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BiH State-related State

Council of Ministers: If the OHR does not annul tenders for GSM and Siemens, it assumes all responsibility

The BiH Council of Ministers asked yesterday the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, to annul the tender for the third GSM operator in BiH. The Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications, Svetozar Mihajlovic, said that the Council is expecting Petritsch to make his decision by the end of the month. He also said that the CoM will, after consultations with representatives of the OHR, reach a final agreement on the continuation of the CIPS (Citizens Identification Protection System) Project. "The BiH public is confused with the dispute between the International Community and the Council of Ministers over the issue of the third GSM operator," said Mihajlovic, and added that the Council does not have any intention to further discuss this issue with the CRA (Communication Regulatory

Agency), "since all discussions are useless." Commenting on the possibility that the High Representative does not annul the existing tender, Mihajlovic said that the CoM will not be responsible for the results of "this damaging business".

Mihajlovic also informed the public that the Council of Ministers will soon make its final decision about the CIPS project. "This project has not been sufficiently transparent and I believe that our working group will, in cooperation with representatives of the OHR, find a good solution, despite the fact that the OHR believes that everything has been well done thus far," explained Mihajlovic. He added that the OHR is not the sole organization responsible for the flaws in the project, but also other institutions which have been involved in the CIPS, in particular the Ministry of Civil Affairs and Communications.

US Ambassador Thomas Miller: Decision on GSM should be made by local leaders

The US Ambassador in BiH, Thomas Miller, said that a number of questions have been opened about the tender for the third GSM operator in BiH, and stressed that he and his government would like to get answers to them.

Commenting on the recent statement of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, that the CRA Director Jerker Torngren has full support of the International Community, Miller said that he cannot speak on behalf of the IC, but stressed that his government would like to be better informed about the entire process and get answers to some questions opened by the Council of Ministers. "I want to stress that I am a part of that International Community, and I and my government have certain questions," said Miller vaguely. He stressed that the present CoM includes a number of very responsible individuals, who are trying to establish a partnership relations with the International Community, a relations in which their views will be taken seriously and considered not only after something happens, but before certain decisions are even made. "That is the essence of everything. This is your country, and not mine. The bottom line is that you and your leadership make decisions, and not a group of representatives of the International Community. My government has a very firm attitude about this," stressed Miller. Asked if some ambassadors in BiH requested Torngren's dismissal, Miller said that he could not speak on behalf of other ambassadors. "What I can say in the name of my government is that we want to be witnesses of a fair and transparent process which will not raise so many issues," said Miller at the end.

CRA's Jerker Torngren: Not even Petritsch could annul the tender!

In a short statement for Oslobodjenje, the director of the CRA, Jerker Torngren, said that only the Communication Regulatory Agency could annul the tender for the third GSM operator in BiH. Torngren stressed that he would like to continue discussions with the Council of Ministers, but this time he implied that other companies could take part in the continuation of the competition. "I still have not heard any argument as to why this tender needs to be annulled," said Torngren. Asked if the US company Western Wireless could provide sufficient arguments, Torngren said that this company had as much information as all other bidders.

"This company thought that it would, if it wins, have responsibility for the Eronet, which is not true. The winner would take over Eronet's users, and if Eronet allows, its infrastructure," said Torngren and added that he could not answer to all WW questions because he did not have adequate information. He stressed that he regrets that this company could not offer its bid, but added that he was concerned about the fact that WW was not ready to takeover the infrastructure of the Eronet. "The CRA was responsible for protecting the property of this company." Torngren also said that current bidders offered investments worth from 300-400 million KM, but he could not disclose any further details.

Mirza Hajric: Slavo Kukic is biggest demagogue and, together with Shearer, he will destroy the TV BiH

In an interview with Oslobodjenje, an Aide to the Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency and a member of the (Presidency) three-man working group in charge of the transformation process of the RTV BiH, Mirza Hajric, said that the general situation in this media house is catastrophic, but not because of the present political situation. "The most responsible for this state are Slavo Kukic, the president of the Fed TV Council and John Shearer, the High Representative's Broadcasting Agent," said Hajric. He said that the Presidency formed a working group to evaluate the transformation process in the institution which is to complete a comprehensive report on this issue by the end of August. "The state at the TV BiH is chaotic. Dirty political war, as Kukic calls it, has nothing to do with it, since it is him who manages business there, and not the Presidency," said Hajric. "The program is catastrophic and our report will show that."

Republican Party: TV BiH has remained a partisan television

The president of the Republican Party BiH, Stjepan Kljucic, at today's press conference in Sarajevo warned about the alleged biased behavior of the Television BiH editorial staff.

"Such tendency was established by the war management of the TVBiH, which, in addition to having eliminated all those who did not think as the ruling party did, also removed the personnel that at least symbolized multi-ethnicity

in that TV House” – Kljucic said. According to him even today the backstage fights are going on for the domination over the Television BiH. It is interesting, Kljucic claims, that the chief protagonists of this fight are those who had ruled before and those who are in power today. Neither want the true democratization of the media. “It is necessary to say openly that it is not the foreigners who are making problems in this TV House, but home people who for years have been putting political goals before professional norms” – Kljucic concluded.

HDZ on the reconstruction of the public broadcasting system in BiH

In a statement for the press, the HDZ BiH rejected the claims of the Federation TV Council Chairman, Slavo Kucic, that this party is dissuading journalists from working in this institution. “This Petritsch’s universal Croat who fills nearly all institutional holes in which he would never get because of the will of his people, is not capable of successfully reconstructing the public broadcasting service...and is blaming our party,” said the HDZ, and added that the entire reconstruction process is developing at the detriment of the Croat people. “The (reconstruction) team is comprised of radio-television dilettantes Kucic, Shearer, Riley and others, who, in the heart of Europe, trample over basic human and collective rights and are creating a politicized information system.”

Prlic says Election Law was not a requirement for the accession of BiH to the Council of Europe

ONASA news agency reported that the President of the Forum 2000 European Movement (FEP), Jadranko Prlic, said yesterday that the election law had not been a condition for BiH’s admission into the Council of Europe and that it was set as a condition by some other organizations and certain individuals in BiH. “The adoption of the election law was on the list of conditions agreed with the Council of Europe for BiH’s admission. That was defined consequently under pressure of one organization and some local officials,” Prlic said. Had that not happened, BiH would have been a member of the Council last year, and everything would have been different, he added. “We do not think that it is not important to pass the election law, but we maintain that more than a year passed in discussions, instead of BiH becoming a member of the Council of Europe,” Prlic said.

Jozo Krizanovic: I see BiH without entities in the future

In an interview with Dnevni Avaz, the Croat member of the BiH Presidency, Jozo Krizanovic, said among other things that he sees the future BiH state without entities. “As much as it seems impossible today, I believe that we will come to a point when the citizens will ask for the abolishment of the entities,” said Krizanovic, and added that such a small state like BiH cannot handle this fragmentation of its territory.

Serb caucus in the House of Peoples asks Petritsch to stop outvoting in the House

The caucus of Serb representatives in the BiH Parliament’s House of Peoples sent a letter yesterday to the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, asking him to support them in their efforts not to “have the House of Representatives turned into a place where outvoting is the practice.” A Serb representative Dragutin Ilic said that the Alliance for Change is trying to put Serb representatives in a position where they must vote against certain legislation so that they can again say that it is the Serbs who are not accepting BiH and not meeting their obligations.

RS officials debate about common defense policy

The RS member of the BiH Presidency, Zivko Radisic, submitted to the Parliament a memorandum on the BiH defense policy, stating that it nowhere mentions a single army or a single defense ministry. “This paper is only a document on security and does not threaten the RS Army or the RS itself,” said Radisic, and added that he will use his constitutional powers in the event RS interests are threatened. RS president Mirko Sarovic said that the defense policy paper is in essence acceptable but that it needs to be emphasized that RS can in no way accept a common defense policy or army in BiH. He added that according to the Dayton accords, defense is in the jurisdiction of the Entities.

Federation

Federation government fails again to agree on payment of backlog pensions

The Federation Government on Thursday again, for the third time, postponed the decision on the payment of the late pensions and disability benefits and the deadline for the payment. Federation Prime Minister Alija Behmen said at yesterday’s session of the Federation Government in Sarajevo that the officials of the Government will later hold final talks with the representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), after which it should finally

be clear whether or not and when the late pensions will be paid. Behmen stressed that the government officials will not give up the request that a part of the late pensions and invalid benefits be paid this year. This was the second time that the Federation Government postponed the adoption of already prepared decision on when it will repay its debt towards the pensioners and disability benefits users in the entity.

Federation government to discuss sale of apartments for cash

Dnevni Avaz reports that the Federation government will in ten days decide whether socially owned apartments in the entity will be purchasable for cash, or potential buyers will still be able to use vouchers. The Federation Minister of Urban Planning, Ramiz Mehmedagic, said that the Federation government tried to persuade RS authorities to allow voucher purchase in the entity, however, this proposal was bluntly rejected. Mehmedagic expressed concern that the RS will use 150 million KM earned from the privatization of socially-owned apartments to fund construction of homes for Serbs who do not wish to return to the Federation. He said that such activity would simply freeze the results of ethnic cleansing. His view was also supported by the Federation Minister of Interior Muhamed Besic.

Commenting on the proposal to sell socially-owned apartments in the Federation for cash, OHR spokesman Oleg Milisic said that such initiative would simply result in the discrimination of returnees who have not been able purchase their apartments.

Republika Srpska

Reactions to Draft RS Law on Cooperation With ICTY

Today's edition of "Nezavisne novine" quotes ICTY Spokeswoman, Florence Hartman as saying that the RS did not have to pass the law on cooperation in order to start cooperating with the Tribunal. "Article 29 of the ICTY Statute says that the RS has the obligation to cooperate with the ICTY. We are waiting for the RS authorities to adopt the decision on cooperation with the ICTY as soon as possible. Cooperation can work even without this piece of legislation", says Hartman.

OHR Spokesman, Kevin Sullivan says that the Draft RS Law on Cooperation with the ICTY represents a public acknowledgement by the RS authorities that they must cooperate with the ICTY. "Cooperation with the ICTY is required of all BiH authorities since BiH is a member of the UN, which founded the Hague Tribunal. Like any other UN member state, BiH is obliged to cooperate with the ICTY and execute all of its orders and requests, domestic legislation notwithstanding", says Sullivan.

RS NA Speaker, Dragan Kalinic says that adoption of the Draft RS Law on Cooperation with the ICTY basically means that the RS expressed its readiness to comply with international legislation and that the Law will be finally accepted in September.

SNSD top official, Krstan Simic says that the SDS finally admitted that decision to ignore the ICTY has been completely wrong. "SDS members are now in a position to declare themselves as people who accept to extradite indicted war criminals", says Simic.

President of DSP, Nebojsa Radmanovic says that the RS Government is trying to force the RS NA and RS citizens to take responsibility for adoption of the RS Law on ICTY.

Chief of SDP BiH Caucus, Zeherijah Osmic sees adoption of the RS Law on cooperation with the ICTY as another proof that the RS Government is not going to start cooperating with the ICTY very soon. Osmic says that the Law aims to obstruct cooperation with ICTY and extradition of two main war criminals.

International Community

ICG: Even if Ivanic ordered the arrest, RS authorities would not apprehend Karadzic and Mladic

In an interview with Radio Free Europe, the president of the International Crisis Group in BiH, Mark Wheller, said that even if the RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, ordered the arrest of the indicted war criminals Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, the RS authorities would not do this. "The army and police in the RS are the creations of Mladic and Karadzic. It is irrational to expect them to start searching and arresting their founding fathers," said Wheller.

He stressed that it is the international forces in BiH, namely the SFOR, who needs to arrest the most high profile suspects in the entity, while the local authorities in the RS could start arresting the 'small fish.' Wheller explained that only after Karadzic and Mladic are arrested, the International Community can expect a genuine cooperation between the RS and The Hague Tribunal.

The High Representative meets with US Secretary -General

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, met yesterday in New York with the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the under-secretary for peace operations, Jean Marie Guehen, announced OHR spokesman Kevin Sullivan. He told reporters that Petritsch informed Annan about the improvement in the work of international organizations in BiH.

Vecernji List: Interview with Robert Beecroft, Head of OSCE Mission in BiH: We accept the partnership, but nobody needs to teach us democracy

You have recently taken over the position of the Head of the OSCE Mission in BiH. Are you already informed about the situation in this country and what would you stress out as the greatest problems in BiH?

Seven days a week I get to know the situation. As far as the problems are concerned, it is the lack of democracy and not being able to comprehend the same. Democracy is a process about giving and taking, a process of compromise and understanding that you will not be in power forever. It seems to me that the democratic game will not develop in the right way until a whole generation has been changed. There are still tendencies towards authoritarianism and there is a feeling that the authority goes from the top downwards and not the opposite. There is an opinion that the IC is opposing the democratization, that there is a tension between the IC and the ruling structure in BiH. I have been here, with breaks, since 1996 and I would say that without the IC there would not be democracy in BiH. We need not lessons in democracy. Many of us are here without families. I am one of them. We are not here on vacation.

Does that mean that you do not recognize the criticism coming from Zlatko Lagumdžija at the expense of the IC officials' behaviour?

We are here as one team. It is both a BiH and international team. I think that nothing can be achieved with those provocative statements. I believe in teamwork.

Do you think that Lagumdžija is not right when he says that some IC officials in BiH are guided by their financial interests, for example in the case of the licence for the third GSM operator?

You have to ask the people who give those statements what they actually wanted to say. I, luckily, as the Head of the OSCE Mission, am not involved in the problem. I have a clear mandate in BiH that covers four areas: democratization, the rule of law, issues of security and stability and the competence that are left in the election process. Those authorities have reduced considerably and it is obvious that we will not have to organize elections in BiH any more. As long as an election law is not passed, there will be no elections in BiH. And even when an election law is passed it will require a lot of time to organize elections.

Does the current authority in BiH cope well with democracy and if that's not the case would it cause a greater crisis in BiH?

I would not agree that there is a crisis in BiH. At the State and the Federation level we have an authority that is not exclusively based on what we call national affiliation. Even in the RS we have a Prime Minister who is not a member of the SDS. I am not a pessimist. I try to be as realistic as possible, and the reality is that a lot more has to be done. I am worried over the fact that Croatia and FRY will take the democratic path much sooner than BiH.

Do you admit that the IC has made some mistakes in BiH in the past?

This may come as a surprise to you, but the IC is not perfect.

Does that mean that you do not want to answer the question or maybe that the IC has made mistakes?

I am not avoiding the question. I think that the IC has done a big job here in difficult circumstances. The work of the IC as a whole can be positively evaluated. Look at the BiH towns, how many people of different ethnicity have returned back to their homes. It could not have happened without the IC.

Some media have published the letter of your former Head of OSCE Mostar Regional Office, Daniel Simpson, addressed to the Mostar Bishop, in which he criticizes the behaviour of the IC, even the OSCE BiH's behaviour. How do you comment his claims?

Before all, it is typical that a private letter is published in order to serve somebody's political interests. Secondly, I do not agree with Ambassador Simpson's views at all. I am simply disappointed with (the fact) how much he had gathered about the events in Herzegovina and how those events affect the whole situation in BiH. I regret he sent the letter, but he is a common citizen now and that is his personal thing.

Editorials

Oslobodjenje: A positive co-rule

By Hamza Baksic

Oslobodjenje columnist Hamza Baksic wrote that an initial phase of the international community's presence in BiH was just about to be ended. In sight is a reorganization of the international institutions and an establishment of dialogue with local authorities. Baksic writes that the period from Dayton until today has been divided in three phases, in accordance with the mandates of the three High Representatives in BiH. The first High Representative, Carl Bildt, will be remembered by BiH citizens with negative feelings, because he did not use power of his authorities. Bildt did not find a way to overcome obstructions of then Serb member of the BiH Presidency Momcilo Krajsnik. Deputy High Representative Michael Steiner was actually a star during the Bildt's mandate. He was prepared to establish all kind of constructive communication and, an idea on the partnership with local authorities was, in a way, launched precisely by Steiner. The second High Representative, Carlos Westendorp, had more authority and he achieved better results than his predecessor. But, neither Westendorp succeeded in overcoming systematic obstacles to the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. Wolfgang Petritsch was the first of the three High Representatives who arrived in BiH with his family and an obvious ambition. He showed readiness to learn more about the ordinary people and not only about the politicians. He has been making decisive moves, but he has failed to establish better relations with the American diplomats, including the outgoing US Ambassador to BiH Thomas Miller, who is certainly the most popular foreigner in BiH. However, Baksic concluded that the Petritsch's mandate had been extended, so he would be able to finish the job he had started.

Oslobodjenje: A hand of reconciliation

By Sejad Luckin

Oslobodjenje columnist Sejad Luckin wrote in the In Focus editorial that, it had probably been a coincidence, but the BiH citizens on Thursday were able to buy two newspapers, which published articles on Wolfgang Petritsch written in two different ways. In the first case, Petritsch was speaking in an interview with Sarajevo daily Dnevni Avaz about leaving the full authority and responsibility to the BiH state institutions. On the other side, the second newspaper, Sarajevo weekly Slobodna Bosna fiercely responded to Petritsch's accusations against the magazine spoken out in the TV Hayat talk-show. Slobodna Bosna also said that the Siemens company had been selected to lead the CIPS project implementation because Petritsch was closely related to one of the company's managers. According to Luckin, Petritsch is obviously in an unpleasant situation. Differently from his predecessors who were criticized due to political failures, Petritsch has to defend himself from accusations of suspicious financial arrangements. That is why he suddenly needs to overnight establish a partnership forum and include local institutions in the decision-making processes, and of course share the responsibility with them. But, whether the initiative for the forum establishment will be accepted primarily depends on Zlatko Lagumdžija, as the leader of the Alliance for Changes. He is to decide if he will accept Petritsch's hand of reconciliation and take over at least a part of Petritsch's burden.

Vecernji List: Silence is a comment to Puljic and Peric's speech in Washington

By Zoran Kresic

The testimonies of the Sarajevo Archbishop Vinko Puljic and of the Mostar Bishop Ratko Peric before the members of the US Congress' Committee for Foreign Policy which have pointed out the "undemocratic" actions of the current authority in BiH and its "protectors" from the international administration towards the BiH Croats have caused an "alarm" among the domestic authorities and especially among the international administration. Members of the Committee have addressed the objections at the expense of the "unmistakable" international administration too. The Chair of the Committee, Republican Henry Hyde assessed, after the Cardinal Puljic and Bishop Peric's address, that the international efforts have not produced a true peace and stability. He, among all, said that unlimited authorities of the international officials in BiH "were leading towards misuses and failure". It is only a part of the address carried by the Croatian press agency - HINA. Does these standpoints hint that there will be a change in the US policy in the region remains to be seen, but it is important that a Croat voice was heard in front of such a high institution which should represent a warning to the current leadership of the international administration in BiH which has even been opposed by the SDP. Our attempts to get a comment on the testimonies from the OHR on Thursday had failed. Only the leader of the HSS Ilija Simic went public. He disagreed with Bishop Peric's assessment that the Croats' will in BiH was not observed. He accused the HDZ for the difficult position of the BiH Croats, claiming that they had opposed the policy of the international administration. That sort of Simic's thinking was expected having in mind that Cardinal Puljic and Bishop Peric had told the Committee that the Croats' representatives had been elected by other peoples or in Simic's case through electoral machinations. It has to be

said that he as the leader of the HSS got 163 votes and became an MP in the Federation Parliament and later he became the Chair of the House of Peoples in the State Parliament. One has to expect further, stronger reactions to the address of the BiH Croats' prelates, especially from the Croat representatives in the Alliance, because after the Peric and Puljic's testimonies that the Croathood is implemented best near the State valet their positions have been jeopardized.