

MLADEN BOSIC

"Session of CoE Monitoring Committee in Sarajevo Is a Significant Step for BiH"

The session of Committee on the Honoring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee), which will discuss the situation in BiH in the next two days, as well as many other current topics from the jurisdiction of the Committee and the Council Europe, started in Sarajevo

Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH and Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Mladen Bosic welcomed members of the Monitoring Committee at the beginning of the session in his opening speech. Noting that Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the host of the meeting, sends a message to its citizens that it is part of Europe, Bosic said that, after the European Union they have changed the order of priority, the adoption of agreed reform agenda bodes well for the country to move faster on the path to European integration. Bosic said he believes that Bosnia and Herzegovina will find a way to agree on the implementation of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of "Sejdic-Finci".

According to him, all political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina have good will and show willingness to reach compromise in the application of the judgment,



but the Constitution, as an integral part of the Dayton Agreement, is not easy to change because, as he said, it is a good compromise and agreement that works even after two decades.

The functioning of the Dayton constitution after 20 years will be one of the top-

ics on the agenda, which, in addition to members of the Board of the House of Representatives Parliamentary Assembly, attended by members of the Permanent Delegation of the BiH PA in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.



Enes Cengic, Energoinvest director: Interests (of commercial loans for companies) are very high. Also, we pay much higher guarantees than our (foreign) competition



Mijo Misic, BiH banks association: The banks' assets that exceed the required reserve are very significant (...) but it can't be put into function of free capital that can be invested immediately



Marko Djogo, economist: Practically, banks (in BiH) approve increasingly unfavorable loans; companies experience increasing difficulties to repay (those loans)

Dodik's Referendum Question Not in Accordance with European Standards: Markert

Secretary of the Venice Commission, Council of Europe's advisory body, Thomas Markert told FENA that President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik is not right claiming that referendum on status of Court and Prosecutor's Office of BiH is in accordance with the European standards

On the contrary, he emphasized, it is completely inconsistent with the European standards and the Venice Commission. "Most important element of referendum is that referendum should be neutral and the answer should not be suggested. But the referendum that Dodik has formulated suggests only one answer, so it is neither objective nor neutral," said Markert. He emphasized they disagree with opinion that the Law on Court of BiH is not in accordance with the Constitution, because he reminded that the Venice Commission stated it is necessary to have a state court. In that regard, he emphasized that a state that is based on rule of law cannot exist if it does not have a court at the state level, that is, a court which can make decisions whether some laws which concern citizens are legal or not. Even though, he added, that is not directly stated in the Constitution, it is necessary to

have court at the state level.

He added that in general, the Venice Commission is not against referendum, but he noted that consequences of referendum need to be clear, and the referendum question as well, which means that people who vote need to understand what they are voting for.

"Apart from that, this referendum question is something that should be solved on state, not entity level," said Markert.

Asked if he finds that reform of the Constitution of BiH is necessary, he answered that he does, and noted that the Venice Commission has already been involved in different attempts to implement such reform and he reminded of the April and Butmir package of constitutional reforms.

Unfortunately, he said, all those attempts have failed, but he added he hopes it will be possible to start implementing reform of the Constitution of BiH again.

Covic Attends Military Parade in Beijing

Chair of the BiH Presidency Dragan Covic attended a military parade which was held on the occasion of 70th anniversary of victory over Fascism at Tian'anmen Square in Beijing. After the ceremonial part, President of the People's Republic of China hosted a reception for presidents of

states and other state delegations in the National Congress of PR China.

Covic briefly met with presidents of Russia and Serbia, Vladimir Putin and Tomislav Nikolic, and the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, BiH Presidency stated.

Grubesa and Kreso Meeting: Restore Trust in Judiciary

Minister of Justice of BiH Josip Grubesa met in Sarajevo with President of the Court of BiH Meddzida Kreso. They talked about the current situation in BiH judiciary and future cooperation between these two insti-

tutions. They agreed that judiciary reform is necessary, which, among other things, will restore public trust and encourage faster progress of BiH on its European path, Ministry of Justice of BiH stated.

AF Help Extinguish Wildfire in Gorazde

38 members of the Armed Forces with the equipment for protection and fire-fighting were engaged at a wildfire site in the Gorazde municipality.

Soldiers successfully provided assistance to the civil protection and the local population, said the Ministry of Defense.

DAILY MARKERS

By Vlastimir Mijovic
Senior Editor

Media Toy

*F*ederal Television is not what it used to be. Yet, it is still a medium around which various political nets and intrigues are knit, and which is tried to be put under the control of individual political-business clans.

After yesterday's dismissal of Avdo Avdic from the position of head of news department, one thing is clear: the SDA, or Bakir Izetbegovic's faction, don't have the political sway in that medium anymore. It is still unclear who successfully lobbied to have Aleksandar Markovic on that position (temporarily?). That political lobby is supposed to be become the new "shadow government", which will use FTV for their political purposes.

A thin hope remains the departure of Avdic and the arrival of Markovic was a happy day for the public. I know that journalist for a long time and I know nothing ugly about him. He never stood out as a supporter of any political current, although he was never forced in his career to deal with the harsh politics.

It would be indeed a happy day for the public and TV subscribers if Markovic ran the FTV news program on the path of objectivity and professionalism. He might get the support in that from the majority of colleagues in that media, which were embarrassed for years to have to think with other people's brains, to work as politicians, through they people in the FTV, directed the program as they see fit. Those who think that the media are an independent power are terribly wrong. They are only a tool in the hands of globally powerful people, not only here, but everywhere in the world, somewhere more and somewhere less. In this light should be seen the possible improvements in the still the most watched TV program in BiH, but also in other media outlets. What is realistic and with what we should be happy is the situation in which we will be a country where the media are less manipulated.

Currently we are, unfortunately, primarily one of the countries in which the media are a toy in the hands of politics.

Feed the Monkeys and Don't Touch Anything

A guy called me at 2 am to tell a joke. He does that sometimes, calling in the middle of night from a bar to tell a joke

And so, Mujo was sent on a space mission with three monkeys. When they reached the orbit, Houston contacted the ship to give assignments: monkey no. 1 is to purge the fuel tanks, monkey no. 2 is to check the oxygen levels, monkey no. 3 is to maintain the course. "And you Mujo, feed the monkeys and don't touch anything."

I remembered that old, chauvinistic joke on stupid Bosnian Mujo last year, when a Dutch company called on volunteers for an ambitious mission to colonize Mars. The general authority for Islamic affairs and endowment, GAIAE, in the United Arab Emirates issued a fatwa and warned Muslims that anybody who would embark on such a "dangerous trip" would risk "death without justified cause", and of course "a punishment similar to the one for suicide".

The second time I remembered that chauvinistic joke

was when I read my favorite Q&A section on the BiH Islamic Community's Ryassat website and stumbled upon a reader's question "to which side would a Muslim turn in prayer if in space, for example on Mars" and the Ryassat's fatwa scholar's answer that he will give an answer "when and if that happens", because "going into that now is pointless."

And finally, the third time I remembered the chauvinistic joke about Mujo was the other day when I read the news about a gigantic Islamic center being built at Pester near Sjenica, with a magnificent mosque with 16 domes and 6 minarets, two of which will be 100 meters high and the highest in Sjenica, Sandzak and whole of Europe.

In short, chauvinists can't think of a more stupid Mujo than his imams can.

Had the "Arab Marco Polo", the great traveler and explorer Abu Abdullah ibn Battuta told today's Islamic scholars that he intended to travel to India and China 700 years ago, the world literature would have probably be left without the most fascinating travelogue ever written in Arabic. If a "dangerous trip" was seen as a risk of "death without justified cause" 400 years ago, Evliya Celebi would have never left Istanbul and there would be nobody to write about the Ottoman Bosnia. With all due respect to travel writers, a trip to Mars is a walk in the park compared to dan-

gers and risks of a trip to China 700 years ago. Denying Muslims the right to be curious and seek knowledge, their scholars deny all the magnificent discoveries that the Islamic mind and curiosity gave to the humanity, including the achievements in astronomy, in which the Middle Ages Arabs were NASA to Europe. If the curious reader asked famous Arab astronomer Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, the "Arab Leonardo da Vinci", about the prayer direction on Mars a thousand years ago, Al-Biruni surely wouldn't tell him it was "pointless".



By Boris Dezulovic
Oslobodjenje, Sarajevo

Not only because knowledge and science weren't pointless in the Islamic world a thousand years ago, but also because the Arab astronomy - whose fantastic achievements are part of today's astrophysics, and will be part of a future mission to Mars - was based, among other things, on the Muslims' need to calculate the position of Mecca using stars, and determine the direction of prayer.

But, what could today's Bosniak Islamic scholars know about that. If they themselves weren't avoiding "pointless" knowledge, which is how they like their congregations, that Ryassat's fatwa scholar would answer the question about where to turn in prayer on Mars with simple: "Towards the Earth". Even I, an infidel with no knowledge in astronomy, know that much.

That is the stupid Mujo they count on when they build giant mosques instead of schools and universities in Bosnia and Sandzak, with dozens of domes and 100-meter minarets from which the edge of the flat Earth can be seen. Chauvinists can't come up with a joke in which Mujo would be more stupid than in the visions of today's scholars, in which he will have no house, no school, no kindergarten, no library, no university, no bread and job, but he will have a mosque with Europe's tallest minaret. Or two, just so he can't tell which one is higher, because knowledge is not good.

The spectacular Islamic center at Pester, with its six minarets, will be the Bosniak Cape Canaveral. There will be no dangers and risks for Mujo there, or any need to be curious and seek knowledge.

Just feed the monkeys and don't touch anything.

❖Chairman of the Friendship Group for North and South America, Australia, Oceania and Japan Damir Arnaut met in Sarajevo with the Ambassador of Japan to BiH Kazuya Ogawa to discuss improvement of political and economic relations between the two friendly countries. They stated they are pleased with formation and assembly of this group in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH. Ambassador Ogawa announced that Japan will continue implementation of projects of assistance to BiH.

❖The State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) was visited by the head of the FBI Office for Eurasia based in Washington Damian Brcko, who met with the deputy head of SIPA Djuro Knezevic. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the United States Embassy in Sarajevo. At the meeting they talked about different aspects of the work of the Agency, its jurisdiction, organizational structure, results achieved in the previous period, role it has in the security system in BiH and the current security challenges. It was stated that the cooperation between the partner agencies was successful so far and that it will continue in the future.

❖Bruce G. Berton, a US diplomat, take over his duties as the new Principal Deputy High Representative and Brcko Supervisor. Before arriving in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Berton served as the Deputy Chief of Mission in the US Embassy in Bulgaria. He joined the Foreign Service in 1987 and has served in Caracas, Moscow, Bermuda, Hong Kong, Rome, Mexico City, Frankfurt and Warsaw.

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Crnadak Meets With Hoyt Yee

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina Igor Crnadak met with State Department Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Asia Brian Hoyt Yee

Minister Crnadak pointed out that the US is one of the main foreign policy partners for BH, and thanked for the support and help in the path of reforms and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On this occasion, Minister Crnadak especially welcomed the decision of the US Congress to adopt the law that allows for goods produced in BiH to have preferential tariff treatment of imports into the United States. Also, Minister Crnadak informed his interlocutors about the current presidency of the Committee of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Europe. Assistant Yee expressed strong support for the European integration processes of Bosnia and Herzegovina, announced the cooperation with the EU in an affirmative approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina and its European aspirations.

He stressed that it is time to carry out the expected reforms, implement all its commitments on the European path, access to the necessary amendments to the laws, and make additional efforts in order to create a better business environment and attract investment.

A representative of the State Department welcomed the adoption of the initial program of



Igor Crnadak, Maureen Cormack and Brian Hoyt Yee

reforms and expressed hope that the co-ordination mechanism will be adopted soon.

One of the topics of the meeting was the current initiative to hold a referendum in Republika Srpska about the confidence in the judicial system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the continuation of the Structured Dialogue on Justice, scheduled for September 10 this year.

During the meeting, the interlocutors agreed that the agreement with Iran on the nuclear program is very important for the whole world, and that the timely implementation of the provisions of the same is essential for the preservation of the environment of trust and commitment to dialogue, said the Office of Public Affairs of MFA BiH.

EUFOR Operation Commander Discusses Exercise Quick Response 15

EUFOR's Operation Commander, General Sir Adrian Bradshaw held a press conference discussing Exercise Quick Response 2015. At the event held at the Hotel Europe in Sarajevo, General Bradshaw detailed the purpose of the exercise and the location.

Exercise Quick Response 15 is an annual exercise demonstrating the capacity of EUFOR to train and operate alongside the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It will take place during October and will include soldiers from a number of European nations. These troops will join soldiers from around Europe already serving within EUFOR. The exercise will take place in Manjaca, hosted by the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Manjaca was chosen



as the location for the Exercise as the area is large enough for the troops to train freely. The exercise will focus on Peace Support Operations and will take place between the 13-22nd of October. The 2014 Exercise Quick Response coincided with heavy flooding in the country, and EUFOR quickly changed their plan in order to assist the BiH

authorities in their disaster relief. Soldiers from around Europe joined the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina to rescue civilians and provide essential support. This year's Exercise is part of a long term commitment to working closely with the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

General Bradshaw has held the role of Operation Commander since March 2014, when he assumed the role of NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR), and visits EUFOR personnel regularly as part of his responsibilities. Under an arrangement known as the 'Berlin Plus Agreement', this key command position also commands the EUFOR Operation ALTHEA.

Conference Held on Common Core Curriculum

**The Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education (APOS)
of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the support of the US Embassy in BiH,
organized a conference in Mostar to present the results of the development of
"Common Core Curriculum and programs for civic education defined by learning outcomes"**

Director of the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education, Maja Stojkic, pointed out that the aim of the conference is to present the Common Core Curriculum for Civic Education, within the common core curriculum for the social and humanistic area. Speaking about the development of the Common Core, she explained that all the subjects which are taught in BiH are divided into eight areas, adding that the language communication area that includes the mother tongue and foreign languages has been completed and published in the Official Gazette in March this year, adding that the publication of mathematical areas and the guidelines for implementation is underway.

Given the fact that the common core defined by the learning outcomes is something new, there have been some problems in the implementation on the ground, that is why we have been working on these guidelines which will help counselors in the pedagogical institutes and ministries to facilitate the review process, said Stojkic.

As for the humanistic area, Stojkic said that the history for high school should be completed and Informatics and Engineering started in September, adding that the natural sciences are near the end.

According to her, currently the common core for physical-health and the arts area remains uncovered.

"If the two were completed we would have complete common core curriculum modernized, which would be no more expensive, and which would be based on learning outcomes, corresponding to all European standards, all international studies conducted in the field, and in the end, that is the goal of everybody, we would get functional knowledge, knowledge that children need for life," said Stojkic.

Speaking about the implementation, she said that the big problem US Ambassador to BiH Maureen Cormack said in a press statement that education is one of the most important issues in BiH, adding that she met with many young people in the country who told her about the challenges that have the

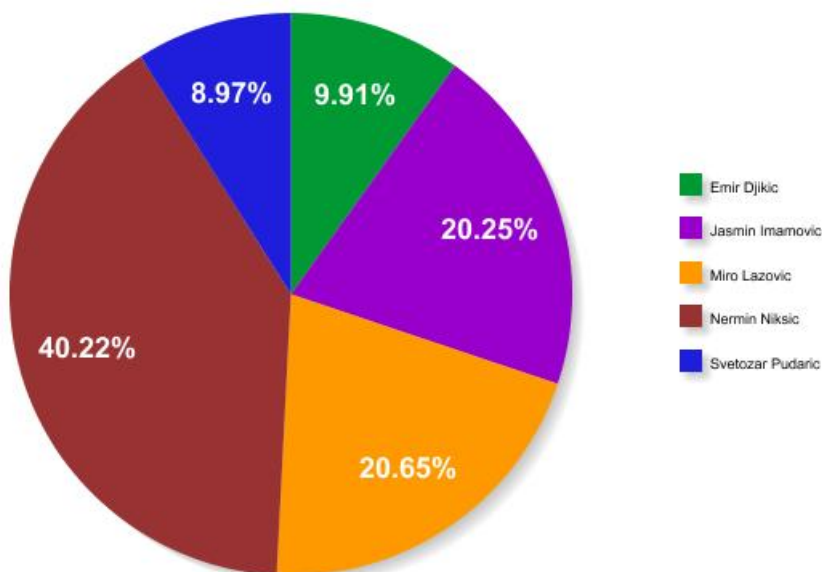
primary and secondary education, as well as later on universities, to acquire the knowledge and those skills that they need for the 21st century.

One of these challenges was a topic of the conference, i.e. the talk on the common core curriculum, which is intended to prepare the students and provide them with those skills and abilities they need in the diverse, modern and constantly changing world.

Joint Exercise of ICITAP and Brcko Police to Be Held

The ICITAP (International Program Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Department of Justice) and the Brcko District Police will perform demonstration "Close Protection of VIPs" on Saturday, September 5 in Brcko. The aim of this exercise is to train police officers for effective action in providing security in close protection of VIPs, says a statement issued by the Brcko police.

Which candidate should win the SDP
presidential election?



Source: Vijesti.ba



PHOTO



General Manager of HeidelbergCement in Bosnia and Croatia Branimir Muidza, CEO of HeidelbergCement Central Europe and Central Asia, Andreas Kern, and CEO of Kakanj cement plant Izudin Neimarlija met in Kakanj with German Ambassador to BiH Christian Hellbach

Agents of Change

I was recently asked to speak at an event about the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I was the only speaker. I was happy to be there, but to be honest I thought it was a bit odd

I'm a foreign diplomat who has lived here for a year. Why should I be better qualified to talk about the future of this country than a local politician? Or, for that matter, anyone else who was born and raised here? Even better, what about some young people? They are the future of this country, not me.

I'm being a bit unfair. The organizers wanted me to talk about the new EU strategy, which I hope very much will indeed help BiH to make real progress towards a more stable and prosperous, European future. But even so, I think it points to an interesting reflex in the political life of this country, which is still, 20 years after the war, often to look outside for ideas and for leadership. And it highlights too the fact that young people in BiH do not have the voice that they deserve in shaping their future.

Ordinary People Can Be Agents of Change

The thing is that I don't believe for a moment that there is a shortage of ideas. I meet all sorts of fascinating people with strong opinions about what needs to change. The problem is not the 'what', but the 'how'. Many people - particularly young people - tell me that they have lost faith in the political system to deliver that change. Some fear the consequences of speaking publicly about the economic and social challenges they face on a daily basis. And so many of them are opting out. They don't vote. And, all too often, they want to leave BiH to pursue the opportunities they are denied here.

I can understand the frustration. But if you don't vote, then you are effectively voting for the status quo. And if you walk away from BiH altogether, then you are missing the opportunity to play a part, however small, in shaping the future of your country. You don't have to be a politician to be a leader. Ordinary people can be agents of change.

Over the past year I have seen how 'people power' can and does make a difference in BiH. The EU's new strategy didn't come from nowhere. It was a direct

**By Edward Ferguson,
British Ambassador to BiH**
blogs.fco.gov.uk/edwardferguson

response to last year's protests. We heard a clear message that ordinary people are fed up with corruption. That they want jobs and justice. And we responded.



More importantly, your politicians are responding too. They recognize that people are running out of patience. That empty nationalism doesn't put food on the table. And so the State and Entity Governments have now signed up to the most positive and ambitious reform agenda since the end of the war. It's an exciting moment, and one that gives me real hope for the future.

There are other examples too. I recently visited the National Museum for the first time. It's an amazing place, full of treasures that tell an important story of centuries of peaceful coexistence in BiH. I went to support the #jasammuzej movement, which is campaigning for the museum to be reopened and put on a sustainable financial footing. #Jasammuzej happened because four women were fed up with the museum being held hostage to political infighting. Just four. And they're getting real traction. Hundreds of people have joined the cause and volunteered to help out in the museum. And now, finally, it seems that we may be close to a political agreement that could see the museum re-open its doors. I can't wait.

And what a great few weeks it has been

for sport. Last week, my Embassy team cheered on Amel Tuka to win his bronze medal at the World Championships in Beijing. And, of course, there was that wonderful moment when the BiH under 16 basketball team won the European Championship. The public reactions showed how much people are crying out for positive stories and for success. I was one of the many thousands of people squeezed into the streets of Sarajevo to welcome back "the pride of the country". Džanan, Njegos, Sani, Emir, Lazar, Amar, Vedran, Aljosa, Srdjan, Adi, Timur, Nikola. They show what this country could become. And now, it seems, their success may stimulate a serious political debate about how governments can better support sport and the arts.

Support an Issue That Matters to You

These examples show that change is possible, and that the best catalysts are often not politicians or foreign diplomats, but ordinary people. It's amazing what a few organized and determined people can achieve. But if young people are to be convinced that change is really possible, they will need lots more such role models. So if you are an agent of change, or if you know someone who is doing amazing things, whether for their local community or for their country, then get in touch. I'd love to hear about it and perhaps to come and visit.

And for those of you who want a better future, but don't know where to start, it doesn't matter if you can't find a political party to support. Support an issue that matters to you. And if you can't think of anything else, then support the reform agenda. Because politicians need to hear more clearly the voices of ordinary people. Not the voices of the privileged few who want to preserve the unjust and unsustainable status quo. But the voices of the many who want change, and who want it fast. And perhaps next time they want someone to talk about the future of this country, it could be you.

"Appeal of Croatia Will Be Dismissed"

The Council of Ministers of BiH discussed the information related to the issue of export of milk from BiH to the EU and reached certain conclusions

Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of the Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH, Mirko Sarovic said at the press conference after the session of the Council, that the meeting of the delegation of the Ministry and the State Veterinary Office of BiH with representatives of the relevant institutions in Brussels was held two days ago.

"A proposal with which delegation arrived was for us to shorten the deadline for solving an appeal of Croatia from 16th September. That is the basic positive success", said Minister Sarovic, adding that they got assurances that the meeting of the relevant Committee will probably occur on 9th September.

Minister Sarovic said that the BiH delegation used an opportunity to get additional information related to the appeal of Croatia itself. According to his words, appeal is related to the list of four export objects, four dairy plants, with an opinion of Croatia that BiH still does not meet conditions for the export of milk, and that was necessary, before adding to the export list, for the relevant inspection body that has a headquarter in Dublin to come to BiH once more and inspect objects that were registered for export.

"That is what writes in written appeal of



Mirko Sarovic

Croatia. But, in a talk with Croatian representatives, I want to say that basically, reasons are different. In the first place, dissatisfaction of the Croatian side with the slowness in the adaptation of SAA, i.e. an additional protocol between the EU and BiH where the Croatian side has an interest. I guess, and I am now expressing my opinion that one of the reason is a fear of the competitiveness of BH milk at the Croatian market", said Minister Sarovic.

He stated that in previous days, there were proposals by institutions, individuals and associations where they requested taking appropriate measures.

"Yesterday, the Council of Ministers discussed the information in which all facts related to this case in the last seven days were presented. One of conclusion from yesterday's session was that the Ministry of the Foreign Trade and Economic

Relations, depending on the result of the work of the Committee on the appeal of the Croatian side, will propose appropriate measures to the Council of Ministers", said Sarovic adding that BiH will wait for this result.

He underlined that one month ago, when BiH met conditions for the export of potato to the EU, one country member of the EU, whose name was not published, also submitted an appeal for BiH not to be allowed to export the potato to the EU, but other members haven't accepted that. He expressed his confidence that the same will happened this time as well.

"My proposal for numerous requests addressed to the Ministry and other institutions to introduce blockades, to close borders, is to buy domestic milk", said Sarovic.

When asked whether Croatia submitted an appeal outside the deadline, Minister Sarovic said: "I think that Croatia is late at least 10 days, but that is a question for the European Commission".

**SAROVIC, MIRJANIC
AND DEDIC**

Situation in Agriculture to Be Discussed in Banja Luka Today

Ministers in charge of area of agriculture and food industry in BiH will meet today in Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of RS. Host of the meeting is Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of RS Stevo Mirjanic, and the meeting will be attended by Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH Mirko Sarovic and Minister of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry of the Federation of BiH Semsudin Dedic.

The meeting was called on the occasion of earlier talks of ministers held in Sarajevo and the aim is to continue joint activities on issues within sector of agriculture and food industry.

Highway from Doboj to Bosanska Gradiska Soon

In addition to highways constructed in the Federation of BiH, the country got the first kilometers of the highway in the entity Republika Srpska few years ago. The construction of road section Banja Luka-Bosanska Gradiska started in 2004, and the final kilometers of this 32.1 km long section were opened in 2013.

Besides this section, the road section Prnjavor-Doboj is also in the final stage. Completion of works was firstly planned for November this year, but due to objective circumstances, primarily last year's floods, this deadline will be postponed. After the completion, this section will bring new 36.6 km of highway to BiH, and value of the investment

amounts to around 180 million EUR.

Preparatory works on the section Banja Luka-Prnjavor, 35.3 km long, started recently and will cost around 160 million Euros.

With the completion of these two sections, BiH would get almost 100 kilometers of the highway and thus people would be able to drive through the highway from Doboj to Bosanska Gradiska. Currently the most important project is bridge above Sava with which the highway Banja Luka-Gradiska would connect to the highway A3, and after that, probably the largest part of the export of animal origin would go through Bosanska Gradiska.

Bosnia Croats Keep Old Tattoo Tradition Alive

A Balkan tradition that dates backs millennia - which seemed close to dying out after World War Two - has inspired a new generation of fans, keen to keep up a connection to their ancestors

By Sven Milekic
BIRN

Unlike her peers in the West, where tattoos of favourite bands, clubs, Chinese letters or names of loved ones are ever so popular and present, Iva Anita Knezevic has a mysterious tattoo, which some would not notice at all. 30-year-old Iva from the small town of Sveta Nedelja, near Zagreb, wears a simple but unusual tattoo on the back of her wrist - a peculiar looking cross-shaped symbol.

"This is a memory on my grandmother. We were very close, she practically raised me and was my great friend as well," she said, turning the arm to expose the design.

Although born in Zagreb, at 18 months, she was sent to live with her maternal grandmother in Tomislavgrad in south-west Bosnia. There, her grandmother became a substitute for her parents, whom she saw only a few times a year. "She had a tattoo like this on the back of her left hand. I remember it vividly and can't get it out of my mind. She always used to gently rub it with her right hand," Iva said, doing the same gesture.

"That tattoo was her connection with her long-deceased brother, with whom she was close. Oftentimes, she would rub over her tattoo and say 'My brother made

this', as if trying to remember and connect with him," she explained.

Family Tragedy

Her grandmother and great-uncle Martin were born in the village of Kuk, nearby Tomislavgrad. In 1942, with World War Two already raging, Martin, then 17, tattooed the cross-like figure on his sister's hand, then aged 15, which she was very proud of.

"This is the reason while she was so connected to it. It was her way of dealing with the trauma of Martin's violent death," Iva explained.

Her grandmother told Iva of seeing Martin and their father, Jandre Juric, for the last time when they were put into a big stable and burned alive in December 1943 by the SS Prince Eugen division. Some 83 civilians from nearby villages, both men and women, aged from only a few months to 72, perished in this crime. "It was a trauma from which she never truly recovered but she nevertheless

talked about it," Iva said.

Iva's grandmother came from a traditional Catholic Croatian family, practicing her religion on a daily basis. The tradition of wearing a cross-like tattoo as a symbol of faith was passed down through generations of women in the region, although Iva remembered that "not everyone had it, as the custom was already dying out".

She thinks that although the tattoo was used to distinguish between Catholics and Muslims, it was a tradition connected to the family as well, which is why she is continuing it, even though her own beliefs are very different.

"Maybe I don't share her beliefs, but I decided at a young age that I would make the same tattoo some day. I even told her so and she was very proud that the tradition would outlive her," she said, although her own mother did not follow her grandmother's way and associated tattoos "only with something deviant".

"So many times she had cuddled and fed me with these hands," Iva said of her grandmother. "I loved her hands."

"I know it is a bit cheesy and pathetic," she said, with a blush, "but I needed to do it. She was the most important figure in my life and loved and respected everything I did and understood me on an 'another level'".

Tattoos Predate Christianity

Different variations of cross-like figures, as well as symbols of the sun or even a swastika, were usually placed on the back of the hand, wrists, forearms, upper breast or even forehead.

The tattoos were made with a method known as "bocanje", which involves using a crude needle soaked in a mixture of breast milk from a woman nursing a male child, and charcoal.

After penetrating the skin with the hot needle, blue-coloured paper was put on the tattoo, so the tattoo would turn into a bluish colour.

The tradition of making cross-like tat-



toos was mostly confined to Bosnia, to the regions of Tomislavgrad, Rama, Kupres and Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje. Usually present among older women from this region, rarely men, it started to die out after World War Two.

Since it is almost exclusively connected to Catholic Croats and since a variation of crosses is tattooed, the tradition is interpreted as being linked to Catholic and Croat national heritage in Bosnia.

Women, usually tattooed between the ages of 10 and 16, themselves claim it to be a family tradition - usually the same figures were passed down through the family - marking them out as Croat Catholics.

Although tattoos were definitely used by Catholics in Bosnia throughout the Ottoman period between the 15th and 19th centuries, and were believed to prevent Turks from kidnapping Catholic children, the tradition of tattooed symbols predates the Ottoman invasion and even Christianity itself.

Tattoos in the Balkan Peninsula were mentioned by the Greek historian Herodotus as far back as the 5th century BC, as well as by the historian Strabo in the 1st century BC. The Roman scientists Pomponius Mela and Gaius Plinius in the 1st century AD did the same.

Aristocratic Status

They wrote about the tattoos in the Illyrian tribes who inhabited the region of present-day Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also other tribes and Thracian tribes.

According to these authors, tattoos were a sign of aristocratic status in the tribes. Wives and daughters of aristocrats had the same tattoos, they wrote. Symbols used in these times, forms of crosses with branches and circles, appear to the present day.

A number of ethnologists, anthropologists and historians in the 19th and 20th centuries researched the tradition and its origins in the Balkan Peninsula, offering different interpretations.

The British anthropologist Edith Durham carried out pioneering research in the subject, writing a book, "Some Tribal Origins, Laws and Customs of the Balkans", which was published in 1928. Durham researched the tradition during her stay in the Albanian mountains, as well during her stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



She concluded that it was a pre-Slavic and pre-Roman tradition, which formed part of the ritual of entering puberty, between the ages of 13 and 16, in the "spring of life", and was performed in the spring as well.

Although she noticed that tattooed women connected the tradition with religion, she denied that it had either a Christian or Islamic origin, since the cross-like symbol was just one of the symbols, with moons and suns also present.

She noted that such symbols were used in other cultures as well, claiming that early Christian missionaries emphasized the cross designs due to their potential link with Christianity, which would explain why it became the chief or only surviving design.

She explained how the Roman cults of Mithraism and Manichaeism, later introduced on Balkans, also integrated these customs in their own practice.

The most comprehensive research into the tradition of tattooing in Balkans was conducted by Mario Petric, a Yugoslav ethnologist from the late 20th century. He took into account the findings of previous authors and somewhat confirmed some of the findings of Durham, while adding that the custom was connected with Christianity according to "folk interpretation of the custom" of Catholics in Bosnia and Albania.

According to him, the custom and especially its cross-like symbol survived due to the advent of Christianity when it became interpreted as a religious sign, and when the earlier roles that the custom played were forgotten.

He claimed that the custom was used for magical purposes, to remove evil spells and bring luck. It had social purposes, too, as members tattooed each other, marking their joint entrance to maturity. It also had an aesthetic purpose, as it was seen as decorative or even erotic.

Petric also noticed other special features of the custom in Bosnia in terms of the techniques and the terms used. According to him, the Slavic tribes took on the tradition after settling in the Balkans.

Revival among the Young

Among the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia, the tradition of tattoos has experienced something of a revival in recent years. Characterized now as exclusively connected to Croats and Christianity, some young people have taken an interest in the custom.

Young women, either wishing to make a connection with their ancestors, or for aesthetic reasons, have started to tattoo these symbols on visible places, such as backs of hands, fingers, wrists or the upper back. The majority of these tattoos are made using modern technology, in specialized tattoo studios.

Young people even started a Facebook group in 2009, "Traditional Croatian Tattoo", which includes photographs of young people tattooed with these ancient symbols, but also old and new photographs of older women and their traditionally made tattoos. As a result, it seems that the symbols of a dying tradition could live on for at least another generation.

WEATHER OUTLOOK



Sarajevo

Today: Sunny. High 31C.

Tonight: Low 17C.

Saturday: Cloudy. Close to 26C.

Banja Luka

Today: Chance of rain. High 30C.

Tonight: Low 18C.

Saturday: Rain. Close to 23C.

Tuzla

Today: Chance of rain. High 30C.

Tonight: Low 18C.

Saturday: Light rain. Close to 26C.

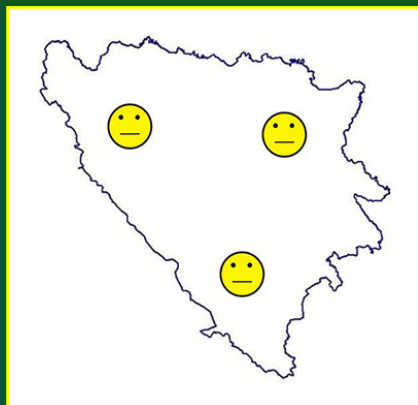
Mostar

Today: Sunny. High 33C.

Tonight: Low 19C.

Saturday: Chance of rain. Close to 28C.

BIO METEO



Air pollution in Sarajevo

MODERATE

UV Index

Moderate

GLOBE IN PICTURES



People's Liberation Army aircraft and vehicles drive in formation past the Tiananmen Gate in Beijing



Participants make their way through dust at the Burning Man Festival in the Black Rock Desert of Nevada



A trader works at the London Metal Exchange, in London. Turmoil continues to affect world stock markets due to a slowdown of the Chinese economy



A resident tries to extinguish a fire burning temporary houses at a riverside slum in Jakarta, Indonesia



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