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Headlines

BiH State-related Issues

Belkic meets with Slovenian Prime Minister, Croatian and Macedonian Presidents in New York

Oslobodjenje and Dnevni Avaz report that the Chairman of the BiH Presidency, Beriz Belkic, met in New York on Thursday with the Slovenian Prime Minister, Janez Drnovsek, to discuss bilateral relations between the two countries. Belkic also met with the Croatian President, Stjepan Mesic. The two officials discussed the work of the Inter-State Council for Cooperation, which should contribute to the further development of good relations between the two countries. In the course of the day, Belkic met with the Macedonian President, Boris Trajkovski, as well.

BiH Council of Ministers postpones discussion on 2002 Budget

At a session in Sarajevo on Thursday, the BiH Council of Ministers did not discuss the draft Budget of the State Institutions for this year. Oslobodjenje quoted the Chairman of the Council, Dragan Mikerevic, as saying at a press conference following the session that the discussion had been postponed for a special session. However, he did not specify when the session would take place.

Coordination of the BiH Associations of Journalists supports adoption of the law on PBS

According to Oslobodjenje, the Coordination of the Associations of Journalists in BiH comprising the BiH Independent Union of Professional Journalists, BiH Association of Journalists, Independent Association of the RS Journalists and APEL Association of Journalists supports the adoption of the law on PBS. The Coordination said in a press release that it believed the adoption of the law was in the interest of BiH citizens, who had a right to correct and impartial information.

Federation

HPT Mostar officially applied for the third GSM license

Oslobodjenje reports that the Mostar-based HPT (Croat Postal and Telecommunication Services) on May 3 officials submitted to the CRA (Communication Regulatory Agency) an application for the third GSM license. The HPT Steering Board Chairman, Slavo Kukic, told journalists in Mostar on Thursday that this was the best possible solution and that the company had therefore decided not to wait for the resolution of the ownership dispute in Eronet.

Vecernji List: HPT announces that Eronet users might be left without signal as of June 1

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

HPT Mostar announced that the company would sever the telephone links to the Eronet Company on June 1 if HPT Mostar, one of the co-founders of Eronet, does not receive back the majority share in the Eronet Company. The Chairman of the Steering Board of HPT Mostar, Slavo Kukic, called on three companies, co-owners of Eronet (Hercegovina Osiguranje, Alpina Komerc and Croherc AG) to return their stocks to HPT Mostar by May 31 for which they would be paid the nominal value of the stocks + interest. In case that an agreement is not reached, HPT Mostar would sever the telephone lines to Eronet which would in turn cause a communication chaos, reads Vecernji List.

A separate report by the same papers reads that the Management of Eronet and the Provisional Administration of Hercegovacka Banka held talks last night at which they agreed on a strategy how to deal with HPT Mostar's Steering Board in the future. The daily carries an anonymous expert on mobile communications as saying that it is an unlikely scenario that transmitters that carry the Eronet signal would be switched off but if that does take place some 70.000 Eronet users would be able to talk within the regular network only.

Dnevni List: Sefkija Dziho protests against a recent article related

to revealed mortar rounds warehouse

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Reacting against the article published in Dnevni List on May 5 in which it was stated that Sefkija Dziho and the Bosniak top leadership were in charge of the key to the warehouse in which the mortar rounds were placed, Dziho says that this article is an example of irresponsible, unprofessional and biased journalism. Dziho says that the time has come to determine the consequences for all those, who abuse freedom of speech for their own goals or the goals of their masterminds. Dziho concludes that it is clear that the producers of such an editorial policy will never stop with this kind of work if they are not punished adequately. Dnevni List also carries its response to the protest letter of Sefkija Dziho, written by Marko Markovic. Dnevni List says that they tried to contact Dziho for a few days, however, he did not respond to their invitations. The reaction also says that Dziho, as the most responsible person on the Bosniak side in the authorities in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, instead of demanding an the investigation against smugglers and terrorists, demands that Dnevni List and its journalists be punished. Markovic says that the investigation will show to what extent Dziho, Sead Sabic, the Deputy Minister of Interior of the HNC, Safet Orucevic, a former Mayor of Mostar, Haris Silajdzic, the founder of Party for BiH, and high-ranked officials of the Islamic Community were involved in this case. The reaction says that in spite of the fact that Deputy Governor Dziho asked for sanctions against Dnevni List, they will continue to investigate 'the Vrapcici affair'.

Vecernji List: Acting President and members of HDZ Presidency to be elected today

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

In relation to today's sessions of the HDZ BiH Presidency and Central Board that should, according to many announcements, elect an acting President of the party and members of the HDZ Presidency to replace removed officials, Vecernji List carries an article speculating with the names of the possible candidates for the offices. The author, Zoran Kresic, says that members of the Central Board believe that Dragan Covic, Vice President of the HDZ BiH, and Josip Merdzo, the HDZ BiH Secretary General, stand the best chance to become the acting President of HDZ BiH. VL also learns that one cannot rule out the possibility that the Central Bosnia HDZ nominates its candidate Rudo Vidovic for the office.

With regards to other posts, the daily says that Ivan Madunic and Mate Franicevic will run for Marko Tokic's office, Ivica Marinovic for Ivo Andric Luzanski's and Ante Spajic and Josip Bilic for Zdravko Batinic and Pero Madzar's positions. VL concludes the article saying that it is unknown who will be nominated to replace Slavo Bago, the position allocated to Posavina HDZ.

Slobodna Dalmacija: What is the future of the strongest Croat party in BiH after resignation of its leaders

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Slobodna Dalmacija carries an article about the split in HDZ, which has actually never occurred because the interests of the top officials of the party are very interdependent and they are not connected to politics or the interests of the Croat people. Writing about fractions in the party, concerning the election of the acting President of HDZ, the author says that Miro Grabovac Titan's fraction has no influence at all; Bozo and Mariofil Ljubic's fraction is expecting a selection within the party, which might happen with the assistance of the OHR; the so-called techno-manager fraction led by Dragan Covic has entered the executive authorities too early, and that is why they were discredited; and the candidate from the so-called radical fraction (Tokic, Bacak, Colak, Lozancic), Niko Lozancic, doesn't have a lobby that would support him, thus he is quite often opposing moves of International Community. On the same issue, **Jutarnji list** reads that Ivan Bacak, a member of HDZ Presidency, stated that politics can not be changed at the Central Board level but at the convention of the Party. The article says that Cardinal Vinko Puljic addressed a message to HDZ that they must take part in the elections.

Republika Srpska

Reuters: RS makes landmark war crimes arrests

The United Nations said on Thursday that the Republika Srpska authorities had arrested five ex-policemen for war crimes in what is believed to be the first such move in a region renowned for harboring war crimes suspects. The West has upped pressure in recent months on RS to start arresting suspects — including those indicted by the U.N. war crimes tribunal such as Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, Serb leaders in Bosnia's 1992-95 war. So far the RS police have not detained anyone on The Hague tribunal's wanted list but international officials welcomed the latest arrests as an encouraging development. The RS ex-police officers from the northwestern town of Prijedor were detained on Wednesday and transferred to a prison in the RS de facto capital Banja Luka, where the prosecutor charged them with war crimes, the U.N. said. The Prijedor area was notorious in wartime for ethnic cleansing and Serb-run camps where thousands of Bosniak and Croat civilians were held and hundreds killed and tortured. Alun Roberts, spokesman for the UN Mission in BiH which monitors local police, said the ex-policemen were arrested on suspicion of involvement in the murder and disappearance of Roman Catholic priest Tomislav Matanovic and his parents in 1995. The RS' Prosecution Office said in a separate statement that it had requested an investigation into the five and their detention based on charges filed by the Prijedor police accusing them of war crimes against civilians in 1995. The prosecution said it proceeded with the case after The Hague Tribunal gave a green light. "The U.N. mission is encouraged that the Republika Srpska Interior Ministry carried out the first arrest in regards to war crimes allegedly committed in the Prijedor area," Roberts said. The bodies of the Matanovics were found last October in a well shaft in a village near Prijedor. Roberts said forensic tests had established that Matanovic had been killed by gunshots from close range. The Human Rights Chamber, BiH's top human rights court, determined that at the time of their disappearance the Matanovics were being held illegally by Prijedor police.

RS Justice Ministry: Establishment of the High Judicial Council unacceptable

The Republika Srpska Justice Ministry said that forming a unified judicial council for the whole of BiH was unacceptable as it would contravene the country's Constitution and the Constitutions of both entities. "The whole process of reforms in the judiciary should be carried out within the framework of the RS Constitution and Annex 4 of the Dayton Peace Accord," RS Justice Minister Biljana Maric said on Thursday at a news conference in Banja Luka. According to Fena, SRNA and Oslobodjenje, she emphasized that the RS Government was of the opinion that if such a body were formed the judicial authorities would no longer be within the competence of the entities. According to her, the RS Government has insisted that the selection of judges could be carried out without any political influence and that this would be done in the RS when a law on courts and the judiciary is adopted. She added that the RS Government had been striving for the formation of a special body, which would be in charge of selecting judges and prosecutors in the RS.

We will strengthen trust between armies - RS president

The Supreme Defense Council of the Republika Srpska concluded on Wednesday in Banja Luka that the issue of defense and armies in BiH had to continue functioning in accordance with the country's Constitution and the Dayton agreement, Fena news agency report. This was a response to certain initiatives coming from certain representatives of the international community but also from the BiH Presidency, RS President Mirko Sarovic said after a session of the Council. "The RS will be strengthening mutual trust, coordination between armies and ministries of defense as well as coordination at the level of BiH, including the SCMM, but our framework is the BiH Constitution," he said. Sarovic said that the RS was oriented towards regional, as well as European integration, including the Partnership for Peace, and that the RS would fulfill its obligations related to the restructuring of the military potential. According to him, the RS Supreme Defense Council was discussing the issue of sending the RS' military units in peace missions, the process of mine clearance, as well as the activities concerning the 10th anniversary of the RS Army on 12 May.

International Community

High Representative addresses OSCE Permanent Council

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, on Thursday addressed the 55-nation OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. He briefed the Council on recent political developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and gave an overview of the three years of his mandate, highlighting the major achievements and the overall progress sustained in the country. The High Representative said that the tremendous progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina during this three-year period "heralds the start – not the end – of positive change". Major breakthroughs have been achieved and important processes have been brought on track in refugee return, the building of state institutions, economic reform, human rights and in other fields. (All Sarajevo dailies carried Fena news agency's report from the yesterday's press conference in Sarajevo, where OHR Spokesman Mario Brkic briefed journalists about the event, Nezavisne Novine carried the Press Release)

Petritsch to attend international donors conference on Srebrenica in New York

Dnevni Avaz reports that, on Monday, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, will be at the United Nations in New York to participate in the donors conference on Srebrenica aimed to raise some 12.5 million US dollars for the next three-year period for the "Srebrenica Regional Recovery Program." He will also meet bilaterally with high-ranking UN officials. "The Office of the High Representative strongly supports this initiative. The High Representative will briefly address the participants to underline this support for the Recovery Program, which is a crucial element of the International Community's efforts to offer practical, substantial and moral assistance to the people of Srebrenica, so that they can continue on the long slow journey towards healing and restoring their community," the OHR Spokesman, Mario Brkic, said at a press conference in Sarajevo on Thursday.

Reuters: NATO to reduce, re-organize Balkans forces

NATO will cut its 57,000 peacekeeping forces in BiH and Kosovo by 20 percent this year because of improved political stability in the Balkans, the alliance announced on Friday. NATO's North Atlantic Council decided to reduce Stabilization Force (SFOR) troops in BiH from 19,000 to 12,000 and KFOR forces in Kosovo from 38,000 to 33,200 by the end of the year. At the same time, NATO plans to pull together separate operations and adopt a more unified regional approach with more lightly armed forces, it said. "These changes will help us build on success," said NATO Secretary-General George Robertson in a statement accompanying the announcement. "Since we first sent forces to the Balkans much has changed and improved and we are changing with them." Click here for NATO's press release.

The first Euro INFO Center opened in BiH

At a ceremony in Sarajevo on Thursday, May 9, which is The Day of Europe, the Head of the EU Delegation to BiH, Hansjorg Kretschmer, officially opened the first Euro INFO Center in BiH. Zekerijah Smajic, the Director of the Sense news agency, which had initiated and realized the project, said on the occasion that the main task of the Center was to provide all BiH citizens with accurate and comprehensive information about the European Union and about what it expects BiH to do in order to come closer to Europe. In order to mark The Day of Europe, the EU Delegation to BiH also organized a reception for the BiH and international officials and other guests, which took place late in the evening in the devastated building of the Sarajevo National Library. As part of the ceremony, the Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Dragan Mikerevic, and Kretschmer signed a document on the CARDS program of EU economic assistance to BiH, worth up to f Euro 192 million, Nezavisne novine reports.

OHR appeals to all political parties to comply with party registration-related legislation

As the deadline for the certification of political parties for the participation in the general elections in October is getting closer, OHR appeals to all political parties to comply with the provisions of the Election Law and other legislation governing the elections, whether a party is allowed to run in the elections or not, Dnevni Avaz and Jutarnje Novine report. "As you remember, on March 27, the High Representative issued three decisions clarifying the registration procedures for political parties, and defining the eligibility of candidates and parties to run in the elections. These decisions were necessary at the time to clarify and to prevent a return of extreme elements to the political scene," the OHR Spokesman, Mario Brkic, told journalists in Sarajevo on Thursday.

Prlic willing to testify in The Hague

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

HINA news agency quotes former prime minister of the Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna and former BiH foreign minister, Jadranko Prlic, as saying he is willing to testify before the ICTY if the prosecution summons him. The media have several times mentioned Prlic's alleged responsibility for the establishment of detention camps for Bosniaks in Herzegovina when he held office of the Herceg-Bosna prime minister. Prlic said he is willing to face his possible guilt, i.e. testify about what he could have known as an official of at first a temporary civilian body of the executive authority and later the Herceg-Bosna government.

Belgrade police start arresting war crimes suspects wanted by ICTY

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

On instructions from the Belgrade district court, members of the Belgrade Secretariat for Internal Affairs (SUP) on Thursday started arresting Hague indictees who have not responded to the federal government's appeal to surrender to the ICTY, Belgrade-based radio B-92 reported yesterday. The station's source in the Belgrade SUP said that the district court had instructed the secretariat's search department to take all necessary measures to locate and present to the investigative judge all 17 indictees for whom the court has received warrants and indictments from the ICTY. The same source confirmed that the police immediately acted upon the court's instructions.

Judge refuses to act on president's arrest order, contacts government

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The Belgrade district court has ordered the special branch of the Belgrade Interior Affairs Secretariat to undertake "all necessary measures" to locate 17 persons indicted by the ICTY, and take them before the investigative judge, Beta news agency reported yesterday. A statement by the district court says that the ICTY's order for arrest is being treated as an order for issuing an arrest warrant. The FRY Justice Ministry has forwarded to the district court an order and indictment by the ICTY against current Serbian President, Milan Milutinovic, but the investigative judge working on this case has decided that "acting on this could jeopardize the sovereignty and security of the state", and has informed the Serbian government about this.

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- Dismissed Federation Army soldiers to be financially compensated in June

Dnevni Avaz

- Financial compensation of dismissed BiH Federation soldiers under question

Jutarnje Novine

- Interview with SDA President Sulejman Tihić: "If I were in Bicačić's place, I would resign"

Dnevni List

- We planted explosive devices in Derby betting shops: 'Dika owes us 2 million Marks'
- Response of Dnevni List editorial board to Deputy Governor Džihov: Instead of investigation against smugglers and terrorists Džihov demands punishment of journalists
- Warning before today's session of the HDZ Central Board in Mostar during which the new President and members of HDZ Presidency will be elected: Free or serfs

Vecernji List

- HPT announces: Eronet without signal as of June 1
- Reform of judiciary: Petrić appoints first judges
- Interview with General Slobodan Praljak: HDZ BiH must participate in elections

Glas Srpski

- Five former RS police officers arrested on war crimes charges
- Fake believers arrested in Čelinac

Nezavisne Novine

- RS Police arrested five Serbs on war crimes charges
- Terrorist attack in Russia – 30 people killed in Dagestan