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BiH State-related Issues

Top BiH and Entity representatives establish a coordination team for BiH's economic development

According to Sarajevo dailies, the BiH Council of Ministers members, the Prime Ministers of the BiH Federation and Republika Srpska, and the Entity Ministers of Finance and Industry established a coordination team for the BiH's

economic development in Sarajevo on Thursday. BiH Council of Ministers Chairman Zlatko Lagumdžija, who had initiated the establishment of the Team, said following the session that the body would deal with the harmonization of the positions on the economic transition, trade, and creation of a suitable economic environment. It will also coordinate reforms in the sectors of public finances and social welfare. According to Lagumdžija, the Team will be tasked to cooperate with the international financial institutions, primarily the World Bank, IMF, European Bank for reconstruction and Development and the European Commission.

BiH Council of Ministers approves BiH Veterinary Office Statute and imposition of the landing card

Oslobodjenje reports that the BiH Council of Ministers on Thursday, at a proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, approved the adoption of the statute of the Veterinary Office and accepted a proposal for the regulations on the internal organization and systematization of working positions in this office, Minister of Foreign Trade Azra Hadžiahmetović. Hadžiahmetović told reporters after the session that the European Commission had presented the Council with a project "A Single Economic Space in BiH." In the framework of the implementation of the anti-terrorist program, the Council approved imposing the so-called landing card for the entrance into BiH by airplanes. The landing card will be in use once all the preparations are completed and the necessary agreements are signed with the airline companies.

Vjesnik: Lagumdžija got bored of the international tutorship

(Written by Mario Marusic – provided by OHR Mostar)

The Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, dr. Zlatko Lagumdžija is not satisfied with the attitude of the officials

of the international community in BiH, especially that of the OHR and OSCE, towards the local authorities. In the separate meetings with the Ambassadors of Great Britain, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Russia and with the Charge d'affairs of United States, he asked for the change of that attitude, with the aim of accomplishing partnership. The concept of partner relations, and not that of mentorship and the IC protectorate of its kind, has been the goal of the Alliance, ever since coming to power. But, it is obvious that in the meantime, there have been "different interpretations" of that partnership, so Lagumdžija does not hesitate to point out these days that finally "what needs to be stopped (in practice) is to blame the local authorities for the bad results of the international community, the same as the international community cannot be blamed for the bad results of the local authorities." Lagumdžija particularly stresses the dissatisfaction with the actions of the junior officials of the OHR and OSCE who, according to him, are not well informed about the essence of partner relations between the international community and the BiH authorities, so "they more and more often publicly criticize certain institutions of the local authority for the bad results in the spheres that are in the competence of the international community."

Sarajevo-based Oslobodjenje, referring to the unnamed sources from the top level of authority, writes that the concept of partnership, envisaged as the joint project, is lately being more and more bureaucratized, and the most recent events relating to the RTV BiH reconstruction testify to that. The same source does not hide his/her disappointment with such behavior of some international officials and claims that the "bureaucratic structure in the international community creates the affairs in the fear of losing their jobs." They (the bureaucratic structure) believe that the entire concept of partnership means abolishing their roles, and therefore they slow everything down.

The new "schism" in the relations of the Alliance and the international organizations forced Lagumdžija to question the entire model of partnership and the offer of making the joint plan with the Ambassadors of the strongest countries on how to make BiH "a self-sustainable, normal country, i.e. so that it knows when it has no more need for certain international organizations."

Slobodna Dalmacija: Speaker of the BiH House of Peoples Sejfidin Tokic says remains of terrorist groups' ideological influence to be destroyed

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

He stated that he does not know whether the reliable evidence about the photograph of bin Laden and Alija Izetbegovic exists. (...) 'What I expect is that, apart from a military engagement, the whole International Anti-terrorist Coalition, in which BiH has a very active role, solves all those issues that might be potential food for terrorists. In this context I would mention the IC obligation to help with the arrest of Karadzic and Mladic. (...) Problems that we shall deal with are remains of the possible ideological influence of groups close to the organizations that we are talking about. Recent events will not isolate BiH and they will not distance BiH from European integration. The decision of the Political Committee with the Council of Europe on the admission of our country as a full member of this oldest association is the best proof that BiH enjoys a full trust and represents a support of the International Coalition in the struggle against terrorism.

Federation

BiH Federation Government discusses privatization of the state enterprises

Oslobodjenje reports that the BiH Federation Government held its regular session in Mostar on Thursday to discuss the results achieved so far in the process of privatization of the state-owned enterprises in the entity. According to data collected by the BiH Federation Privatization Agency, approximately 50 percent of the companies were sold by the end of August this year, which amounts around 20 percent of the state capital. The Government also addressed the issue of the privatization of the Mostar Aluminum Combine. According to the Radio Mostar East, Hasan Becirevic, the Federation Minister of Energy, Mining and Industry stated that three things in connection with the Aluminum Company had occurred contrary to the regulations. The first one is a drastically reduced state capital in the period from 1996 to 1997, when it was not possible to make it according to any law. Secondly, backlog salaries could not be paid to the employees by the state capital for the period when they were not working and mostly according to an ethnic principle. The third thing refers to the illegally reduced state capital on the ground of loan (credit) liabilities.

Commenting on the audits of the Aluminum operations conducted so far, Becirevic said that not a single of them had been aimed to protect the state capital in the company. "Only authorized state bodies can therefore make legally valid conclusions on the issue," he emphasized.

Dnevni Avaz: Will the Mostar Aluminum accounts be blocked?

Dnevni Avaz learned from reliable sources that the inspector of the BiH Federation Financial Police were on Thursday prevented from entering the Aluminum Company in Mostar. The move made by the Aluminum management was explained by the

absence of persons exclusively authorized to give documentation and data to the investigators. According to Avaz sources, if the management of the company does not ensure access to the required documentation within a deadline set by the investigators on the ground, the legal measures could be taken including the blockage of the accounts.

Aluminum Trade Union not allowing any more audits

Croat Radio Mostar reports that, following the Thursday's session of the Federation Government held in Mostar, the Independent Union of the Mostar Aluminum (West) held an emergency session this morning to decide further steps concerning the situation related to the company. According to a press release issued by the Union following the meeting, the Aluminum management has been instructed not to permit any audits. "We are waiting for the official report of the OHR's commission. The report will be considered as final and official," the Union members emphasized. They add that, in case the Aluminum management permits any kind of police surveillance or financial audit, the Aluminum workers and stock holders, will hold an emergency session of the Stock Holders Assembly and dismiss both the Steering and Supervisory Board, the CEO and the whole Aluminum management and go on strike. "If there is anyone to contest the ownership structure in the Aluminum d.d. Mostar, it should be done in accordance to the law and before a competent court and not by methods of political and police pressures," the release read.

Izetbegovic asks for a copy of his photo with Bin Laden

Oslobodjenje and Onasa report that the President of the BiH Party of Democratic Action (SDA), Alija Izetbegovic, has sent a letter to the chairman of the socialists group in the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, Peter Schieder, with a request to inform him whether he had told the BiH

parliamentarians that he has a photo showing Izetbegovic with Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, and if he had, to send him a copy of that photo. Izetbegovic sent the letter in regard of a statement made by Speaker of the BiH Parliament's House of Peoples Sejfidin Tokic that the BiH parliamentarians had been informed by Schieder about the existence of the photo showing Izetbegovic and Bin Laden. Izetbegovic claims in the letter that this creates a confusion, adding that he has never met in his life with Osama bin Laden. "I am asking you to help me establish the truth in this case," Izetbegovic said in the letter.

Austrian Embassy to BiH says Schieder does not have "Izetbegovic&Bin Laden" photo

Onasa quoted the Austrian Embassy to BiH saying in a press release issued on Thursday that Chairman of Socialist Group in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Peter Schieder did not possess a photo that allegedly shows wartime Bosniak leader Alija Izetbegovic with Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, as the media in BiH have reported. "Schieder only drew attention of the BiH delegation in the Council of Europe that some newspapers had reported about contacts between top Bosnian officials with Bin Laden," read the statement.

OHR supports the election of BiH Federation TV Director Jasmin Durakovic

Oslobodjenje and Dnevni Avaz quoted OHR Spokesman Patrik Volf as saying that the appointment of the Federation Television Director Jasmin Durakovic by the media Council had been legal, contrary to the statement made by Dubravko Lovrenovic, the Federation Deputy Minister for Education, Science, Culture and Sports, and that OHR supported the Council's decision. At a press conference in Sarajevo on Thursday, Volf said that "furthermore, Ivo Komsic, Chairman of the Federation House of Peoples made an inaccurate statement regarding the closure of

HRT terrestrial transmitters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "The two networks that will carry the Federation television signal already cover over 95% of the Federation population between them. PBS, Office of the High Representative and CRA have been working closely with the Government of Croatia, HRT and the Croatian Telecomms Ministry to improve the coverage of each channel (RTVBiH covers currently 83% of the Federation population, and TEST covers 61%). Contrary to yesterday's claims, the development of Federation television is especially designed to enfranchise Croats in public broadcasting in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatian language programming is being purchased, and local Croats have been employed to increase the profile of Croats on the new service. Discussions with Croatian authorities are nearing conclusion regarding the phase out of HRT terrestrial broadcasts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this is primarily because HRT broadcasts cannot be legalized for licenses, licensing and copyright reasons in accordance with Standard International Broadcasting Regulations," Volf emphasized.

BiH Association of Journalists supports Durakovic's appointment

Oslobodjenje reports that the BiH Association of Journalists has been closely following and fully supporting the process of the RTV BiH transformation. The Association is aware of efforts being made by OHR, the BiH Federation TV Council and the Foundation Board of the BiH PBS in the process. It expresses its support to these efforts as well as the appointment of BiH federation TV Director Jasmin Durakovic, who was the BiH Journalist of the year for 2000. At the same time, the Association fiercely protests a campaign of a part of current BiH authorities against the RTV BiH and the BiH Federation TV. According to the Association, the public addresses of Dubravko Lovrenovic and Ivo Komsic represent just a continuation of SDP and some other Alliance for Changes members pressures directed against the freedoms of media and

democratization of the society.

Haris Pasovic says was manipulated by BiH Federation TV Council

Oslobodjenje and Habena news agency report that Haris Pasovic, a reputable manager and producer, who had been encouraged by the BiH Federation Government's Working Group for the Transformation of the TVBiH, primarily because of his professional references, to apply for the position of director of the Federation Television, had not been elected for this function, and this was explained by the assertion that he had failed to present his program of work. However, Pasovic claims the Federation TV Council has been toying with his name and reputation. He emphasizes that he did submit his working program together with the application, as was requested. Pasovic also says that he provided assurances he would submit the rest of working directions after his appointment to the post of the Federation TV director.

"The Council has acted unprofessionally and I think it has manipulated me, and I am no longer interested in this story," said Pasovic. However, he did not want to answer a question whether he would apply for the post if the appointment of Jasmin Durakovic is annulled.

Zekerijah Smajic says he has never applied for the BiH Federation TV Director

Oslobodjenje reports that Zekerijah Smajic, the SENSE news agency director and a famous BiH TV journalist, said he had never applied for the position of the BiH Federation TV Director. Smajic commented on media reports that his candidacy had been unacceptable due to a list of his conditions, which could not be fulfilled.

Tihic and Nakas nominees for the post of the SDA President, Izetbegovic steps down

According to Oslobodjenje, the SDA Presidency late on Thursday nominated Sulejman Tihic and Abdulah Nakas as candidates for the party's President to be elected at the upcoming SDA Congress. The current SDA leader, Alija Izetbegovic, who, according to AFP, announced on Friday he had stepped down as head of the party, will be elected SDA President of Honor and Chairman of the SDA Political Council.

Dnevni Avaz: BiH Federation Interior Minister Muhamed Besic resigned

Dnevni Avaz reports that on Thursday BiH Federation Minister of Interior Muhamed Besic resigned from the office. He did not want to comment on the move. However, in an interview given to the newspaper earlier during the day, Besic said that he did not have support from the Party for BiH, which had nominated him for the post.

The Zepce Croats Coordination Board request that Zepce Group is tried before a special court

According to Oslobodjenje, the members of the Zepce Croats Coordination Board comprising representatives of the HDZ, NHI, Croat veterans and businessmen requested OHR to ensure that the legal proceeding against a group of 15 Croats accused of war crimes committed during the war in the Zepce area against Bosniaks and Serbs is not conducted before the Zenica Cantonal Court. They proposed that some other court is authorized for the process or a special court established to deal with the issue.

Hercgovacka Banka shareholders request return of

employees to their jobs

The Assembly of the Hercegovacka Banka has these days held its session in Mostar and delivered the conclusions to Oslobođenje. According to the newspaper, the shareholders concluded that the Hercegovacka Banka clients, depositors, employees and owners suffered enormous damages by the imposition of the Provisional Administration. They reiterated their request from the first special session of the Assembly that all seized documentation and equipment is returned to the Bank's management, and that all employees continue their work under the Provisional Administration until the completion of the audit. The shareholders demanded OHR to transfer the case of Hercegovacka Banka to the Banking Agency, which was the only authorized body to conduct audit of the Bank's operations according to the valid Federation laws and regulations.

Dnevni List: Hercegovacka Banka shareholders announce launching of international litigation

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Owners of the "Hercegovacka Banka" have decided at their assembly to start an international litigation with regards to the "Hercegovacka Banka" case by hiring an international law firm. The assembly decided to fund the litigation, upon reaching an agreement with an international law firm, by giving it a percentage from the awarded compensation. The owners' PR announces hiring of a consultant company that should make an estimate of the damage incurred since the bank got the provisional administration (...) It was also decided that an expert team be formed to monitor the work of the provisional administration in the subsidiaries of the bank and inform the owners about it. If there are any detrimental procedures the owners will immediately start litigation, it was said at the assembly. It was also agreed that the institute of the private property, which the whole world holds

inviolable, be used in negotiations and litigation. The owners request that the seized documentation be returned to the bank so the bank can start operating normally since nothing has been done with regards to the audit for more than half a year. They also request that all the issued loans and international compensation be collected so the provisional administration cannot put them into the "E" category and write them off which will in turn prevent the provisional administration from creating a fictitious loss. The owners agreed to wait with the litigation until October 25 this year "if the bank's status is not resolved we will go all the way". Owners of the Hercegovacka Banka demand the OHR to delegate the authority in the case to the Banking Agency because, according to owners, the bank was supposed to operate in accordance to their rules and the Agency was the only one that could perform audits, reads Dnevni List.

Dnevni List: Mostar City Administration announces the town center soon to become a huge construction site

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

For over a year now, the City Administration of Mostar has been engaged in the activities concerning the reconstruction of the former Santica Street and the former Boulevard. Despite big investments, the area of what used to be the demarcation line during the war, remained ruined. Many Mostar citizens believe that, if we want to have a normal, joint, integrated town, it is exactly this area that should be reconstructed.

"Our fellow-citizens are mostly aware of what has been done so far, but I would rather focus on what is current. And current are drawing up the project for the residential building in 28 Alekse Santica Street financed by the City, and the preparatory stage for the reconstruction of the residential buildings number 17, 19 and 21 on the Boulevard. The

activities concerning that building interesting as there have been rumours that the works have been suspended so I am taking this opportunity to deny that news since the initial works concentrated on removing the ruins and clearing the site”, Marica Raspudic, the Deputy Head of the Mostar City Administration’s Urban Planning Department.

The pre-war idea to have the flats in the building on the Boulevard converted into business premises and to build flats for the residents on the building’s third floor can finally be implemented.

“After the clearing was organized, preparatory phase followed which included resolving of the property-legal issues and drawing up the project design for the building. We have established contacts with the residents and the City of Mostar has their consent to build apartments for them on the third floor. The reason why it took over a month, and the works have not started yet, is that the City of Mostar will co-finance this building’s reconstruction since the 400 thousand KM, donated by the US Embassy, are not sufficient. Besides, property-legal issue is to be resolved with “Soko-zrakoplovstvo”, the Company that is the bearer of the right to dispose with the apartments. Legal acts have been prepared and we expect to sign the contract. The project realization will depend on the readiness of the “Soko-zrakoplovstvo” Company to transfer the right of disposing of the apartments in those buildings.”

Republika Srpska

Radisic says there will be no joint BiH Army at cost of Council of Europe’s accession

Onasa reports that Serb member of the BiH Presidency Zivko Radisic said on Thursday that he would not sign the document

for BiH's accession to the Council of Europe if it contains an approval for formation of a joint BiH army. Radisic said that he had still not seen the whole accession document, but that the Presidency should formulate its opinion concerning the issue in accordance with the established "BiH Defense Policy." The Presidency is to discuss the document for BiH's accession to the Council of Europe on Friday. The document was sent for verification to the BiH institutions, and beside the Presidency, Council of Ministers and both houses of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, it is to be ratified by the governments of both BiH entities. According to Oslobodjenje, the Republika Srpska National Assembly interrupted its special session on the work of the RS representatives in the BiH state institutions and the BiH Defense Policy without any conclusions late on Wednesday. During the discussion, the issue of the possible establishment of the BiH joint Army was also addressed. The deputies agreed to continue the session on October 26.

Rodoljub Trkulja appointed RS Minister for Agriculture

Both Banja Luka dailies report on Thursday's session of the Republika Srpska Government at which Rodoljub Trkulja was appointed to a position of the RS Agriculture Minister. He replaced Rajko Latinovic who had recently resigned from this position. The Government also discussed the activities of the RS Interior Ministry in regard to the control over work of the tourist facilities. It was concluded that the Interior Ministry in cooperation with the labor inspectors should increase this control.

International Community

The first session of the Civic Forum held in Sarajevo

Dnevni Avaz reports that the first session of the BiH Civic Forum called by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, was held in his Sarajevo residence on Thursday. A participant at the session told the newspaper that the issues of economy, visa regime, and particularly the situation in media were discussed. It was agreed that the next session of the Forum would be held in a month. The participant, who spoke under the terms of anonymity, said that the High Representative had ensured an opportunity for open communication about all issues. According to Dnevni Avaz, Boro Kontic, Friar Petar Andjelovic, Sevima Sali Terzic, Dr. Sacir Filandra, Srdjan Dizdarevic, Ivan Lovrenovic and Zarko Papic attended the session together with Petritsch and his associates including the Head of OHR Press Office, Alexandra Stiglmayer.

OSCE and SFOR launch campaign to raise public awareness of high-level of military expenditures in BiH

All BiH media report that the OSCE Mission to BiH in cooperation with SFOR is launching an initiative aimed at raising public awareness of the high level of military expenditures in Bosnia and Herzegovina. OSCE Head of the Mission to BiH Robert Beecroft told a press conference in Sarajevo on Thursday that the initiative was encouraging the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to demand transparency in the budgeting process and to give a strong reminder to the political leadership that they are accountable to taxpayers. The campaign will be launched in Bosnia and Herzegovina's major towns of Sarajevo, Mostar, Tuzla and Banja Luka, followed by Brcko, Bihac and Gorazde. It will last for 10 weeks and address the ordinary citizen in both entities.

OHR says returnees do not need to de-register from places of their current residence to purchase their pre-war apartments

Dnevni Avaz reports that the privatization of abandoned apartments in the BiH Federation will not start yet because OHR is dissatisfied with the instructions on the implementation of the latest High Representative's property decision drafted by the Ministry for Urban Planning. According to the newspaper, BiH Federation Urban Planning Minister Ramiz Mehmedagic last week submitted the draft instructions to Wolfgang Petritsch's Office. However, the OHR legal experts agree that the instructions contain a provision, which should not be put in the property laws or related decisions at all. "It is about an obligation of the occupancy right holders who are purchasing the abandoned apartments to de-register from the places, which were places of their residence before the repossession of their properties. We believe that this is not needed at all, and that the Federation is attempting to incorporate in the law on the privatization of apartments something, which should be a subject of some other regulations," Head of the OHR Press Office Alexandra Stiglmayer told Dnevni Avaz. She added that the High representative was disappointed with such a way of preventing citizens from purchasing their pre-war apartments. OHR will therefore organize a meeting on the issue on October 22 in Banja Luka, at which the Federation Urban Planning Minister, his Republika Srpska counterpart, both Entity Refugee Ministers and the BiH Minister for Human Rights and Refugees have been invited.

Dnevni List: EU financially supports Mostar

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Economic manager of the EU, Mark Prestley, announced that the EU would provide an aid worth 300.000 EUR0s for the

implementation of the "Strategy of development of the City of Mostar" project during talks with the Mayor of Mostar, Neven Tomic, and Deputy Mayor, Hamdija Jahic. The conference that started in October last year will be continued on November 28 this year at which programs of the Strategy will be presented, reads Dnevni List.

Dnevni List: Association of BiH pensioners living in Croatia writes to the High Representative

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

President of the Association of Pensioners of BiH (who live in Croatia), Stipo Cicak, sent a letter to High Representative for BiH, Wolfgang Petritsch, asking for his help because the Croatian nationals who earned their pensions in BiH have been getting their pensions irregularly. According to Cicak, most of 8500 pensioners, who are suppose to get their pensions from the RS have not received them in 15 months and pensioners who do get them receive between 80 and 200 KMs. Pension Funds from Mostar and Sarajevo, which obliged themselves to provide for 11000 pensioners, are paying in an orderly manner although the Sarajevo Fund did not pay for months of October, November and December last year. "How is it possible that there are three pension funds in the internationally recognized state of BiH that provide pensions at their whim which in turns affects the pensioners", reads Cicak's letter.

Editorials

Dnevni Avaz and Oslobodjenje

Indira Catic wrote in the Avaz Commentary of the Day about unofficial announcements from Pentagon that a thousand of US soldiers will be withdrawn from BiH and Kosovo and sent to Afghanistan. However, Catic quoted SFOR Spokesman Daryl

Morrell as saying that there was no official NATO confirmation of these announcements. The Avaz journalist concluded that the US forces were therefore staying in BiH as an important component of the Stabilization forces. In the Oslobodjenje In Focus column, Azhar Kalamujic commented on a fact SDA leader Alija Izetbegovic was these days again in the focus of media interests for many reasons. They include his repeated announcements he would leave the top post in the party and go to the political pension and accusations of his war links with international terrorists. Kalamujic concludes that this will make it impossible for Izetbegovic to silently leave the political scene, since he will have to spend sometime in correcting his political failures. In another column on the today's Oslobodjenje second page, Hamza Baksic wrote about heavy burden carried by BiH in these difficult times when a worldwide fight against terrorism was in the focus. This burden is in form of, for example, still unresolved issue of war terrorism in BiH in sense of bringing the war criminal to justice. It also includes disputes and different views inside BiH about the role played by mujahedeen during the war as well as their number and links with international terrorists including Osama bin Laden. Baksic concludes that it will take time until everyone understand how dangerous these things are.