OHR BiH Media Round-up, 25/3/2006

RADIO HERCEG-BOSNA (18,00 hrs)	**TV PINK** (18,00 hrs)	**BHT 1** (19,00 hrs)
Strike in secondary schools in HNC	Regional News	Floods in Tuzla area
New electricity prices	BiH Lawsuit against SCG	Drina and Sava about to flood
FBiH pensions not to be increased	Caucus of Croat people established	Increase of electricity prices
BiH Croat Block on const changes	Coordination Board's session	HR at meeting of fiscal council

NTV Hayat (19,00 hrs)	**FTV** (19,30 hrs)	**RTRS** (19,30 hrs)
Floods in Tuzla Canton stabilized	Increase of electricity prices in FBiH	Blair on constitutional changes in BiH
BiH Presidency in session	HDZ-DC Caucus dissolved	Report on floods and slides
Croat reps. leave HoR HDZ Caucus	IMF delegation visits BiH	RSNA session- BiH lawsuit vs SCG
IMF, BiH CoM on VAT results	Conf. "BiH and EU integrations"	RSNA session- constit. changes

Oslobodjenje	Minister Grahovac opposes abolishment of Financial Police
Dnevni Avaz	Silajdzic: I am definitely coming back to politics
Dnevni List	HDZ officials abandoned obedience to Covic

Vecernji List	Automafia cheated hundreds of buyers through announcements in newspapers
Nezavisne Novine	Toby Robinson: I will not unfreeze the account; Dragan Cavic: We will not be able to run for elections
Glas Srpske	Crying out for justice [*Families of 20 Serbs allegedly 'killed by Croat and Bosniak' armed forces in Posavina demand justice*]

General political issues

RSNA in session: Tihic's initiative to assess constitutionality of RS symbols rejected	**RTRS** by Marina Marjanovic – The RS National Assembly adopted on Friday the Declaration that rejects the initiative of BiH Presidency member **Sulejman Tihic** before the BiH Constitutional Court, regarding the request for assessing the constitutionality of the RS symbols. In declaration, RSNA explained that Tihic's initiative is not legal but political act with a purpose to destroy legality of the RS as well as the constitutional system of the BiH. **Rajko Kuzmanovic**, member of RS team before the BiH Constitutional Court, believes that solution should be found through political dialogue. "*This [initiative] is [an initiative] of political nature and bad policy*", said Kuzmanovic. "*I expect that BiH Constitutional Court would have on mind all aspects and repercussions of its decision*", said **Dusan Stojicic** from SDS. **Tarik Sadovic**, RSNA representative from SDA, said that there was no other option but to address the issue before the BiH Constitutional Court. **PINK**– RSNA also stressed the RS symbols are not based on principle of discrimination and denial of other peoples. Bosniak and Croat Representatives did not agree with the this opinion. "*I think it is not necessary to convince us that cross, two-headed eagle, flag and anthem of RS are also symbols of other two peoples*", said **Sefket Hafizovic** from SDA. **Tomislav Tomljanovic** from the NHI said that RS symbols were passed without compliance of other two peoples. SDA Representatives announced that would reject this declaration and that would ask from BiH House of Peoples to initiate procedure of the protection of the vital national interest. **BHT 1** – Tomljanovic adds that the entire discussion on the issue was unnecessary as Tihic's request is being considered by the Court. **Hayat, FTV, Dnevni Avaz** pg 9 'Ahmetovic: RSNA steps over its authorities', **Oslobodjenje** pg 2 'Tihic's initiative for assessment of the constitutionality of RS symbols is ungrounded', **Nezavisne novine** pg 4 'Tihic's initiative rejected', **Glas Srpske** pg 2 'Politics vs Law', **Dnevni list** pg 6 'Symbols before the Court' – also reported.

Int. conference on BiH and EU integrations held in Sarajevo: BiH fits into Europe	**Hayat** by Elma Kazagic – In the organization of the International Pan European Union, the conference on the BiH and European Integrations was held in Sarajevo on Friday. The aim of the meeting was to discuss ways in which Pan-European Union could help BiH on its way to Europe. "*Need for communication, for [information on the] results BiH achieves becomes [more important] as the EU's scepticism towards further EU enlargement grows. We have to brief others on the results we achieve and this is great opportunity to do that*", commented the Director to the Directorate for the European Integrations **Osman Topcagic**. Pan-European Union representatives, including honorary president **Otto von Habsburg** and several members of the European Parliament, pointed out that BiH's future was in the Europe, but that it was also in Europe's interest to have BiH integrated in the EU. However, they stressed that many changes have to take place. "*The state must not be divided but united, all people and all citizens have to enjoy their rights in entire territory…ecological issues will also have to be solved*", said Union's Vice Chair **Mislav Jezic**. BiH authorities accepted all recommendations. "*Our main motif is to stabilize the country and to make it self-sustainable, both, in political and economic sense*", said BiH Prime Minister **Adnan Terzic**. **RHB**– The Chair of the Union **Franjo Topic** said that, despite its problems, BiH was making progress on its way to the EU. BiH Presidency member **Ivo Miro Jovic** addressed the meeting, pointing the basic values and EU standards BiH was aspiring to. **FTV, Dnevni Avaz** pg 5 'EU will get new sense once BiH joins', **Oslobodjenje** pg 2 'BiH fits into Europe in any sense' by M.K.S. – also reported. **Dnevni Avaz** pg 5 'I was born like Bosnian too', mentioned on cover, by Nedzad Jamakovic – DA carries a half page interview with the honorary president of the Union Habsburg.

PBES – SDS : Toby Robinson says she would not unfreeze SDS account	**Nezavisne novine** cover splash, pg 3 'Toby Robinson: I will not unfreeze the account; by M. Cubro, A.Sisic– The Provisional Administrator of the Privredna Bank East Sarajevo, **Toby Robinson**, told NN that the SDS account will not be unfrozen until the party pays 1,9 million KM of debt towards the PBES. "*This is not political issue, as some SDS members are trying to demonstrate, but usual situation between the debtor and the bank, in this case between PB ES and SDS,*" stresses Robinson. Commenting announcements that the SDS would not accept the agreement on the constitutional changes unless their accounts unfrozen, Robinson adds she would continue to protect savings holders. She adds that a request to confiscate SDS property was not submitted to the Sokolac Court on Friday due to technical reasons, but ads this would be done at the beginning of the next week. On 21 February, the East Sarajevo County Court confirmed the verdict of Sokolac Basic Court reached earlier under which SDS must pay PBES 1,9 million KM [with interest] to settle the debt of 'Spektra' company towards the Bank.
PBES – SDS : Dragan Cavic claims SDS would not be able to run for elections if it has to pay 1,9million KM to Bank, denies SDS conditions support for const. changes	**Nezavisne novine** cover splash, pg 3 'Dragan Cavic: We will not be able to run for elections' V. Popovic – SDS leader **Dragan Cavic** told NN that the *"SDS has no capacities to meet the financial obligations it wards towards the PBES, which brings into question even party's registration for the upcoming general elections in October."* Cavic says he met with the PBES Provisional Administrator, **Toby Robinson**, on Thursday upon his request to try to find a solution. He told her that the SDS has also obligations towards the BiH Election Commission, and added that this problem would have large political consequences. Cavic doesn't deny the Court's verdict, however says that a solution must be found to ensure SDS takes party in the elections, including a possibility to introduce fee on membership. He also rejected the claims that the SDS conditions a support to the agreement on the constitutional changes with the abolishment of the verdict.

Former RS PM Bukjelovic: SDS politics led to my fall down	**Dnevni Avaz** pg 11 'SDS politics lead to my fall down' by N. Diklic – In the first public statement given following fall of his Government, the former RS Prime Minister, **Pero Bukejlovic** told DA that his removal is a consequence of the politics lead by the SDS in recent past. However, he dismisses there were conflicts between him and the SDS leader, **Dragan Cavic**, as speculated at the time.
NN op-ed by PDHR Butler invites citizens to seek from municipal authorities to prove their accountability and efficiency	**Nezavisne novine** pg 7 'What Have You Done for Me Lately?' op-ed by Larry Butler – Editorial by the Principal Deputy High Representative deals with the issue of accountability and dialogue among the citizens and state, stressing this is supposed to be 'give and take' relationship. The question posed in the headline, reads the editorial, could firstly be posed to the municipal authorities: *"Municipalities are the point at which, nine times out of ten, the government meets the people… it's the municipality that is responsible for delivering key services – such as refuse collection, street lighting, local clinics and children's playgrounds… So the question…can elicit a very concrete response. We've improved this, we've started that, we're about to begin the other. If it's met with a less constructive response – then you know that your mayor or the members of your municipal assembly are not doing their jobs."* Editorial concludes inviting citizens to act: *"Start the ball rolling. Ask your mayor or your nearest municipal official: "What have you done for me lately?"*

Constitutional changes

BiH HoR: New Croat Caucus established; Media: Act of disobedience to HDZ leader, const. changes would not be adopted in Parliament now	**PINK** Representatives in the BiH House of Representatives **Vinko Zoric**, **Martin Raguz**, **Ruza Sopta**, **Filip Andric** and **Ivo Lozancic** announced on Friday that the HDZ-Demo Christians Caucus in the BiH HoR would cease all further activities, while the MPs would continue to work in the Croat Caucus. "*In these crucial moments for BiH and the Croatian people, faced with the signing of the agreement on constitutional reforms by **Dragan Covic** and BiH Presidency member **Ivo Miro Jovic**, which will, if adopted, have ruinous consequences on the position of Croats in BiH, we have decided that the HDZ-Demochristians Caucus in the HoR will cease to function*", reads the announcement. The MPs once again expressed their disagreement with the manner of reaching the agreement on the constitutional changes and its content. "*The correctness of our stands on constitutional reforms was supported by the statements of BiH Catholic bishops, which represent the highest spiritual and moral authority of Croats in BiH*", concluded the representatives. PINK comments that in this way representatives showed their disobedience to **Dragan Covic**, HDZ Leader adding that it is certain now that the constitutional changes would not be accepted in BiH Parliament. Following this announcement **Dnevni list** cover splash, pg 4 'HDZ officials abandoned obedience to Covic' by Dn.L – DL agrees with both comments from PINK. **Hayat**also questions now the chance of having the agreement on the const. changes adopted in the parliament. **BHT 1, FTV, Dnevni Avaz** pg 2 'HDZ Caucus doesn't exist anymore' by H. Orahovac, **Oslobodjenje** pg 7 'HDZ- Democrhistians Caucus ceases operation', **Nezavisne novine** pg 6 'Croat Caucus established', **Glas Srpske** pg 2 'New Croat Caucus'– carried announcement.

Croat Block calls on rejection of agreement on const. changes, postponement of October elections	**RHB, BHT1, Dnevni Avaz** pg 2 'Stories on second phase are deceitful', **Oslobodjenje** pg 7 'Reject agreement', **Dnevni list** pg 8 'Postpone elections' – Vice-chair of the Croatian Block Block, **Ivan Madunic**, told press conference on Friday that the agreement on constitutional changes signed by representatives of seven political parties was reached without previous public discussion, adding that solutions provided for by the agreement are not only unjust but rather fatal for Croat people in BiH, because it is surrendered on the mercy of the peoples who have 2/3 majority in their entities. He also pointed out that the allegation that this is "the first phase" of the constitutional changes and that its mistakes can be corrected in a "second phase" is in fact a delusion. "*Therefore, we call upon Croatian representatives in BiH Assembly to reject courageously the defeatist agreement of their party colleagues*", Madunic stated also calling on postponement of the general elections in October which should enable renewed discussion on the constitutional changes.

HDZ answers those opposing const. changes: Agreement is good for Croats	**RHB**– Following the statement by the New Croat Initiative (NHI) which reads that the agreement on the constitutional changes would bring Croats to unequal position in comparison with two other constituent peoples in BiH and a number of other related criticism, HDZ Spokesperson **Miso Relota** said in an interview to RHB that the negotiations were transparent and that all changes have been tested and agreed at a number of the HDZ Presidency sessions. Relota pointed out that the agreement would now correct the unjust Dayton Peace Agreement. He explained the agreement enables Croats to elect its representatives at state level, defines next phase of the negotiations with a focus on reorganization of lower authority levels, and abolishes entity voting in the BiH House of Peoples. Relota admits that the preservation of the entity voting in the BiH House of Representatives was negative, however concludes: "*We are aware of the fact that we are about to face an extremely difficult work regarding future negotiation phases*." **Nezavisne novine** pg 6 'Constitutional changes are good for Croats' – also carries.
SBiH founder Haris Silajdzic: 'I am definitely coming back to politics'	**Dnevni Avaz** cover splash, pg 2 'I am definitely coming back to politics' by E.Sarac – Founder of the SBiH, **Haris Silajdzic**, confirms to DA that he is "*definitely coming back to politics*". While he doesn't disclose details of his future engagement in the politics, he explains that the reason for this is his strong disagreement with the agreement on the constitutional changes signed by the leaders of 7 political parties.

SDP leader Lagumdzija; Agreement on const. changes is first step in creating normal state	**Oslobodjenje** 'Pogled' supplement pgs 4-5 'SDP was never an opposition to BiH' by Senka Kurtovic – In two pages interview to daily, the SDP leader **Zlatko Lagumdzija** explains the details of the agreement on the constitutional changes. He points out this was the great improvement for the states, as the agreement *"is the first step in creating the normal state."* Lagumdzija harshly criticises opponents of the agreement, strongly claiming that the agreement strengthens the state and weakens the entities. The changes would now be made into amendments, says SDP leader, adding that these amendment would be in the parliamentary procedure for about a month which is also a timeframe for holding public consultations on the issue to allow citizens to have their say.

BiH HoR delegate Kunic: Const. changes agreed would bring RS in position of the regional unit	**Glas Srpske** 'Glas Plus' supplement pg 2 'Everything goes to Sarajevo' by Zarko Markovic – A delegate in the BiH House of Representatives, **Petar Kunic**, in an interview to GS strongly opposes the agreement on the constitutional changes claiming that it leads towards the collapse for the RS. Kunic also criticises the manner in which the negotiations were held, wondering why have RS representatives consented to it. He wonders whether the international community *"blackmailed them and now a part of the IC is trying to use them to provoke RS self-destruction."* Kunic explains that the agreement would bring the RS in the position of nothing more than regional unit at the disposal of Sarajevo . In this regard, he is especially critical of decision to state levels ministries of the ecology and agriculture. Noting that Bosniak parties all united, and that criticism of the agreement coming from SBiH and alike is a part of the plan, Kunic ends that the RS representatives at the negotiations were playing only for themselves.
BiH Presidency postpones discussion on const. changes	**Hayat, BHT1, Dnevni Avaz** pg 4 'No discussion on the constitutional amendments' by Srna – Despite announcements, the BiH Presidency on Friday did not hold the session that was supposed to be dedicated to the amendments to the BiH Constitution. The Presidency's press office informed that the members of the Presidency concluded following the consultations that the conditions to hold the session have not yet been reached, and the date of the session is not know yet. Last week, Presidency members forwarded the agreement on the constitutional changes to the expert group which was tasked to draft the amendments by Friday.

RHB comments const. changes: Everybody won something, Croats are loosing	**RHB** comment by Ivica Simunovic **–** Commenting the agreement on constitutional changes, author notes that the EU, through the Venice Commission, is supportive of the proposed changes, but adds the real problems lies in the fact that both US and the EU treat BiH as normal European state, with unitary system, instead of a multi-ethnic society. That is the reason why the Venice Commission proposes abolishment of Cantons, which – according to Simunovic – would be "lethal" for Croats. Author further comments that for both Bosniaks and Serbs such changes are a step forward, however only Croats are damaged as the changes adopted further legalize division of BiH in two entities. RHB says that thus HDZ decided to accept the changes, hoping that at next negotiation phase concessions would be made for Croats. However, author wonders for the second phase of negotiations who and under which circumstances would make Serbs to abandon the RS, a question that should be addressed to Croats who want regionalization in BiH. Additionally, would is to make Americans and Europeans to meet Croats "just" terms to be equal with Serbs and Bosniaks.
VL op-ed on const. changes: Croats damaged, referendum should be held	**Vecernji list** pg 4 'Price of authority' op-ed by Tihomir Begic – Editorial on the agreement on the constitutional changes reads: "*What doesn't constitutionality in BiH means to Croats if Cantons and vital national protection disappears, options which are more and more possible. Nothing. Therefore, it is necessary to hold the referendum ont eh new BiH Constitution to ask the people, who are not asked anything by anybody anymore despite the fact that they are the one to feel the consequences the most*."

NN op-ed on const. changes criticizes those opposing the agreement	**Nezavisne novine** pg 7 'Agreements on imposed Constitution' by Ugo Vlaisavljevic – "*Unhidden disappointment and rage among supports of adopting the 'civic constitution' was created by the knowledge that another such agreement was reached in peace, without pressures of the war circumstances. Those don't care at all for promises that this time, apart from mediation of US Ambassador, this was not another inter-state, i.e. imposed military agreement, but truly the first domestic, truly political compromise on the structure of a foundation for the joint statehood*," reads the editorial critical of those who slam the agreement on the constitutional changes.

Economic issues

FERK increases prices of electricity in FBiH for 6% as of 1 April; Aluminij strongly criticises decision	**RHB, Hayat** – Starting with April 1 citizens of the Federation BiH will be paying electricity at a price higher by 6% on an average. At the Friday's session held in Mostar, the Federal Electricity Regulatory Commission (FERK) has adopted a new tariff rates for electricity coming into force on April 1. According to the new tariff model, consumers of the Herceg-Bosna Elektroprivreda will be paying a somewhat higher price [6,58%] than those of the Elektroprivreda BiH [5,7%]. From the same date, large consumers, such as Aluminij and Mital Steel companies, will be paying 37,63 euros for one megawatt of electricity. **FTV** by Ivan Pavkovic – The decision on price increase was made to make up for the losses of both Elektroprivredas. **Vecernji list** pg 5 'Electricity more expensive, large companies to collapse' – Aluminij has already reacted stating that this price increase would endanger employment in the company and the production. **Dnevni Avaz** pg 4 'As of 1 April, electricity more expensive for 6%', mentioned on cover, by N. Huskovic, **Oslobodjenje** pg 4, mentioned on cover 'As of 1 April, electricity in FBiH 6% more expensive', – also reported.

BiH/EU Coordination Board for Economic Development in session; RS PM Dodik given 7 days to gain insight on the process	**PINK** – The BiH/EU Coordination Board for the Economic Development met on Friday to discuss principles, priorities and conditions for the European Partnership, and to consult on the implementation of the World Bank program.The session was attended by the BiH Council of Ministers Chair **Adnan Terzic**, RS Prime Minister **Milorad Dodik**, authorized state and entity Ministers, Brcko Mayor **Mirsad Djapo**, BiH Central Bank Governor **Kemal Kozaric**, and the representatives of the EC, World Bank, US Embassy, IMF, OHR and USAID. *"We decided to give Prime Minister Dodik and his ministers seven days to get informed on the document the [Programme for the] European Partnership and for [**Osman**] **Topcagic**, director of the BiH Directorate for the EU integration to go to Banja Luka and clear up certain details"*, said Terzic. **Dnevni Avaz** pg 8 'Dodik asks for more time to study European partnership' – As this was the first Board's meeting since Dodik took over position of the RS PM, SAA chief negotiator **Igor Davidovic** will also join Topcagic in briefing the new RS Government. **Nezavisne novine** pg 4 'No discussion on the police directorate' – the Board did not discuss Dodik's request to introduce changes in the Steering Board of the Polcie Reform Directorate. **Hayat, RTRS, BHT1, Oslobodjenje** pg 5 inset 'European partnership to be discussed next wee', **Glas Srpske** pg 2 'Catching up' – also covered.

HR Schwarz-Schiling: Job Creating is key priority for BiH officials	**PINK, BHT1, RTRS, Nezavisne novine** pg 4 'Economic development a key priority', **Vecernji list** pg 3 'Job creating is a priority for BiH'- Addressing the meeting of BiH/EU Coordination Board for the economic development, the High Representative, **Christian Schwarz-Schilling** stressed that the single most urgent task facing BiH's politicians is to create job, adding that the ability of candidates to deliver benefits of economic reforms and other measures that are part of the Stabilization and Association process will be "*the ground on which the October elections are contested*". HR underlined that the economic development in his key priority and urged the BiH authorities to enact the necessary legislation to provide a legal basis for the BiH Fiscal Council. He also called on the authorities not to waste the expected extra VAT revenues, stating they should be used to cut labour taxes and facilitate the internal debt settlement. The HR also called for the enactment of the BiH Salary Law, the BiH Law on Obligations and the Law on Pharmaceuticals, and for centralized banking supervision under the Central Bank.

IMF meets CoM Chair, Fiscal Council: Analysis of IMF and BiH institutions on VAT very different	**Hayat** – IMF presented their preliminary analysis which notes the "*astonishing rise in prices*" following VAT introduction in BiH. However, Terzic told press conference this was not at all in accordance with the information of the BiH Institutions. IMF analysis says that the price of oil in RS was increased by 30 %, while the data of the RS Statistics Office marks a rise in prices estimated at approx. 11 %. Asked about the effects of VAT introduction in BiH, Terzic said that reliable information is expected in mid April, but noted that according to the current preliminary information, apart from the indubitable growth of revenue, the average growth of prices is estimated at 5 percent. The meeting between the representatives of the BiH Fiscal Council and the IMF also focused on the need to rebalance this year's budget due to surplus of VAT revenue. **FTV** – Terzic announced that the expected income from VAT is 140 million KM. Despite announcements, the IMF and BiH officials didn't discuss the stand-by arrangement for the macro-economic stability of BiH. IMF insists on reduction of the administration costs and the budget funds to tackle negative VAT effects. Terzic expects. IMF representatives to address these issues at the final meeting in Banja Luka. **BHT 1, Dnevni Avaz** pg 8 'Terzic: IMF's analysis on VAT doesn't correspond with ours' by T. Lazovic, **Oslobodjenje** pg 5 'Analysis of the IMF and BiH institutions do not correspond', **Nezavisne novine** pg 2 'Income must not be used for public expenses', **Glas Srpske** pg 3 'Two measures for taxes' – also mentioned.

FBiH Deputy PM Grahovac says new changes to Law on financial police introduces political control over this institution	**Oslobodjenje** cover splash, pgs 4-5 'Minister Grahovac opposes abolishment of the Financial Police' by Azhar Kalamujic – Daily reports that the Deputy FBiH Prime Minister, **Gavrilo Grahovac**, was the only member of the Government who opposed the changes to the Law on FBiH Financial Police which would "*turn the only institution with staff competition to investigate corruption and economic crime into controller of payments of benefits related to salaries".* The changes should be submitted to the Parliament soon, but Grahovac claims that they would limit both the Law and Prosecution in leading investigations. "*If the Prosecution demands from the Financial Police to carry out the investigation, according to this law they could not do this without the consent from the Finance Minister which is a violation of the Crime Procedure Code,*" says Grahovac. Daily also carries the written statement by the FBiH Finance Minister **Dragan Vrankic** who denies such intentions.
VL learns HB Provisional Admin. Robinson meets potential buyers	**Vecernji list** pg 4 'Euroherc and FIMA in competition for 'Osiguranje'' by Zoran Kresic – VL learns that the Hercegovacka Bank provisional administrator, **Toby Robinson**, on Friday met the representatives of Euroherc company and FIMA, investment company from Varazdin and discussed possibilities of the Bank's sale and separate sale of sister company Hercegovina Insurance. No concrete agreement was reached, and talks will continue next week.