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BiH State-related Issues

Federation, RS football clubs unite into single Premier League

From the next 2002/2003 season the BiH Premier League will include 20 clubs (14 clubs from the Federation Football Association and six from the RS Football Association). Media say this is the most important decision adopted at an emergency assembly of the BiH Football Association which was held in Sarajevo on Friday. At the end of the season six clubs will be relegated and will be replaced by the top clubs from the Federation and the RS First Divisions. The unification of two associations is a result of negotiations that have lasted for the past eight years, and it represents a landmark development for BiH sport.

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, welcomed the unification of football in BiH, saying that this move opens a new chapter in the history of this sport in BiH. Click here to see [OHR press release](#).

Faruk Balijagic, Sarajevo lawyer does not support judicial reform in BiH

Vecernji List on Saturday carries an interview with Faruk Balijagic, a well-known attorney-at-law, in which talks about the current reforms to judiciary. Balijagic says that he does not believe in the current reforms to the BiH judiciary because according to him, the (High Judicial and Prosecutorial) Councils that decide on appointments of judges and prosecutors should consist of immaculate people, which is not the case now. Balijagic states that Zarko Bulic and Mate Tadic, both members of the Council, have compromising pasts. Talking about recent 11 removals/suspensions Balijagic says that the High Representative should have removed at least 50 or more judges and prosecutors because of their connections to political parties and police structures

Federation

Toby Robinson is not giving up on Eronet

Dnevni List reports that the SFOR raid into the Hercegovacka Banka (HB) has caused a direct damage to the bank, its clients and whole region amassing to 25-35 million KMs, whilst the indirect damage is estimated at 250-280 million KMs. The daily says that Ms. Toby Robinson, when she first assumed the office of the Provisional Administrator for the HB, knew little about Eronet but when she realized that Hercegovacka Banka has shares in Eronet through its subsidiaries, Ms. Robinson decided to capitalize on the shares, whilst in the same time the new management of HPT Mostar want to reclaim the property and register it into its business books. The HPT Mostar offers to buy 51% of Eronet shares from the Provisional Administrator, 3,5 million KM for the shares + 1,5 million KMs for default interest, the proposal which was turned down by Ms. Robinson because she needed 30 million KMs to revitalize HB, the money she expected to get by selling the share in Eronet.

Toby Robinson does not give up on Eronet. She goes public saying that if she gets Eronet that she would save HB, otherwise the bank would go down labeling the HPT Mostar management as the culprit if HB collapses. Knowing that Eronet is worthless without the license, Ms. Robinson offers one percent of its shares to HPT Mostar in an attempt to procure license to Eronet thus avoiding a public tender and huge costs which was turned down by the Chair of Steering Board of HPT Mostar Slavo Kukic. What Toby wants is that HPT Mostar gets the license but in the same time Kukic want her and other co-owners of Eronet to fight for the license at an international tender.

DL says that international circles in Sarajevo mention a motive behind Toby Robinson's engagement in Eronet case, the motive being the High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch preparing the ground for the Austrian Mobilkom to take over the market.

The daily goes on to say that if one takes into consideration that Eronet's monthly turnover is some 15 million KMs,

60% of which is profit, which in turn means that Eronet earns 110 million KMs a year, dynamically speaking Eronet is worth around 700 million KMs.

If HPT Mostar does not get the license which it applied for, says Dnevni List, there could be a political problem. Slavo Kukic could use that as a concrete proof that Croats do not have the same rights as Serbs and Bosniaks since Telekom of RS and BH Telekom automatically got licenses.

Silajdzic chases away Croatian state capital from BiH telecommunications

Under a title "Silajdzic chases away Croatian state capital from BiH telecommunications", Vecernji List reports that the Party for BiH has requested that talks with Republic Croatia on withdrawal of Croatian state companies from the Federation of BiH telecommunication companies be held as soon as possible. According to the party leader, Safet Halilovic, the presence of foreign state companies in telecommunication companies in Federation has a negative influence on privatisation of telecommunication sector in BiH. Halilovic also questions a role of the Deutsche Telecom, which has become a co-owner of telecommunication companies in BiH through privatisation in Croatia.

Federation Deputy PM Nikola Grabovac on Federation Financial Police

In an interview with Vecernji List, the Federation Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Nikola Grabovac, said that the restructuring of the Federation Finance Police (FFP) has taken much time announcing that a new version of the Law on Financial Police, in which the OHR took part, has been completed. Grabovac says that the new law brings new name, so instead of Financial Police, the new name would be Service for fight against fraud in BiH. What worries Minister Grabovac most is the evident parallelisms in the FFP that are, according to him, even worse than the ones in the military and intelligence services, with Croat dominance in Croat majority areas and Bosniak dominance in Bosniak majority areas. In addition to that, Grabovac believes that it is not permissible to have two Bosniak Heads of Cantonal Financial Police in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton and Central Bosnia Canton in the same time.

Republika Srpska

RS Vice president says nobody immune to prosecution for customs fraud

Nobody, including the director of the RS Customs Administration, Goran Popovic, can be immune from prosecution should the CAFAO [Customs and Fiscal Assistance Office] report prove to be true, RS Vice President Dragan Cavic said on Friday, reports the BHTV. "Should it be proved that members of the SDS abused their position in the customs administration for personal gain, they will be excluded from the party," Cavic announced. In the meantime, the RS Finance Minister, Milenko Vracar, confirmed that he had offered to resign in the wake of the announcement of the CAFAO report about alleged fraud in the RS Customs Administration. "After the CAFAO report had been presented at a government session I said that, given the circumstances, I shared responsibility for what happened although I was not personally involved. At the government session I offered to resign and asked the prime minister to acknowledge my resignation," Vracar said on Friday, however, media quote Cavic as saying that the RS government will not insist on the Finance Minister bearing his part of responsibility in the whole affair.

International Community

High Representative reaffirms International Community's commitment to education reform

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, expresses his full support for the message conveyed by Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays on Thursday at a roundtable on education reform. "The High Representative reaffirms the commitment of the OHR and the International Community to substantial and rapid reform of the BiH education system, so that teachers can teach effectively and children can learn in a creative and secure classroom environment," said OHR in a press release quoted by Oslobodjenje. (Click here to see the [OHR press release](#) and the text of the [speech](#) delivered by the Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, at a Round Table Discussion on Education held on Thursday)

Hand-over

Wolfgang Petritsch officially hands over the duties of the High Representative in BiH to Paddy Ashdown

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today officially handed over his duties to his successor, Paddy Ashdown. After the hand-over, the new High Representative addressed representatives in both chambers of the BiH Parliament and informed the BiH public about his priorities as the new High Representative. According to Julian Braithwaite, Ashdown's spokesperson, Petritsch's successor will focus his activities in BiH on securing the rule of law, eliminating the unemployment and fighting corruption. Click here to see the [speech](#) delivered before the Parliament and [OHR press release](#).

Paddy Ashdown: Crime poses greatest danger for BiH

The incoming High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, said on Friday in Vienna that the greatest danger for BiH is crime and that it is, therefore, necessary to establish the rule of law in the country. "I do not believe that BiH is threatened by a revamped ethnic conflict, however I do believe that crime is the greatest threat for this state. It was a mistake to believe that democratization will resolve all the problems after the war, and to neglect the establishment of the rule of law," Ashdown said in his Friday address to the ambassadors of the OSCE member-states in Vienna. He added that crime is a regional problem and that it should be tackled as such, that is, regionally. Ashdown, who is officially to take over as the High Representative in BiH on Monday, said that the establishment of the rule of law will be his main priority during his mandate in the country.

Paddy Ashdown to visit Banja Luka, Mostar

Dnevni List reports that the new High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will visit Banja Luka this afternoon when he will meet with the RS leaders, and then travel to Mostar on Tuesday. The daily also enumerates some of the main priorities of the new High Representative during his mandate, including the struggle against corruption.

Slobodna Dalmacija and Jutarnji List also carry similar reports and extensively quote introductory statement made on Sunday by Julian Braithwaite, Ashdown's Chief Spokesperson.

RS Vice President Cavic says he expects a dialogue with the new High Representative

The RS Vice President, Dragan Cavic, said on Friday that the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, was during his three-year mandate a “man of principle and a fair High Representative.” He emphasized that in that period, BiH has experienced a significant progress in all spheres of social life in BiH and that Petritsch had a great deal of influence of that progress. At a press conference in Banja Luka, Cavic expressed hope that Petritsch’s successor, Paddy Ashdown, will also be impartial and ready for a dialogue with all political leaders and elected officials in BiH.

Barisa Colak, acting President of the HDZ BiH, expects contacts with the new High Representative

DL on Sunday carries an interview with Barisa Colak, the acting President of HDZ BiH. Asked to give his view of Wolfgang Petritsch’s mandate in BiH, Colak says that Petritsch has left a big mark in BiH by implementing a certain policy. From that perspective, says Colak, he did good, because people who installed him would not have kept him in the office had he not been good. Colak goes on to say that Petritsch made a few mistakes stressing the constitutional changes, “the greatest injustice made against Croat people” as Colak puts it, as the biggest mistake. Questioned whether Petritsch did anything good, Colak says that there were positive moves too such as property related laws.

Asked as to what BiH peoples and citizenry could expect from the future High Representative Paddy Ashdown, the acting President of HDZ BiH says that it would be good to welcome the new HR and make his mandate as good as possible in sense of not making many mistakes from the HDZ BiH side. Colak also expects the new HR to get informed about the situation and have open talks with him and his close associates. Speaking about latest media reports that Josip Merdzo, the HDZ BiH Secretary General, is leaving the party, Colak says that he had a conversation with Merdzo who ruled out such a possibility. Finally, when questioned whether it would be him who is going to be a HDZ BiH candidate for the Croat member of the BiH Presidency, Barisa Colak says that the party bodies are yet to talk about the issue announcing that the HDZ BiH Presidency would sit on Wednesday to form a Central election HQ.

Wolfgang Petritsch’s Farewell Activities

Farewell press conference of Wolfgang Petritsch: BiH must stay the course towards Europe

The outgoing High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, said on Friday that BiH’s way to Europe will not be easy, but stressed that the country must stay the course in order to ensure that BiH joins the European integration process as soon as possible. “Peoples in BiH must never lose the vision that BiH can make it and that it can be a part of the European Union. After the war (WWII), Austria was also a country which was not wanted by its citizens. However, through strong efforts of all of us, the country slowly joined the modern European ways,” said Petritsch at his highly emotional farewell press conference on Friday. Speaking about his three-year long mandate as the High Representative in BiH, Petritsch said that he does not regret any of his moves in the past three years. “I only regret that BiH is not moving faster towards the European integration process,” he said, adding that the set of his Decisions on the judiciary in BiH will strengthen it and enable BiH to pass modern laws. (All media in BiH and Croatia carried excerpts from High Representative’s press conference)

Presidency holds farewell meeting with High Representative

Petritsch

"In the past three years in which I had the privilege and honour to work with the BiH Presidency, I can say that it has developed into a positive force which very successfully represents the full diversity of BiH and its nations," the outgoing High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, told journalists on Friday after his farewell meeting with the members of the BiH Presidency. The Presidency chairman, Beriz Belkic, said that during the working meeting on Friday, Petritsch and the members exchanged information and discussed reforms in the spheres of judiciary, state administration, police and the media. It was jointly concluded, Belkic said, that it was good and indeed important that ahead of his departure, Petritsch had completed these projects, giving them a legal framework and establishing the necessary elements and procedures in order to facilitate their continued implementation. Belkic said that he held Wolfgang Petritsch's work in high esteem, adding that he would continue to be present in some shape or form in BiH, because "whoever once tackles these projects never leaves them until the end of his life".

Presidency member Zivko Radisic stressed that "this is indeed a radically new and different BiH compared with the situation three years ago" and that "in all these changes, in that progress, Wolfgang Petritsch made a considerable contribution by doing his best to share his authority with the institutions in BiH, as well as displaying a great deal of wise patience in building a law-governed state based on our own decisions". And when that was impossible, Radisic went on to say, Petritsch was resolved and brave to do what a "modern, democratic, law-governed and stable state needed".

Jozo Krizanovic said that "the Wolfgang Petritsch period", no matter how dissatisfied we are with the situation in BiH, could be viewed as being very successful for the consolidation of BiH as a state, for the functioning of its institutions and for the series of reforms that have been initiated.

At the end of the farewell meeting, Wolfgang Petritsch thanked the BiH Presidency members for their extraordinary understanding of the – as he put it – at times almost impossible job of High Representative. (All electronic and print media, as well as news agencies reported quite prominently on the High Representative's farewell visit to the BiH Presidency)

Wolfgang Petritsch about his mandate: I managed to be objective and still keep moral standards

In a farewell interview with Oslobodjenje, the outgoing High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, said that his three year long experience working as the High Representative in BiH was the most incredible, but wonderful and intense period. "I must say that I am proud that I managed to experience all this and still keep my own opinions...to stay objective and stick to moral standards," Petritsch told Oslobodjenje, adding that he will, even after he leaves the country, closely follow the situation in BiH. "This emotional tie (to BiH) is too strong to be cut so simply."

Wolfgang Petritsch: Indicted war criminals still at large preclude faster changes in BiH

In a farewell interview with ONASA, FENA and SRNA news agencies, the outgoing High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, said that the fact that the two high profile indicted war criminals, Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, are still at large had been a great burden during his three-year long mandate in BiH and have prevented the country from moving faster toward Europe. "Some people in the country do not see that with Karadzic and Mladic at large, you cannot become part of European civilization," Petritsch said in an interview with ONASA, which was carried by Sunday's issue of Oslobodjenje. [Click here for the full text.](#)

Petritsch's Last Minute Decisions on Judiciary and PBS and reactions

Senior Deputy High Representative: New Civil Service Law will professionalise state service

Commenting on the recently imposed set of laws, including the Civil Service Law, which will strengthen democracy and the rule of law in BiH, the Senior Deputy High Representative, Matthias Sonn, said that this law will secure a professional, impartial, transparent and depoliticised civil service in the BiH institutions. In a short statement for Dnevni Avaz, Sonn explained that the Agency for Civil Service, which will be headed by Jakob Finci, will set up the new system, and select new civil servants according to their qualifications and upon recommendation of the Council of Ministers or of a single Ministry in the Council. Sonn also said that all present civil servants will have to undergo a review and reapply for their positions.

RS Government, RS President, Speaker slam Petritsch's last minutes Decisions

"The institutions of the RS will seek protection from the Council of Europe, particularly from the Human Rights Court, after the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, imposed radical Decisions [on the judiciary] in the last hours of his mandate and overstepped his competencies," the public relations bureau of the RS government said on Saturday. "The RS government is shocked by the number of Decisions imposed by High Representative to BiH," the statement said. The RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, said that Petritsch's Decisions "have undone years of efforts aimed at empowering the local politicians."

Ivanic's party, the PDP, was of a similar opinion. PDP spokesman Igor Crnadak said on Saturday that the party is surprised by the Decisions by the High Representative because, as he said, they go against his position that the BiH politicians have to assume responsibility for their country and discuss all vital issues in order to reach compromise solutions. "The PDP believes that there was no need for the Decisions to be passed in such a manner, particularly in the areas in which many things had been in procedure and about to be resolved in a normal way through the joint institutions and entity institutions," Crnadak is quoted as saying by SRNA, RTRS and Sarajevo media.

RS President Mirko Sarovic, who also criticized Petritsch's move, called for an urgent session of RS's top officials for Monday, May 27, and announced that appeals may be submitted to the RS and the BiH Constitutional Court to assess whether the imposed amendments are constitutional. Sarovic's party colleague and the speaker of the RS National Assembly, Dragan Kalinic, also slammed High Representative's Decisions in the field of judiciary, saying that they set a dangerous precedent and open the way for future amendments to the RS Constitution. Kalinic singled out the imposed provision envisaging that the RS President proposes to the RS NA candidates for the Constitutional Court upon recommendation of the High Judicial Council and the Prosecutorial Council, saying that this is an unprecedented decision. "By this provision, the decisions of the Constitutional Court, as the top judicial body in the RS, are made conditional and linked to decisions of inferior judicial bodies, such as the High Judicial Council and Prosecutorial Council," Kalinic said. Nearly all electronic media and news agencies quoted RS officials' complaints about the set of imposed Decisions by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch.

Judge challenges High Representative's Decision to dismiss him

The Hercegovina-Neretva Canton deputy justice minister and Mostar Cantonal Court judge, Davor Silic, has said that all the arguments given by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, for his Decision to dismiss Silic from the post of deputy justice minister and suspend him from the post of cantonal judge, are erroneous. Silic told a news conference in Mostar today that he would demand the protection of his rights going even as far as to the Human Rights Court in Strasbourg. Silic rejected all the charges levelled against him, adding he had not violated any law, reports FENA.

The High Representative imposes the Law on the Public Broadcasting Service

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, issued late Thursday a package of Decisions providing a legal base for the three public broadcasters of the Public Broadcasting System in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These laws, says OHR in a press release, – the Law on the Basis of the Public Broadcasting System and on the Public Broadcasting Service of BiH, the Law on Radio Television Federation BiH and the Law on Radio Television of Republika Srpska – represent a milestone in the process of restructuring the public broadcasting system in BiH, in accordance with European standards as repeatedly called for by the Peace Implementation Council. In addition, they fulfill an important requirement of the European Union Road Map. (All media in BiH report on this item). Click [here to see OHR press release](#).

EC Delegation welcomes the imposition of the Law on PBS

The Delegation of the European Commission on Friday welcomed the Decisions of the High Representative on establishing a legal framework for the Public Broadcasting System of BiH. According to an EC press release, this set of Decisions marks an important step in the process of restructuring of public broadcasters and in establishing a European model of a countrywide public service broadcasting system. (EC press release was carried by all news agencies)

Editorials

Vecernji List: About Petritsch's departure and Ashdown's arrival

Vecernji List says that Wolfgang Petritsch is leaving the position of the High Representative with better results than his predecessors Suede Karl Bildt and Spaniard Carlos Westendorp. His Slavic origin and knowledge of local languages have helped him a lot to understand mentality of people in BiH. However, even the great strategist Petritsch has made several tactical mistakes, says the daily. Tank raid into Hercegovacka Banka has brought him more harm than good, because it gathered Croats around HDZ and so far no evidences about crime in the bank that would justify the action have been presented. The article said that Petritsch had far better tactics in the RS with democratisation of Serb Democratic Party (SDS) than in the Federation BiH where he completely destroyed Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) and Party of Democratic Action (SDA). Vecernji List, referring to analysis of Democratization Policy Institute (DPI), says that after a two-year mandate of new High Representative Paddy Ashdown destiny of BiH will be determined – either it will be self-sustainable state or it will remain under protectorate of EU. The article says that efforts of IC will be focused in three fields, but with one goal: restructuring of BiH into self-sustainable state, strengthening of state institutions and change of foreign experts with “domestic talents”. VL said that Ashdown will most likely found special “task force” that will deal with, what is known in international circles as, remaining wartime obstacles.

Vecernji List: Politics and crime

By Stjepan Kovac

The author of this editorial in Vecernji List writes that the fact that Paddy Ashdown repeatedly noted that the greatest danger for BiH is crime “shocked numerous followers of communist consciousness in BiH, who would have preferred thesis about nationalists and fascists who have buried their bellowed Yugoslavia.” “It happened quite often that some domestic and international factors have abused a story about crime for political purposes,” writes the daily, adding that even in the time of war, foreign media wrote about Croat criminals, dogs of war, Croat Mafia in Herzegovina in connection with similar one in Croatia that should be isolated and eliminated. Nevertheless, argues DL, the mentioned alleged crime was never argued, nor were any criminals arrested, in spite the fact

that a lot of people in Herzegovina believed that they existed. Even the main goal of attack on Hercegovacka Banka was elimination of financial spine of the Croat self-rule and not any crime, says the author.

Jutarnji List: Diplomat who managed to conquer wartime rulers of BiH

Jutarnji List on Saturday carries an article on the tenure of Wolfgang Petritsch as the High Representative in BiH. According to the daily, Petritsch's greatest success were his Decisions in the field of refugee return and the implementation of property laws, which "significantly accelerated the return process." In addition, the High Representative, in the view of JL, managed to sack most obstructionist officials on all sides, although, "he was not as nearly as tough as he should have been with RS politicians."

Headlines

Saturday

Dnevni List

- Citizens of Dubravka plateau block road against SFOR: Nobody will ever destroy Dubravka plateau
- Eronet case: Why is it good that HPT of Herzeg-Bosnia gets concession for mobile phones: Toby Robinson trying to remove Slavo Kukic
- Security companies responsible for explosions in Mostar

Vecernji List

- What will BiH Presidency look like after the elections: All the candidates for President
- High Representative at the end of his tenure: Petritsch weeps in front of journalists

Dnevni Avaz

- Safet Halilovic: Dirty campaign against Haris Silajdzic

Oslobodjenje

- New Restitution Law: Prime Minister Behmen suggested changes to the law

Glas Srpski

- Why or because of whom, is Drasko Trifunovic's return to office being delayed: When Justice is Unjust
- By Decision of Wolfgang Petritsch: Judges dismissed

Nezavisne Novine

- An employee of the RS Government Trade Ministry, Nedeljka Jagodic, dies in a mysterious way
- Mladen Ivanic, the richest RS politician
- A new scandal shakes the RS Government: The Customs Administration wire-taps political opponents of SDS

Sunday

Dnevni List

- Interview with Barisa Colak, acting President of HDZ BiH: New constitutional changes cement division of BiH even further

Vecernji List

- Politics and wealth: Richest politicians in BiH are Ivankovic, Dodik and Babo
- Prior to departure Wolfgang Petritsch orders: Federation TV subtenants of PBS

Dnevni Avaz

- Russian plastic surgery: Karadzic changed his looks

Oslobodjenje

- First Congress of BiH diaspora: 250,000 young people left BiH since Dayton

Monday

Dnevni List

- Interview with Zeljko Koroman, President of Initiative Board for unification of all rightists in BiH: Hrstic was running HSP using Udba's (Secret Service during Communist time) methods
- At Mostar Square Pronto the first fashion show 'Mostar Spring' was held organized by Department Store MIK-Company and boutique 'Terranova': Unforgettable fashion spectacle at Mostar fashion show
- Interview with Mladen Kvesic, acting Head of Mostar Education Bureau: Curriculum cannot be made according to standards of one people in name of some sort of artificial unity

Vecernji List

- Night explosions still echo over Herzegovina: Car of Konjic lawyer Suta was blown up
- Neven Tomic: Mostar-city of danger and hope
- Members of Commission for Missing Persons of RS claim: Deputy Minister Buljubasic is responsible for death of 47 Serb civilians

Oslobodjenje

- How do Americans see Ashdown's mandate?

Dnevni Avaz

- Am-Sped Affair: Grabovac topples Financial Police

Jutarnje Novine

- Ashdown's Priorities: Justice and employment

Glas Srpski

- Mirko Sarovic: This is not rule of the law

Nezavisne Novine

- Exclusive report: What is in the CAFAO report on the corruption in the RS Customs Administration: Who in the RS is the brain of the Customs Mafia?
- Wolfgang Petritsch leaves the office today: Ashdown brings a plan with ten items