

V.I.P. Daily News Report

V.I.P. News Services, Čika Ljubina 6, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

phone/fax: (381 11) 32 82 360, 32 86 140, 32 86 141

e-mail: office@vipnews.rs vipnews@sbb.rs

Publisher: V.I.P. News Services

Editor-in-Chief: Vladan Marjanović

News Desk Editors: Rade Stanić, Davor Lukač

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COMMENTARY

Election Poker: Tadic Lays all Cards on Table

The Serbian President Boris Tadic announced on Wednesday that he has made a decision to resign as the president and then to re-run in the presidential elections that should take place at the same time with the parliamentary elections - on May 6.

He also announced that now his Democratic Party (DS) has two female candidates for the position of the prime minister, if the DS will set up the future government, but he declined to say their names.

That way Tadic has laid all cards on the table and now there are no more unclear issues what is going to happen till the elections. He has also put an end to all discussions within his party on possible solutions on the position of the prime minister.

There is first impression that Tadic and his party have decided to run for all-or-nothing in the elections in May. Tadic has decided to run in the presidential elections in order to help his party to get more votes in the parliamentary elections, counting on that his popularity will give the DS a few percents more. By that he has confirmed his intention to be the pillar of the DS election campaign as well as that the party's campaign will be based on Tadic himself as it has been the case since the very beginning. However, that way Tadic has assumed great responsibility for the result the DS will make in the elections.

When he announced that there would be two female runners for the position of the prime minister, Tadic practically put an end to all speculations that he could run for the prime minister in an event of defeat at the elections. By that he has also blocked the ambitions of some party's leadership members who had seen themselves at that position, particularly the Minister of Defense Dragan Sutanovac, who counted on the support of Belgrade Mayor Dragan Djilas.

Tadic has probably disappointed the leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) Ivica Dacic, who openly demonstrated that he wants to make progress in his career and from the current position of the First Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior to the position of the Prime Minister.

According to the sources close to Tadic's office, the two female runners for the prime minister position from the DS are Gordana Matkovic and Milica Delevic.

Matkovic is known for being the Minister of Social Issues in the government of the late Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, the first Serbian government set up after the toppling of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000.

Delevic has been at various positions in the European integration domain for a long period of time. At this moment she is the Director of the European Integration Office of the Government of Serbia. She is known to non-political public for being the ex-wife of Dragan Djilas.

Both Matkovic and Delevic have reputation of being competent experts in the domains they have been working in.

It is interesting that Tadic, who counts on that he is going to be the president, puts up two women who should replace the current Prime Minister Mirko Cvetkovic, a politically weak figure without a stronghold in the party that spent its mandate mostly following orders given by Tadic.

According to the Constitution the Serbian President shall have lesser competences than the Prime Minister or the Government, but it is not the case in the practice, because Tadic has imposed himself as the key holder of the political power in the country.

On the other hand, the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), the biggest opposition party, announced that its candidate for the position of the head of the state would be the party leader Tomislav Nikolic, who lost narrowly (around 50,000 votes) at the 2008 presidential elections in the second run-off.

The SNS deputy leader Aleksandar Vucic on Wednesday gave a hint that the party's candidate for the position of the prime minister highly likely would be a woman too – like in the case of the DS – Jorgovanka Tabakovic, the SNS deputy leader, the PhD in economics holder, who used to work as a banker.

Candidates of the other parties will be active in the first runoff of the elections that will be used for personal promotion and promotion of the parties, or coalitions they head.

It is realistic that the president will not be elected in the first runoff. For victory in the first runoff one needs more than 50% of the votes of the voters that cast their ballots. It is also realistic to expect that Tadic and Nikolic will be the runners for the position of the president in the second runoff on May 20. In the meanwhile it will be clear which parties will be capable of setting the government up, which certainly can affect the outcome of the second runoff.

It is still early to specify the results of the elections that are yet to take place in a month time, but by all indications the SNS is going to be the strongest party represented in the parliament, although it is not clear whether the party will be able to set the government up, or not. On the other hand the DS believes that with the SPS and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) led by Cedomir Jovanovic as well as with the minorities' parties, it will have enough seats to form the government. If the SNS wins by margin bigger than 5-6%, then it will not be possible to set the government up without them. The way the things are now it is likely that exactly that can happen. Tadic is obviously heavy artillery that should help the DS to reduce that margin.

On the other hand, Tadic – although he keeps giving optimistic statements – stands relatively small chances to win the presidential elections. If Tadic and Nikolic run in the second runoff, it is highly likely that the LDP and the SPS voters will not vote for him, or will not vote at all. Nikolic's voters, on the other hand, will probably cast their ballots in the same number both in the first and in the second runoff. Tadic perhaps has made a mistake because he has not gone for the version the presidential elections to take place on April 22 and May 6, i.e. the second runoff, instead of the first one, to take place at the same time with the parliamentary elections – in that event he certainly will have full support of his party's infrastructure, which will be more difficult to activate on May 20.

Anyways, the elections now gains in weight and dynamics. It is yet to be seen whether Tadic himself is enough to wake up the DS' voters and the voters of the parties close to it from lethargy. So far the DS' election campaign, in which Tadic dominates, has not been given a warm welcome.

After the elections it will highly likely be much more interesting – options in all manner of ways are possible.