

BiH Media Round-up, 13/5/2002

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BiH State-related Issues

BiH Constitutional Court accepts Jelavic's appeal for transferring his process to Mostar Court?

Slobodna Dalmacija reports that the BiH Constitutional Court declared admissible the appeal by Ante Jelavic in his criminal trial, requesting that his case be transferred from the Cantonal Court in Sarajevo to the same in Mostar. According to the daily, this decision also pertains to all other HDZ officials in this case, including Marko Tokic, Ivo

Andric Luzanski, Petar Milic, Zdravko Batinic, Dragan Curcic and Miroslav Prce. Jelavic's attorney Josip Muselimovic told SD that he believes that the Cantonal Court in Sarajevo and the administration of the High Representative will "learn a lesson about their future behavior."

BiH Constitutional Court accepts appeal by former Federation officials about immunity from prosecution

The Constitutional Court accepted on Friday the appeal logged by the former Federation officials, Ante Jelavic, Edhem Bicakcic, Sulejman Garib, and Dragan Covic, who were earlier charged with committing criminal acts while performing their duties in entity institutions. The four submitted an appeal to the BiH Constitutional Court demanding full immunity from prosecution for acts committed while on various functions in the Federation. Dnevni Avaz reports that the final decision on this will be made by the Federation Constitutional Court, while in the meantime, all proceedings against the four officials must be suspended.

Funds for lawsuit against Yugoslavia to be excluded from budget

The chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Dragan Mikerevic, said on Sunday that a consensus had been reached to scrap any budgetary expenditure for financing the BiH aggression and genocide lawsuit against Yugoslavia, thus creating conditions for the adoption of the BiH State Budget for this year. "The fact that the adoption of the BiH budget has been in the making for the last five months and that this has paralysed the work of the BiH institutions and led to the failure to implement the principles of the "road map" outlined for BiH's integration into Europe indicates that it was a mistake to outvote the Serb member of the Presidency [Zivko Radisic] on the issue and not to take into account his veto on this article being included into the BiH budget," Mikerevic told SRNA. Certain circles who wanted to impose their solutions, as Mikerevic put it, would have to accept the fact that decisions cannot be made or imposed without the Serb deputies. "We must build a spirit of tolerance in this region," Mikerevic pointed out.

Islamic Community appeals to domestic and international authorities to protect Muslims

The parliament of the BiH Islamic Community asked on Sunday all domestic and international authorities to protect Muslims living in BiH and to stop activities which foster fear among this group. After a session held yesterday, the Islamic Community said that Muslims are today concerned about their social and financial wellbeing, and expressing their identity and their human and civic rights in general. In a statement for the press carried by most Sarajevo media, the IC Parliament warned that the ongoing anti-terrorist media campaign is instrumentalized politically to the point that it inflicts the feeling of guilt among Muslims.

Federation

HDZ party elects acting chairman: Barisa Colak takes over from Ante Jelavic

Barisa Colak has been elected acting chairman of the HDZ on Friday. Media in the Federation reported that the party's presidency and the central board reached this decision by a majority vote. "The party's main task is to ensure that the party can register [for the autumn elections]," Colak told to the Radio Herceg-Bosna in Mostar immediately after the HDZ session, stressing that the party ought to stay united in the future as well. The Central Board also elected Anto Spaic, Ivan Madunic and Niko Lozancic as the party's vice presidents.

Vecernji List notes on Saturday that the election of the three vice presidents and Colak is the optimal compromise

achieved by the divided HDZ, which will also ensure that the influence of Ante Jelavic in the party will remain intact. Jutarnji List concurs with Vecernji List in its evaluation of Colak's election, adding that the acting chairman indeed has a positive image in the public, has not been involved in any controversial affairs and is quite acceptable for the International Community in BiH. However, the daily argues, Colak is considered to be under the strong influence of the so-called "generals' lobby", which is also backing Jelavic. NHI's president, Kresmir Zubak, was of a similar opinion. He told Vecernji List on Sunday that it is clear that "Jelavic has won again", as he and the former HVO General Stanko Sopta Baja stand behind the new chairman. Representatives of other moderate political parties in BiH were a bit less cynical and welcomed the elections, saying it may lead the HDZ into a more democratic future.

OHR's spokesman Mario Brkic told Vecernji List that the OHR does not have any intention to interfere in the party's policy. "What is important for us is that the Election Law and the High Representative's decision on the eligibility of candidates are complied with. Since Barisa Colak is not under sanctions of any sort, there are no obstacles for the HDZ to re-register for the upcoming elections," Brkic explained. In a statement for Jutarnji List, Colak, however, said that he is not certain whether the HDZ will run in the October elections. He emphasised that the party convention will be held some time this summer when it will be decided if the HDZ will or will not take part in the elections.

Sarajevo's Oslobođenje reports that Mariofil Ljubic, one of the senior members of the HDZ and the party's representative in the BiH Parliament's House of Representatives, is leaving the party and will most likely run in the October elections as an independent candidate.

Rift within HDZ BiH: Liberal faction forms party

Jutarnji List reports that the liberal faction of the HDZ BiH is preparing to form its own party following the election of Barisa Colak, labeled by the daily as Ante Jelavic's man, to become a new HDZ BiH President. JL says that nobody is confirming the report, but the daily unofficially learns that final preparations with regards to the issue are ongoing. JL also says that it is only Mariofil Ljubic who confirmed that he was to leave the HDZ BiH and that he was to take part in the elections either as a part of an independent list or with a new party. Moreover, JL says that Miro Grabovac Titan did not want to confirm whether he was to leave the party although Titan said that his stance in the matter would be defined soon. If he leaves the HDZ BiH, says JL, Titan will form a new party.

SDA dismisses six officials, including Edhem Bicakcic

The main board of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) on Saturday made a decision to dismiss six party officials, thus creating conditions for the registration of the party for the upcoming general elections in BiH, scheduled for 5 October. In a statement for the press carried by nearly all media in BiH, the SDA said the decision was made with the full approval of the dismissed officials. "The SDA will participate in the elections independently, aiming to strengthen its position, win seats in the BiH Presidency and RS institutions, and a sufficient number of mandates at all authority levels," said the statement.

The decision to dismiss officials was made in order to comply with the March Decision by the High Representative defining the eligibility of candidates and parties to run in the elections. The amendments to the BiH Election Law issued by the High Representative stipulate that no person who has been removed by the Provisional Election Commission, the Election Appeals Sub-Commission, High Representative, IPTF or COMSFOR for having personally obstructed the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace or violated the Provisional Election Commission Rules and Regulations shall be permitted to be a candidate in the elections or hold an elected mandate or an appointed office. Similarly, the political parties whose top leadership includes officials dismissed by the High Representative, PEC or EASC would not be able to register for elections until they dismiss those officials.

Oslobođenje writes that the six (Edhem Bicakcic, Dzevad Mlaco, Kemal Brodlija, Jusuf Zahiragic, Mirsad Veladzic and Ahmed Smajic) refused to voluntarily resign and demanded the main board to make a decision on dismissal. The daily's source said that Bicakcic stressed prior to the session that he does not consider himself guilty of any crime and that he will refuse to resign.

Draft Restitution Law causes rift in the Federation

After nearly a year long break, the issue of restitution of nationalized property has once again become one of the hot topics in the Federation. Although on May 6, the Federation government forwarded a draft Restitution Law into the parliamentary procedure, media speculate that the Federation Prime Minister, Alija Behmen, withdrew the same draft from the procedure last Friday. Oslobođenje and Dnevni Avaz note, although they could not get any official confirmation of this, that the Federation Minister of Urban Planning and Environment, Ramiz Medhmedagic, forwarded the “fake” draft law to the legislative authorities. The draft apparently included a number of controversial provisions and was not fully agreed upon by all ministers in the Federation government. In a statement for the press issued on Saturday, the Presidency of the SDP reiterated its position on the Restitution Law, stressing that all party representatives in the Federation Parliament must support the rights of all occupancy rights holders on nationalized property to privatize their apartments under the same conditions as all other citizens in the Federation. In line with this, notes the SDP, the original owners should be fairly compensated without the possibility of natural restitution.

The Association of citizens- occupancy right holders on the nationalized apartments “Dom” warned on Saturday that the draft Restitution Law prepared by the Federation government includes a number of discriminatory provisions stipulating that the property previously belonging to the four confessional communities in BiH should be exempted from privatization. “Dom” argues that this provision would clearly discriminate against the citizens living in such apartments.

Lijanovici affair: Former Federation official illegally exempted the company from paying dues on meat products

Oslobođenje on Saturday carries a lengthy story on the recently revealed Lijanovic affair. According to the daily, the former Federation Finance Minister, Dragan Covic, and the director of the Federation Customs Management, Filip Andric, exempted without proper authorisation the Lijanovic company from paying customs on its meat products, thereby damaging the entity by 12,6 million KM. The BiH Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Azra Hadziahmetovic, told the daily that the Ministry of Finance and the Customs Management were asked to immediately revoke the authorisation of exemption. She said that Covic’s behaviour was highly detrimental to the Federation.

SDP: Dilemma in Aluminij Factory ought to be urgently resolved

Presidency of the SDP concluded on Friday that it is necessary to urgently resolve all dilemma relating to the ownership of the Aluminij Factory in Mostar. At a session on Friday, the SDP said that relevant Federation and international institutions must undertake all necessary measures to protect the rights of genuine owners of this company and open perspectives for the development of this company. Oslobođenje reports that the party also warned the public about political games whose aim is to bring into question the entire transformation of ownership in the Federation, create additional national and social conflicts and slow down the process of transition all together.

OHR will not allow Alliance to gain control over ‘Hercegovacka banka’

Vecernji list reports that the threat by Slavo Kukic, the President of Steering Board of HPT Mostar, about the break of connections between Eronet mobile phone operator and HPT users is a result of the conflict between the ruling Alliance For Democratic Changes and the OHR over the influence over the Hercegovacka banka.

The dispute over awarding concessions for the third GSM operator ended with a compromise annulment of the tender. Recently, the Provisional Administrator of the bank, Toby Robinson, announced that the High Representative will make a final decision on the fate of the Hercegovacka Banka before the end of his mandate. The resumption of operations in this institutions depends on its ownership over Eronet. In order to make up for the

loss of dozens of millions of KM, the Bank vitally needs the profit-maker such as Eronet.

CRA's spokesperson, Amela Odobasic, told the daily that only the Council of Ministers could make a decision as to whether the third GSM license will be awarded to the Bank or the HPT Mostar. Spokesman for the Provisional Administration, Johan Verheyden, said that the PA expects a positive answer by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, by May 27, when Petritsch's mandate is expiring. If Petritsch makes the decision allowing the resumption of work by the Hercegovacka Banka, the one who will control its ownership will have the influence over the Croat territories in BiH which could be compared only to the influence the HDZ leadership had in the past.

Alija Izetbegovic says detention of ex-Bosniak intelligence officers wrong

"The accused in the Pogorelica case should have not been detained. They should have been allowed to defend themselves from freedom," the honorary chairman of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), Alija Izetbegovic, said in a statement for Dnevni Avaz. "A group of Croats in Zepce were accused of war crimes on the basis of a Hague tribunal's judgement and sometimes they appear before court and sometimes they do not. However, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, reached a decision that detention was not compulsory in their case. It is clearly a matter of double standards and this is not the only case. Unfortunately there are many such double standards and they lead towards a gradual marginalization of the Bosniak people in Bosnia and Herzegovina," Izetbegovic said.

Federation BiH loses 125 million KM on annual basis, on unpaid contributions for salaries

Vecernji list reports that employers and government are paying minimal contributions, based on salary of 200 KM, for over 400,000 employees in Federation BiH. Because of this, Pension and Health Funds are losing 100 million KM, plus additional 125 million-KM because of 100,000 unregistered workers. The article says that out of 4,000 planned inspections, Federal Inspection of Work has conducted only 300. VL says that after last year's controls employers have employed 4,5 thousand workers, and in first quarter of this year only 180 workers have been employed in that way.

Around 1,700 boxes of mortars discovered in tobacco factory in Mostar

Between 1,200 and 1,700 boxes of mortars have been found so far in the underground premises of the tobacco factory in the eastern part of Mostar and it is believed that there might be 1,000 more, SFOR Lt-Col Nicholas Rambeau has confirmed for SRNA. "Initially 218 boxes were discovered in the basement yesterday (Friday) afternoon. Late last night we went through the wall and discovered another room which contained 1,000 - 1,500 boxes of mortars," Lt-Col Rambeau said. The numbers are not final since there exists a third hidden room. "We will probably find the same amount of mortars as in the second room, probably more than 1,000 boxes," he said. Rambeau explained that the SFOR found 122-mm grenades, each box containing two of those. "The investigation continues but very slowly because SFOR experts for mine clearance are working step by step and that is the reason why they have not reached the third room yet, although I am not excluding the possibility that there might be more," Rambeau said.

Republika Srpska

RS President on the Celebration of 10th anniversary of RS Army: Army of peace and freedom

Upon 12th May, the RS Army Day, the RS President, Mirko Sarovic, at the military barracks Kozara in Banja Luka yesterday, inspected the entity Army units. In the presence of the highest ranking military and civilian representatives of the RS, the RS President expressed his determination to maintain and affirm the RS Army. Glas Srpski quotes Sarovic as saying: "The destiny of the army is tightly related to the destiny of the RS. Regardless of the fact that the number of soldiers is to be drastically reduced, in order to meet the international obligations, the tradition or constitutional role of the RS will not be jeopardised." Upon 12th May, the RS President and other representatives of the civilian and military authorities of the RS, laid flowers and wreaths at the commemorative graveyard of the RS soldiers at the Graveyard St. Pantelija. The representatives of the RS Association of Soldiers and the RS Association of the families of the killed and imprisoned soldiers and missing civilians also laid wreaths. The 10th anniversary of the RS Army was celebrated throughout the RS.

International Community

Donors Conference for Srebrenica to take place in New York on Monday

An international donors' conference for the Srebrenica Regional Recovery Program will be held at the United Nations in New York on Monday. Federation media report that the conference is seeking \$US 12.5 million from UN Member States and other donors over a three-year period to implement the program, a joint initiative of the UNMIBH and the UN Development Program (UNDP). The conference will be co-chaired by UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown and Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Coordinator of UN Operations in BiH Jacques Paul Klein. Other speakers and guests will include the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, Her Majesty Queen Noor of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Chairman BiH Presidency Beriz Belkic, Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska Mladen Ivanic, and representatives of the NGO "Women of Podrinje".

The Srebrenica Regional Recovery Program (SRRP) is a comprehensive development framework that seeks to revitalize the human and physical capital of Srebrenica and the neighboring municipalities of Bratunac and Milici. In a statement for the press, the UN Mission to BiH said that the direct beneficiaries will be returnees to those three municipalities and the legally domiciled community in the region.

Petritsch and Radisic at International Press Institute Congress in Ljubljana

Nezavisne Novine carries an extensive report on the World Congress of the International Press Institute, held in Slovenian capital Ljubljana last week. The daily reports that Presidents of Croatia and Montenegro, Stjepan Mesic and Milo Djukanovic, as well as the BiH Presidency member, Zivko Radisic, discussed political issues in Southeast Europe, the causes of the tragic crisis in former Yugoslavia and the stabilization of the region. Addressing the Congress, Radisic emphasized that the Stability Pact was a project important for the integration of the Balkans into Europe. The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, addressed the Congress on Friday. Petritsch spoke about the efforts of the international community aimed at full normalization of the situation in former Yugoslavia region and Balkans in general.

Zlatko Lagumdzija: Ashdown is very well informed about the

situation in BiH

Zlatko Lagumdžija, the President of the SDP BiH, said that the future High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, is very well informed about the situation in BiH. In an interview with Dnevni List, Lagumdžija said that Ashdown's knowledge of this region is much greater than that of any of his predecessors. "Ashdown is a person who has a great credibility and authority within international circles, and this is important because the world is losing its interest in BiH," Lagumdžija said. He added that Ashdown's statement that terrorism is a great problem for BiH is very interesting and represents a good way to cope with nationalism, which is very much present in BiH.

Lagumdžija also said that he hopes that Wolfgang Petritsch will pass a number of decisions pertaining to the reform of judiciary before he leaves BiH. He also welcomed the fact that Ashdown has great ambitions in this sphere.

Gas pipeline from Turkey to Greece to include BiH

The gas pipeline which is being built by Turkey and Greece will be extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina and it could be put into operation as early as 2006, Turkish ambassador to BiH, Ahmet Erozan, told Dnevni Avaz on Saturday. Erozan expects that the gas pipeline, which is to run from the Dardanelles to Komatin and further to Greece would be completed by 2004. "After the completion of the pipeline, it will take a year or two to extend it to other Balkan countries," the Turkish diplomat said, adding that the project is also expected to include Albania, Macedonia and Yugoslavia. Erozan said that apart from its importance for economy, the project would be of great political significance as it would stimulate multilateral cooperation in the Balkans.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Reduction of NATO troops won't affect BiH security

NATO's decision to pull out part of its Balkan-based peacekeeping forces will not endanger security in BiH, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Saturday. "The reduction of NATO troops is not going to endanger their strategic presence here," ministry spokesman Amer Kapetanovic told the AFP. "This is not a surprise. The process of downsizing NATO troops here has already been announced," he said.

Earlier, NATO said it was scaling down its peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo by nearly 12,000 troops, thanks to what it called an improving security environment in the Balkans. SFOR in BiH is to be reduced from 19,000 troops to approximately 12,000 by the end of this year, while nearly 5,000 more are to be pulled out of UN-administered Kosovo.

"We are fully confident that NATO's estimation on the security situation in Bosnia is correct and that it justifies the reduction of troops," Kapetanovic said. "The ongoing process of NATO's troops reduction is proportional to Bosnia's preparations for membership in the Partnership for Peace program," he said, adding that the country is seeking admission to the program in 2003.

OHR's Stiglmer: Diaspora is the greatest chance for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina needs capital and new companies which will employ its citizens, and the BiH diaspora has an advantage to invest here, said OHR Senior Spokesperson, Alexandra Stiglmer. In an interview with Sabah, the New York based weekly targeting BiH citizens living in the US, Stiglmer said that the OHR and she personally would like to see BiH stand back on its two feet and emphasized that Bosnians and Herzegovinians living abroad should consider returning to their homeland and making their contribution to this process. "This refers especially to people who have acquired knowledge and wealth. They can now take a close look at the situation here and consider investing their capital in BiH and helping attract other investors from abroad," Stiglmer said, adding that BiH citizens living in the US, in particular, should animate American investors to put their money into BiH, thereby becoming a bridge of sorts connecting BiH and their host-country. "Young people are still leaving the

country, and BiH needs educated people to bring the country back on its feet. One cannot expect the country to recover if all the educated people leave. BiH needs them,” said Stiglmeier. She also explained that the recent constitutional changes will turn BiH into a truly multiethnic country where all constituent peoples and others are equally represented at all levels.

Editorials

Oslobodjenje: Ashdown’s ideological misstatements

In Sunday’s Oslobodjenje, Zija Dizdarevic criticizes the future High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, for making “typical ideologically loaded statements about BiH’s communist past.” In several recent interviews and articles which appeared in the Western European press, Ashdown said that BiH cannot be stable “so soon after 50 years of communism” and that “the greatest threats to BiH are crime and corruption, not nationalism.” Dizdarevic argues that Ashdown, like numerous other Western officials, could not resist to typically Western “anti- communist call” and the “very simplistic understanding of the BiH reality which comes with it.” He stresses that Ashdown’s second thesis (about the threat of crime and corruption) is also peculiar, as classic corruption can never produce the number of deaths that nationalism can. “The main problem in BiH is the connection between nationalism and crime who are feeding on each other. Fact is that the economic and political foundation of nationalism is criminal in its nature, and the fluid borders allowing for the international crime in BiH are just a results of a state ill-designed in Dayton,” writes Dizdarevic. Finally, he comments on the future High Representative’s statement that the “International Community will not allow BiH to become Afghanistan”, noting that the Western official here also could not resist making “the shameful analogy between Bosniaks and terrorism”. “Ideological statements that BiH is the criminal work of communism and that it presents an Islamic-terrorist danger are not only politically retarded, but question Ashdown’s mission,” concludes Dizdarevic.

Headlines

Saturday

Oslobodjenje

- Restitution: Vakuf-owned apartments cannot be privatized?

Dnevni Avaz

- Alija Izetbegovic: My health is both good and bad

Glas srpski (weekend edition)

- After arrests in Glamocani, near Laktasi: searching for the car mafia
- Sarajevo: Silajdzic smuggled weapons

Nezavisne Novine (weekend edition)

- Regional conference dedicated to the fight against cigarette smuggling in Pristina: using taxes to fight against cigarette smuggling
- How the ruling SDS – PDP Coalition secured votes for the survival of the RS Prime Minister: SPRS and SDP-BiH kept Ivanic in Premier’s chair

Dnevni List

- During meeting of HDZ Central Board successor of Ante Jelavic was elected: Barisa Colak head of HDZ!
- Exclusive: Reporters of Dnevni List followed action during which Bosniak political-smuggling Mafia was disclosed: Affair Cambodia: Three new warehouses of mortar rounds revealed in Tobacco Factory Mostar
- Interview with Slavo Kukic, president of HPT Mostar Steering Board: Eronet is working illegally and someone has to be held responsible for it

Vecernji List

- It was decided in Mostar yesterday: Barisa Colak is HDZ President
- New financial affair at sight: 'Silajdzic's loan' of 20 million Dollars
- Rumors denied: Izetbegovic is no in coma

Sunday

Oslobodjenje

- Former authorities must have known about weapons found in Mostar

Dnevni Avaz

- SDA: Bickakic must leave

Vecernji List

- SFOR came in all walled premises in basement of Tobacco Factory in Mostar East: 75 tons of mortar rounds were found
- Barisa Colak, acting president of HDZ: I wish that Petritsch withdraws Decision on Jelavic's removal
- Sarajevo reactions on election of Barisa Colak for position of acting president of HDZ: Hard-liners do not want changes

Dnevni List

- Action in which Bosniak political-smuggling affair was revealed: Affair Cambodia: Secret factory of weapon was revealed
- Zlatko Lagumdžija, president of SDP, at public forum in Mostar: Alliance emerged from desperate need to correct deviations that national parties caused

Monday

Oslobodjenje

- Dramatic appeal to domestic and international authorities: Protect the Muslims

Dnevni Avaz

- Behmen prevented Mehmedagic from submitting the "fake" Restitution Law to the Federation parliament

Jutarnje Novine

- Mostar: SFOR discovers two tons of gunpowder

Glas Srpski

- SFOR revealed another illegal storehouse of Bosniak weapon: Mostar on the secret gun powder
- The Army of Peace and Freedom

Nezavisne novine

- After the discovery of another secret weaponry storage in Tobacco Factory: yet another weaponry storage discovered in Mostar

- Nezavisne Novine in Prijedor: Priest Matanovic was killed by Drljaca's team

Vecernji List

- OHR will not give Alliance control over Hercegovacka Bank
- BiH Federation loses 125 million Kunas on contributions for salary per year: 100 000 illegal workers
- Leading Bosniak party succumbed under Petritsch's requests: Undestined Izetbegovic' successor has been politically retired

Dnevni List

- Interview with Zijad Hadiomerovic, Head of Mostar Municipality Stari Grad: SDA will officially turn to Petritsch to sign acts on suspension of Bosniak officials
- Racan's Elliot Nes: Has Mafia removed Rdaovan Ortynski, Croatian State Attorney: Showdown of Zagreb's Mafia through Belgrade's newspapers