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BiH Stare-related Issues

Croatian and BiH highest authorities agree on improving the cooperation between the two countries

The highest state officials of Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina said on Saturday that the current quality of relations between the two countries was below the actual potential, and announced additional measures with the aim of improving the cooperation in the coming months. Croatian President Stjepan Mesic, BiH Presidency members Beriz Belkic and Zivko Radisic and the president of the BiH Federation, Karlo Filipovic, agreed at a working session in Gradacac, that the next meeting of the two countries' council for cooperation should be held in Zagreb in November. "We expect the governments of both states and all executive structures, which were entrusted with carrying out the conclusions of the last session of the council, to carry out their duties," Belkic told reporters after an hour-long meeting with the Croatian president. President Mesic said bilateral cooperation was satisfactory to some extent but by no means sufficient. "Our economies complement each other and we have to improve our cooperation, the more so as both sides are interested in it," Mesic said. The Croatian president did not hide his dissatisfaction with the fact that competent bodies of authority in the two countries have not done what was expected

of them, but refused to point the finger at anyone.

After the meeting with the Bosnian state officials, Mesic visited an international plum fair in Gradacac, where a number of Croatian companies are exhibiting their products.

SDS deputy in BiH Parliament criticises initiatives for the creation of joint army in BiH

SDS deputy in the BiH Parliament, Mirko Banjac, condemned Friday's statement of British Ambassador to Bosnia-Hercegovina Graham Hand in which he said that "it is high time for the process of unification of armed forces in Bosnia-Hercegovina to begin". In a statement for Banja Luka NES Radio, Banjac emphasised that the situation in BiH was being complicated by people who are not familiar with the cultural milieu of this territory. "Solving problems in a way which is unsuitable for the majority of citizens and the majority of people on these territories would not bring any good or provide security," Banjac warned.

Federation

Eronet and HPT expect to obtain a license for the third GSM operator without a tender

In a statement for Oslobodjenje, Stipe Prilic, the newly appointed director of the HPT (Postal Company) Mostar said that he expects that, after the HPT re-appropriates the Eronet, the Communication Regulatory Agency (CRA) automatically grants it a license for the third GSM operator without a tender. "According to the policy of the telecommunications sector, it is foreseen that state companies automatically obtain the license," said Prilic. The president of the Eronet's management board, Bozo Knezevic, is of similar opinion. He stressed that Eronet is taking a "leading place in the mobile sector in BiH," and, therefor, deserves this

license.

Prlic also announced a meeting with the Hercegovacka Banka's Provisional Administrator Toby Robinson for next week because the Bank owns 60% of the shares in Hercegovina Osiguranje, and is the absolute owner of Croherc (two of the companies to which the HPT Mostar ceded the Eronet).

Aluminij Trade Union in a letter to UN Secretary General: OHR must stop supporting the racism in Aluminij!

In a letter addressed to the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, the Trade Union of the Aluminij Factory in Mostar warned that "if the country's economy continues to be based on the racist foundations from the war, BiH will be a country without a future but with dark past." The Union also asked Annan to appeal to the OHR to stop protecting and supporting the racists in the Aluminij Factory in Mostar.

Marko Tokic's hearing postponed until September 20th

The investigative judge of the Sarajevo County court has postponed the first hearing of the dismissed deputy president of the HDZ and chairman of the Croat self-rule, Marko Tokic, who has been charged along with other six HNS (Croat National Assembly) and HDZ officials with undermining the territorial sovereignty of BiH. Tokic appeared before the Sarajevo court for the first time on Friday and used the opportunity to ask that the hearing be postponed until September 20th. "I do not expect that further investigation will take place after our explanations," Tokic said. He added that he would shed light on the context of the decisions taken by the HNS and, once more, dismissed this trial as a "politically motivated event."

Education in the Federation: Waiting for salaries, money goes to Sarajevo

School year will not again start simultaneously in elementary and secondary schools with the Croat(ian) curriculum. Pupils

from Posavina, West Herzegovina and Herzegovina-Neretva Cantons will be in their schools today, whilst the pupils from Herzeg-Bosnia and Central-Bosnia Cantons will go to school on September 10. Employees of the schools in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton wait for their salaries two months on the average, and the Cantons are having troubles with poor collection of funds for their budgets. Heads of the Cantons are accusing the authority in Sarajevo for making anti-Dayton steps. Ivo Miro Jovic, one of coordinators for schooling issues in the Cantons with the Croat majority, says that the cantons are being deprived of their rights in the area of finances and that the money is being collected in Sarajevo. Federation authority in Sarajevo decided to open an account for the Cantons in the Central Bank in Sarajevo, which is illogic, and remit the money from there, read Vecernji List.

Medjugorje to get a police station

The latest decision cutting down the number of police officers in the Citluk Police Administration, which covers the Medjugorje Police Station, is being explained with the fact that the number of police officers is determined by the number of residents from the 1991 census. This will result in the Police Administration Citluk losing 16 policemen. That was decided by the International Police in BiH (IPTF), namely by its Commissioner, Vincent Coeurderoy. An unnamed source from the Citluk Police Administration told "Vecernji List" that the fact that more people live in Medjugorje nowadays than in 1991 was not put into consideration. Unofficially, Vecernji List reports, some 3700 people live in Medjugorje at the time. Moreover, over 20,000 pilgrims at one time come to Medjugorje to attend masses and other ceremonies. "There are more reasons in favor of hiring more policemen than sacking them," says the source from the Citluk Police. He adds that there have been many cases of thefts, burglaries and car thefts every year and pilgrims from abroad often lose themselves on the Apparition Hill, Krizevac or in other places, (...) Thus, the reduction in

manpower will compromise the security in the Medjugorje area (...), reads Vecernji List.

Vecernji List: Augustin Mestrovic: Draft Law on Forests leads into centralization

Government of the Federation of BiH should work on a draft law on forests, which will, according to some experts, centralize the system and totally deprive the cantons of their rights. It is a part of the project of the ruling Alliance for changes which is resolutely opposed by the Cantons with the Croat majority. When you take the entire index into consideration, it is clear why the Government in Sarajevo wants to administrate forests. The current data show that salaries of the Croat employees in the forestry are three times higher than their Bosniak colleagues receive. The latest draft will favor interests of the local sheriffs who set the rules of the market and, as it would seem, of the state. Augustin Mestrovic, Ph.D., until recently a Deputy Minister, currently the President of the Herceg-Bosnia forestry company criticizes the latest draft

What is debatable in the new draft?

A: That law offers solutions which are being used in Switzerland, Belgium and some other European countries, but it is all mixed up. It is not applicable and acceptable in the Federation of BiH and its legal system. The draft law envisages a Federation institution for forests which is not determined by a single provision of the Federation of BiH (...) It is envisaged that such an institution would be established by the Federation Government but in the same time the Government would not finance it, which is illogical (...) Cantons are being deprived of their rights by provisions of the law. Of course, the Federation is entitled to enact laws, but it has to observe Constitutional provisions on delegation of authorities in the forest administration. Namely, the Government of the Federation of BiH can enact a law on

utilization of natural resources only with consent of all 10 Cantons. Those constitutional provisions were not taken into consideration and the Cantons do not have a say in that. That is why they (Cantons) reacted to the draft.

What kind of the law is the Herceg-Bosnia forestry in favour of?

A: All the previous drafts of the law carried too much politics and not much expertise. We are favouring a law which would take into consideration the latest achievements in the forest sciences, its practice and the current arrangement of the Federation of BiH. We do not want to see the leveling for all Cantons and regions. That would punish the already developed companies and return them back to the socialist-type of management.

Anyone particular?

A: (...) The forestry in the so-called Bosniak part carries a burden of debts and loans. They still employ a lot of people in order to solve social problems. The Bosniak part, where rules of the controlled economy are still at full swing, is yet to start a privatization whilst in the same time the privatization in the Croat part is in its final stage, says Mestrovic, reads Vecernji List.

The HDZ BiH ousts Tomic from the party?

After Bozo Ljubic resigned from the post of the Chief HDZ BiH Negotiator with the International Community and after his disagreement with the Presidency of the party reached the public, his status in the party remained unclear. According to an unconfirmed information, Neven Tomic, the Mostar Mayor, has already been ousted from the party by the decision of the Court of Honor of the Mostar HDZ Board. This is the result of a years-long conflict with the city party leaders and the HDZ leaders, since Jadranko Prlic left the party last year. The Mostar HDZ Board has tried to remove Tomic from the position

of the Mostar Mayor a few times but they failed.

Vjesnik: Requests for reexamination of the decision on the financing of Intelligence Services (provided by OHR Mostar)

Two Intelligence Services, that function on the territory of the BiH Federation at this moment, the Bosnia Agency for Investigation (AID) and the Croat Service of the National Security (SNS) receive 11,5 million Marks a year from the Federation budget and no one in the official Federation bodies is familiar with the way that these funds are being spent!

Safet Halilovic, the Vice President of the Federation, claims that the Muslim AID and the Croat SNS have been existing on the ground of the decision from 1996, and nothing has been done on their unification. The procedure for the adoption of the Law on Security-Intelligence Service in the BiH Federation is ongoing, and according to this law a unified organization, completely separated from the Federation Ministry of Interior has been planned, which would not do the Police work at all. If this Law were adopted then the appointment of the Heads of the Intelligence Services would take place and only then the Parliament, President and Vice President of the BiH Federation would be able to have an insight in the work of this organization. At the moment, it is not possible to have any insight since, according to the present Law on Security-Intelligence Services, the BiH Federation Authorities are not competent for the issue of the Security-National Services and their work. According to the new Law, it was envisaged that the Federation Government with the agreement of the Federation President and Vice President would appoint the Head of this Service.

Republika Srpska

South-eastern Bosnia refugees to protest in front of the OHR today

Refugees and displaced persons from south-eastern Bosnia will on Monday organize a peaceful protest in front of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) building in Sarajevo where they will demand an urgent solution of their problems. Their requests relate to construction of homes for returnees, issues of education and transportation of their children, as well as the frequent obstruction of their return. The south-eastern Bosnia regional board of the Association of Refugees and Displaced Persons represents more than 2,500 returnees who currently live in 154 tent settlements.

Nine Construction Plots Disputable in Kotorsko

Glas srpski (cover page) carries a story about suspension of construction waiver in Kotorsko, quoting to a great extent the OHR's press release. The story goes on quoting the Doboj Public Security Center as saying that municipal construction inspector has asked assistance of the police in order to fully implement the OHR's decision.

Minister of Human rights and refugees at BIH Council of Ministers Kresimir Zubak stated that events in Kotorsko were "manipulated and politicized" and added that it should be established if the houses were being built on property nationalized in 1945, which "clearly means that it is a private property".

Construction of Church in Potocari near Srebrenica Again Prevented

Glas Srpski reports that construction of Church in Potocari near Srebrenica was again stopped due to request of the employees of Srebrenica Public Security Center and municipal Inspector for Urban Affairs. The daily writes that all construction was halted after the Inspector issued a relevant order. Since the construction material has already been provided, there was an attempt to continue with the work.

International Community

OHR and BiH authorities on corruption: Urgent investigation of most difficult cases

Dnevni Avaz reports that, at the recent meeting, the OHR and representatives of all responsible authorities in BiH, discussed the issues of corruption and organized crime in the country. An anonymous participant of this meeting told the daily that the OHR has made up a list of "priority case" on both entity and cantonal level which will be investigated urgently. Some of those cases pertain to corruption scandals connected to the former Federation Prime Minister, Edhem Bicakcic and the former Minister of Finance, Dragan Covic, as well as to the Hercegovacka Banka.

Zagreb's Vecernji List says that the Federation Prosecutor's Office, Financial Police, Customs and Tax Administrations, Banking Agency and the Federation Audit Bureau are supposed to produce, within one month, specific information pertaining to the investigation into 74 serious cases of corruption. All corruption-related details are contained in a "Special Audit Report" made by OHR and OSCE experts, reads the daily.

ICTY Prosecutor to arrive in Belgrade, Sarajevo

Chief prosecutor of The Hague Tribunal Carla Del Ponte is to arrive in a visit to Belgrade on Monday, and later in the week to Sarajevo as part of her tour of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Del Ponte is to meet today with Yugoslav officials and discuss further cooperation

between Yugoslavia and the Tribunal. During her Tuesday visit to the BiH capital, media speculate, Del Ponte is to present the Federation government with additional sealed indictments.

Saturday's issues of nearly all BiH dailies report that Del Ponte has, once again, appealed to the international community to exert pressure on the RS authorities to finally hand over

their former leaders, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. "The Republika Srpska does not cooperate, no pressure has been exerted on it and it cannot be said that it has made a leap in the democratization", said Del Ponte on Friday, and quoted both Banja Luka and Sarajevo newspapers.

Oslobodjenje: Interview with Wolfgang Petritsch

In an interview for Saturday's issue of Oslobodjenje's section Pogled, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch talks about the Aluminij audit report and the future steps pertaining to the situation in this company and also briefly comments on the professional standards of media in BiH, in particular in Sarajevo. Full translation to follow.

OHR is concerned about the situation in Primary and Secondary Schools in Stolac: **In a new year with Acting Principals of schools** (the press release covered in full in all Federation and Croatian media)

Sarajevo: **The meeting of the Legal Experts Consultative Group: Inter-entity cooperation** (the press release covered in full in all Federation media and Slobodna Dalmacija)

Brcko District

Croat parents protest multiethnic schools in Brcko

Several dozen Croats from Dubrave, a settlement in the southern part of the Brcko District, protested on Saturday against the plan of the Transitional District Government which stipulates that the schoolchildren of the Croat, Bosniak, and Serb backgrounds will, as of Monday, jointly attend the multiethnic school in Brcko. The parents of Croat students consider that it is still too early for such a move and threatened to send their children to Catholic schools in Tuzla and Orasje. After a closed meeting between parents' delegation on one side and Brcko authorities and Deputy Supervisor

Gerhard Sontheim on the other, it was agreed that at least 40 Croat students will start attending the multiethnic school on Monday (today).