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BiH State-related Issues

Promised pension will not be paid because Tokic and Spiric are to start celebrating upcoming holidays

The BiH pensioners and disabled persons will not received promised pensions by the end of the year, which were expected to be paid from the succession money. In an article on the issue, Oslobodjenje reminded that the BiH House of Peoples failed to adopt the law on the use of the funds BiH had gained from the process of the succession to the former Yugoslavia properties. The draft was returned to the BiH Council of Ministers, which is expected to amend it at its session scheduled for Thursday and deliver the amended law into the

urgent parliamentary procedure. However, the deputy speaker of the House, Ilija Simic, told the newspaper that his colleagues from the Collegium, Sejfidin Tokic and Nikola Spiric, had no interest to call the session since they were to start celebrating upcoming holidays as of Friday.

Tokic to request suspension of the entity Constitutions' parts

According to Oslobodjenje, Speaker of the BiH House of Peoples Sejfidin Tokic told journalists in Sarajevo on Wednesday that he would request the BiH Constitutional Court to suspend part or even entire entity Constitutions if its decision on the equal constitutional status of all three peoples throughout BiH is not implemented by the next week. Tokic emphasized that the Court had a right to do so following the expiration of all the deadlines for its decision implementation.

Tokic says the BiH House of Peoples has passed more laws than it had been passed in all previous mandates

At a press conference held in Sarajevo on Wednesday, Speaker of the BiH House of Peoples Sejfidin Tokic said that the House had passed in the first nine months of the year 41 laws, and 53 decisions, agreements or resolutions, which was more than the House had done in any of the previous mandates. According to Dnevni Avaz, Tokic assessed as the biggest political failure in this year the non-harmonization of the entity Constitutions with the BiH Constitutional Court's decision on constituent peoples.

Spiric rejects RS pensioners' accusations

Deputy Speaker of the BiH House of Peoples Nikola Spiric expressed his regret Republika Srpska pensioners were not aware of a fact they were just to be used as a social factor in terms of making pressures for the adoption of the law on

use of the succession money. He said that he could not agree that his engagement was against the RS pensioners' interests.

Vecernji List: BiH at the beginning of the 21st century – events that marked 2001 in BiH

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

There is no other state in the world that is politically established and organized like BiH, with such a huge administrative apparatus and the international community as the decisive factor. In such a complicated system, people lived through this year on the edge of poverty, experiencing rapid violations of human rights, crime and corruption in abundance, as well as backwardness in all aspects. All the powerlessness of this state where all world and European associations keep their fingers crossed behind their backs while saying nice words, is reflected in its incapability of confronting even the smallest social disturbances, such as piracy. There is almost no well known product that has not been forged in BiH, says Vecernji List. Scandals and political events are predominant in such a state. Vecernji List says they are offering their choice of the ten events that marked the year of 2001 in BiH, which will be impacting the society in the following period as well.

Change of authorities: Vecernji List says that the arrival of the Alliance for Changes and the change of authorities is the event of the year because it caused a number of tectonic tumults in both the politics and society. It was clear ever since the elections that the international community was supporting the change of politicians because they could not find a common ground with the old authorities. Although many envisaged the Alliance would have a short life, it sustained owing to a strong support of the IC, says the daily.

Proclaiming Croat self-rule: Provisional Croat self-rule was proclaimed at the HNS session of 3 March and its proclamation

was the highest point of its existence because it sank into oblivion only one month after establishment, especially following the raid into Hercegovacka Banka. Croat Ministers Mijo Anic (Federation Defense Minister) and Nikola Grabovac (Federation Minister for Finance and Deputy Prime Minister) were the major executors of it because while Grabovac was in charge of cutting all financial flows that the self-rule "fed" on, Anic managed to get soldiers back to the barracks after the HVO had been disbanded. Even the HDZ hard-liners now admit the self-rule was a failed project. Still, the Alliance made a major gaffe by launching a rigged trial against Ante Jelavic, whom Petritsch dismissed from all political functions after those events, says Vecernji List.

Raid into Hercegovacka Banka: Persons with black hoods and SFOR soldiers raided the branch offices of Hercegovacka Banka in the morning hours of 6 April in order to confiscate the documentation and introduce provisional administration. The operation did not go smoothly. Several SFOR vehicles were damaged, and the demonstrators literally held hostage a few soldiers in Grude. The Provisional Administrator Toby Robinson, a murderer with a baby face, as some people call her, has been in conflict with the depositors, shareholders, management, employees, numerous politicians and the Federation Government (Deputy Prime Minister Nikola Grabovac, to be more precise) ever since. When everyone started becoming nervous, she came up with the first results in the early days of November. She broadened the circle of her enemies by the recent act of publishing lists with the major suspects on her lists being Monitor M and HPT Mostar.

Search after bin Laden's followers: After the September 11 events, it turned out that the former, SDA authorities approved of the arrival of bin Laden's terrorists to the country. The Minister of the Interior lost the position for his bombastic announcement that 70 Taliban were coming to BiH.

Kupreskics released: Judge Patricia Wald, during the appeals procedure, acquitted Zoran, Vlatko and Mirjan Kupreskic, and in the explanation of her ruling, requested the Tribunal to work in accordance with the standards of the civilized world.

Shutdown of HRT signal and launch of FTV: Beyond any doubt, the media event of the year. All the anger of the public and criticisms are focused on the FTV's poor program. Its informative program is its weakest point since it did not meet the criteria of modern investigative journalism. The lack of the Croatian language on the FTV is filled with broadcasts that the HTV gave them for free. However, the Croat side is still complaining about the poor representation of the Croatian language and the public in Sarajevo is bitter at the program quality.

Pre-trial release for the Bosniak officers and Biljana Plavsic: The pre-trial release for the officers of the BiH Army caused more public attention than the release of Biljana Plavsic. If Sefer Halilovic gets back to the position of Minister for Refugees and Welfare, the current Government will be discredited.

Passing of the Permanent Election Law: The next parliamentary elections will be held on 5 October 2002, and for the first time under the patronage of the Election Commission instead of the OSCE. BiH House of Representatives passed the Election Law on 21 August and the House of Peoples verified it two days later, and thus the election-law saga ended. The daily then carries some of the Law stipulations. (Note: Next to the text, Vecernji List carries a picture of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, although he is not mentioned in the text.)

Events in Trebinje and Banja Luka: The way in which the Republika Srpska functions, was explained in Trebinje and Banja Luka in the early days of May. Foundation stone for the reconstruction of the Osman-Pasha Mosque was supposed to be laid in Trebinje on 5 May, but Serb volunteers, 1500 of them,

interrupted the ceremony by showering those present with rocks, on which occasion a few people were wounded. Two days later, the same, but more extreme incident happened in Banja Luka, where a foundation stone was to be laid for the Ferhadija Mosque, says Vecernji List, stating in addition the consequences of the violence.

Srecko Novak – false or real Bishop: Vecernji List writes about a scandal surrounding the coronation ceremony that Bishop Srecko Novak led in Grude, Capljina and Trepčici. It was alleged that Novak is a false bishop and the Mostar Diocese said that Novak is not even a priest.

Federation

Vecernji List: Christmas Eve Mass at the Franciscan Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Mostar

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The Provincial of the Herzegovinian Franciscans, Fra Slavko Soldo, led the Christmas Eve Mass at the Franciscan Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Mostar. The mass was attended by Ante Jelavic, Dragan Covic, an HDZ BiH Vice President, Josip Merdzo, the HDZ BiH Secretary General, General Stanko Baja Sopta, as well as guests Kresimir Cosic and Milan Kovac of the Croatian HDZ. Mostar Mayor Neven Tomic and Dr. Jadranko Prlic were also there, but were standing in the back of the church.

Vecernji List also reports that Fra Slavko Soldo followed the tradition of many years and invited HNS delegation, representatives of the cantonal and municipal authorities, as well as the Croatian guests for a Christmas dinner at the Franciscan Monastery. Among the invitees were Ante Jelavic, Dragan Covic, Stanko Sopta, Kresimir Cosic, Milan Kovac, Josip Merdzo, Miroslav Coric, the Prime Minister of Canton 10, and

Ivan Mandic, the Mayor of the Municipality Mostar-Southwest. Vecernji List reporters were the only journalists invited to the dinner. Dinner participants waited for Ljubo Cesic Rojs who attended the Mass at the Mostar Cathedral. They recalled Gojko Susak, a former Croatian Defense Minister, as well as Croat prisoners in The Hague and Croatian General Ante Gotovina.

Rasim Kadic says Nezavisne Novine-organized Sportsman of the Year Contest negates state of BiH

According to Oslobodjenje, President of the BiH Liberal-Democratic Party (LDS) Rasim Kadic rejected an invitation of BiH Presidency Chairman Jozo Krizanovic to attend a ceremony to select the BiH Sportsman of the Year, which was for the first time this year organized by the Banja Luka daily Nezavisne Novine. In a letter sent to Krizanovic, Kadic said that, as the Chairman of the Presidency, he was making a dangerous precedent through legitimizing intentions negating all BiH had been as a state since the declaration of its independence. Kadic explained that, in the letter of invitation to the ceremony, it was written that this was the first BiH Sportsmen of the Year Contest, which negated all contests organized in the previous years. The LDS BiH leader wondered whether this meant that BiH existed from the day when Nezavisne Novine had decided to, with Krizanovic's approval, select the Sportsman of the Year.

Lagumdzija says the state of BiH more important for SDP than power

At the New Year's press conference held in Sarajevo on Wednesday, SDP leader Zlatko Lagumdzija said that BiH was more important for the party than its remaining on power. According to Oslobodjenje, Lagumdzija emphasized that the political struggle for the rule of law and BiH state institutions strengthening would be SDP priorities in the next year.

Dnevni List: Stolac – Developing the strong municipal authority

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List reports that the Stolac Mayor Zeljko Obradovic gave a Christmas and New Year's reception for persons of Stolac public life at the 'Vila Ragusa' Motel. The daily says Stolac did not have the necessary civil authorities for over a half a year, which is what the election losers, the block of Bosniak parties led by the SDA, benefited from. Obradovic said what he wants is a strong municipality, with all of the system segments functioning. In an article about the Christmas celebration in Stolac, Dnevni List says that the construction works at the mosque/church site unfortunately continued and that the number of people working on it even increased.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Interview with Jerko Ivankovic, a representative in the BiH Federation House of Peoples

Interview conducted by Tomislav Zoric (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Within the International Visitors Program, a group of Croat politicians visited the USA and through numerous meetings held with the state and local officials and Government's experts, they got familiar with the American political system. 'During the first few days we visited State Department and National Security Council, where we were received by Dean Pittman, the Head for the area of Europe and Euro-Asia. (...) It was rather interesting to hear the American stands on the global security and American interests in Europe, as their main political and economic partner, from the first hand. (...) We have also met with Rafi Gregoriani, the Head of the Office for BiH with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with whom we talked about the political situation in BiH and the American role in the resolving of political problems in BiH. (...) I have to stress that my impression is that, so far, the problems of the Croats

in BiH have not been presented before the main American institutions in the right way and it is pity. (...) On the ground of their analyses on the work of the BiH politicians they selected a group of people for whom it would be useful to get familiar with the functioning of the USA political system and they are coming from different parties. (...) In my opinion there is one basic problem in the American understanding of the BiH situation and our understanding of them. The American society is based on the principles of the rights of an individual. All problems that appear in the social and political life are being seen through the rights and protection of the individual. We are aware that in our country collective rights are very important in the resolving of political problems and they were implemented in the social organization itself. Perhaps, a part of our mutual misunderstanding, that sometimes appears as misunderstanding in the field, or in the resolving of some political issues and interpreting of some statements of the American officials about the Croat electorate, has a root in that perception.

Naturally, we have been trying to explain that in BiH today both individual and collective rights are important, that is, both constituency and sovereignty of the BiH peoples and their national rights. (...) There are many different interests in the USA but none of them is an obstacle for the economic development, as it is the case in our country.

Republika Srpska

RS National Assembly starts discussion on the amendments to the entity Constitution

Oslobodjenje reports that the Republika Srpska national Assembly started late on Wednesday the discussion on the proposed amendments to the entity Constitution. Deputy Speaker of the Assembly and SDA BiH President Sulejman Tihic said that

the RS with its current arrangement could not survive. It was also uncertain when would the Assembly vote on the proposed Budget for the next year, since five non-Serbs members of the entity Constitutional Commission vetoed the draft. According to RS dailies, the Bosniak members of the RS Constitutional Commission vetoed the proposed RS Budget because as they said it jeopardized their vital national interests. They requested that unallocated money from this year's budget, aimed for return of refugees, are added to the return budget for the year 2002. Sulejman Tihic, a Bosniak member of the RS Constitutional Commission, said that there would be no negotiations with the RS Government on this matter. However, if they the Government and Bosniaks fail to reach an agreement, the RS National Assembly will not vote on the budget and the final decision will be made by the High Representative to BiH, Wolfgang Petritsch, Glas Srpski writes.

Radisic excludes possibility that the High Representative imposes amendments to the RS Constitution

The Banja Luka dailies write that Serb member of the BiH Presidency Zivko Radisic emphasized that the aim of the International Community led by the High Representative to BiH was to have internal relations arranged in a democratic manner. "I am convinced that Petritsch will not impose amendments to the RS Constitution," said Radisic. He added that nobody was bringing the existence of the RS into question and that no one's interest should be endangered if the authorities were established on basis of election results, on which representatives of the RS insisted.

Tihic says news coalition formed at the RS political scene

Sulejman Tihic, the SDA president and the delegate to the Republika Srpska National Assembly, accused on Wednesday SDP and NHI-nominated Croat deputies in the Assembly of supporting

an amendment to the entity Constitution, according to which one of the three official languages would be named Bosniak and not Bosnian. According to Tihic, when it comes to the amendment related to the use of languages, a new coalition of SDP, NHI, SNSD and SDS exists at the RS political scene.

RS President Mirko Sarovic says suspension of the RS Constitution just a pure wish of Sejfidin Tokic

Glas Srpski and Nezavisne Novine carry a statement of Republika Srpska President Mirko Sarovic, in which he commented on the announcement made by Sejfidin Tokic that he would ask for suspension of the RS Constitution if the Decision on Constituent Peoples was not to be applied soon. Sarovic said that such thing was a pure wish of Tokic, who was constantly in a mood for exhibitionism. He added that the RS was a permanent constitutional category designed by the Dayton Peace Agreement, as a compromise to end the war.

RS Army Deputy Chief-of-Staff Momir Zec says 1000 soldiers will be dismissed

Glas Srpski carries a statement of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff of the Republika Srpska Army Momir Zec, in which he said that the RS Army would be focused on its reorganization and the implementation of the Defense Policy in the next year. Zec said that number of professional soldiers would be reduced, as planned, for another 1000 in the course of the year.

Dnevni List: Banja Luka Bishop Franjo Komarica replied to the letter of Mico Micic, the Minister for Refugees and Displaced Persons in the RS Government

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

'First of all, I would like to express my pleasure over the promise given in the name of the RS Government 'that the implementation of the Property Laws does not have an

alternative' and that 'in accordance with your possibilities, you will do everything to implement Property Laws completely and consistently'. (...) You have also expressed your regret because of my alleged statement 'on the alleged obstruction of return of the persons of non-Serb nationality by the RS authorities' and stressed that you believe that such statement is completely ungrounded. (...) The truth is that in many occasions I have stated and repeated to many domestic and international officials, in different media, the statistic data about the number of repossession claims that the Department for Legal Issues with our Caritas has submitted. (...) Your statement that the RS authorities have invested 4,5 million Marks does not deny my statement. These funds could have been invested for the return of Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats (and they probably were invested for this purpose) on the territory of the whole RS. I am not aware whether the returnees of the Croat nationality, who have returned to my diocese, have received anything from these funds. (...) How do you judge the information that in 32 parishes of my diocese, on the territory of the RS, out of 70.000 displaced persons and refugees only 873 families or 1702 persons have returned during the last 6 years. (...) The end of the letter says that Bishop Komarica is glad that they finally met his request and that the meeting between the two of them will be arranged.

International Community

OHR says SDS' Congress decision must be followed by concrete actions

OHR believes that the SDS commitments to the Dayton agreement must be proved through concrete actions and results to be achieved. "OHR supports the decision of the SDS Congress to exclude from the party the indicted war criminals including Radovan Karadzic and Momcilo Krajisnik emphasizing that this is a long-awaited political move," OHR Spokesman Mario Brkic

told Dnevni Avaz.

Mossad official visits Sarajevo, agrees on cooperation with Bosnian AID

One of the leaders of Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, visited Sarajevo in mid-December and reached agreement on cooperation and exchange of information of mutual interest with BiH intelligence service (Agency for Investigation and Documentation, AID) chief Munir Alibabic, Radio Deutsche Welle said on Tuesday. The Israeli official, whose name was not given, was informed in Sarajevo about the activities of extremist Muslim groups in Bosnia which are under the influence of the world's most wanted criminal Usamah bin-Laden of Saudi Arabia, the radio said. Ronen Bregman, an Israeli reporter and expert on intelligence services, visited Sarajevo at the same time as the Mossad official. Bregman collected data on the activities of Muslim fundamentalists in that part of the Balkans, the radio said. Bregman wrote about the results of his investigations these days in Israel's highest-circulation daily, Yedioth Aharonoth. He concluded that Bosnia has become a paradise for Muslim terrorists in the recent years.

Source: Tanjug news agency, Belgrade

Editorials

Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz and Jutarnje Novine

Zija Dizdarevic writes in the Oslobodjenje In Focus column that the change of the SDS statute preventing The Hague indictees from being members of the party just shows that SDS leadership would do anything to remain on power. In another Oslobodjenje editorial, Gojko Beric emphasized that the winners over the communism were keeping in their heads a communist-like arrogance in relations with media. Enes Plecic

wrote in the Dnevni Avaz Commentary of the Day that all democratic countries were building strategy of their development on the propaganda slogan: "Let's buy domestic products." In the Jutarnje Novine The Seal editorial, Vanja Ilcic concluded that Nikola Spiric and his Serb colleagues in the BiH House of Peoples hold responsibility because a backlog pension will not make the retired people in BiH happy ahead of the coming New Year holidays.

Dnevni List: Annual inventory check of Daytoncracy!

Written by Milan Sutalo (Provided by OHR Mostar)

The state, that we live in, is immediately before Albania by its wealth although a better life was promised to us. After 6 years of practicing of democracy, coexistence and strengthening of the state and state institutions, a fight against corruption, nationalism, extremism, permanent elections, pre-election campaigns, voters' lists and change of authorities, we have made a step ahead. An increasing number of people in this country are becoming aware that all this is a farce and comedy. Each year we wonder as to why we have elections if those, no matter who they are and what they are like, that we elect are not in charge of national and state-related issues, but the international administrators are in charge of these issues instead of them.

Why do we need representatives, Parliament debates, positions and opposition if one man, who is above the Law and Constitution, and who is not responsible to us but to those who appointed him, passes laws by using the summary procedure. His will, called 'the High Representative's decision' in a written form, is Law and Constitution, an execution document and verdict. It has a power to appoint, remove and laugh at democracy and voters. Peoples and citizens of this country, in whose name all these things are being done, remain without civil and peoples' rights, depressed and frustrated. Because

of the feeling of national and civil powerlessness they see a way out in abstinence- a refusal to consume the Dayton democracy.

However, politicians think in a different way. Politics is one of the most profitable occupations in this country. Frustrated voters should be animated. You should run for the elections and see in which way you can cheat the cheated ones so that they can vote for you again and while doing this you should win sympathy of the IC officials. Politics is the art of possible and there is no politics that does not have its executors, and thus why should something be changed about it? And what about voters! If they get used to an illusion of democracy and if they accept it, then they have not deserved more than that. Do we believe that in the next year, the second year of the third millennium, something will change in BiH?