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BIH State-related Issues

Political parties would like to meet Paddy Ashdown

Zagreb's Vecernji List reports that apart from Zlatko Lagumdžija and his SDP, other political parties are also preparing to lobby with Paddy Ashdown, the most likely new High Representative in BiH. Circles close to the ruling Alliance leaked the information that other party representatives are preparing for the meeting with Ashdown. The daily notes that they have already been given a green light from the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. Petritsch and Robert Beecroft, the head of the OSCE mission to BiH, allegedly told Ashdown that popularity of nationalistic parties in BiH is growing once again.

Vecerni List also reports that, after the tour of the US, HDZ officials will most likely remove Ante Jelavic from the post of the HDZ president (unrecognized by the International Community) and appoint Josip Merdzo in his place. Representatives of the HDZ would also like to have a meeting with Ashdown in order to inform him and explain certain details pertaining to the so-called Croat self-rule.

The daily claims that, during the recent dinner in the Lebanon restaurant in Sarajevo, Petritsch gave Haris Siladzic some instructions about the new political rhetoric during the pre-election time. For more [click here](#).

Council of Ministers fails to discuss the

imposition of excise tax on high tariff goods

The BiH Council of Ministers on Thursday failed to discuss the proposed measures to increase excises tax on high-tariff goods and introduce sharper chemical control of oil and oil products on border crossings. Deputy Minister for Civil Affairs and Communications Jusuf Halilagic said the Council of Ministers did not discuss, as some media have announced, the new measures that would hit the most Croatian producers, with which BiH has the biggest goods exchange. Halilagic told reporters after yesterday's session that the proposed measures is in preparation and will be considered at next meeting.

Federation

Bosnian Patriotic Party still insists on Sefer Halilovic re-assuming his ministerial post

Sead Gajevic, the secretary-general of the Bosnian Patriotic Party (BPS) told Dnevni Avaz that this party will not give up on its insistence that its president Sefer Halilovic reassumes the post of the Federation Minister of Refugees and DPs. Gajevic stressed that the BPS will change its mind only if the Alliance removes other officials who are currently under criminal investigation.

Disabled war veterans stage protest against the new Law on Veterans and Invalids of War

Approximately 1000 disabled war veterans and representatives of the organisations bringing together the former soldiers staged on Thursday a peaceful protest outside the Federation government building in Sarajevo against what they are perceiving as the unjust encroachment upon their rights. Federation TV reported that representatives of disabled war veterans and former soldiers reiterated that the new Law on War Veterans and Invalids of War entitlements, crafted by the

competent Federation Ministry, puts their very existence at risk. (All Federation media prominently covered the protests)

Historic meeting of Croat political parties near Sarajevo

(provided by OHR Mostar)

Regarding the announced meeting of all BiH parties with Croat prefix, today's Dnevni List reads that the meeting will take place at Hotel "Delminium" at Stup, Sarajevo. The daily reports that **Miljenko Brkic** of the HNZ (Croat People's Union), **Stjepan Kljucic** (Republicans) and **Mladen Ivankovic** (Working for Prosperity) have already confirmed they would attend the meeting adding the parties members of the HNS (**Croat Christian Democrats, HSP, Croat Christian Democratic Revival**) and their respective leaders are most likely to participate as well. Some Croat MPs from the SDP, university professors and representatives of various Croat associations will take part in the talks. The HDZ BiH could not confirm whether the **HSS BiH** will take part, however it looks as though **Ilija Simic**, the President of the HSS BiH, would decide in favor of attending the meeting after all. Regarding the **NHI**, the daily reads that **Mijo Anic** and **Ivo Lozancic** often disagree with their party boss, **Kresimir Zubak**, when it comes to meetings of Croat parties concluding that Kresimir Zubak will, in the end, also join the talks because even **Wolfgang Petritsch** would be invited to the second round of talks, just prior the parliamentary debate on the issue of implementation of the Constitutional Court's decision on the constituent status of the peoples.

Dnevni List reads that everyone agrees that the most dangerous scenarios for the Croats and BiH itself are:

a) BiH with two entities, proportional administration, limited definition of national interests and a House of Peoples with limited competence

b) BiH with two entities, one-chamber Parliament and constitutional-legal commissions as only protection of vital interests and with the so-called proportional administration of the entities

c) BiH with two entities, civic Government and one-chamber Parliament

d) Finally, Silajdzic's dream – regionalization of BiH

Positive outcomes that could, to an extent, satisfy interests of the Croats:

a) BiH with tripartite administration, two-chamber Parliament and municipal structure only

b) Cantonized BiH (with the same number of Cantons for all constituent peoples) which is a concept endorsed by the (Catholic) Church in Sarajevo

c) Finally, three federal units

One cannot expect a full consensus between all Croat parties on the minimum of Croat vital interests at the first meeting, but everyone should come to the Hotel Deluminium with the sense of understanding for others, readiness for compromise and openness for discussion, reads Dnevni List.

People's Party Working for Prosperity establishes BiH Economic Block

Dnevni List reads that the People's Party Working for Prosperity has established a BiH Economic Block whose task is, reads the party's PR, to ensure a political and economic stability in BiH in the post-election period. The Block has ten priorities such as elimination of corruption and black market, change of customs and foreign trade policy that would ensure an equal status of domestic companies to the foreign ones, building of necessary institutions that would make the BiH economy function at the state level, completion of the

privatization process and opening of public works through concessions which would in turn open new jobs, adaptation of the education system to modern methods, giving Cantons more space when it comes to creating and implementing of policy in the area of public revenues, increasing of employment figures, return to all areas in BiH and implementation of constituency of all peoples within BiH . The party has called on all political factors in BiH to join the Block.

OHR on statement of (unrecognized) President of HDZ: Jelavic is “frivolous”

Office of the High Representative in Mostar considers the statement of the (unrecognized) President of the HDZ BiH, Ante Jelavic, according to which the High Representative to BiH will take most credits for establishment of a Croat federal unit in BiH, as frivolous, says the OHR in Mostar. “This Jelavic’s statement is aimed at securing space on covers of local papers”, says the Spokeswoman of the OHR Mostar, Avis Benes. She called the statement “funny and frivolous”, especially knowing that Jelavic, who was removed from all functions by the High Representative, said that the policy of creation of the Croat self-rule turned out to be unsuccessful. Benes also called Jelavic’s announcements of charges against the High Representative with the European Human Rights Court, which should be raised by all Croat officials removed by the High Representative in the past years, frivolous. “A fact that speaks about the frivolous nature of the announcements is that Jelavic mentions the International Court, although the Court in Strasbourg is called the Strasbourg Human Rights Court”, says Benes, reiterating that the OHR does not pay much attention to these statements and announcements, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

Republika Srpska

RS President says RS citizens do not support BiH charges against Yugoslavia

RS President Mirko Sarovic told SRNA on Tuesday that as far as the RS was concerned the [war crimes, including genocide] charges of BiH against Yugoslavia do not exist. "The RS tax payers cannot support an idea which does not reflect the joint interest of all Bosnia-Hercegovina peoples, but has been imposed on them by one BiH part," Sarovic told journalists in Banja Luka. "The RS will, despite everything, continue firmly to strive toward the policy and relations which will affirm and develop trust and dialogue, equality and communication between all the three peoples and entities of Bosnia-Hercegovina," Sarovic said.

RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic In Washington

Glas srpski reports on the visit of the RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic to the US, where he attended the traditional breakfast organized by the US President George Bush. During his stay, Ivanic also met with senior director and director for South-east Europe at the US National Security Council Greg Shult (?) and Dean Pittman (?). It was assessed that situation in BiH is improving and moving towards better inter-entity cooperation. Encouraging are also the results in implementation of property legislation, the daily carries.

Yugoslavia cuts aid to RS Army

Most media reported that the Yugoslav government decided on Thursday to stop paying the salaries of some officers of the RS army as demanded by the international community. The assistance was approved during the 1992-95 war by the regime of the former president, Slobodan Milosevic, to support some officers of the army of the RS. The US Congress had linked further financial aid to Belgrade to scrapping the payments to

the RS, and the move was also demanded by a number of European Union officials.

Krstan Simic, Attorney From Banja Luka, Claims that the RS Government Blackmails The Hague Indictees

Nezavisne novine carries the statement of Krstan Simic, Banja Luka attorney, as saying that he is surprised by the fact that the RS Government reaches for threats and blackmails of the indictees, all in framework of their "highly proclaimed" cooperation with The Hague. The RS Government gave a deadline of 30 days to persons publicly indicted for war crimes by The Hague to surrender or their would not get guarantees for defense in absence. Simic stressed that every indictee has a right to decide on his/her destiny and states are obliged to act in accordance with law, especially when it comes to their own laws, NN write.

International Community

Council of Europe Secretary-General says accession to CoE depends on successfully organised elections in BiH

Following the meeting with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Walter Schwimmer, said that the BiH's accession to the CoE could be called into question if BiH authorities fail to organise the elections scheduled for October. Schwimmer stressed that preparation for the elections ought to start immediately, as they will be fully in hands of domestic institutions. "Successful organisation of elections will be the first proof that BiH deserves the membership in the Council of Europe," he said. Stressing the importance of the elections, the High Representative reminded the local

authorities that they need to secure funds for their organisation. He said that the International Community will provide expert help, but operational matters will be the responsibility of local authorities. (All media in the Federation carried this report)

High Representative to BiH Wolfgang Petritsch Says Constitutional Changes Have to be Adopted by Mid-March

Nezavisne novine carries a of the High Representative made in London, saying that the amendments to the entity constitutions have to be passed by the mid- March in order to leave room for making necessary changes to the Election Law. This, said Petritsch, would ensure that the elections could be held in October. He also stressed that BiH politicians have to find solution responsibly and with compromise for the constitutional changes, which would lead to the implementation of the Constitutional Court's ruling on the constituency of peoples.

UN chief in BiH says BiH authorities should be more concerned with resolving problems then commenting on private conversations

Following numerous reactions by local authorities and intellectuals, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in BiH, Jacques Paul Klein, sent a letter on Thursday to the chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Zlatko Lagumdžija, in which he explains his recent statements made in the interview with the HTV (Croatian Television). UN spokesman, Stefo Lehmann confirmed this information and added that Klein informed Lagumdžija that it is regrettable that, instead of focusing on real events of real importance to the welfare and future of the citizens of this state, certain Parliamentarians chose to debate comments made in a private capacity on the historical context in which we are all

working. "SRSG Klein reiterated his belief in the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its sovereignty and the fact that independence is a reality that cannot be questioned," said Lehman at a new conference. He added that in his letter, SRSG Klein recalled the comments of Winston Churchill when he said that "The Balkans has had more history than it can digest" and also noted that at a time of massive unemployment, severe budgetary constraints and growing international donor fatigue, there were surely more pressing concerns for the people of BiH. (Oslobodjenje and Federation Television carried the item)

OHR: Inaccuracies in Ivanic's report on RTRS

Dnevni Avaz carries a report from Thursday's press conference of international organisations in BiH and quotes OHR spokesperson Patrik Volf as saying that media incorrectly reported the recent statement of Sonja Pastuovic about the state of the RTRS.

Commenting on the situation in the RTRS (Radio Television of Republika Srpska) Pastuovic, said that there are numerous inaccuracies in the recent RS Prime Minister's report on the restructuring of the RTRS. "We intend to engage the RS government directly on these issues, rather than go into detail now. OHR will continue to work with the RS government to try to help them resolve this problem," said Pastuovic and added that the OHR will continue to be guided by the following principle: The RTRS law MUST adhere to basic European standards for public broadcasting.

RS Member of BiH Presidency Met with OHR's Paul Martin and George Bordet

Glas srpski reports on the meeting between the RS Member of BiH Presidency Zivko Radisic and the departing and newly appointed Heads of OHR Banja Luka, Georges Bordet and Paul Martin. Radisic informed his guests about the current political situation in BiH, which is entering a phase of

economic and social reforms and joining the European integration. "It was jointly assessed that equality of three constituent peoples and two entities represents a basis on which tolerance and trust in BiH should be built on, without majorization and imposition of solutions from the outside", GS carries press release from Radisic's cabinet.

Headlines

Dnevni List

- Presidents of all parties and SDP Ministers accept HDZ invitation: Historical meeting at Hotel Delminiun at Sarajevo
- Continuation of Leutar case: Key witness Merim Galijatovic suffers of schizophrenia

Vecernji List

- A trade conflict between BiH and Croatia: The BiH Council of Ministers postponed countermeasures to Croatia
- Analyses of 750 retired HVO soldiers conducted by the Ministry of Defense has shown: They were receiving compensations although they were owners of cafes

Oslobodjenje

- Gafic was not removed, nor kidnapped during the extradition of Algerina Group
- War Veterans protest the new Law

Dnevni Avaz

- BPS asks for the removal of Becirovic, Ajanovic, Anic and Zubak; keeps insisting on Halilovic's reassuming the post of the Federation Minister of Refugees

Jutarnje Novine

- Veterans threaten with mass demonstrations

Glas srpski

- Djokic Close to “rebels”(Vice President of the RS Socialist Party (SPRS) Biljana Rodic-Obradovic stated yesterday that there were no new splits in the party. She also said that Petra Djokic is getting closet to a group of Rebels who try to take over key position in the party)

Nezavisne novine

- Fear of Terrorists Before the opening of 19th Winter Olympic Games