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BiH State-related Issues

Reuters: BiH recalls 10 years since war broke out

BiH marked the 10th anniversary of the outbreak of its 1992-95 war on Saturday with European Commission President Romano Prodi urging Bosnians to put aside differences and make a new start. Few official events were held to recall April 6, 1992, widely seen as the point at which an already simmering conflict became a war, after fighting broke out in Sarajevo and the European Community recognized Bosnia's independence. But the anniversary was on the minds of local people and given broad media coverage in Sarajevo, where newspapers ran special editions recalling the 43-month-long siege of the capital by Serb forces in which around 12,000 people died.

Prodi, on a one-day visit to the city, called on Bosnia to make a new start. "I am here to think about the past but (also) to look into the future," Prodi told reporters. "I know the sufferings of your people, but I know also that the doors of Europe are open."

But Prodi also warned Bosnian leaders they needed to show more unity among themselves so the rest of Europe could give more support to their bids to join European bodies.

High Representative expresses solidarity with citizens of BiH

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the fatal shooting during peace demonstrations on Sarajevo's Vrbanja Bridge, one of the tragic incidents that mark the beginning of the war in

Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, expressed his solidarity with the citizens of BiH as they were remembering the difficulties of the last decade and looking forward with hope to the future. "Ten years ago, two young women were shot dead on the Vrbanja Bridge in front of the building that today accommodates the Office of the High Representative. In the following three and a half years, countless citizens lost their lives and more than two million people were forced from their homes. This was a catastrophe whose legacy will remain for decades to come. There are few in this country who have not been touched by wartime loss," Petritsch said in his address to the BiH citizens. (All Sarajevo dailies carried the [Press Release](#) on Saturday)

AFP: Bosnian Oscar winner gets warm welcome

Several thousand Sarajevans on Friday welcomed Danis Tanovic whose anti-war film "No Man's Land" won this year's Oscar for best foreign language film. Tanovic, who lives in France, arrived in Sarajevo to visit his parents and friends. Visibly uncomfortable with the huge public acclaim, Tanovic, who has said he prefers to be behind the camera than in front of it, briefly addressed the cheering crowd gathered in front of the capital's theatre. "This is for Bosnia. This is for you," he said holding the Oscar statuette. Bosnia has been celebrating for days its first ever Oscar win for "No Man's Land," directed and written by Tanovic. It is a bittersweet anti-war film about two soldiers, one a Bosniak, the other a Serb, who end up stuck in an abandoned trench between the frontlines during the country's 1992-95 war. Tanovic arrived here on the eve of the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the siege of Sarajevo, one of the darkest chapters of the Bosnian war. "There is some mixture (of feelings) in me like, I guess, in everybody else," said Tanovic, who lived in Sarajevo during the siege, commenting the anniversary. "There is happiness because of this success and because the war has finished and also a sadness because all these things had happened," he told

reporters. Over 10,000 Sarajevans including children lost their lives during the war as Bosnian Serb forces held the city besieged, under constant artillery and sniper fire. "I like to think that my generation is the generation which is going to bring hope back to this country," said the 33-year-old Tanovic.

BiH Presidency members, Mikerevic meet with Prodi

Europe's doors are open for BiH, but it must adapt to certain European standards and join the European market of 500 million people, EU Commission President Romano Prodi said in Sarajevo on Saturday after the meeting with members of the BiH Presidency, according to Sunday's *Oslobodjenje*, *Dnevni Avaz* and news agencies. Prodi, who was on a one-day visit to Sarajevo, concluded that a significant progress had been made, pointing out that a great deal of work remained to be done to in order to complete the process of institutional reforms in BiH. BiH Presidency Chairman Beriz Belkic said that during the meeting with Prodi they had reached full agreement on the future of the country as a single, multiethnic and self-sufficient state within Europe.

"We concluded that significant progress had been made concerning the development of institutions, return of refugees, stability of the currency, but we pointed out to the difficulties which have slowed down the economic life in BiH," Belkic said. He advocated the need for a greater rule of law, introduction of a single economic market and implementation of the decision on constituency of all three peoples on the entire territory of BiH. In the course of the day, Prodi also met with BiH Council of Ministers Chairman and Minister for European Integration Dragan Mikerevic. *Oslobodjenje* quoted Mikerevic as saying that he had tried to convince Prodi in an undoubted pro-European orientation of the BiH authorities. Mikerevic expressed his expectations that the European Union would continue supporting BiH in overcoming current difficulties.

Petritsch meets with the European Commission President

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, on Saturday met with the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, at the OHR in Sarajevo to discuss developing BiH's European perspective (Sunday's Dnevni Avaz, Oslobodjenje, Monday's Jutarnje Novine and news agencies reported on the event). "Europe and BiH should have common values, common rules and they should share common road into the future," Prodi told journalists following the meeting. He assessed that, during more than two years of his mandate, Petritsch had been very well performing the extremely difficult duties of the High Representative of the international community in BiH. "Thanks to Petritsch's engagement BiH is now on a right path leading it to the European integration," Prodi emphasized. For his part, Petritsch pointed out at the significance of the European Commission's assistance to BiH, which was being increased in spite of a general decreasing of the foreign interest for the country.

BiH Presidency discusses information on the BiH debts

BiH's debt on December 31, 2001 amounted to 4.3 billion KM, according to an information on the issue discussed by the country's Presidency at a session on Friday. Croat member of the Presidency Jozo Krizanovic told journalists following the session that only in 2006 or 2007 BiH would be able to take some foreign loans. Until then, the annual debt should come down from the current level of 290 million convertible marks to around 260 million KM. Oslobodjenje reports that the Presidency decided to call on the executive board of the BiH Central Bank to assess the possibility of allocating the sum of 20 million KM for the CIPS project and just over 6million for the State Border Service. Krizanovic said that a new VAT rate might be introduced in mid-2003. This is not aimed at strengthening the central government but concentrating

taxation funds at BiH state level in order to secure better distribution. The Presidency also ratified a number of agreements, including a free trade agreement with the Republic of Macedonia. The trade liberalization process in the area of the former Yugoslavia has now been completed.

BiH Presidency and Council of Ministers hold a consultative meeting in Sarajevo

Saturday's Dnevni Avaz reports that, at a consultative meeting held in Sarajevo on Friday, the members of the BiH Presidency and the Council of Ministers agreed to in coordination with the collegia of both BiH parliamentary houses de-block the procedure of the consideration and adoption of the state Budget for this year.

According to weekend edition of Nezavisne Novine, this is the third time the Presidency called on the parliament to open debate on the issue. Moreover, in the same way as the last two attempts have failed, the state leadership has failed again to resolve the most contentious issue in relations between the two entities, i.e. the issue of financing BiH's legal suit against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia lodged with the ICTY in The Hague. The procedure for the adoption of a state budget has been set out by parliamentary legal and constitutional commissions. According to the procedural rules, the commission must justify the constitutional basis for the adoption of a budget. This is why the parliament had not been able to resolve conflicting views through parliamentary debate, the Presidency chairman, Beriz Belkic, said. "The BiH Parliamentary Assembly has not begun the debate because of the limitations imposed by the RS NA on the deputies from the RS which stem from the decision that the national interest of the RS has been jeopardized. The Presidency received the OHR legal interpretation according to which the financing of the work of a lawyer acting on behalf of BiH in the suit against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia does not represent a vital national interest", said Belkic. The Presidency and the

Council of Ministers have not found a solution to this problem. However, in the meantime, a new problem has been created. BiH has accepted obligations set out by the IMF which affect the draft budget in the sense that funds secured from the succession assets cannot be spent on current expenditure such as development projects or pension arrears. Amendments will be tabled to demand that these funds be earmarked for the repayment of domestic and foreign debts.

Constitutional reforms

OHR view on RS constitutional amendments will be known during the week

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Monday's edition of Nezavisne Novine quotes the Head of OHR Press Office, Alexandra Stiglmayer, as saying that the OHR view on RS constitutional amendments will probably be known during this week. "We really want to look very thoroughly into the constitutional amendments adopted by the RS National Assembly, and it will take some time," she said.

Mikes says IC should accept adopted constitutional amendments

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Sunday's edition of Belgrade-based daily newspaper "Blic" quotes President of the RS NA Constitutional Commission, Miroslav Mikes, as saying that the IC should accept the constitutional amendments passed by the RS NA on Thursday, because, for the RS, these amendments are big step forward. "One should bear in mind that the RS Constitution was constitution 100% designed for Serbs and now with consensus of all Serb parties the highest European standards have been accepted. This is the biggest achievement on the RS political

scene for the past 10 years and the IC representatives should consider that. According to him, the constitutional amendments will lead to structural changes of the entity toward democracy and make sure that national exclusivity disappears, because the representatives of all peoples who live in BiH will have the opportunity to access all positions under the same conditions. Mikes also reminded that Zlatko Lagumdžija and Kresimir Zubak requested that Others be eliminated from the Sarajevo agreement. "Without this category (Others), which represents a balance between the inter-national tensions, BiH cannot work", said Mikes.

RS President comments on constitutional amendments: gain through sacrifices

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Addressing the people of the RS on Friday, RS President Mirko Sarovic said the constitutional changes would not alter the Dayton-based constitutional position of the RS, nor its true nature, and after all, the RS was not at the end but at the beginning of its journey, weekend edition of Glas Srpski reports. "After the RS National Assembly session on Thursday night, a green light was given to the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court ruling on constituent status of peoples in BiH, bringing to a close yet another important chapter in our history", Sarovic said. Reminding citizens of four years of strenuous work, different approaches, rejections and confrontations, Sarovic said the RS fulfilled its duty "regardless of the fact that this duty and the court's decision were under a question mark throughout this period". Sarovic said the decisions passed by the RS NA were difficult, and for many a big and painful sacrifice. "And difficult they were. But it is our duty on this thorny road to seek the best and safest ways for our people and our republic", Sarovic said. He underlined that this was not a time for joy. Instead, it was a time for political wisdom and maturity, "and for the realization that we have done what was realistically possible

and most beneficial for our republic". "Thanks to the RS NA we adopted the amendments which will ensure full equality, justice and absence of discrimination for all peoples in the RS. And we reached this decision ourselves. I am convinced this important phase in constitutional harmonization will put an end to the stories about attacks on the RS and the ones denying its status", the RS President said. "On our part, by adopting these decisions, we have sent out a strong signal of our political and democratic maturity, readiness for compromises and flexibility in important issues, which will guide the RS and BiH on their road to European integration", Sarovic concluded in his address.

RS Prime Minister says adoption of constitutional amendments to the RS Constitution is a historic decision

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Weekend edition of Glas Srpski quotes RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, as saying after the Thursday's session of the RS National Assembly (RS NA) that the RS has entered a phase of full stabilization and complete legality of all its institutions. He said given that the RS NA passed the amendments to the RS Constitution, all reasons for disputing the status of the RS have disappeared. He said the history would show how wise the decision of all Serb deputies in the RS NA to pass the constitutional amendments was. "For the first time we managed to ensure the unity of all Serb deputies. We played tough when we could and we made concessions when concessions had to be made", said Ivanic. He said that those who signed the Agreement on constitutional changes are now in fear, because they expected that the RS NA would reject this document and its principles. "Their tactic was to accuse the RS. But, instead of blockade, which was something they expected to happen, we passed the constitutional changes. The High Representative will not have arguments to dispute the decision of the RS NA", said Ivanic.

RS Prime Minister says unity of Serb parties proves consolidation of the entity

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

SRNA news agency quotes RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, as saying in Gradiska/Bosanska Gradiska on Friday that the unity of the Serb parties during the adoption of constitutional amendments demonstrated that the RS had been consolidated. "The RS is on its way to become a stable entity which knows what it wants and which has shown, for the first time, that it can be active. We have now fulfilled our part of the obligations regarding the constitutional amendments and we will continue the job we have begun in order to prove that the country is capable of implementing its laws", Ivanic said. He said that the RS was ready to implement laws in the area of taxation policy and that it would fight tax evasion.

RS Vice Premier Kunic: Bosniaks and Croats got more than they are entitled to

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The Vice Premier of the RS, Petar Kunic is of the opinion that all discriminatory appearances and power monopoly were eliminated by the constitutional amendments in the RS and that other nations in that entity – Bosniaks, Croats and all others "as a matter of fact, gained more than they are entitled to. "Critics on the constitutional changes in RS, that are coming from Sarajevo are ungrounded and unacceptable" – Kunic said to Srna news agency. The RS Vice Premier said that the decision of the BiH Constitutional Court was "too exploited." Kunic also said that the fact that the RS National Assembly was unanimous in accepting the amendments speaks enough about the maturity of the RS political leadership and leading RS political parties.

RS NA Speaker says adopted constitutional amendments key to future

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

SRNA news agency quotes RS NA Speaker, Dragan Kalinic, as saying on Thursday night, that he believes that the adoption of the constitutional amendments is an important decision for the RS which would be beneficial for the status of the RS in BiH and its international standing, and which would strengthen the RS's position. "I hope that the people would see the adopted decisions in the right way; they were taken to make this country as free and democratic as possible, and to respect in the best possible way the national, civic and human rights in line with the best European standards", Kalinic said, adding that this was the aim of the amendments. He pointed out that the RS parties displayed exceptional unity on Thursday evening and that there were no differences between the government and opposition. "The decision additionally strengthens the position of the RS and it is a key to its future", said Kalinic after the extraordinary session of the RS NA. He expressed his hope that the international representatives who were present at the session would analyze the amendments in detail and with a great deal of understanding. Asked to comment on the demand by the SDP BiH MP, Zekerijah Osmic, to adjourn the session, Kalinic said that he appreciated Osmic's work, but that "it seems that it suited someone for this important task for the RS not to be completed this evening". He added that the MPs in the BiH Federation may face problems with the adoption of the amendments, and wished them to ensure a majority in favor, just like the RS did. Asked what was the difference between the adopted amendments and the agreement made in Sarajevo, Kalinic said: "We shall not discuss differences in relation to the agreement, but the amendments which would improve democratic relations in the RS." The Speaker congratulated the MPs who voted for the amendments for their courage in taking such a complex

decision.

RS War Veterans' Organization: Amendments slightly more favorable than Sarajevo deal

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Weekend edition of Glas Srpski quotes Savo Cvijetinovic, president of the RS War Veterans' Organization, as saying on Friday that the adopted constitutional amendments are somewhat more favorable for the RS than the Sarajevo agreement. Veterans are not satisfied that the 1991 population Census remained the basis for the distribution of powers in the RS authorities. Cvijetinovic said that the Veteran Organization was very much satisfied with the unity of all Serb political parties in adopting the constitutional solutions in the RS.

FRY president and Serbian Prime Minister applauded the RS NA decision

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Monday's edition of Glas Srpski reports that the FRY President, Vojislav Kostunica assessed that the constitutional amendments, adopted by the RS National Assembly, are very important not only for the RS and BiH but also for the neighboring countries. Kostunica says that the RS NA deputies demonstrated that they accept political reality and respect international obligations. He also says that the adoption of the constitutional amendments means that democratic principle of constitutionality is recognized, without questioning the Dayton-based two-entity character of BiH. "This means that further existence of the RS is not in question, which the OHR confirmed in its statement", said Kostunica. Serbian Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic also commended the adoption of the constitutional amendments. "Adoption of the constitutional amendments is important for safe future of the RS as one of the two equal entities in BiH", said Djindjic.

SDP says adopted amendments to the RS Constitution not in compliance with the agreement on the issue signed in Sarajevo

According to Sunday's Dnevni Avaz, the BiH Social Democratic Party (SDP) described as unacceptable the constitutional amendments adopted by the Republika Srpska National Assembly on Thursday (April 4) and called on High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch to ensure that the agreement reached on March 27 in the OHR building in Sarajevo is fully implemented. A statement issued by the SDP on Saturday says that no less than 11 of 13 amendments adopted by the RS' Assembly depart in some way or another from the agreement. The SDP believes that this is unacceptable, given that the Federation Government has adopted draft constitutional amendments, which are in line with the Sarajevo agreement. "The content of the constitutional amendments and the manner in which they were adopted have confirmed unequivocally that the High Representative must now fulfill his part of responsibility regarding the setting up of mechanisms for protection of vital national interests," the SDP release said. It added that SDP chairman Zlatko Lagumdžija would discuss constitutional changes at a meeting with US Ambassador to BiH Clifford Bond on Monday. In a statement with Saturday's Dnevni Avaz, Lagumdžija said that the amendments adopted by the RS Parliament had to be harmonized with the Sarajevo agreement by April 18. He adds that all other solutions would represent a slap to the BiH Constitutional Court's decision and the international community.

Dodik says Federation not RS is cause of the problem

The chairman of the RS Party of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), Milorad Dodik, said that BiH SDP leader Zlatko Lagumdžija was urging the High Representative to impose changes to the constitutional amendments adopted in the RS in order to divert attention from the situation in the Federation

of BiH “where there is no parliamentary majority in favor of the constitutional amendments”. “The constitutional amendments in the RS were adopted in line with procedure and the RS is not the problem here. Whenever a terrorist from Al-Qaeda or some other organization is found in BiH, Lagumdzija and people like him hit out at the RS and blame it for everything,” Dodik told SRNA. Dodik pointed out that the Federation was again the cause of the problem. “When he was signing the agreement in the Office of the High Representative on March 27, Lagumdzija was aware that he did not enjoy the backing of a parliamentary majority,” Dodik said. He added that the SNSD would not accept any imposed solutions because the RS was able to resolve its own problems. He urged Lagumdzija “to deal with the problems in the Federation of BiH” and to use his deputies in the RS parliament to raise any objections he had to the amendments adopted in the RS. According to Monday’s Oslobodjenje, in an interview with the Novi Sad daily Dnevnik, Dodik emphasized that the RS was a reality, which would not vanish, and that the international community was aware of that fact differently from the BiH Federation politicians.

SDA claims adopted amendments to the RS Constitution ensure Serb dominance

The President of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), Sulejman Tihic, on Friday said that the constitutional amendments adopted by the Republika Srpska National Assembly on Thursday night finally reaffirmed the entity dominated by the Serbs.

“The amendments ensure the domination of one people, Serbs, and consequently do not guarantee the equality of the other two constituent peoples, Bosniaks and Croats,” Tihic said at a news conference in Sarajevo. According to Oslobodjenje, Tihic said that “in this way the continuity of the Serb Republic entity has finally been signed and delivered, largely in the shape and form envisaged by Radovan Karadzic, and for which Slobodan Milosevic is on trial in The Hague today.” ([SDA](#)

Party for BiH leader says amendments to the RS Constitution adopted in the same way as the RS Constitution from 1992

Sunday's Dnevni Avaz quoted Party for BiH President Safet Halilovic as saying at a press conference in Bihac on Saturday that the amendments to the RS Constitution had been adopted exclusively by votes of the Serb deputies, just like in 1992, and that it was actually about the same project. "This is the SDS project about the ethnically clean RS in which there is only one people making decisions about everything," Halilovic said. He added that since the High Representative and the US Ambassador to BiH had signed the agreement on the constitutional reforms as guarantors, they were expected to take decisive measures against all political parties, which were obstructing the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court's decision.

Ahmed Zilic, Council of Europe's legal expert, claims amendments to the RS Constitution legalize ethnic discrimination

In an interview with Dnevni Avaz, Council of Europe's legal expert Ahmed Zilic said that it was paradoxical the amendments to the RS Constitution adopted by the RS National Assembly were giving less rights to the Bosniaks and Croats as the constituent peoples than were given to the ethnic minorities according to the international standards. Zilic added that the RS parliamentarians had actually legalized ethnic discrimination through a deliberate violation of the constitutional procedure and a selective approach to the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court's decision on the constituency of the peoples and the Sarajevo agreement.

Croatian Ambassador to BiH: the agreement on constitutional reforms opens a new, European perspective for all peoples in BiH

In an interview with the Sunday's Dnevni Avaz, Croatian Ambassador to BiH Josip Vrbosic said that he believed the position of the Croat people in BiH was being improved by the agreement on the constitutional reform signed on March 27 in the OHR building in Sarajevo, although the solutions were remaining asymmetric in the BiH Federation and the RS. According to Vrbosic, the agreement is opening a new, civic and European perspective to all constituent peoples in BiH including Croats.

HDZ BiH to initiate referendum on constitutional changes in BiH

According to Saturday's Oslobodjenje, the presidency of the BiH Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) held a regular session in Mostar on Friday at which they analyzed and discussed activities of this party in the process of constitutional changes following the signing of the agreement on implementation of the Constitutional Court's decision on the constituent status of peoples. It was said at the session that the HDZ did not sign this agreement because it places the Croat people in an unequal position and deprives the Croats of their right as a constituent people and reduces them to a national minority. The HDZ presidency will request its deputies to the BiH Federation Assembly to press for the adoption of amendments which are in accordance with the standpoints of the Croat People's Assembly, the statement of the HDZ public relations office said. It was also said at the session that the presidency would request the party parliamentarians to launch an initiative for the implementation of the referendum on constitutional changes in BiH and state demands for federalization of the country. This includes cantonization or building of BiH as a community of three federal units with a majority of one of the three

constituent peoples in each one of these units.

Federation

AFP: BiH Federation Army to begin massive troop cut

BiH Federation is to start reducing its 23,800-strong army by over 40 percent next week in order to bring down its high level of military expenditure, the deputy defense minister said on Friday. The plan to downsize the army to 13,200 soldiers became possible after parliament approved earlier this week a scheme for compensating demobilized soldiers, the BiH Federation deputy defense minister, Ferid Buljubasic, told AFP. The parliament gave the government the green light to borrow 100 million convertible marks (51 million euros, 45 million dollars) from commercial banks to give each demobilized soldier 10,000 marks in compensation. The money will be paid back by donors and money earned by the government from privatization programs. The troop reduction, to be completed by the end of June, is expected to go smoothly as a recent survey showed around 8,600 soldiers were willing to leave the army voluntarily. That number was likely to exceed 10,000 now that the parliament had approved the compensation package, Buljubasic said. The Republika Srpska Army currently has more than 8,000 soldiers but their number is expected to be cut to 6,600 by 2005. Branko Trkulja, the RS defense ministry spokesman, told AFP the reduction could be made by July 2003, on the condition that dismissed soldiers were given severance pay and the proportionate size of the RS and Federation armies was not disturbed. The BiH authorities pledged to downsize their armed forces amid strong criticism from the international community, which was involved in the peace process in the Balkan country and which said Bosnia should reduce its military expenditure in favor of much needed economic reforms. According to estimates from the Organization

for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), military expenditure in BiH as a whole is currently more than eight percent of gross domestic product, while the European average is 1.5 percent.

Vecernji List: Jelavic resigns from the office of the HDZ President

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Vecernji List learns from an anonymous HDZ official that (unrecognized) President of the HDZ BiH Ante Jelavic has left the post of the party's President adding that he did it because of the pressure coming from the IC and in order to enable the re-registration of the party with the Mostar Cantonal Court (MCC). VL reads that the Presidency of the HDZ BiH, following a session of it, issued a press release that did not say anything about Jelavic's resignation but said that that the Central Board of the party would discuss the request of the MCC at its session in Mostar on April 12. The daily says that the HDZ BiH should submit the MCC new materials with names of officials who have not been sanctioned together with changes to the party's Statute. With regards to the latest decision of the High Representative on the eligibility of election candidates, VL says that the HDZ BiH has been cornered with the decision because there are four senior HDZ officials that have been sanctioned including Ante Jelavic, Marko Tokic, Ivo Andric Luzanski and Zdravko Batinic. "Our position burdens the party. That's why we have to withdraw", said Ivo Andric Luzanski at a long session of the HDZ Presidency which was held behind closed doors. The daily says that there was not any mention of names of possible successors but it would appear that Jelavic is to be replaced by a moderate Barisa Colak. As previously reported, the party should be represented at court by Niko Lozancic, a member of the HDZ Presidency. With regards to Lozancic and Colak, VL says that they are both loyal to Jelavic so one could believe that Jelavic would be in charge of the HDZ from shadow. With

regards to the issue as to who would lead the party, VL says that Thursday should offer the answer, when the HDZ Presidency holds another session. The daily says that one cannot rule out a possibility that the party's Central Board postpones a decision on election of new leadership and organizes another Convention of HDZ BiH.

On the same issue today's **Dnevni List** carries that apart from Jelavic, Ivo Andric Luzanski, Marko Tokic, Ivan Bacak, Zdravko Batinic, Niko Lozancic and Barisa Colak also submitted resignations.

Dnevni List: Croat intellectuals from Stolac meet at the invitation of the Municipal Administration

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The article says that Zeljko Obardovic, the Stolac Mayor, announced numerous actions that the Municipal Authority is planning to take. According to him, the construction of the waste dump on the location called Njivice as well as finding of a high-quality solution for the water-supply problems were stressed as priorities. The Stolac Mayor stressed that in spite of the fact that they have achieved the best results when the minority returns are concerned, the International Community is 'shyly ' investing its funds in this area, and as an example he stated that fact that out of 207 houses, which were built, there are only 7 houses, whose owners are Croats. Father Luka Pavlovic, the General Vicar of the Trebinje-Mrkan Diocese, pointed to the need of construction of the pastoral center in the center of Stolac, which would organize Catholics of this area and participants supported this proposal.

Dnevni List: An interview with Stolac Mayor Zeljko Obradovic in regard of the announced Petritsch's visit to Herzegovina

Interview conducted by Ivica Glibusic (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Commenting on the protocol of the High Representative's visit to Stolac, Obradovic said that he believes that the visit to Careva Mosque will be disputable because Obradovic is of the opinion that it was used as a small provocation. Obradovic added that this would be an opportunity to hear a story about Stolac in Stolac because for a longer period of time there were various information and misinformation about the situation in the Stolac Municipality coming from those, who do not live in Stolac but who 'love Stolac' in a special way. Obradovic said that 4 religious communities exist on the territory of Stolac and a good cooperation was established with all of them apart from the Islamic Religious Community. Obradovic said that he is really glad that they will talk with the representatives of the Islamic Community in the presence of the IC representatives. Asked whether the HR's visit is an additional pressure exerted against the Croats in Stolac, resulting from the open statements given by Safet Halilovic, the President of the BiH Federation, regarding the cultural heritage in Stolac, Obradovic stated that he does not think that someone wants this visit to be the additional pressure exerted against the Croats and added that, first of all, he will see this visit as an opportunity to talk about Stolac in Stolac and to clarify 'some misunderstandings' in this municipality.

Talking about the visit to Opijaceva Kuca (Opijaceva House), Obradovic stated that the protocol envisaged a visit to this place, however, after some documents were handed over it was erased from the protocol. Obradovic says that this visit to Opijaceva House was primarily planned in order to preserve tensed political situation, after which he sent his letter to media by which they denied some information which even came from the office of Safet Halilovic. Obradovic stated that Halilovic should have written to him first and in this way he would have got the right information from Obradovic or some of competent Departments. Obradovic concludes that, lately, they have felt certain pressures exerted against Catholic symbols

in the city and Municipality and he believes that these problems will be solved in cooperation with the Police. He says that the same things that take place on the whole BiH territory also take place in Stolac and adds that Stolac shares the fate of this country. Obradovic also said that representatives of the Catholic Church would not participate at the meeting of representatives of the religious communities. Obradovic said that the Catholic Church has distanced itself from this visit to Stolac due to certain dissatisfaction with the HR's attitude towards the Catholic Church and added that, according to his information, the representatives of the Catholic Church will not meet with the HR's delegation.

DISS requests the High Representative to stop construction of a mosque in Ilijas

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The association of citizens, Democratic Initiative of Sarajevo Serbs (DISS) requests the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch to stop the construction of a mosque in Ilijas, urgently. The release issued by DISS and carried by Nezavisne Novine said the following: "Despite an explicit prohibition issued by OHR, over the construction of a mosque in center of Ilijas, the construction continues. Religious objects are needed, but in reasonable number and where is appropriate. We believe that a location between two schools, on a school's playground, on a land expropriated from Serb families, is inappropriate and tendentiously chosen." The representatives of the Association are of the opinion that construction of a mosque at that particular location would not contribute to the return of Serbs to Ilijas, nor would it increase tolerance and multi ethnicity. "We request the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, to urgently stop all illegal construction on expropriated land throughout BiH and to dismiss mayors of all municipalities where such things take place." – says the release.

Republika Srpska

Forcible collection of taxes in the RS: Accounts of Five Companies Blocked

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The process of forcible collection of taxes has for the first time in the last ten years been applied against five companies in the RS. This was stated at a press conference by the Director of the RS Tax Administration, Milica Bisic, Glas Srpski reports. The companies that are facing forcible tax paying are **"Trgotrans"**: from Bileca, which owes KM 365,000 to the Tax Administration, **"Manko"** from Bijeljina – KM 134,000, **"Peti Neplan"** from Omarska – KM 680,000, **"Dusanic Company"** from Prnjavor – KM 1,32 million, the companies **"Ambalazerka"**, **"Sinekop"**, **"Agrosinekop"** and **"Bomi Free"** from Trn – KM 5,535 million. (Note: In total the amount of losses owed is KM 8,034 million). An assistant to the Director of the Tax Collection Sector, Zeljko Orelj, said that: "We have received an official receipt and a certificate that the company "Manko" fully paid its debt to the Tax Administration, and this company will be de-blocked. In regard to "Dusanic Company", we have the information that this company has filed a request for reprogramming the debt." He said that the Tax Administration had only unofficial information that "Trgotrans" had paid part of its debt. If, in line with the law, a company pays the debt in installments, with all relevant documents, or if the goods, the value of which meets the basic debt, are seized on the spot, the forcible payment procedure is stopped and the company can work. Bisic explained that: "If a debt can not be fully paid by selling movable property, the property will be put under a mortgage. If the amount of both movable and real property is less than the debt, then the debtor is declared insolvent, and the debt is considered non-operative." She noted that an insolvent taxpayer could not form another

company. According to Bisic, by the same law, the Tax Administration has been given jurisdictions and procedure possibilities to implement the forcible payment procedure swiftly and efficiently, in the way done in countries with a strict tax system. Bisic pointed out that: "This is not an extreme, but a regular law enforcement job. This is only the beginning of the forcible payment, because the Tax Administration has its own working pace." According to her, the basic debt of taxpayers is increased by 10% for special stamp duties and by 5% for the expenses of forcible payment. Although Slavko Roguljic, the owner of four blocked companies, claims the opposite, Bisic pointed out that he had been informed of the forcible payment and legal repercussions if he failed to pay the debt. Eight trucks owned by the "Dusanic Company" will remain seized until the debt of this company is paid off. Bisic explained that: "As to the debt of budget beneficiaries to Roguljic, the Tax Administration can implement only written decisions on the manner of payment, and not statements given by the parties involved." She noted that registration forms for property taxes had so far been filed by 122,000 citizens, while registration forms for income taxes had been filed by 110,000 citizens.

Upon claims of the owner of "Peti Neplan" that he was financing PDP: Who was racketeering Romanic?

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Reacting upon claims of the owner of "Peti Neplan" (that he was financing PDP /Party of Democratic Progress/ following Vracar's orders), the RS Minister of Finance, Milenko Vracar, told "Nezavisne novine" that: "I have never given any order to anyone, neither have I ever made any agreement with anyone as to what party to finance, including PDP led by Premier Mladen Ivanic. If Romanic said he was financing PDP following my order, then he is telling rubbish." The statement by Vracar went on to say that: "You cannot order anyone to finance any political party. It can be done only on a self-voluntary

basis. I do not know what motive a person has to say that. I am sure that there are people, who were giving out money to the ruling parties, in order to avoid paying taxes. It is not possible any more. Nobody can be amnestied from paying its duties towards the state." Referring to the statement by Romanic, the RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, said that there were no signs of any such thing. Ivanic told the press that: "Even if he did so, it demonstrated that the state was functioning and that everybody is equal before the law." Commenting on the above statements, Romanic said that he had all bills of lading for the goods, which the members of the PDP and other political parties obtained from "Peti Neplan". Regarding this, Romanic added that: "It will be made public who signed what and when. If Premier Ivanic has no evidence of me being the donator of the PDP, led by him, then he should ask himself why his associates failed to tell him anything about this. Everything is known. Furthermore, this authority knows very well who was coming to collect racket from me on a monthly basis."

Cornerstone laid for the construction of mosque in Srebrenica

Saturday's Oslobodjenje reports that a ceremony to lay out the cornerstone for the construction a mosque in Srebrenica was held on Friday. The mosque will be constructed at the site of the former White Mosque. The ceremony also attended by representatives of the municipal authorities took place without any incidents.

Serb Orthodox Bishop hosts inter-religious conference dedicated to peace in Trebinje

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Both Banja Luka dailies report on the inter-religious conference dedicated to peace and inter-religious dialogue, which takes place in Trebinje and is hosted by the Serb

Orthodox Bishop Grigorije. The papers report that the representatives of all 4 major religious communities in BiH participate in the conference. Bishop of Zahumlje and Herzegovina, Grigorije said that the goal of the conference is that we tell each other what we feel and what we think and to open the door for new dialogues which will eventually be initiated in other parts of BiH in order to resolve all our problems in a peaceful manner. Banja Luka Mufti, Edhem Camdzic said that there is no peace without freedom of thought and freedom of religious freedom as well as without reconstruction of all destroyed places of worship. "The differences between us have to be our advantages and not disadvantages", said the Banja Luka Mufti. President of the Jewish Community in Mostar, Zoran Mandelbaum stressed that differences between religions must not be an obstacle to reach a long-lasting peace and coexistence in BiH. Representative of the Catholic Church, Franciscan priest Marko Orsolovic pointed out that peace cannot be restored with political decisions but only with true reconciliation with God and with restoration of human lives not only places of worship.

International Community

Petritsch extends mandate of the Hercegovacka Banka Provisional Administrator

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, on Thursday issued a Decision extending the mandate of the Provisional Administrator of Hercegovacka Banka with regard to the blocking of the deposits and investments in the Bank beyond the period of one year. (All Sarajevo dailies and Banja Luka Nezavisne Novine carried the [Press Release](#) on Saturday)

PDHR Hays says the Hercegovacka Banka founders

intended to make an autonomous region under Croat control

Saturday's Dnevni Avaz reports that Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hayssaid on Friday at a press conference in Mostar that the final goal of the founders of the Hercegovacka Banka had been to make Herzegovina an autonomous region, i.e. to put it under Croat control. Hays said that the founders of the bank had wanted to control the community and then take taxes from it. He added that Hercegovacka Banka had been meant to become a kind of treasury for public funds. Although the bank was created to be commercial, it turned to be an institution that was fulfilling political goals of individuals, Hays said. According to the Radio Mostar East, Provisional Administrator of the Bank Toby Robinsonsaid that, since the investigation into the bank's operations was underway, new criminal charges were expected to be filled during summertime. Robinson stated that not only OHR but also depositors had lost confidence in Hercegovacka Banka. Based on about million documents and over 600,000 computer files, the investigation showed, said Robinson, that this was really a story on major criminal of a small group of people who had taken large credits never giving them back. Two thirds of credits were given to shareholders, members of the Steering board and connected associations, Robinson said. She added that people who had organized all this were still in possession of the money that belongs to 40,000 depositors. According to Dnevni Avaz, Robinson said that there were three resolutions for the Bank: rehabilitation, selling or liquidation.

Saturday's Dnevni Avaz declares Toby Robinson as the Person of the Day

Saturday's Dnevni Avaz declared Hercegovacka Banka Provisional Administrator Toby Robinson Person of the Day in light of the extension of her mandate for another year. According to the newspaper, Robinson has been given more time to resolve the

situation in once the largest financial institution in Herzegovina caused by more than suspicious transactions.

Petritsch not excluding possibility he will appear as a witness before The Hague Tribunal in trial of Milosevic

According to Sunday's Dnevni Avaz, in an interview with the Vienna magazine "News," the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, said he did not exclude possibility that he would appear as the witness in trial of former FRY President Slobodan Milosevic before The Hague Tribunal, but only after the end of his current diplomatic mission in Sarajevo. He emphasized that he was not available to the Tribunal as long as he was performing the sensitive duties of the High Representative of the international community in BiH.

Reuters: Dutch brace for long-awaited Srebrenica report

Reeling from charges that it failed to prevent the 1995 massacre of up to 8,000 Muslims in Srebrenica, Bosnia, despite the presence of Dutch U.N. troops, the Netherlands this week releases a report into the bloodbath. Up to 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were killed in the United Nations-designated "safe area" – Europe's worst massacre since World War Two – when the town fell to Bosnian Serb forces during the war in BiH. More than five years in the making, the 7,000-page report by the Dutch Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) is the official Dutch history of events in Srebrenica. Tension is high ahead of Wednesday's publication, not least because of a damning report released two weeks ago. That report, "Srebrenica: The genocide that was not prevented," by domestic peace group IKV (Interchurch Peace Council), said Dutch U.N. troops, generals and politicians bore clear responsibility for failing to protect the Bosniaks. The IKV wants a parliamentary inquiry and an official Dutch apology for events in Srebrenica, where some 110 lightly-armed Dutch peacekeepers were stationed when

the town fell without a shot being fired.

Crime in BiH scares Ashdown more than nationalism

According to Monday's Dnevni Avaz, Paddy Ashdown, the future High Representative of the international community in BiH and the former leader of the British liberals, said in an interview with BBC that the crime in BiH scared him more than nationalism. However, Ashdown emphasized that great progress had been made in the country since the end of the war. "If the progress was made in Northern Ireland in the past 30 years as was made in BiH in just six years, today, we would not have problems there which we have," Ashdown assessed.

Vecernji List: Interview with Wolfgang Petritsch, the High Representative of the International Community in BiH

The newspaper carries an interview with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, in which he talks about the Hercegovacka Banka case, the Agreement on the constitutional changes and the overall situation. In relation to the Hercegovacka Banka case, the HR says that the case is more serious than he expected at the beginning of the investigation, which is the reason why the Provisional Administrator and AFD are still not revealing all details and names of persons involved in the illegalities.

(Full translation of the interview to follow)

Editorials

Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz, Jutarnje Novine and Nezavisne Novine

In the Saturday's Oslobodjenje In Focus column, Gojko Beric wrote the first analysis were showing that there were certain differences between the amendments to the Republika Srpska

Constitution and the agreement on the constitutional reform signed in Sarajevo. He concluded that the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, would probably have to make some corrections in order to fulfill his promise that he would not mind improvements of the Sarajevo agreement but that he would not tolerate any solution below its level. In another Saturday's *Oslobodjenje* editorial, Mirko Sagolj criticizes HDZ because it did not sign the agreement on the constitutional reform, which is reasonably being described as the most important political act since Dayton. Sagolj concludes that the final outcome of the HDZ's policy of the BiH's partitions can only be a full isolation of a part of the Croat peoples it controls. Vanja Ilcic wrote in the weekend *Jutarnje Novine* The Seal editorial that those informed on the political situation in BiH should not be surprised with the essence of the amendments to the RS Constitution adopted by the RS National Assembly. The BiH Federation now expects the High Representative to react as the final authority for the interpretation of the Sarajevo agreement until it is fully implemented by the entity's parliaments. In the Sunday's *Oslobodjenje* editorial, Zija Dizdarevic analyzes the amendments to the RS Constitution adopted by the RS National Assembly assessing that they to a significant extent honor the agreement on the constitutional reform signed in Sarajevo, but that there are also crucial elements in them ensuring political and legal domination of Serbs over two other constituent peoples: Bosniaks and Croats. "The aggressive Serb exclusivity can be democratically overcome only through a full implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court's decision and through an invasion of returnees on the RS, Dizdarevic concludes. Armin Zeba wrote in the Sunday's *Dnevni Avaz* Commentary of the Day that, by rejecting the decision on the constituency of the peoples, the Serb politicians were once again showing that a fascist idea on which the RS was based was still alive.

Weekend edition of *Nezavisne Novine* carries an editorial in

which Radomir Neskovic says that the RS NA finally fulfilled its constitutional obligation toward the BiH Constitutional Court ruling on constituent status of all peoples in BiH thus putting an end to the toilsome process of harmonization of the entity constitutions with the BiH CoCo ruling. He also says that the consistency of the IC had a great impact on the entire process – because the IC insisted from the day one that the BiH CoCo ruling has to be implemented in the essence and in its entirety without hedging and quibbling and that the changes cannot exceed the framework set by the Constitutional Court.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Bosniaks and Serbs divided Bosnia and Herzegovina

Written by Marijan Puntaric (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Slobodna Dalmacija carries an editorial about the Agreement on constitutional changes in which the author says that the Agreement was not welcomed by Croat parties, moreover it was rejected by them, excluding the NHI. The author repeats the HDZ BiH's stance that the agreement does not bind the Croats due to the alleged anti-Croat nature of it. He goes on to say that the Sarajevo Agreement was fooled on Friday when the RS Parliament changed the Agreement thus bringing Croats and Bosniaks into even more unfavorable position. With regards to the Croat Ambassador Josip Vrbosic calling on the HDZ BiH to sign the agreement, SD says that it the final blow coming from official Zagreb, 'a stab in the back', as the daily puts it. Why do Croats i.e. Croat parties mind the Agreement, asks SD. Firstly, it legalizes final division of BiH into two entities, a Serb and a Bosniak one, in which decisions would be taken on principles of civic majority, through outvoting and not through consensus which would secure national equality.

Croats mind the Bosniaks and Kresimir Zubak for signing the Agreement which preserves an ethically cleansed RS, without mechanisms which would provide national equality and

protection of vital national interests, whilst Serbs get 15-20% stake in the authority of the Federation BiH. The author goes on to say that the introduction of "Others" represents a possibility of abuses of national minorities for purposes of Bosniak and Serb majority. According to Petritsch's Agreement, says Puntaric, the entity Governments are elected by the House of Representatives in the Federation and RS Assembly in the RS without consent of the House of Peoples in FBiH and Council of Peoples in RS which means there would be 14 Bosniak, 12 Serb and 8 Croat Ministers. The author goes on to say that even those points of the Agreement were revised by the Serb MPs in the RS Assembly on Friday thus revising the already fragile mechanisms of protection of vital national interests. "Petritsch stayed silent to the unilateral change", says SD. Puntaric says that there are great constitutional-political crisis and huge problems in sight adding that the Agreement and "Petritsch's amendments", despite Kresimir Zubak's signature, appear not to bind the Croats. He says that if the amendments do not go through in a parliamentary procedure and a blockade of institutions occurs, Petritsch would have to impose the amendments. Puntaric wonders what's the point of having elections when constitutional amendments are imposed, why hurry when the goal of the constitutional changes is fortification of division of BiH into two entities thus bringing Croats into a position of a national minority. Finally the author says that it is hard to believe that the HDZ BiH would sign the Agreement and support it in the Parliament adding that the IC will have hard times when it gets involved in de-blocking of the political blockade, threats and bans will do no good says Puntaric.

The situation will hit Zagreb and Croatia like a boomerang, because their passive role regarding the BiH Croats will be an excuse for the IC to mount more pressure on Croatia regarding the rights and position of Serbs in Croatia.

Headlines

Saturday

Oslobodjenje

- Oscar in Sarajevo!

Dnevni Avaz

- Lagumdžija on adopted amendments to the RS Constitution: Slap to the Constitutional Court's Decision

Jutarnje Novine (weekend edition)

- First but not the last Oscar

Glas Srpski (weekend edition)

- RS Tax and Revenue Administration coerced debtor enterprises into paying taxes – Money or sequestration;
- Belgrade: Americans blackmail enterprises linked with Radovan Karadzic's brother;

Nezavisne Novine (weekend edition)

- Danis Tanovic given a warm reception by Sarajevans – Bosnia celebrates Oscar (+ big picture of Danis Tanovic holding the Oscar statue)
- Interview with US ambassador to BiH Clifford Bond – No reason for RS to change its name;

Dnevni List (weekend edition)

- Toby Robinson, a Provisional Administrator of Hercegovacka Bank, and Donald Hays, a Principle Deputy High Representative, on the anniversary of the raid into Hercegovacka Bank: Political-criminal groups robbed Herzegovina: we have come to save you!
- Ilija Simic, the HSS President: We are preparing second Croat Block for the elections!

Vecernji List

- One year of the Provisional Administration in Hercegovacka Bank: There

are no evidence on crime

- 20 000 Sarajevo citizens welcomed Danis Tanovic: This Oscar is for you!
- Stormy celebration of the 10th HVO Anniversary: General Zeljko Glasnovic:
I am taking off uniform of such Army

Sunday

Oslobodjenje

- A memory of Sarajevo

Dnevni Avaz

- Due to the debts of Ljubljanska Banka: BiH depositors boycott Slovenian products

Vecernji List

- Mijo Anic, the Minister of Defense of the BiH Federation: I am the Minister of only one third of Ministry
- Possible consequences of the blockade of the Herzegovina-Neretva Cantonal budget it is questionable whether pupils will receive certificates
- Problems on the illegal market place Vrapcici near Mostar: Salesmen blocked the high-way for three hours

Monday

Oslobodjenje

- Fresh affair in selecting hotel for accommodation of Federation parliamentarians: Holiday Inn selected in advance?

Dnevni Avaz

- Paddy Ashdown, future High Representative in BiH, for BBC: Crime not nationalism scares me

Jutarnje Novine

- Pensioners in uncertainty over payment of two backlog pensions

Glas Srpski

- Public prosecutor from Srpsko Sarajevo pressed war crime charges against

416 Bosniaks;

- HDZ Main Committee – Croats want entity;

Nezavisne Novine

- Zeljko Romanic claims he was ordered to finance some political parties
Who was racketeering “Peti Neplan”?
- Constitutional changes in BiH – Petritsch looking into amendments to the RS Constitution

Dnevni List

- Mirnes Ajanovic has commented the statement of Mijo Anic in which it was said that Ajanovic ‘is crazy’: Mijo Anic has blackmailed soldiers!
- During the session of the HDZ Presidency: Jelavic and 7 members of HDZ Presidency submitted resignations
- An interview with Zeljko Obradovic, a Stolac mayor, with regard to today’s visit to Stolac and Herzegovina: Finally talks on Stolac in Stolac

Vecernji List

- A stormy HDZ session: Jelavic resigned, Colak is new President
- Wolfgang Petritsch, the High Representative of the IC for BiH: HVO did not get 1,16 billion Kunas from Croatia