OHR SRT News Summary, 27 Jan. 1998

Headlines

- In Serb Orthodox Churches all over the world, St. Sava Day is celebrated
- In Banja Luka: talks Plavsic – Westendorp
- New mission of EU in RS
- In all schools in RS; second semester starts tomorrow
- Persian Gulf – boiling

In Serb Countries and Diaspora, the Serb Orthodox Church celebrated its Saint, the first Bishop and Educator, St. Sava. Since this is also the Day of Schools, many schools were celebrating the day traditionally with appropriate programmes. The Holy Liturgy was held in the Church of Holy Trinity in Banja Luka by Bishop Jefrem. RS President, Biljana Plavsic also participated at the holy liturgy.
1:30

RS President, Biljana Plavsic, talked today in Banja Luka with the High Representative for BiH, Carlos Westendorp, and representative of the European Commission, Herman de Lange. They talked about the forthcoming session of the National Assembly of the RS and about the assistance the RS needs for economic recovery. Plavsic stated to the press that the newly elected Government is very efficient and that the IC is complying fully with their promises. She also mentioned that this Government had been recognised by the IC and it was obvious to everyone that it could not function without resources. “Assistance is coming from everywhere and I must say that Mr. Westendorp should take credit for that, so I thank him”, said Plavsic. Westendorp stated that for practical and security reasons, the 3rd session of the National Assembly would be held in Banja Luka on Saturday. “Banja Luka will be

the capital of the RS, therefore it is logical for the National Assembly to be held in Banja Luka.
1:00

RS President Biljana Plavsic also met with a delegation of the European Commission led by Herman de Lange, who informed her of the 6mil. ecu of assistance to the RS, approved yesterday by the Council of Ministers of the EU.
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The Prime Minister of the RS, Milorad Dodik, also had meetings with them. The new Prime Minister announced that the Government of RS would use economic assistance from the EU to pay the remaining salaries for employees in the education sector and for the needs of the Ministry of Interior. The Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik, met today with the High Representative for BiH, Carlos Westendorp, and discussed urgent measures for the recovery of the Republic budget, privatisation in the RS, current activities in that area which would create prerequisites for signing the Agreement with the International Monetary Fund. “We have also discussed the new 3rd session of the Assembly and concluded that it should be held here, in Banja Luka”. Westendorp stated that they had concentrated on economic assistance to the RS, and that there was an urgent need for paying the Republic budget users, primarily teachers and the police.
1:00

The Prime Minister of the RS, Milorad Dodik, also met with James Wright, the Director General of the Eastern and Southern Europe Department of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; with the German Ambassador in the BiH, Hennece Graf von Basewitz; a delegation of the EU led by Herman de Lange; with the Ambassador of Greece in the BiH, Mazuranis; the Head of the UNHCR Banja Luka office, Vladimir Curko; a delegation of the Italian Embassy and the Political Advisor of the Swedish Embassy in the BiH.
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The Minister for urbanisation and architecture in the RS Government, Jovo Basic, and the Minister for refugees and displaced persons, Miladin Dragicevic, received representatives of the EU today in Banja Luka. Representatives of the EU have promised assistance for accommodation of refugees and displaced persons and their problems of 15mil ecu, and 35mil ecu for infrastructure in RS. The Minister for refugees and DPs informed them that in 62 collective centres in RS there were 7,000 families living in difficult conditions. It has been agreed that the Ministries in the RS Government will urgently create concrete programmes, so that the financial assistance of the EU can be realised.
1:00

Representatives of the World Bank in Sarajevo, Sarah Forster and Roy Gilbert, visited Banja Luka today. The mayor of Banja Luka, Djordje Umicevic, received the World Bank delegation. The aim of the visit was an introduction to the mayor of Banja Luka, and to agree on basic financial needs for the town.
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The Vice-president of the Party of Independent Social Democrats, Branko Dokic, stated his satisfaction at the unity of the RS Ministry of Interior, which was a guarantee for the survival of the RS, he said at a press conference today. “Brcko is an integral part of the RS, which has to remain in the RS”, said Krstan Simic, a new delegate of the Party of Independent Social Democrats in the RS National Assembly and the new legal representative of the RS in the Brcko Arbitration process. Dokic appealed to the member of the BiH Presidency, Momcilo Krajisnik, to come to Banja Luka as soon as possible and talk to the new Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik, and the President of the RS, Biljana Plavsic, in order to resolve further problems in the area by mutual agreement.
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The first session this year of the Parliament of the Council of Europe opened in Strasbourg. At today’s informal meeting

with a parliamentary delegation from the RS and the Federation of the BiH, the beginning of the procedure for accepting BiH as a member of the Council of Europe was announced.
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The High Representative of the International Community, Carlos Westendorp, stated that at this moment it was more important to help the RS on its way towards democratisation than to arrest Radovan Karadzic, he said in his interview for the French newspaper “le Monde”.
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Eighteen Serb war prisoners from the “Storm” offensive in 1995, which are now in Solin prison near Split, have announced a hunger strike starting on the 1st of February, because they were sentenced to between five and twenty years’ imprisonment by the Croatian authorities, instead of being released according to the Law on Amnesty.
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At a press conference of international organisations in Banja Luka today, a spokesperson of OHR, Aisling Byrne, presented three designs for the flag of BiH, based on the choices of the independent commissions. She also announced a Conference for the Return to Sarajevo in February this year, where the High Representative for BiH, Carlos Westendorp, the Special US Envoy for the Balkans, Robert Gelbard, and Herman de Lange, a Director of the EC will be present along with many other international representatives. Regarding the new registration plates, she stressed that by the end of July all vehicles in the BiH will have to have these.
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