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BiH State-related Issues

BiH House of Representatives adopts report on the work of the BiH Council of Ministers

Oslobodjenje reports that, at its session in Sarajevo on Tuesday, the BiH House of Representatives adopted the report on the work of the BiH Council of Ministers in the past year. Presenting the report to the House, the Council Chairman, Zlatko Lagumdzija, said that significant level of cooperation and coordination had been achieved in the period not only between the Council and the Parliament, but also in the Council's relations with the BiH Presidency, Entity Governments and the international organizations in BiH. Dissatisfied with the work of the Council, the SDA and SDS deputies did not support the report.

A BiH state delegation departs to Brussels for talks with NATO leaders

A BiH state political-military delegation headed by the BiH Presidency Chairman Beriz Belkic and the Presidency members, Zivko Radisic and Jozo Krizanovic, departed on Tuesday to Brussels for talks with the NATO leaders about the issues of importance for the BiH accession to the Euro-Atlantic Associations. "I believe we will succeed to make progress on the path leading to the NATO Partnership for Peace program," Belkic told journalists before the departure. The BiH delegation also comprising the Entity Defense Ministers, Armed Forces Commanders and the military advisors is to visit

Brussels at the invitation of the NATO Secretary General George Robertson.

Constitutional reforms

The BiH Federation House of Representatives starts discussion on the amendments to the Entity Constitution

Oslobodjenje reports that the Speaker of the BiH Federation House of Representatives, Ismet Briga, interrupted late on Tuesday the session of the House due to a large number of the deputies (more than 20) interested in taking part in the discussion on the draft amendments to the Entity Constitution. Many of those participating in the Tuesday discussion gave a series of proposals to improve the Government-drafted amendments. The proposals mainly concern the better definition of the status of the ethnic minorities, which could be resolved, according to the deputies, by the adoption of the law on the issue at the level of BiH.

EU says the BiH Constitutional Court's ruling on the constituency of the peoples must be implemented

The European Union notes that two years after the first partial decision of the BiH's Constitutional Court on the equality of the Constituent Peoples, the process of implementation is entering its final stage. Consistent with its emphasis on the concept of BiH's ownership, the European Union strongly urges the political leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure the implementation of the Constitutional Court's Decision. In the context of the 5 October elections, it is necessary that the implementation takes place within the next two weeks. (All Sarajevo dailies carried the EU Press

Release)

Dnevni Avaz: Petritsch foresees long Wednesday meting on the constitutional reforms

The newspaper reports that, on Wednesday, the representatives of the eight main parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina are expected to continue the talks on the constitutional reforms at the Office of the High Representative, under the auspices of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. In a letter of invitation, Petritsch said that, if necessary, he was ready to assist in the talks until late into the night and on Thursday morning. The High Representative reiterated that the deadline for the agreement, also set in the Communique issued following the February 28 session of the Peace Implementation Council's Steering Board in Brussels, is mid-March, so that there was only very little time left. Dnevni Avaz was told in the OHR that the High Representative was very much hoping that the spirit of willingness to compromise from the last Friday's meeting would prevail during the Wednesday's meeting as well and lead to an overall agreement.

Federation

Dr. Franjo Tudjman bridge opened in Capljina

The reconstructed bridge over the Neretva river, which was named "Dr. Franjo Tudjman" by the decision of Capljina Municipal Council comprising mostly of BiH HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) members, was opened on Tuesday in Capljina, all Federation media reported. Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Governor Dragan Vrankic (HDZ) opened the bridge and announced at the ceremony that the bridge was given its name "as a sign of gratitude to the first Croatian President for his merits and concern for preservation of Croats in Capljina and the wider area". The opening of the reconstructed Capljina bridge, which had been destroyed by the former Yugoslav People's Army

(JNA) in 1992, was attended by several thousands of citizens. Two anthems were played at the ceremony – the BiH anthem and the Croatian anthem. Unrecognized HDZ leader Ante Jelavic also attended the opening ceremony, together with other senior officials of HDZ and Croat National Assembly (HNS). Tudjman family members were not present. There were no representatives of the BiH Alliance for Changes either. At a session Monday evening, the FBiH Government assessed the naming of the Capljina bridge without consent of the Federal Government as inappropriate. However, BiH Federation Prime Minister Alija Behmen told the BiH Federation TV late on Tuesday that the name of the bridge was not so important such as a need that it serves its main purpose, which is to link two banks of the Neretva river.

Republika Srpska

SDS considering to participate in the elections also in BiH Federation

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

President of the SDS stated that his party was ready for the forthcoming elections and that SDS was even considering to participate in the elections in the BiH Federation. In a report from Tuesday's press conference, Glas Srpski quoted Kalinic as saying that he was an optimist, regarding Wednesday's meeting of the High Representative and leaders of BiH political parties, related to the constitutional changes.

Reactions to the SDS Congress held on Monday in Banja Luka

The OHR Spokesman, Oleg Milisic did not want to comment on the election of Dragan Kalinic for SDS President, explaining that the OHR never comments on inner party developments. However, Milisic added that SDS needed a reform urgently. The Spokesman

of the RS Party of Independent Social Democrats, Rajko Vasic stated for Nezavisne Novine that, by the election of Dragan Kalinic, nothing would be changed in the SDS. However, he assessed that Kalinic's election was bad for SDS as well as for the RS. A high Official of the Serb Radical Party, Mirko Blagojevic stated that RS had no perspective neither with SDS nor with Dragan Kalinic. On behalf of Democratic Party, Borislav Bojic said that Kalinic was a bad choice and added that the SDS President was a personification of a syndrome of Chinese communism.

RS leadership meets with representatives of Serb Orthodox Church

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Glas Srpski reports on Tuesday's meeting of the RS Officials (RS President and Vice President, Mirko Sarovic and Dragan Cavic, RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic and RS National Assembly Speaker, Dragan Kalinic) with the representatives of the Serb Orthodox Church (SPC), led by Metropolitan Nikolaj. After the meeting, Sarovic stated that the topic of discussion was the repossession of the Serb Orthodox Church property, in the BiH Federation, in Sarajevo in particular. Metropolitan Nikolaj stressed out that not even one claim submitted in the Federation for repossession of property, submitted by SPC was not solved.

International Community

The OSCE Chairman visits BiH, meets with top country's officials

The OSCE Chairman in Office and the Portuguese Foreign Minister Jaime Gama said Tuesday he was hopeful for BiH's future after meeting a number of local and international officials, AFP and local media reported. "Bosnia and

Herzegovina has firmly decided to move forward, not to be an assisted country, but to be a self-propelled country," Gama told a press conference in Sarajevo. Gama said he was sure BiH would "be equal to other countries in the region" in searching for a place in an integrated Europe. "The situation (in the country) is more secure, institutions are working better and there is room for a reduced level of international presence, which is the main objective (of the international community)," Gama said. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe had been involved in organizing and financing elections after the peace agreement. Its mission is now focused on institution building and the establishment of security structures after BiH authorities adopted a law last year enabling the October 2002 elections to be locally organized. On the first day of his two-day visit to Bosnia, Gama met with a number of local and international officials, including BiH Presidency Chairman Beriz Belkic, BiH Council of Ministers Chairman Zlatko Lagumdzija, top BiH Federation leaders and the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. On Wednesday, Gama will travel to Banja Luka for talks with the RS authorities.

Petritsch meets with Gama

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, held talks today in Sarajevo with the Chairman in Office of the OSCE, Portuguese Foreign Minister Jaime Gama. Foreign Minister Gama was accompanied during his visit to the OHR by the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, Robert Beecroft. The High Representative briefed Foreign Minister Gama on the streamlined structure of IC operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, noting OSCE's integral role in the new cabinet and task force configuration. He also discussed the latest developments in reducing the size of the Entity armed forces, and he commended OSCE and Ambassador Beecroft for providing leadership in this area. Foreign Minister Gama expressed support for the High Representative's position, noting that "it is very important that constitutional reform can come about through agreement,

through dialogue among the political parties." (Dnevni Avaz, Jutarnje Novine, Nezavisne Novine and Vecernji List carried the Press Release)

OHR, EC and OSCE announce re-launch of the Free Media Help Line

Dnevni Avaz reports that the OHR, the European Commission and the OSCE on Tuesday announces the re-launch of the Free Media Help Line. This confidential telephone service provides assistance to journalists and media outlets in the event of threats, intimidation or interference against them. "Although the OSCE has terminated its media-related activities, the continued operation of the Free Media Help Line remains an essential service for journalists across Bosnia and Herzegovina. OHR has taken on this task in order to ensure that this facility can continue its vital work. This would not be possible without the generous financial support provided by the European Union and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation," Head of the OHR Press Office Alexandra Stiglmayer told journalists in Sarajevo. OHR Press Release

SDHR Matthias Sonn Highlights the Primacy of Dayton

The Dayton Agreement and the promotion of the concept of "ownership" have together prevented Bosnia and Herzegovina from becoming a protectorate, Senior Deputy High Representative Matthias Sonn told an international conference in Paris on Tuesday. "The Dayton blueprint outlines the structures that BiH needed in order to become a sovereign and democratic state," the SDHR said. "By emphasizing domestic responsibility, the International Community has consciously and progressively sought to retreat, systematically from areas where the domestic authorities demonstrate the will and the competence to act on their own behalf." The SDHR was addressing a conference on "Humanitarian Interventions and Crisis Management: the Lessons of the Balkan Experience,"

organized by the Institute for International and Strategic Relations. (FENA news agency carried the Press Release) Click here for the SDHR's Speech

First International Sava Basin Commission meeting held in OHR Brcko

The Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe convened the first meeting of the International Sava Basin Commission at Office of the High Representative (OHR) in Brcko on Tuesday, the OHR said in a press release. The meeting was chaired by Director of the Working Table II of Stability Pact Beate Grzeski and hosted by the Brcko Supervisor Henry Clarke. (ONASA carried the Press Release)

OHR comments on the statement of RS President Mirko Sarovic on Karadzic

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Commenting on a statement of the RS President Mirko Sarovic that Radovan Karadzic was a symbol of the Serb people's struggle for freedom, the OHR Spokesman Oleg Milisic stated that it was his private opinion and warned the RS President that the arrest of the war crimes indictees was an obligation of the RS, coming from the DPA. Five days after Sarovic's statement given in an OBN program "Telering", Milisic stated for Nezavisne Novine that the RS can no longer ignore its obligations.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Interview with Dr. Josip Vrbosic, Croatian Ambassador to BiH

Interview conducted by Dino Mikulandra (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Commenting on the harsh reactions coming from Sarajevo with regard to the meeting of the representatives of the Croat political parties and Racan, Vrbosic stated: 'Sarajevo is

right when it says that they do not want ‘foreign’ help. However, Prime Minister Racan was also right when he called leaders of the Croats parties to Zagreb in order to be informed about the position of the Croat people in BiH before the elections. It is not good to deny that right. It is the obligation that Croatia undertook as a signatory of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Also, Racan stated that he would like to meet with the leaders of other BiH parties. Croatia believes that BiH Croats are strong enough to win ‘their place in the sun’ together with other two constituent peoples. Croatia will help them in that process, however, on no account, this help will not transform into interfering in internal affairs of a neighboring country.’

Asked to comment on the information that Ante Jelavic, an unrecognized HDZ President, asked the Croatian Helsinki Committee to help him and announced that he will file a suit to the Court in Strassbourg because of the annulment of the election results and removal of 165 Croat officials in BiH, Vrbosic stated: ‘It is not a simple problem. As you know Mr. Jelavic was removed by the decision of the HR from state and party positions and this decision should be respected. At the same time, due to this situation, he did not become a second-class citizen and I do not see that there is anything disputable if he tries to use some legal remedies in order to bring down consequences of this decision to a reasonable level. It is up to competent bodies to decide on this issue. As far as the HR is concerned, by his moves he has to show an absolute impartiality, and the sanctions, by which he reacts to unacceptable activities of some officials in BiH, have to be grounded on equal criterion, regardless of national or any other affiliation of the perpetrator.’

With regard to the relations between the Croatian Embassy and IC, Vrbosic stated: ‘I would judge the contacts between the Croatian Embassy and representatives of the International Community as correct and professional. Croatia is a part of

the IC and our policy towards BiH is in accordance with the IC policy, and in that context we have not had some special disagreements so far, and I believe that we shall not have any disagreements in future as well. Naturally, certain differences in daily strategic moves or statements with regard to some issues are possible, however there is a lot of mutual understanding and tolerance, and there is no any reason that the things change in future. I would stress as my greatest success the fact that the relations between the two countries progress, although not fast enough as some people perhaps want. On the other side I am disappointed by that slowness and unbelievable amount of energy, which is necessary to overcome bureaucratic and other obstacles in order to make even the smallest progress.'

Reuters: NATO drops reward reminders in Karadzic stronghold

Peacekeepers scattered mock banknotes printed with pictures of Radovan Karadzic from helicopters on Tuesday night to promote a $5 million reward for the war crimes fugitive, a spokesman said on Wednesday. They dropped the leaflets near where they believe he is hiding, close to the town of Foca in eastern Bosnia, a wooded and mountainous region where swoops by the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) twice failed to nab Karadzic two weeks ago. A hotline phone number and e-mail address were printed on the back. A spokesman said on Wednesday SFOR was assisting a U.S. campaign to tempt locals to tell them where the elusive former Bosnian Serb leader is hiding, and claim the promised reward. "It's important that people recognise there is a reward of $5 million for Karadzic," spokesman Scott Lundy told Reuters by telephone. "The idea is to get the information to the people in an eye-catching way." The U.S. embassy has already begun an aggressive media campaign to promote the reward, plastering posters across the country and broadcasting frequent radio and television advertisements. However many local Serbs remain

fiercely loyal to Karadzic, their political leader during BiH's 1992-95 war, and posters have been torn down or matched with pro-Karadzic graffiti. Karadzic was indicted twice by the U.N. war crimes tribunal for genocide during the Sarajevo siege and the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of up to 8,000 Muslim men and boys. He remains at large six years after the end of the war, and is believed to move between remote areas of eastern Bosnia and the Yugoslav republic of Montenegro, where he was born.

Editorial

Dnevni List: Arrogance, lack of power and ignorance are being esteemed

Written by Miso Relota (Provided by OHR Mostar)

The commentary says that Dnevni List was totally right when they persistently claimed during the last months, that the Croat people entered a new stage of the pressures exerted against them. The author mentions 'the post-election theft', arranged by international tutors with a support of domestic, 'pro-European oriented' politicians, Hercegovacka Bank, Aluminij, criminal charges issued against the leaders of the Croat National Assembly, Leutar case, Zepce Group, returnees-related incidents in Travnik and Zenica, trial against journalist Zvonimir Cilic, desecration of the graveyard in Donja Dreznia etc. Criticizing the work of the Federation Government, the commentary also says that as the elections are approaching a process of impoverishing of the Cantons and Municipalities with a Croat majority has reached perfection. According to the author, the Government is more interested in the Capljina bridge, Algerians, stronger relations with Iran, and in what their neighbors in Croatia and FRY do, than in the social problems of its citizens. The commentary refers to the statement given by Mihajlo Butigan, the Minister of Finances

of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, saying that a Croat part of the HN Cantonal Government will not accept to divide the funds from the Cantonal budget according to a fifty-fifty principle, since the Municipalities with the Croat majority make 70% of the budget.

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- Investigation continues into the work of the humanitarian organizations: Tracing missing millions

Dnevni Avaz

- SDA decides that Muhamed Sacirbegovic is no longer its member

Jutarnje Novine

- OSCE Chairman's visit to BiH: BiH yet closer to the European integration

Glas Srpski

- Modrica: a threat to a journalist
- At football tournament in Brcko: red card to Ravnogorac

Nezavisne Novine

- OSCE Chairman, Jaime Gama in Sarajevo: elections as planned (a picture of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch and OSCE Chairman, Jaime Gama, published on the cover page)
- ICG on situation in the region: FRY impedes implementation of Dayton Peace Agreement

Dnevni List

- Final decision of Unions of Elementary and Secondary School: Warning strike in all school in HNC tomorrow
- Dr. Franjo Tudjman bridge opened in Capljina: Governor Vrankic and mother of legendary Bozan Simovic cut the ribbon

Vecernji List

- Vecernjak discovers: Scandal with funding of defence of The Hague prisoner: Kordic’s defence without money – Kordic refuses to see delegation of Central Bosnia HDZ
- Capljina: Tudjman’s bridge opened
- Banja Luka HDZ requests emergency Convention of the party: HDZ is neither Jelavic’s nor Petritsch’s