BiH Media Round-up, 10/6/2002

Print Media Headlines

Dnevni Avaz

- Alagic does not want amnesty
- Boxing match of the century: Tyson vs. Louis

Oslobodjenje

- Ashdown: Reform will bring new jobs and justice

Glas Srpski

- Property law implementation in Rogatica
- Customs scandals in Federation and the RS

Nezavisne Novine

- SDS Laktasi president: SDS leadership supports crime
- Al-Qaida preparing new attacks on US

Dnevni List

- SOKO company: strike continues, workers forgotten and neglected

Vecernji List

- BiH to face difficult passage through Neum

AM-SPED Affair

Commenting for **Dnevni Avaz** (p. 5 and f.p. “Ashdown asked me to persuade Grabovac to resign”), the president of the NHI, **Kresimir Zubak**, said that he will not ask the Federation Finance Minister, Nikola Grabovac, to resign due to charges of negligence pressed against him in this case. Zubak, however, said that he is under tremendous pressure. “*I received a phone call from Mr. Ashdown who told me that I should persuade*

Grabovac to resign. A few days earlier, Ashdown's deputy Donald Hays suggested the same. I told them that I cannot do this as I know that Grabovac was framed," explained Zubak, adding that Grabovac's deputy, Sefika Hafizovic, is an "*evil woman*." "*Ashdown also told me that he may have to make a decision on Grabovac's removal when the investigation opens. I thanked him on the conversation and on the fact that he just strengthened my belief that Grabovac was framed*."

The new director of the Federation Customs Administration, **Zelmir Rebac**, said in a statement for the **BHTV** last night that, apart from the customs officials directly involved in the Am-Sped affair, all other officials and officers who abused office or who performed their duties with negligence will also be removed. "*Removals will soon take place at all levels, everywhere where it turns out that criminal activities were taking place*."

In an editorial in today's **Nezavisne Novine, Fazlija Hebibovic,** writes aboutthe AM SPED case and argues that the Alliance for change was also thoroughly shaken by this affair. According to Hebibovic, from the very formation of the Alliance, a silent war is ongoing amongst the Alliance members and its frustrated leaders. "*It appears that Nikola Grabovac is the main target and those who supported him as one of the most important pillars of the Federation Government, nowadays attack him. The High Representative,* **Paddy Ashdown,** *got involved in the case and strongly supported the Federation Prime Minister,* **Alija Behmen,** *who called upon all officials against whom criminal charges were pressed to resign. The British Ambassador to BiH,* **Ian Cliff,** *also supported Behmen. From the very beginning, Grabovac kept saying that he is innocent and presented various arguments in his favor. As it is usually the case in this country, Grabovac transferred the whole story from the financial field to the political one, claiming that the chase on him was tendentious and orchestrated*" In his claims, argues Hebibovic, he was

supported by **Kresimir Zubak,** President of the New Croatian Initiative. *"While the public in BiH Federation impatiently expects the epilogue of this case, the Federation Government, its Prime Minister and the entire Alliance for change, might be facing crucial moments. If a similar case happened in a country with developed democracy, resignations would be logical next move. But it seems that in our country, it became quite normal that all these illegal things are being done so publicly, perfidiously and for such a long time. And through all that time, already tested mechanisms of defense are being used: sometimes it is about national interest, then party interest, but nobody is strong enough to face the truth. And none of them think that they are responsible to the people who elected them. October elections should make the voters open their eyes and see how much those for whom they voted have and to see all the misery and poverty they got in return*."

In an opening editorial in **Ljiljan** (p.7), Sejo Omeragic writes that *"Instead of removing the Finance Minister, Nikola Grabovac, the BiH Federation Government decided to direct all of its wreath towards an ordinary Grabovac's servant, Slavko Sikiric. Of course, the entire circus ends by Sikiric's removal, although, in other cases, criminal charges would be pressed for an evident corruption. That is why it is good to be in power, far away from law and pardoned from any evil…".*

Nijaz Durakovic shakes political scene in BiH

"A spectacular announcement of Nijaz Durakovic's transfer from SDP to Party for BiH has almost broken a cemented political scene. It seems that the SDP has lost as Party for BiH has won enormously. In such a politically articulated picture, it seems that only the departure of Durakovic from the SDP could have made such chaos…The departure of the man who gave the name to SDP, who wrote the Statute of the party and who has been, for decades now, a firm and persistent politician, simply had to wake up the ghosts in the people, much harder than the World Soccer Championship," journalist Enes Jakupovic

wrote in today's **Ljiljan.** (Note: Durakovic did not leave the party and stressed over the weekend that he has no intention of doing so)

New customs affair: Lijanovici damaged the state for 32 million KM of customs fees

Nezavisne Novine (p. 3) report, quoting anonymous sources, that the largest importer of meet from Herzegovina and prime distributor for Lijanovici company, Mega Comm from Mostar, failed to pay 32 million KM in customs fees. According to the daily, Lijanovici company made a prime profit from this, while several officials in the Federation Customs Administration officials and senior management in the Mega Comm also had certain benefits.

Official says passage through Neum depends on status of Ploce port

"If the Croatian parliament fails to ratify a bilateral agreement with BiH on the use of the port of Ploce, BiH's parliament should then annul the ratification of that deal as well as of an agreement on the free passage through Neum," said **Kasim Trnka**, an adviser to the BiH presidency to **Dnevni Avaz** and **Vecernji List** (p. 3). Trnka, a former BiH ambassador to Zagreb, said that one should keep in mind that the agreements on Ploce and the passage through Neum are interrelated in line with the 1994 Washington Agreement. Vecernji List notes that this may turn into a serious problem as for Croatia, the free passage through Neum is of crucial importance during the tourist season. "*Similarly, we can interpret the fact that Croatia, which does not want to ratify the Agreement on Ploce port, can significantly endanger the economic development in BiH*," said Trnka.(**Dnevni List** p. 5, **Jutarnji List** p.6, **Vjesnik**, p.2 also report on this item)

HPT Mostar and Eronet to face international arbitration

Besim Mehmedic, the Federation Minister of Transport and Communication, told **Dnevni Avaz** that the Federation government will initiate the inter-state talks with representatives of Croatia about the return of HPT Mostar and Eronet shares which are presently controlled by Hrvatski Telekom and Croatian Post Office. *"If need be, we will go before an international arbitration, because we believe that it is our natural right to be a 100% owner of telecommunications companies,"* he said. According to Mehmedic, only after the HPT Mostar is returned into state hands, tenders for privatisation of Sarajevo and Mostar telekom companies could be opened. *"There is no possibility that Eronet obtains the third GSM license before it is fully and completely returned to the state*." Mehmedic said that the Provisional Administrator in Hercegoacka Banka, Toby Robinson, is one of the strongest opponents of this. "What we are demanding is our absolute right, and that is why I presume that the International Community, if ti wants to be a parner, determine that the return of the HPT is a normal move

Strike of Soko employees continues

Dnevni List (p.3)reports that the general strike in the Soko company in Mostar is continuing through this week. The daily notes that all company's employees, apart from the general manager and (his) secretary, is protesting against the fact that there are still 9 outstanding salaries and 15 unpaid contributions for health and social welfare. Dnevni List writes that workers see their last hope in the work of the Federation Financial Police and High Representative.

Croatian Parliament encourages Croats currently living in Croatia to vote at October elections

Noting that BiH Croats currently living in Croatia are not interested in the upcoming elections in BiH in October this year, **Jutarnji List** (page 6)reports that the **Croatian Parliament** has decided to allocate 300.000 Kunas (75.000 KM)

for the campaign encouraging higher voter turn out in BiH. The daily argues that BiH Croats are not interested in the elections mostly because of "*the election engineering by the International Community which excluded the HDZ from power in spite of its victory at the last elections*."

Federation Government not interested in crimes

Vecernji List (p. 2)reports that the **Federation Government** andthe **RS Government** will not be co-operating in gathering and exchange of information and documents pertaining to war crimes after the Federation Government had turned down the RS Justice Ministry's sudden proposal to sign an agreement that would regulate the co-operation between the two governments. The daily quotes an anonymous RS Government official as saying that the RS Government is ready to co-operate in the issues of war crimes because an exchange of information between the two government would make this job easier. However, continues the daily, the Federation Government turned down the proposal and the Banja Luka government went public saying that the behavior of the Federation Justice Ministry will not contribute to processing of all war crimes committed in BiH. According to VL, Banja Luka government also claims that the OHR and some influential Western governments would back such an agreement and co-operation between the two governments up. The daily concludes the article saying that the Federation Government did not explain as to why it turned the proposal adding that Carla del Ponte's reaction, who is coming to BiH soon, is eagerly awaited.

Paddy Ashdown: Reform will bring new jobs and justice

Oslobodjenje on its front page carries the full text of the article written by the new High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, and which was originally published by the IWPR on Sunday. Oslobodjenje title "Reform will bring new jobs and justice".

In a brief satirical item, **Ljiljan** writes that the newly-appointed High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, has won almost all air time on the TV screens, mainly because *"TV stations across BIH are contesting to gain his sympathies."* *"If he continues giving such a large number of interviews, he will not have any time left to resolve actual problems,"* the magazine notes. *"Concerning the BiH journalism, it has never lacked a poltroon-like optimism and admiration with those on the top, all until it begins toppling them through unprincipled attacks."*

BiH-one of the poorest countries in Europe

Theme of the Day in **Oslobodjenje** is the strategy against poverty in BiH. According to the daily, BIH is one of the poorest countries in Europe as a result of the three year long war which left this country without major industrial infrastructure.

RS NA to discuss Petritsch's Decisions on Judiciary, Federation questions some provisions

Dnevni Avaz (p. 2) reports that the **RS National Assembly** will hold later today a special session in order to discuss the package of Decisions on Judiciary imposed by the former High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. (Also, **Glas Srpski**, p. 3, **Nezavisne Novine**,p. 5)

The daily also quotes **Sahbaz Dzihanovic**, the deputy Federation Minister of Justice, as saying that after the package of Petritsch's Decision on Judiciary, which transferred all jurisdictions formerly belonging to executive and legislative power to the High Judicial Council, there is no longer a need for the adoption of the Law on Judicial Budget. Dzihanovic explained that the Federation government will most likely withdraw this Law from the Parliamentary procedure. However, **Vlado Adamovic**, the president of the Federation Association of Judges, argues that the Law on Judiciary Budget is necessary

in order to ensure independence of this branch.

Dnevni List (p. 9) carries excerpts of a Novi Sad daily **Dnevnik** with the High Representative in BiH, Paddy Ashdown, in which he talks about the crime and corruption which still plague BiH society. *"At the same time, authorities in the RS are wasting time and energy on complaining about Decisions imposed by the former High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. They would be better off thinking a bit about the living standards in the RS, which are below minimum, and about the ways in which they could be improved."* Ashdown emphasized that reforms are necessary, as not a single country in the world could expect to curb crime and corruption with an inefficient system. *"BiH has five times more judges than an average European country and it hasten times the number of unresolved cases."* (**Nezavisne Novine** p. 4 and SRNA news agency also carry lengthy excerpts of the interview)

PDP to expel all members involved in illegal activities, opens office in Federation

In a statement for the press, the **Party of Democratic Progress** [PDP] said it is strongly convinced that light must be shed on all irregularities in the work of the individual institutions of the RS, because this is the only way of defending the independence of the Serb institutions and further strengthening of their authority. *"The PDP is of the view that everyone responsible for illegal activities, regardless of their party affiliation, must bear the consequences, said the statement of this party, which was issued after last night's session of the PDP presidency which discussed the political situation in the RS and preparations for the coming elections."* Original statement was carried by **SRNA** news agency. (**Dnevni List** p. 9 carries the press release.)

Some 150 members of the **PDP** gathered on Sunday in Tuzla at a founding session of the first assembly of this party in the Federation. Party president, Mladen Ivanic, who was also

present at the session, said that the PDP Tuzla will deal with two-way return between Federation and the RS and co-operate with other political parties with the aim of re-creating a multi-ethnic BiH.

RS President calls political parties to forget their party interests and gather around an idea that became reality – RS

Glas Srpski reports (p. 3) that the RS President, **Mirko Sarovic,** attended the tenth anniversary of the establishment of Serb Vucijak Brigade. Speaking at the ceremony, Sarovic said: *"From this legendary place, I want to send a message to the leaders of political parties in the RS and that is that, at least for a while longer, they should be patient and forget about their party interests ,divisions, and bad feelings and bitterness, but to gather about an idea that became reality and that is RS."*