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BiH State-related Issues

BiH Premier: The world supports multiethnic and democratic BiH

Upon the return of a BiH delegation from the UN General Assembly summit in New York, the chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Zlatko Lagumdžija, announced that, by 2010, BiH will become a rotating member of the UN Security Council and a full-fledged member of the Council of Europe, and will fulfil most requirements for the admission to the European Union. Lagumdžija also stressed, referring to his bilateral meeting with a numerous heads of states and senior officials, that the world fully supports the multiethnic and democratic BiH, which is strengthening its state institutions and implementing economic reform. He stressed that these positive processes can no longer be stopped.

BiH banks post profit for first time since 92-95 war

Fena news agency reports that BiH banking system posted profits for the first time since the 1992-95 war, with the

total value of funds placed in savings accounts in the Federation rising by 38 percent since last year. A more significant increase in the value of savings deposits was expected in the last quarter of 2001, the news agency added, quoting figures from the federation banking agency.

The main reason for the increase was believed to be the introduction of euro cash on January 1, since all euro-zone national currencies deposited in banks are to be automatically converted into euros free of charge. This was hoped to increase popular interest in savings accounts, which were disrupted when funds deposited in banks were lost at the outset of the war. Funds in savings banks of the Federation increased by almost 100 million of the country's KM in the third quarter of 2001, rising from 496.8 to 595.5 billion KM, FENA said. In the first nine months of the year, banks in the Federation showed a profit of 6.2 million KM, it added.

Presidency adopts decision on dual citizenship with Croatia, Yugoslavia

Fena news agency reported that the BiH Presidency adopted the decision on Tuesday to initiate a procedure for the start of negotiations, and the signing of an agreement on dual citizenship with the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The presiding member of the Presidency, Jozo Krizanovic, said after the meeting that it was not realistic to expect an agreement on dual citizenship with the Republic of Croatia to be ready for signing until mid-December, when a meeting of the inter-state cooperation council is to take place. "I think that this is too short a time for the signing of this agreement," added Krizanovic.

Commenting on the move of the Presidency, OHR spokesperson, Alexandra Stiglmayer, said that she is confident that the bilateral agreement about dual citizenship between BiH and Croatia will be signed by the deadline set by the High Representative – January 1, 2003. (Note: this is a misquote –

A.S. was referring to the deadline set in the Citizenship Law)

BiH “Intelligence” Service to Be Set Up Soon?

Nezavsine Novine quote an anonymous source, as saying that an agency for information and protection will soon be formed at BiH level. It will be tasked with collecting and processing information relevant for implementation of BiH and international criminal laws and with protecting domestic and foreign officials and facilities. The source adds that this is not about setting up a state level intelligence service, saying that the agency will have three departments with clearly defined tasks and that the members of this agency will not have the authority to arrest. The paper says that a working group comprising of experts from both entities, Ministry of Civil Affairs and Communications, OHR and IPTF already completed working version of the draft law on BiH agency for information and protection and will send it to the Council of Ministers in 10 days for discussion. Even though the RS Government first rejected this proposal as non-constitutional, they have changed their mind only a few days later.

Three secret services spy on each other

Can the three current secret services that legally exist in BiH be joined to work on protection of national state interests? It is the question that will be probably answered by the High Representative, reads Slobodna Dalmacija. It is hard to believe that the parties involved will reach a solution and form a joint secret service because all of them believe that they are entitled to have their own services.

“Just analyze the absurd relations between the SNS and AID. They are funded from the same Federation budget, nobody knows who they are responsible to, their Heads are appointed by the Bosniak and Croat members of the Presidency and the services are a possible source of crisis because they collide and confront each other. As long as the intelligence-secret

services are not established at the state level, BiH will be an unsafe and unstable country because that provides room for existence of parallel institutions", says a senior international official who wished to stay anonymous (...), reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

SFOR: Generals of three BiH armies ready to restructure into a single military force

Beta news agency quotes SFOR Commander Major General, Stiven Bloom, as saying that generals from all three BiH armies expressed their readiness in Tuzla today to have all three armies re-structured into one BiH Army. After the meeting with generals of the Federation Army and the RS Army, Bloom said that "generals of all three BiH armies are ready to meet all requirements in order to restructure the existing armies in BiH into one BiH army. Major General Bloom also said that RS Army General Andric expressed his readiness to reorganize the troops he commands and to immediately convert 5 armored vehicles into de-mining machines.

Federation

Alliance for Changes dissatisfied with privatization of apartments in the RS and the Federation

Oslobodjenje reports that the Alliance for Change has tasked the Federation Ministry of Urban Planning and environment with finding modalities to adequately regulate the privatization of apartments in this entity. Safet Halilovic of the Party for BiH told the daily that, up to now, all apartments in the Federation have been purchased with certificates or for the three percent of their nominal value. "The state really does not have any use of this," Halilovic stressed. He added that the present Law on privatization of apartments in the RS

stipulates that apartments have to be purchased for at least 25 percent of cash, which negatively affects the right of Bosniaks and Croats who are returning to this entity. Thus, Halilovic suggested that the Federation should have a similar regulation for the remaining 85,000 apartments which still need to be privatized. "If they are sold for only 5,000 a piece, this entity could secure nearly 400 million KM," he said, adding that the Alliance expects the Ministry to also apply this new regulation (if passed) to all those who have already purchased their apartments retroactively.

Public institutions deposited over 30 million DM in Hercegovacka Banka

In an interview with Dnevni Avaz, the spokesman of the Provisional Administrator of Hercegovacka Banka, Johan Verheyden, said that public institutions, such as the Federation government, Pensions Fund, and a number of entity and Cantonal Ministries have deposited over 30 million DM into Hercegovacka Banka. He explained that the Federation government had about 17 and the Pension Fund about 13 million KM in the bank at the time of the imposition of Provisional Administration. "I honestly do not know when or how these funds will be returned," said Verheyden, explaining that public institutions come at the fourth place on the list of priorities of the Administration.

Deputy Finance Minister: We will not sue the OHR because of 17 million KM frozen in Hercegovacka Banka

Commenting on the recent statement of the Federation Finance Minister, Nikola Grabovac, that the Ministry will sue the OHR because of the "robbery of 17 million KM in Hercegovacka Banka", his deputy, Sefika Hafizovic, denied that such move has ever been discussed in the Ministry. "If Grabovac has an intention to do that, he could do file charges only as a citizen, because the Ministry of Finance will certainly not do

that," she said, adding that she believes that the action in Hercegovacka Banka was justified. Speaking for Dnevni Avaz, Hafizovic also said she does not believe that 17 millions which belong to the Federation government have been stolen.

Mostar's Aluminij can resume its record-breaking production: Daimler Chrysler warned the Federation Government regarding attacks on Aluminij

Vecernji List reports that the Federation Government has finally given up on taking over the Aluminij Mostar after its powerful partner, the German-American Corporation "Daimler Chrysler" stood in its defence. Vecernji List learns from sources close to Debis, which is Daimler Chrysler's business service, that the Federation PM, Alija Behmen and Federation Minister of Energy and Industry, Hasan Becirevic, have been discretely told that BiH was risking to lose few other contracts believed to be worth millions of Euros if the Aluminij Mostar is destabilized. The same message was conveyed to Zlatko Lagumdzija during his official visit to Berlin. In addition to that he was told not try and change the ownership structure in the Aluminij. Vecernji List says that the biggest loser, if the Aluminij stopped working, would be the Elektroprivreda of Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the current contract which was brokered by the Daimler Chrysler and Debis, Elektroprivreda pockets 50 million US\$ from the Aluminij. Debis has also assured Elektroprivreda that they would be supplying the Aluminij with electricity in the next ten years and has announced possibilities of investing into SODA factory of Lukavac which has given the Federation Government extra credits in talks with the SODA workers. Of course, the Debis also announced its biggest project worth some 250 million US\$ which is the second phase of the Electrolysis plant in Mostar. Aluminij Mostar is the biggest construction site in BiH. So it is no wonder that the HR stood in its defence. He appears to have recognized that the winds are blowing from the right direction. From the West, reads

Vecernji List.

HPT Mostar ready to sue Toby Robinson

Vecernji List reads that the dispute between the HPT Mostar and the Provisional Administrator of the Hercegovacka Banka, Toby Robinson, over the ownership over the Eronet Company, should be settled sometime this week. It is hard to estimate who is going to get the company. HPT's management, led by Slavo Kukic, claims that the Eronet was illegally sold to Croherc, Hercegovina Osiguranje and Alpina Komerc of Siroki Brijeg whilst on the other hand, the Office of the Provisional Administrator claims that the Eronet cannot be returned to the HPT by an administrative decision. The OHR and the HR have been informed about the case. The HPT's management requested Wolfgang Petritsch to rule in favour of them on many occasions.

"I have exhorted Petritsch about the problems we are suffering with regards to the return of the Eronet to the HPT's ownership structure. I think it is a serious problem that needs to be solved ASAP to the benefit of our users and to our benefit", says Kukic (...) Some sources say that HPT is even ready to sue Toby Robinson over the issue.

Public opinion poll of Dnevni List: 40% of citizens support initiative to create a Croat block of parties

According to the public opinion poll, 40% of the questioned persons support the initiative of Milenko Brkic on the establishment of the Croat Democratic Block, that all parties with a Croat prefix would join. 10% of the questioned persons do not support it. 40 % of the questioned persons are not interested in this issue, while 10% of them are not familiar with this initiative.

Practice of intimidation of political opponents is becoming frequent in Mostar

Slobodna Dalmacija carries a story about two shameful attacks on public persons that occurred recently in Mostar, when the Chair of the FTV's Steering Board, Slavo Kukic, and a Mostar's HSS official, Milivoj Gagro, were threatened, and in Gagro's case, even attacked (...) Slavo Kukic said that he was not going to ask for police protection because he believes that the police would not react the way they should adding that he informed the OSCE about the ordeal. BiH media report that Kukic's position at the Mostar University (West) has been compromised by the Dean of the Teachers' Training College, Simun Musa, who is becoming ever so powerful at the University. The threats were condemned by the OHR and journalist's association "Apel" (...) The threats and attacks on Kukic and Musa surprise Mostarians because the political battleground in Mostar has so far been fair with regards to relations between the ruling and opposition parties. The recent incidents show that the struggle for a democratic society is far from finish, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

Republika Srpska

Bosnian Serb camp guards get 15 to three years in prison

All media in BiH reported that the three Bosnian Serbs who admitted running a notorious prison camp where many Bosniaks and Croats were tortured during the war were on Tuesday given sentences ranging from 15 to three years in jail for crimes against humanity. Dusko Sikirica, the former commander in charge of security at the Keraterm camp, received the heaviest sentence of 15 years while co-defendants Dragan Kolundzija and Damir Dosen, two former senior guards, were sentenced to three and five years respectively.

Sikirica, charged at the outset with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes agreed to enter a guilty plea for crimes against humanity. Kolundzija and Dosen also pleaded guilty to crimes against humanity after being charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Kotorsko – Ban Suspended

Banja Luka and Sarajevo dailies quote OHR Spokesman Kevin Sullivan as saying that the Human Right's Chamber has withdrawn the provisional measures suspending all construction in Kotorsko and that the Office of the High Representative is ready to lift its own ban on certain portions of the Kotorsko site pending the final decision of the Human Rights Chamber. "The ban on the portions of the site that are registered as privately owned will remain in place pending the Chamber's final decision. However, Office of the High Representative will only narrow the ban on other portions of the site after the Doboj authorities resolve the remaining defects related to its original waiver request", said Sullivan.

Deputy RS NA Speaker Zoran Djerić Says Government Reshuffle on 28th of November

Today's edition of Nezavisne Novine carries a short interview with Deputy RS National Assembly Speaker and the Vice-president of PDP, Zoran Djerić, in which he explains his views on government reshuffle. Djerić says that the RS Prime Minister is preparing the Government reshuffle. "I presume that the RS National Assembly session will be held on the 28th of November where the Prime Minister will present the proposal for the reshuffle of the government", said Djerić.

Brcko District

Chinese Ambassador visit Brcko District

Radio Brcko District reported that the Chinese Ambassador to BH, Lee Shu Jan, visited Brcko on Tuesday and met with its Deputy-mayor, Ivan Krndelj. Ambassador Shu Jan was interested in exploring the possibility of investments into the District economy, especially into the duty-free zone. Krndelj informed a guest about what the District can offer to Chinese businessmen and companies emphasizing that certain activities on opening the duty-free zone are presently being carried out in the District.

After the talks with the District officials, the Chinese Ambassador will visit the OHR in order to be informed about activities of the OHR in the District and its view of the economic and political situation in the District.

International Community

High Representative in the US lobbying for the continued efforts in peace process

Fena news agency reports (and carry most Federation media) that the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, is on a several day visit to New York and Washington D.C. where he is lobbying for the continuation of support to the peace process in BiH. Speaking at yesterday's press conference, OHR spokesman, Kevin Sullivan, said that Petritsch is to meet with the Spanish Foreign Minister, Josepo Pique, and with the UNDP Director, Mark Malloch Brown, with whom he will discuss the future role of this organisation in BiH. At the end of the week, the High Representative will visit Washington D.C. where he is to meet with the Deputy US Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, and other senior State Department officials, as well as representatives of the World Bank and the IMF.

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Editorials

Dnevni List: Armed SFOR soldiers raid into premises of HTV Mostar and Croat Radio Mostar

By Leo Plockinic

Yesterday at 10 o'clock, members of the SFOR unit of a mixed composition raided into the premises of the Croat Radio Mostar and HTV Mostar. Allegedly, according to them, it is about an inspection, which was announced earlier and which is a part of the mandate of the SFOR Mission in BiH. French and Spanish soldiers were armed with Heckler rifles, and they were communicating through handsets.

The SFOR raid scared personnel of two media outlets and it

rather disturbed Croat journalists. Everything reminded of earlier military actions taken against Erotel, Hercegovacka Bank, Mostar Municipal Council etc. However, this time the target of the SFOR soldiers were Croat media and journalists, whose rights were trampled down in the most brutal way by 'the Peace Stabilization Forces'. According to one officer, who was standing at the entrance and who wanted to stay anonymous, the SFOR conducted 'the inspection' in accordance with the request of the Communication Regulatory Agency from Sarajevo and in a coordination with their Commander in the military base Ortijes near Mostar. According to Josef Macrey, the SFOR Spokesperson in Sarajevo, it is about 'a routine, announced control, whose purpose is to check up whether the communication equipment of these media outlets is in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement'. Asked whether he is aware of the fact that the DPA was signed 6 years ago, he did not give us a satisfactory answer, except from the part of the answer that says that the obligations from the Agreement are being implemented. We have contacted the CRA and we received the answer from Amela Odobasic, who after she had checked up the information, told us that the CRA did not send any request on the raid into these two media outlets. However, according to well-informed sources, close to the CRA, it has been claimed that 'after they received a series of information from viewers and other persons, the CRA decided to suggest the SFOR to make an inspection, which is a part of the SFOR mandate in BiH, and they can also make unannounced inspections'.

Asked whether the CRA will protect the Croat electronic media, Mrs. Odobasic told us that the CRA can only suggest the SFOR not to be violent towards the personnel and journalists, and that these inspections are a part of their mandate.

Journalists, who wanted to stay anonymous, gave us a few statements and according to them, the SFOR soldiers were not violent. They were polite. However, the fact that they showed up fully armed scared and disturbed them, because it is not an

appropriate way to make any kind of inspection.

Many people believe that the DPA was severely violated by this raid of military forces into premises of the media outlets, and that this case should be examined exclusively because of such behavior of the SFOR. Also, a few International Charters on Rights and Freedom of Media have been violated and nothing, including the SFOR and its mandate can justify it. One TV technician told us: 'At the moment, when I was working on a TV report, an armed soldier showed up at the door and I was so scared that I did not know how to behave. I was only thinking as to how to leave the premises, but I was not allowed to do it at first. Later on they allowed me to leave the room.' A journalist who wanted to stay anonymous, stated: 'I have never experienced so violent act and if I have to die for my freedom, I will do it...'

According to Vlatko Menix, the Head of the HTV Mostar, the SFOR officers behaved decently and the inspection was made successfully. Tomislav Mazal, the Head of the Croat Radio Mostar, stated that the inspection in his media outlet was made without any problems and the SFOR soldiers behaved decently.