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BiH State-related Issues

CIPS project on hold until state budget for 2002 is adopted

After the extraordinary session of the Council of Ministers on Tuesday, the deputy Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications, Muharem Imamovic, said that printing of the new identity documents for BiH citizens will not start until the proposed state budget for 2002 is adopted. Imamovic explained that the adoption of the budget is also a prerequisite for signing of the contract with Siemens, the company which is entrusted with implementing the CIPS (Citizens Identity Protection System) project worth over 30 million KM. According to him, it has not been agreed yet as to where the new documents will be printed, despite the insistence of the Council of Ministers on having only one location for this purpose. All media in the Federation carried this item.

Advantages of CIPS project: BiH citizens without visas already next year?

In a shorter, but prominently placed article, Dnevni Avaz writes that BiH may be able to ask for the exemption from visa regime for its citizens traveling abroad already next year, if the CIPS project is completed. Speaking about the benefits of the CIPS for BiH, OHR's political advisor in charge of the project Michael Haner explained that the new citizens' identification system will bring some order into the present administrative chaos in BiH, where persons could hold more than one identity card or a passport. "[With these multiple documents], persons can open fictitious companies, take loans or engage in other forms of fraud. CIPS will put an end to

this practice,” said Haner. He also added that after the implementation of the project in BiH, the country authorities will be able to apply for the exemption from visa regime required by Schengen countries already next year.

RS President says latest statements on defence issues harmful

RS President Mirko Sarovic announced on Tuesday that RS representatives would most probably re-examine stances voiced so far regarding the army, defence and security. Sarovic said that a statement by BiH Presidency member Joza Krizanovic that BiH was near the time when it would have a single army “was made at the wrong place and at the wrong time” and that such statements do not contribute to a good atmosphere at such an important moment for BiH and its entities. “We do not need such statements and RS representatives will probably re-examine stances voiced so far regarding army, defence and security, as well as their constructive approach, particularly regarding some issues of coordination,” Sarovic told journalists after a meeting with representatives of the RS War Veterans’ Organization in Banja Luka. Sarovic said that a statement of this kind was unfounded, adding that the Serb Republic had a very clear stance in this respect, reports SRNA.

Constitutional Reform

RS Constitutional Commission: Amendments disputable

Both Banja Luka dailies report on yesterday’s session of the RS Constitutional Commission. Even after seven hours of discussion, the Commission failed to agree on the proposed amendments on the RS Constitution, which should be discussed at the extra ordinary session of the RS National Assembly, scheduled for April 4th. The Chairman of the Commission,

Miroslav Mikes announced that the Commission would continue its work today.

New Bosnian Serb ultra-nationalist group launches protest

A new ultra-nationalist Bosnian Serb group launched a campaign on Wednesday against proposed constitutional changes in BiH. Posters calling for a demonstration outside the RS National Assembly on Thursday were plastered across Banja Luka.. Signed by the "Free Srpska – Movement for liberation of Republika Srpska and unity of all Serbian lands," the posters called for a halt to the constitutional changes which they said would lead to the Republic Srpska being abolished. "Let's stop Serb enemies... Let's stop non-democratic changes to the RS constitution and its (RS) disappearance," the posters said. The group demanded a referendum on the, "peaceful separation of Republika Srpska from Bosnia" if, "non-democratic constitutional changes" are adopted. It also called for civil disobedience and a withdrawal of all RS representatives from BiH's central institutions if proposed amendments to the constitution are accepted. "Let's not allow that they take away from us in peace what we have defended in the war," the posters said.

RS President says constitutional changes will not endanger the Dayton position of the RS

During his visit to the RS Police Academy on Tuesday, the RS President, Mirko Sarovic, reiterated that the RS is ready to implement constitutional changes which will not endanger its Dayton position. Sarovic said that the final decision is up to the deputies in the RS National Assembly who will, at a session scheduled for tomorrow, discuss the agreement on constitutional changes agreed upon in the OHR last Wednesday. "If deputies accept the concept, we will get a constitution which will be acceptable for political factors in the RS,

International community and the Council of Europe, but the problem will ensue in operations of RS institutions,” said Sarovic without specifying, reports Oslobodjenje.

RS Vice president says Serbs must accept Constitutional Court decision

RS Vice President Dragan Cavic has declared the implementation of the Constitutional Court on the constituent status of peoples to be the most difficult test of the national and parliamentary maturity of the RS since Dayton. “We have the majority needed for the implementation of the Constitutional Court decision, and I will act on behalf of the implementation of this decision through a legal and constitutional parliamentary procedure and, in all of that, on behalf of our maintaining the achieved national consensus that was demonstrated during the negotiations,” Cavic stated in an interview with Banja Luka Patriot magazine. In his words, the Serb Republic “has to swallow the pill; the only question is how big the pill will be”. Click here for the [comprehensive summary](#) of patriot interview with Dragan Cavic.

SNSD: RS should be based on equality, not nationality

A senior official of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), Krstan Simic, said that he was dissatisfied because the constitutional changes emphasized the “concept of nation rather than that of man and his liberties”. “We have arrived at a situation where the solutions which are being promoted and offered to us are taking us back to 1991 and 1992, where the RS is being divided exclusively on the grounds of nationality and where we are creating a government based on the principle of national representation, instead of on the basis of citizens and free, equal people,” Simic said at a press conference in Banja Luka, reports FENA. He called on all political parties in the RS to see the constitutional changes

as a step towards making the RS an entity for all citizens who live in it."It is very important to find a system in this area in which all values of the modern civilized world will thrive," the SNSD official said, and added that the talks on constitutional changes would not even be necessary if these values existed in BiH.

PDP critical of the agreement reached in the OHR

In a statement for the press, the Main Board of the PDP (Progressive Democratic Party) said that the agreement on constitutional changes which was fully signed by SDP, NHI and Party for BiH, contains a number of solutions detrimental for the RS, but represents a good foundation for constitutional amendments. PDP expressed hope that deputies in the RS National Assembly will give their maximum and try to find best solutions "respecting the spirit of the agreement". The party also criticized the International Community's behavior during the last week's talks, saying that its representatives "succumbed to media and political pressure" and moved closer to the position of only one side.

RS Veterans urge parliament to throw out constitutional changes accord

The RS organisation of families of prisoners of war, dead soldiers and the missing together with municipal war veterans' organisations and refugee associations have launched a campaign to collect signature in support of a referendum on constitutional changes. The SRNA news agency has learnt from Djoko Pajic, chairman of the organisation, that the petition will urge the RS National Assembly not to adopt the draft agreement on constitutional changes and to allow citizens to vote in a referendum on harmonisation of the RS Constitution with the decision of the BiH Constitutional Court on the constituent status of peoples in BiH. "We hold the view that no-one has the right to decide about major issues such as constitutional changes on behalf of the Serb nation and RS

citizens. We are not against harmonising the RS Constitution with the BiH Constitutional Court's ruling, but what is currently happening is not harmonisation but radical changes in the RS Constitution that will lead to the destruction and disappearance of the RS in line with the goals of political parties in the Federation," Pajic said.

Safet Halilovic: Petritsch's credibility put to test

In an interview with Vecernji List, chairman of the Party for BiH Presidency, Safet Halilovic, said that the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, was very cooperative when talking to RS parties during the debate on constitutional changes. "This caused reaction of Federation parties which signed the Agreement in order to kick start the talks although the Agreement was imperfect, as it does not ensure symmetry and equality on 20% of issues," said Halilovic. He notes that, as there will be obstruction and attempts of selective implementation in the RS, the credibility of the High Representative will be put to test.

Alliance parties call for urgent implementation of the Constitutional Court ruling on constituent peoples

After yesterday's meeting of the Co-ordination Board of Alliance parties, its chairman, Husein Vojnikovic, urged all relevant political factors to implement the Constitutional Court ruling on constituent peoples in BiH, Vojnikovic also appealed to the High Representative to impose the solution if entity parliament procrastinate with debate on this issue or all together fail to adopt constitutional changes based o the agreement reached in the OHR last week.

Federation

OHR holds a briefing on Hercegovacka Banka

Written by Tin Zdilar (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Press conference dealing with the events related to Hercegovacka Bank was held late last night in the OHR building. According to Johan Verheyden, a Spokesperson of the Provisional Administration, and Mario Brkic, an OHR Spokesperson, many irregularities were revealed in the business operations of the bank related to subscription of shares, non-special purpose loans and deposit balance. The Provisional Administrator has already forwarded a few criminal charges to the Federation Prosecutor's Office, however, the names of the suspects were not revealed to journalists.

According to Verheyden, Hercegovacka Bank was a center of powerful and privileged individuals that he called 'Herzegovina Holding'. The bank invested in their projects such as 'Herzegovina Osiguranje', 'Croherc', 'Investment Fund CR0-BiH' and some other Funds, with an ultimate purpose to completely take over control of the economy in this part of the Federation. In order to substantiate his claims, Verheyden distributed to the journalists a copy of the letter that Velimir Lovric, who was the President of Hercegovacka Bank Management at that time, sent to late President Tudjman on June 23, 1998, which was presented as a 'key' evidence. By this letter (whose copy was published together with this article) Verheyden explained the idea on which the project of Hercegovacka Bank was based. Asked by one journalist, who obviously was not fascinated by strength of the 'key' evidence, what was illegal in the business operations of Hercegovacka Bank, Verheyden stated: 'Hercegovacka Bank was serving Croats only!'

Asked by a Dnevni List journalist about the money that remained blocked on the Hercegovacka Bank account after the

SFOR's raid, Verheyden stated: 'At this moment, the final decision regarding the future of the bank and funds of citizens and other subjects has not been passed yet. At the time, after the HR's attempt to take over control of the bank, the bank was already insolvent because the clients started to withdraw their deposits. 22 million Marks was already withdrawn and the HR had to pass a decision to take over control of the bank. '

During the press conference, one could also hear the expectation of Toby Robinson that by the sale of shares that Hercegovacka Bank has in 'Eronet', under the condition that 'Eronet' wins at the tender for the third GSM operator, they will manage to get funds for a possible recovery of the bank.

Please note that the above article carries a number of incorrect facts and statements. For more information and clarification see BiH Media Round-up for April 4, 2002.

Session of HDZ Presidency scheduled for Friday (provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List reports that HDZ announced a session of the HDZ Presidency, during which three important issues will be discussed: Agreement on constitutional changes, new decisions of the High Representative referring to sanctioned officials and election of representatives from the line of the Croat people for the House of Peoples of the Federation Parliament. The article notes that the HDZ attitude on the political organization of BiH is well known: cantonized BiH without entities or BiH with three entities.

According to the article, a very few members of the HDZ Presidency believe that Jelavic should abandon HDZ and withdraw from politics 'for the sake of interests of the Croat people'.

The article says that since nothing has been changed after the last elections with regard to the protection of the Croat

national rights in the Federation – due to the Agreement on constitutional changes the situation has been endangered – a logical question arises as to what is the reason for the change of the HDZ policy and return to the House of Peoples.

It has been expected that by Friday consultations with representatives of the parties gathered around the Croat National Assembly will take place, as well as talks with Church representatives.

Federation army cuts depend on go-ahead from assembly

Federation media report that the reduction of the Federation Army could be completed by the end of the month, provided the entity's parliament on Wednesday (today) adopted a government motion for giving monetary compensation to all who have to be laid off from active military service. "Everything depends on the Federation Parliament, which has to grant the government permission to incur a debt with commercial banks to secure 100 million convertible marks for severance wages," Federation Defence Minister Mijo Anic told reporters on Tuesday.

"If Parliament does that, we shall complete this job during April," said Anic.

The Federation government passed a decision to reduce the entity's army from 23,500 to 13,000 employees, and securing 10,000 convertible marks to everyone who would be laid off. Thus far, 8,600 military employees have volunteered for layoff. There will be many more as they are aware the army has to be reduced, Commander Atif Dudakovic told the same press conference.

Republika Srpska

RS report new move on Karadzic, other suspects

The authorities in the RS said on Tuesday that they had taken a step towards arresting war crimes suspects on their territory by passing on 16 ICTY indictments to their local courts. The indictments handed over include the indictments of the Bosnian Serb wartime leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, said Dejan Miletic, head of the bureau for relations with The Hague Tribunal in the Republika Srpska. The bureau "has forwarded indictments against war crimes suspects to local courts, who should now ask for assistance from the RS police to look for and arrest them," Miletic told AFP. "The indictments against 16 Bosnian Serbs were forwarded few days ago, including the indictments against Karadzic and Mladic," he said.

High Representative appeals to secrete services to engage in revealing sources of financing of war crimes fugitives

In an [interview](#) with Berliner Zeitung, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, called on secrete services to engage in revealing the sources of funding of the war crimes suspects who are still at large. Commenting on the fact that two most high profile indicted war criminals, Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic are still free, Petritsch noted their sources of funding need to be dried out. "Only a few months ago did European cities understood that BIH can think about stability only when symbolic figures, such as Karadzic and Mladic, are arrested," said Petritsch, adding that this also requires a genuine political will on the part of Europe.

The High Representative also strongly criticized the RS government, which apart from rhetorical statements, does not demonstrate any readiness to take an active role in the arrest of war crimes suspects. "I would like to see the RS police in action," said Petritsch, noting that Bosnian Serbs must be aware that they can end up in a complete isolation. Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz and Glas Srpski carry excerpts from

the interview.

Kotorsko refugees to stage new protests in Sarajevo

Bosniak refugees from Kotorsko near Doboj will, once again, come to Sarajevo to stage protests in front of the OHR building, objecting to the continued construction on what they say is their land in this area. Meho Zecevic of the Kotorsko Returnee association confirmed this, adding that he will present OHR officials with documents clearly showing the ownership of the disputed property. Apart from construction, returnees in this Doboj village were just faced with additional obstacle: Serb authorities from Doboj municipality shut off their water and electricity supply, so Kotorsko residents fear a health crisis. Zecevic did not say when his association will organize the said protests.

Editorials

Nezavisne Novine: A fear of disappearance

By Branko Peric

Fear is spreading amongst Serbs that Republika Srpska will disappear. At a time when this entity – compared to the BiH Federation, is starting to show visible signs of functionality in terms of constitutionality and transition, the horsemen of the political apocalypse are competing as to who will be the more convincing prophet of its disappearance. Invoking the RS disappearance, both – positions of the ruling parties and the opposition are united.

For a long time now, every change in the internal legal and political relations in BiH comes down to the abolishment of the RS and revision of the Dayton Agreement. There was not a single political move that did not undermine “the letter and

the spirit” of Dayton. Do we have to remind ourselves of the fuss that was made when license plates, passports and border service were introduced? There was not a single RS politician who did not strut in “defending the Dayton”.

Constitutional changes have brought the talk on the RS endangerment to the point of absurdity and generated a paranoid fear that the RS would disappear. It is not only the politicians who blow their horns that the RS would disappear if the Agreement on implementation of decision of the BiH Constitutional Court on constituency of the peoples is accepted. Legal experts, judges of the Constitutional Court and University Professors are also predicting that the RS would disappear. The talk on disappearance of Republika Srpska is dangerous political propaganda which has to be demystified. Namely, it should be admitted that its constitutional and legal structure is grotesque and anachronic for a multi ethnic community and accept the fact that the road to civic state has to be paved with instruments for national interests protection. Mechanisms of that sort of protection are not a constitutional fabrication of the High Representative or Sulejman Tihic. These instruments have been very well known in theory of the constitutional law and political practice.

Those who will point at the RS Constitution and try to prove that it is a modern civic Constitution are terribly wrong because they keep forgetting that this Constitution does not correspond to social and political reality of the RS. In the process of democratic and civic ripening, the multi ethnic societies need additional protection mechanisms in order to ease the fear of disappearance and endangerment, no matter how irrational this fear might be. Those additional mechanisms can become unnecessary at the point when (and if) a community is structured as a stable civic and democratic society.

Had the RS authorities been able to make a serious democratic step forward, there would have not been any talk on constitutional changes whatsoever. For example, had the Prime

Minister Ivanic offered Bosniacs and Croats as many ministerial seats as appropriate to their representation in the National Assembly, only a year ago, we would not have been discussing the 1991 Census nor there would have been fruitless night seances on constitutional changes in the first place. Unfortunately, the RS policy is a policy of continuous obstruction in which it is normal to accept something that could not even be discussed a year ago. Thus, politicians with no vision would have to learn from their tragic policies that politics is an imagination and capability to anticipate future. For so many times, they could have seen that "big deals" in political rhetoric become normal in one year time and that sometimes, making of too much fuss is nothing else but political fog. Therefore, this time as well, the RS will not disappear with the constitutional changes. However, it may disappear if it keeps directing all its intellectual potential in fruitless political talks, leaving behind the economic and cultural development.

Headlines

Glas srpski

- Belgrade: based on ICTY indictment: Vljeko Stojiljkovic arrested
- Bijeljina: Referendum for the Constitution

Nezavisne novine

1. "Eko pokret" and "Euro-hem" prevented ecological death of Vrbas river:
Crna rijeka cleaned

Dnevni List

- Press conference of Toby Robinson, Provisional Administrator for Hercegovacka Banka: Key evidence of criminal is Lovric's letter to Dr. Tudjman

- Session of HDZ BiH Presidency announced: Will HDZ give up on Jelavic?
- 5th International Economic Fair opens in Mostar: Economic Fair "Mostar 2002"
- Discharge of soldiers depends on Federation Parliament: Discharged soldiers of Federation Army get severance pays by end June of this year the latest

Vecernji List

- Two states facing political conflict due to closing down of illegal border crossings: New tension between Zagreb and Sarajevo
- Scandal in Mostar: Vrbosic whistled
- Safet Halilovic, President of Federation of BiH: Constitutional changes will be implemented

Oslobodjenje

- FRY owes money to BiH

Dnevni Avaz

- Probe into work of humanitarian organizations

Jutarnje Novine

- Reduction of Federation army will have no effect on army capacity