurevic, indicted by the ICTY, will voluntarily turn himself in to the ICTY or not. Djordjevic told "Nezavisne novine" that he does not know who Pandurevic's attorneys are, but added that there is a possibility that Pandurevic voluntarily turns himself in. "I have not spoken with his attorneys and I do not know who they are", said Djordjevic and added: "We have received an information from some persons who are in touch with Pandurevic's defense team that after the January 5th it will be known whether Pandurevic is going to voluntarily turn himself in or not". That is all I know. Djordjevic refused to name his contacts.

International Community

Petritsch says BiH is on the road to becoming a normal European state

“Bosnia and Herzegovina is on the road to becoming a normal European state. The upcoming elections in 2002 should bring about a consolidation of the democratic and progressive forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Let us move forward on this road and with confidence into the New Year,” said the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, in his New Year’s message to the BiH citizens. (Press release carried in full by Dnevni Avaz, Jutarnje Novine, Dnevni List, Vecernji List, Slobodna Dalmacija, Jutarnji List and news agencies)

Petritsch warns Lagumdžija that the restitution must not jeopardize BiH’s economy

According to Sunday’s Dnevni Avaz, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, sent a letter to Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers Zlatko Lagumdžija warning him that the process of the restitution had not to produce negative consequences for the economic stability of anyway weak economy in the country. Petritsch reminded Lagumdžija that the compensation to all those having right to it had to be ensured as well. “The current draft law on the issue is basically failed, and although it says that financial means for its implementation will be needed, their amount has not mentioned at all,” Petritsch emphasized.

Petritsch assesses the Balkans still far away from the EU membership

According to the Monday’s Oslobođenje, High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch said in an interview with the Sunday’s issue of the Vienna daily Kurier that the people of the Balkans were still far away from the European Union membership. However, he emphasized, the linking with the common European currency euro would make them feel as Europeans. Petritsch assessed that many reforms were being carried out too slow in the region because the people did not have concrete perspectives.

Manfred Dauster declared the Person of the Year in Dnevni Avaz poll

In a traditional Dnevni Avaz New year’s poll, Head of the OHR Anti-corruption Team Manfred Dauster was together with BiH central Bank Governor Peter Nicholl declared the Person of the Year in the category of internationals. In the explanation of the declaration, the daily said that Dauster completely fulfilled his mandate significantly contributing to the country-wide fight against corruption.