



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

## **TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS**

### **1. OPERA AND BALLET THEATER TO BE MANAGED BY A COMMITTEE AS FORMER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE OPERA TIGRAN LEVONIAN HAD ONCE ANTICIPATED [Aravot, 01/12/08]**

According to the decision of the RA Culture Ministry, after Artistic Director Gegham Grikorian's resignation, the Opera and Ballet Theater will be managed by a council. As Gayane Durgarian, Head of the Public Relations Department of the Opera, told us yesterday, the names of the council members are not known yet.

In an interview to Aravot daily years ago, former Artistic Director of the Opera Tigran Levonian had anticipated this kind of solution to the ongoing conflicts in the opera. On January 9, the Artistic Council of the Opera Theater held the first session of 2008. The names of the members of the council will be known to public in the near future.

### **2. THE UNION OF CAFESJIAN AND SARKISSIAN FAILED ACCORDING TO RUMORS THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN 'ARMENIA' TV [Aravot, 01/12/08]**

Serious problems have occurred in "Armenia" TV Company. There are rumors that the company has been sold to other owners, which means that the whole staff of the company, from drivers and reporters to directors and department heads, may undergo changes. Bagrat Sarkissian had brought all his family members, relatives, friends and neighbors to work in the company irrespective of their specialties and capabilities, and now when he is left out of the "Armenia" TV company, the others are leaving it too.

According to our information, now the 75% of the company's shares, which previously belonged to the Sarkissian family, now belong to Mikayel Minassian, Prime Minister Serge Sarkissian's son-in-law. The other 25% belong to Gerard Cafesjian.

The negotiations on buying the company started immediately after a number of conflicts between the Sarkissians and Cafesjian regarding the investments. Although the company was technically re-equipped recently, huge sums of money, however, did not serve their goal. All the relatives of Bagrat Sarkissian, who occupied higher positions in the company received 2000-3000 USD monthly salary. While others' salaries were very low and there were frequent delays too.

Gagik Mkrtchian, Director of "Zham" news program of "Armenia" TV rejected all these rumors, saying that the owners of the company have not changed. Bagrat Sarkissian left for USA before Christmas and has not returned yet.

### **3. "HAYASTAN" ALL-ARMENIAN FUND CONTINUES REPAIR OF SURB ETCHMIADZIN CHURCH IN TBILISI AND SCHOOL OF ARTS IN PARAKAR [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]**

The "Hayastan" All-Armenian Fund is continuing repairs of Surb Etchmiadzin Church in Tbilisi and the school of arts in Parakar. According to the fund's Public Relations Department, earthquakes and the construction of the subway in Tbilisi have weakened Surb Etchmiadzin Church. In order to prevent the possible further collapse of this 200-year-old structure, the Argentine local body of the "Hayastan" All-Armenian Fund and the US Western diocese of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin undertook a project on reinforcing the church, which was completed in February 2007. Thanks to the project, the building has been considerably improved. The second stage of the project started in November 2007, under which additional reinforcement and interior decoration is being done. It is envisaged to finish the project in late 2008.

"By implementing this project, we not only save a cultural monument but also make a great contribution to the cultural and spiritual life of the Armenians of Georgia," the CEO of the "Hayastan" All-Armenian Fund Vahe Aghabekian said.

As for the school of arts in Parakar not far from Yerevan, after the 1988 earthquake its one-storey building has become unsafe. Thanks to the financial assistance of the French local body of the fund, the school was reconstructed, with a concert hall, classrooms for painting, potter's art and a brass band being built. At the present stage of the program, tables, desks, blackboards, a printer and other equipment will be provided to the school.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

## OTHER REPORTS FROM ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWS AGENCIES

### POLITICS

#### 4. ARMENIA ASSESSES POSITIVELY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF ARMENIAN-BULGARIAN RELATIONS, VARTAN OSKANIAN SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

Armenia assesses positively the development process of Armenian-Bulgarian relations and aims to strengthen and deepen further the bilateral relations. The Armenian foreign minister Vartan Oskanian stated this on January 10 during a talk following the handing of a copy of credentials by the newly-appointed ambassador of Bulgaria Todor Marinov Staykov. The minister said that Armenia attaches great importance to close cooperation of the two countries both in European structures and international organizations.

According to the RA MFA Press and Information Department, the newly-appointed Bulgarian ambassador also expressed satisfaction at the active cooperation and assured the Armenian foreign minister that he will spare no effort in order to strengthen bilateral relations and make them most meaningful.

Reference: Todor Marinov Staykov was born in 1953 in Sofia. In 1975 he graduated from the Lvov Army Political Institute, in 1982 - from the Diplomatic Academy of Russian MFA. In 1982, he worked as third secretary at the MFA of Bulgaria. In 1987-1990, he was Bulgaria's deputy resident representative to UNIDO and UN international bodies on control of narcotic drugs. In 1990-1993, he served as the head of the technical cooperation unit of the department of international economic organizations of the Bulgarian MFA. In 1995-1997, he was Bulgaria's deputy ambassador to the U.S. In 1997-2001, he held a number of positions at state and private organizations. In 2001-2004, T. Staykov was the CEO of Balkanpress company, while in 2004-2007 he was the manager of Viva Associated company. He is fluent in English and Russian.

#### 5. IN CASE OF WINNING ELECTIONS LEVON TER-PETROSIAN WILL GIVE POLITICAL AND LEGAL ESTIMATION TO ACTIVITY OF CURRENT AUTHORITIES [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

"I will not estimate Serge Sargsian's scenario. I have a scenario of my own, according to which, I have already won." First Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosian stated at the January 11 press conference.

According to him, the cause of his return to the political arena is his confidence that today only he is able to hamper the reproduction of the current regime. L. Ter-Petrosian stated that he precisely realizes his duty and confessed that just he is responsible that Robert Kocharian and Serge Sargsian appeared in Armenia. According to him, only in a nightmare one can imagine the reproduction of the current regime and its prolongation for ten more years.

As for the future of the current authorities, L. Ter-Petrosian said that in case he wins the elections of 2008 at first he will give a political and then a legal estimation to their activity. He also expressed confidence that already in ten days different links of power will stop executing S. Sargsian's and R. Kocharian's orders.

#### 6. ACCORDING TO LEVON TER-PETROSIAN'S ESTIMATION, CURRENT DOCUMENT ON KARABAKH IS THE SAME STAGE-BY-STAGE PLAN PLUS TALKS ABOUT REFERENDUM [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

The logic of the negotiations process on the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict should be based on the document, which is on the negotiations table today, and on the logic of the situation formed around the negotiations. First RA President Levon Ter-Petrosian stated at the January 11 press conference, touching upon the issue of his first steps on the settlement of the conflict in case of being elected President.

According to him, the process of negotiations is a system having different stages. Today the process of negotiations is at an absolutely different stage than it was ten years ago when he was President. L. Ter-Petrosian stated that he is acquainted with the current proposals of the Co-chairs. However, not being an official person, he does not comment them. Meanwhile he mentioned that the content of the current document is the same stage-by-stage plan plus talks about the Nagorno Karabakh status and holding a referendum on that issue.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

According to Levon Ter-Petrosian, the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict should be the basis of the possible normalization of Armenia's relations with Azerbaijan. According to his estimation, the current Armenian authorities have held a non-constructive policy to Azerbaijan so far, which was aimed at failing the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh problem.

As regards the issue of normalization of the relations with Turkey, in Ter-Petrosian's opinion, Turkey will open the border in case of the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. At that, according to him, achievement of a final settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh problem is not obligatory in this respect, achievement of a perceptible progress in the process of negotiations on the conflict's peaceful settlement is enough.

As regards the relations with Russia, Ter-Petrosian mentioned that in the years of his presidency these relations distinguished themselves by a high extent of mutual respect, correctness, and mutual profit. "There were no relations of a suzerain and a vassal then. I am sure than in case of my returning to power these traditions will be continued," L. Ter-Petrosian stated.

## 7. AS A RESULT OF CLARIFICATION OF RA VOTERS' REGISTER, NUMBER OF VOTERS REDUCES AND MAKES 2M 311 THOUSAND 665 [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

On January 9, the Passport and Visa Department of the RA Police presented the register of RA voters to the Central Electoral Commission according to districts. According to the preliminary data, it included 2m 311 thousand 917 voters. As NT correspondent was informed by Tatev Ohanian, the CEC Spokesperson, as a result of lists' clarification, the number of voters reduced and as of January 11, made 2m 311 thousand 665.

## 8. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN CONSIDERS PEOPLE'S SUPPORT AS DECISIVE IN HIS GAINING VICTORY IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

"If I see that the elections are falsified, realizing my rights and knowing the laws well, I will take steps proceeding from the legislation, that is, I will hold rallies, processions, pickets, demonstrations, court examinations on falsifications, and other measures will start." First RA President Levon Ter-Petrosian said at the January 11 press conference.

Answering the question of how he estimates his chances of winning the presidential elections, Ter-Petrosian said that already today his audience, thanks to meetings with the public and rallies, makes half a million people. He assured that in a few days and especially when the election campaign starts his audience will considerably increase and will reach one million. According to him, the very support of the people is decisive in his fight and his success depends on that support.

L. Ter-Petrosian also assured that he does not need any support from outside. In this respect, according to him, the issue of sympathy of this or that state does not play a significant part.

## 9. MASS MEDIA OUTLETS HAVE BECOME CLOSED CLUBS FOR OPPOSITION FIGURES, "OYP" DEPUTY CHAIRWOMAN SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

Armenian mass media outlets have become closed clubs for opposition figures in recent period, the deputy chairwoman of "Orinats Yerkir" Party (OYP) Heghine Bisharian said at the January 11 discussion "The Problems and Guarantees of Ensuring the Freedom and Pluralism of the Mass Media in the RA Presidential Election Campaign". According to her, since the parliamentary elections in May 2007 until now, representatives of the authorities have been given the opportunity to speak constantly on all television channels. Whereas, in her words, so far the chairman of the OYP Artur Baghdasarian has had the chance to speak on TV only 6 times. H. Bisharian said that in such conditions, to speak about freedom and pluralism is pure nonsense. She pointed out that electors, especially those in marzes, have no opportunity to orient themselves due to this "information blockade".

Member of the National Assembly "ARF" faction Ruzan Arakelian said that in Armenia mass media outlets are free as much as they are given freedom. According to her, especially television companies fulfill requirements of either those who pay them or the political forces that stand behind them.

In the opinion of the director of the Information Analytical Center "Noyan Tapan" Tigran Harutyunian, the political parties that should be the most active part of society "have killed the society's demand for free, independent, unbiased information and analysis". In his words, today the society seems to have no demand for such information. "Over these years, people have lost faith: they do not believe in the role of any political force and even their own role in political processes," T. Harutyunian said.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

## 10. OSCE/ODIHR PRESENTS BID FOR IMPLEMENTING OBSERVER MISSION TO CENTRAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

The OSCE/ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) has presented a bid for implementing an observer mission (with the participation of 40 long-term observers and 250 short-term ones) at the February 19 presidential elections in Armenia to the RA Central Electoral Commission (CEC). As of January 11, this is the only bid received from the international organizations which were invited beforehand by the Armenian authorities, NT correspondent was informed by the spokeswoman for CEC Tatev Ohanian.

The number of accredited local observers remains unchanged: 6,074 representatives of 5 NGOs have been accredited in the CEC. The deadline for accrediting observers is February 9.

## 11. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN NO POLITICAL RIVAL FOR ARTASHES GEGHAMIAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

Levon Ter-Petrosian is the most desirable rival for the Armenian authorities because he is the most vulnerable of all the presidential candidates, the chairman of the "National Unity" party Artashes Geghamian expressed an opinion at the January 11 press conference. According to him, the authorities have a lot of discreditable material about L. Ter-Petrosian and the latter is well aware of it.

In the words of A. Geghamian, he does not regard L. Ter-Petrosian as a political rival. "Calm Thoughts" (NT: the name of L. Ter-Petrosian's pre-election program) suggested A. Geghamian the idea that the first Armenian president is "in nirvana and has not yet awakened". According to him, the mass media artificially exaggerate the role of L. Ter-Petrosian in the upcoming presidential elections, trying to raise his rating.

As for L. Ter-Petrosian's statement that he is the only force opposing the current authorities, A. Geghamian called it an attempt to mislead the public and present the desirable for the real. In his words, for 10 years "the Ter-Petrosian propaganda machine" was doing one thing: it was discrediting the acting opposition - but it did not succeed in it. A. Geghamian remarked that by making this statement, L. Ter-Petrosian gave a slap on the face of the political figures supporting him.

A. Geghamian called on all the presidential candidates to stop insulting each other and to dispute over provisions of the programs. He added that the prime minister Serge Sargsian gave a proper example of political debate by praising A. Geghamian as a politician. He denied the rumors that S. Sargsian made financial investments in his propaganda campaign.

The 164-page pre-election program of A. Geghamian - "Program of Creation" is currently at the publication stage. As regards the first Armenian president's program, A. Geghamian said that it is a selection of his own book.

## 12. REPUBLICAN MP SAYS NO PUBLIC DEBATES BETWEEN PM AND EX-PRESIDENT [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

Galust Sahakian, a deputy chairman of the governing Republican Party, said today prime minister Serzh Sarkisian will never agree to hold public debates with ex-president Levon Ter-Petrosian, because "there is no need for it."

"I would personally feel hurt if the Republican Party's presidential candidate (Serzh Sarkisian) met with Ter-Petrosian because the latter used abusive language when talking about the government," Sahakian said.

Sahakian then slammed Ter-Petrosian's election manifesto in which the former president pledges to turn Armenia into a "normal" state where governments are formed as a result of free elections and respect laws, human rights and free enterprise. But Sahakian said many who read it felt frustrated because the manifesto looks like a rally statement.

Sahakian also brushed aside expert and media speculations that the main fight will be between Serzh Sarkisian and Levon Ter-Petrosian. He also spoke about possible vote rigging saying the one, irrespective of whether from his or other parties, caught doing so will be declared 'enemy of the nation.'



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

## 13. EX PRESIDENT LEVON TER-PETROSIAN HOLDS FIRST CONFERENCE IN DECADE [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

Armenia's ex-president Levon Ter-Petrosian, who is seeking the highest post of the country, a decade after he was forced to resign, vowed today not to disband the country's parliament-National Assembly, if he were elected head of the country in the February 19 election.

Speaking at a news conference today, for the first time in over a decade, he said the May 12 parliamentary elections showed that Armenia's opposition has ceased to exist as a political factor, prompting his political comeback.

Ter-Petrosian said although the current parliament does not reflect the real balance of political forces, he would cooperate with it because 'this is what we have.' The ex-president, who turned 63 on Wednesday, said if elected he would respect the amended Constitution, albeit he does not regard it as 'perfect.'

Ter-Petrosian refused to comment on forecasts of top members of the governing Republican Party who claim that prime minister Serzh Sarkisian is likely to win the election with over 60 percent of the vote, saying he is preoccupied with his own campaigning.

The former president further said that no progress would come in normalization of Armenia's relations with Turkey unless progress in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is marked.

Ter-Petrosian refused to give his assessment to the latest package of proposals suggested by the OSCE Minsk group on the basic principles for peaceful settlement of the conflict, saying he is familiar with it but not in a position to evaluate it.

"I can say it is a document calling for stage-by-stage settlement plus an extra element-I mean conversations about a referendum, a plebiscite or something like that on Nagorno-Karabakh future status," he said.

Ter-Petrosian argued that the only and most effective solution of Armenia's national security is not a membership in different security systems but a peaceful co-existence with all its neighbors. The former president also argued in favor of shifting from mandatory military service to contract army, which would cost less, but he added this would be possible only after resolution of conflicts.

He said he dreams of a time when Armenia will have good relations with all its neighbors. The news conference was attended by tens of Ter-Petrosian's supporters who would interrupt him by noisy applause.

## 14. ARMENIAN REPUBLICAN PARTY TO GO TO ELECTIONS WITH "FORWARD, ARMENIA" SLOGAN [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

In the coming presidential elections the possible percentage of the candidate nominated by the Armenian Republican Party is 65-68 percent, the deputy head of the party member of the Armenian National Assembly Galust Sahakian said today.

Referring to the results of the polls conducted in the country by "Gelap" organization, according to which Serzh Sargsian got 30 percent of the votes, Sahakian noted that it is not a small percentage.

In his opinion around 20-25 percent of the voters have not yet decided whose candidacy they will support and for getting their votes right work must be carried out.

The deputy head of the party said that the Republican party will go to the elections with the slogan "Forward, Armenia", which is the result of the collective thinking, taking into consideration that Armenia is in the process of continuative movement and progress.

According to him, in future the party will have other slogans as well but the mentioned one is the most important.

## 15. VAHAN HOVHANNISSIAN MEETS MEDICAL WORKERS [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

Member of ARF Bureau, candidate for presidential elections Vahan Hovhannissian met today in Moscow House in Yerevan with officials of Yerevan medical institutions.

According to him, the main army dealing with people consists of doctors and teachers. "The most important property of people – life and health are in your hands," he said addressing to the participants of the meeting.

"Each doctor must be secured in a way so that he/she is not forced to take money from patients for example for paying electricity bill of his department. A doctor must be in such a limelight where he/she



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

must be free to choose whose thankfulness accept and whose not," Hovhannissian said, adding that an Armenian doctor has such moral description.

Assessing the work of the doctors, he noted about the great work there are carrying out for protection of health of citizens.

## 16. VAHAN HOVHANNISSIAN MEETS FREEDOM FIGHTERS [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

Member of the ARF Bureau, candidate for presidential elections Vahan Hovhannissian met today with freedom fighters.

"For consolidating your victory we are going by the path of our victory," Hovhannissian said addressing to them. According to him, the liberated homeland belongs to those who have endangered their lives for it. "Never think that someone instead of you has a right to govern the liberated homeland," Hovhannissian said.

According to the candidate, when a national-liberating movement started the people were divided into 2 groups.

"One part was seeking in this movement political success, another part understood that there is no liberating fight without self-sacrifice and left for Artsakh forming squads of volunteers," he said.

The chairman of the NA's defense, national security and home affairs permanent commission Arthur Aghabekian said in his address, "No one called you, no one demanded that you take arms. You are fighters for freedom and you will remain so. Today we have gathered to choose a commander who will demand peace. It may only be a candidate chosen by a freedom fighter," Aghabekian pointed out.

## 17. ARMENIAN PM CONDUCTS RECEPTION FOR REPRESENTATIVE OF MASS MEDIA [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsian conducted today a reception to congratulate the representatives of mass media on the occasion of New Year and Christmas. Congratulating the invitees, the prime minister wished each that the 2008 be a better year than the previous one.

"It is a very good tradition when the head of the government meets with journalists in such environment. I think right is said – the way you start the year is the way it will continue and I call on you to start it with good mood," Sargsian said.

The prime minister expressed assurance that the people gathered are such people who are concerned with the future of Armenia, and are working for the sake of Armenia.

## 18. OSKANIAN RECEIVES EU REPRESENTATIVE [ARMENPRESS, 01/14/08]

Foreign minister Vartan Oskanian met today with a European Union special representative for the South Caucasus, Peter Semneby, who has arrived in Yerevan on a working visit.

The foreign ministry said Mr. Semneby spoke about post-election processes in neighboring Georgia, saying a statement by the EU on the presidential election there reflects also his position.

The ministry said both men stressed the importance of stability in Georgia as a development guarantee and continuation of regional projects.

They then spoke about upcoming Armenian presidential election stating that a proper conduct of the ballot, in conformity with international standards, will boost Armenia's partnership with EU.

The two men also exchanged ideas and views regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process and Armenia-Turkey relations.

## 19. OSCE MINSK GROUP EXPECTS ARMENIAN AND AZERI LEADERS TO STRIKE VERBAL AGREEMENT BEFORE NATIONAL POLLS [ARMENPRESS, 01/14/08]

The co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group from France, Russia, and the United States have resumed their shuttle diplomacy in an effort to help Armenia and Azerbaijan hammer out a final agreement on the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement starting with Azeri authorities on Monday.

Their first meeting was with Azeri foreign minister Elmar Mammadyarov. Later they were to meet with Azeri president Ilham Aliyev.

U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, a co-chairman of the Minsk Group Matthew Bryza told journalists a day earlier that the mediators expect Azeri and Armenian presidents to reach an oral agreement on the settlement before the presidential elections in both countries.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

The U.S. diplomat also opposed attempts to equate the Nagorno-Karabakh and the Kosovo conflicts 'since each of them is unique.'

The final version of the basic principles for peaceful settlement of the conflict developed by the peace brokers was handed to Armenian and Azeri foreign ministers at an OSCE ministerial council meeting in Madrid on November 29 for transmission to heads of states.

According to Azeri media reports, the document calls for a gradual resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict that would begin with the liberation of at least six of the seven Armenian-controlled Azerbaijani districts around Karabakh. The final stage is a referendum of self-determination on Karabakh future status.

## **BUSINESS**

### **20. IFAD TO PROVIDE 11.9 MILLION DOLLARS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ARMENIAN RURAL SETTLEMENTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]**

The Armenian ambassador to Italy Ruben Shugarian and the president of the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Lennard Bage on January 8 signed an agreement on financing the program "Market Opportunity to Farmers" between the Republic of Armenia and the IFAD. NT was informed by the RA MFA Press and Information Department that under the agreement Armenia will receive 11.9 million dollars, in particular, for development of rural settlements and small enterprises in these settlements.

### **21. DEFENCE EXPENDITURES OF ARMENIA INCREASE BY 25.3% IN JANUARY-NOVEMBER 2007 ON SAME PERIOD OF 2006 [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]**

Out of the budgetary expenditures of 486 bln 58.4 mln drams (more than 1 bln 406.7 mln USD) in January-November 2007, expenditures of 86 bln 840.7 mln drams were made in the defence sphere, which exceeds by 25.3% the index of the same period of the previous year. The ratio of defence expenditures to Armenian GDP grew from 3% in the first 11 months of 2006 to 3.2% in the same period of 2007.

According to the RA National Statistical Service, budgetary expenditures on public order protection, national security and judicial sphere amounted to 41 bln 584 mln drams in January-November 2007, exceeding by 23.4% the index of the same period of 2006. Their ratio to GDP did not change as compared with the same period of the previous year and made 1.5%.

Expenditures on education and science amounted to 76 bln 299.8 mln drams (23.1% growth compared with January-November 2006), while the ratio of these expenditures to GDP grew from 2.7% to 2.8%. 56 bln 161.1 mln drams was spent in social insurance and social security spheres (18.6% growth), the ratio of these expenditures to GDP remained unchanged - 2.1%; 36 bln 837.8 mln drams was spent on health care (22.1% growth), the ratio of health care expenditures to GDP increased from 1.3% in January-November 2006 to 1.4% in the same period of 2007.

35 bln 14.5 mln drams was spent in the transport, communication and road sector, which is more by 29.3% as compared with January-November 2006. The ratio of these expenditures to GDP grew by 1.2% in the first eleven months of 2006 to 1.3% in the same period of 2007.

### **22. LEGISLATION ON RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF ARMENIAN TAXPAYERS IN GOOD STATE [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]**

The Armenian legislation on rights and obligations of taxpayers and the level of tax collection are in quite good state, the director of Aharon Paradigma company Aharon Chilingarian told reporters on January 11.

The company together with the Armenian-European Policy and Legal Advice Centre (ARPLAC) and the USAID has made an assessment of administrative capacities of the State Tax Service (STS) of Armenia. Based on 344 questions, the administrative capacities of the STS were assessed by comparing them with European standards. A. Chilingarian said that in the opinion of experts, the problems of the tax sector are related to issues of human resource management, ethics and communication.

In the words of the deputy head of the STS Armen Alaverdian, external interest (by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund) in tax administration is gradually increasing. According to him, the assessment results are important for planning further steps in the sector. "16 years' work of the State Tax



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

Service shows that development is proceeding in line with European standards, even though we still have much work to do in some directions," A. Alaverdian said.

## 23. YEREVAN SUBWAY TO EXTEND TO AJAPNYAK DISTRICT [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

Prime minister Serzh Sarkisian took a stroll yesterday around Yerevan subway, spoke to its chief executives and employees and discussed ways to boost its effectiveness.

Among immediate plans is extension of the line to Ajapnyak district, but according to estimates, construction of 1 km long subway tunnel's cost is about \$12 million. Another \$6 million will be required for construction of the terminal station.

Prime minister Serzh Sarkisian said this plan is quite feasible. He said he will discuss this issue at the nearest government session. Overall some \$16 million are needed to build a new line to Ajapnyak.

Average wages of subway's workers are 65,000 Drams (a little over \$200). Sarkisian said an expected rise would make the average wage 100,000 Drams.

The Yerevan Underground system was launched in 1981. It runs on a 13.4 km (8.37 miles) line and currently services 10 active stations.

## DIASPORA

## 24. CHARLES AZNAVOUR GIVES CONCERTS IN EGYPT [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

The world-famous French Armenian singer Charles Aznavour gave concerts in the operas of Cairo and Alexandria on January 4 and 6.

According to the RA MFA Press and Information Department, the Cairo concert was attended by the Egyptian prime minister, the secretary general of the League of Arab States, ministers and foreign ambassadors.

The concert of Charles Aznavour in Alexandria took place under the patronage of Egypt's ministers of culture and tourism and the Armenian ambassador to Egypt.

On January 5, an official dinner in Charles Aznavour's honor was given in Alexandria on behalf of the Armenian ambassador. The governor of Alexandria and numerous guests attended the dinner.

On January 6 Charles Aznavour and the delegation accompanying him went to Armenian Church of Alexandria and were present at the liturgy dedicated to Christmas. They also met with members of the Armenian community of Alexandria.

## 25. BUSH SPEAKS TO ARMENIAN CLERICS IN BETHLEHEM [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

Before wrapping up the first leg of his Middle east tour U.S. President George W. Bush visited the Church of Nativity, the site of Jesus' birth Thursday and spoke to Archbishop Aris Shahinian, head of ecumenical and foreign relations department of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, who urged the US president to pass a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide.

"It's been a moving moment for me and the delegation to be here at the Church of the Nativity," said the President in comments after the tour. "For those of us who practice the Christian faith, there's really no more holy site than the place where our Savior was born."

The cave, which was attested to be the site of the birthplace of Christ as early as 100 AD, is now inside the Church of the Nativity. A Church was first built on the premises in the fourth century by Saint Helena, the Mother of Emperor Constatine. The current Church is jointly administered by Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic churches.

Bush thanked the church authorities for allowing his visit. "I also thank very much the three different churches for welcoming me here." The President added: "It's a fascinating history in this church, so not only was my soul uplifted, my knowledge of history was enriched."

The Armenian Archbishop told RFE/RL that US president was interested to learn that Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as state religion.

"I told him that before the end of his term in office he should push for recognition of the Armenian genocide. Bush said he had talked about the issue with Turkish president and was contemplating it. This is very important for us," he said.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

## 26. DENMARK REFUSES TO RECOGNIZE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

Denmark does not officially recognize that Ottoman massacres of Armenians during World War I constitute genocide, Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller said Thursday.

"In the government's opinion, this is a historical question that should be left up to the historians," Moeller wrote in a written parliamentary answer, indicating that Denmark would not follow the lead of some 20 other countries, including France, that have labeled the killings genocide.

Moeller's note came in response to a question from parliamentary member Morten Messerschmidt, of the far-right Danish People's Party, on whether "Denmark had officially recognized this genocide."

"It is unfortunate that the Danish government refuses to join other countries in recognizing this genocide," Messerschmidt told AFP. "It is as if they fear Turkey's reactions."

Copenhagen's decision "to not recognize this genocide shows that the government indirectly supports Turkey's cowardly refusal to take responsibility for its history the way the Germans did after World War II," he said.

## 27. NEW GENOCIDE COURSE IN TORONTO ANGERS CANADIAN TURKS [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

A new course about genocide to be offered in Toronto high schools this fall has sparked anger among Turkish-Canadians for including the Turkish killing of Armenians in 1915, TheStar.com reports.

The Grade 11 history course, believed the only one of its kind at a high school in Ontario and possibly Canada, is designed to teach teenagers what happens when a government sets out to destroy people of a particular nationality, race or religion, through three examples: the Holocaust which exterminated 6 million Jews in World War II, the Rwandan slaughter of nearly one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 1994, and the Turkish killing of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians between 1915 and 1923.

"These are very significant, horrible parts of history, and without sounding hackneyed, we hope we can learn something from them so we can make a better world for our children's children," said Trustee Gerri Gershon, of the Toronto District School Board, who proposed the course after a moving tour in 2005 of the Nazi death camps in Poland.

"This isn't a course to teach hatred or blame the perpetrators `no, no, no," said Gershon. "Our goal is the exact opposite: To explore how this happens so we can become better people and make sure it never happens again."

But the Council of Turkish Canadians has gathered more than 1,200 signatures on an online petition opposed to the course for calling the Armenian killings a "genocide" and inciting anti-Turkish sentiment.

## ARTS

## 28. RECONSTRUCTION OF CINEMA HOUSE TO END IN 2009 [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

The reconstruction of the "Armenian Cinema House" will end in 2009. The chairman of the Armenian Cinematographers Union Ruben Gevorgyants told today at a press conference that soon all will have completely new "Cinema House".

According to him, film industry is developing in Armenia and soon new professional films will be produced for which according to him "film policy" is needed.

"We do not have market in the sphere of cinematography but besides festivals there must be a production, Russia's "Mosfilm" is annually producing more than 100 films," he said.

"We are such country where the state must support the film industry as we do not yet have an opportunity to enter the international market," Gevorgian said.

Summing up the work carried out in the film sphere in 2007, Gevorgyants underscored the works of restoration and digitization of "Armfilm" film studio. Around 140 films have already been digitized and the process is continuing. In two weeks the reconstruction of "Armfilm" studio will launch, the project has already been approved.

The head of the union said that this year another professional film will be ready - "National Center". The film has been shot by "Armfilm" studio, the director is Albert Mkrтчian.

As to documentary films, Gevorgyants noted that each year 12-15 films are being shot, and the tradition remained in 2007 as well.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

Among the prior programs of the union of cinematographers, the head of the union pointed out the revealing of young directors. "We must find those who will continue our work, we must know who will continue the film production," Gevorgyants said.

## 29. ARMENIAN ARTISTS' UNION TO REOPEN IN SPRING AFTER RECONSTRUCTION [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

The Armenian Artists' Union is expected to reopen in spring 2008 after reconstruction which lasted for two years. The head of the union Karen Aghamian told today at the meeting with journalists that during the past year the union did not manage to elaborate active work as a result of the reconstruction but in spring of the running year it will be possible to present exhibitions in reconstructed building.

"The appearance of the building has not changed but inside it a great work has been carried out, soon it will be possible to see the real appearance of the reconstructed halls. I think the showing hall of the artists' union will be the biggest and the best in Armenia," he said.

The first works which will be shown in the new hall will be the works of the member-artists of the union. K. Aghamian said that the building has been reconstructed by a private company which will establish its office in the building of the union.

## SOCIAL

## 30. MILLENNIUM ARMENIAN CHILDREN'S VACCINATION FUND TO ALLOCATE 10 THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR PURCHASE OF VACCINES FOR ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

The law office Geragos & Geragos (Los Angeles) has donated 10 thousand dollars to the Millennium Armenian Children's Vaccination Fund. This money will be allocated for purchase of vaccines on prevention of children's diseases in Armenia. According to a report submitted to NT by the fund's office, the head of the law office Mark Geragos is one of the active representatives of the Armenian community of Los Angeles, he is also a member of "Depi Hayk" organization's board and of the international board of trustees of the "Hayastan" All-Armenian Fund.

## 31. CHARITABLE ACTION FOR ORPHANS AND CHILDREN FROM VULNERABLE FAMILIES TO BE HELD ON JANUARY 13 [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

With the assistance of the Armenian president Robert Kocharian, the magazine "Armyanka" and Valery Kocharian Charitable Fund will hold the charitable action "Kiddy, I Wish to Give All Good Things to You" at the "Yerevan Circus" cultural center on January 13. According to a press release submitted to NT by the fund, the purpose of the event is to organize the celebration of Old New Year for orphans and children from vulnerable families. On this day the circus will host about 1,600 orphans and children from vulnerable and refugee families from Yerevan and marzes.

## 32. SCHOOL HOLIDAYS PROLONGED IN SYUNIK [ARMENPRESS, 01/14/08]

A bitter cold weather unprecedented for southern Armenia, has forced local authorities to prolong winter school holidays for a week until January 21.

Local education authorities say the decision was prompted by a series of breakdowns of water pipes in schools affecting heating systems.

Instead school children will have a shorter spring holiday.

## 33. YEREVAN AUTHORITIES NOT CONSIDERING PROLONGATION OF SCHOOL HOLIDAYS [ARMENPRESS, 01/14/08]

Education authorities in Yerevan are not considering prolongation of winter holidays for school children.

Silva Achoyan, deputy head of a municipality department in charge of education, said prolongation would be discussed in case the bitter cold weather continues into next week.

She said school heads in Yerevan were told to ensure 24 hour heating of buildings beginning from January 15.

The schoolchildren are expected back to school on January 21. Some 100 schools in Yerevan have their own boiler houses and the rest are heated by electricity.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

## SPORTS

### 34. TIGRAN L. PETROSIAN TOPS POINTS TABLE WITH 2 POINTS AFTER SECOND ROUND OF MEN'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP OF ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

In the 2nd round of the Highest Group Tournament of Men's Championship of Armenia held at Tigran Petrosian Chess House: Karen Asrian beat Tigran Kotanjian, Zaven Andriasian beat Tigran Nalbandian, Tigran L. Petrosian beat Levon Babujian.

The following games: Arsen Yeghiazarian - Samvel Ter-Sahakian, Ara Minasian - Arman Pashikian and Artashes Minasian - Smbat Lputian ended in draws.

After two rounds Tigran L. Petrosian tops the points table with 2 points. 6 chess players earned 1.5 points each.

### 35. 10 CHESS PLAYERS TO PARTICIPATE IN WOMEN'S HIGHEST GROUP TOURNAMENT OF ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

Women's Highest Group Championship of Armenia will start at Tigran Petrosian Chess House on January 13. 10 players, except leading chess players Elina Danielian and Lilit Mkrтчian, will participate in the tournament. In addition to competing for title of the country's champion, the participants will also compete for the only vacant place in the national Olympic team and for the right to take part in the European individual championship.

### 36. ARMENIAN PRESIDENT'S PRIZES PRESENTED TO BEST SPORT COMMUNITIES AND YARDS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/12/08]

The ceremony of giving the Armenian president Robert Kocharian's prizes to the best sport communities and yards took place at the RA ministry of sport and youth issues on January 11.

The city of Vedi (mayor Varuzhan Barseghian) in Ararat marz was recognized as the best city sport community of 2007. The communities of the city of Kajaran (mayor Vardan Gevorgian) in Syunik marz and Yerevan's Avan district (head of district municipality Taron Margarian) were in 2nd and 3rd places.

The village of Parakar (village head Samvel Vardanian) in Armavir marz was recognized as the best village sport community. The village of Gugark (village head Ashot Ashughian) in Lori marz and the village of Garni (village head Ashot Vardanian) in Kotayk marz were in 2nd and 3rd places.

"Anushik" yard of the city of Gyumri (mayor Vardan Ghukasian) in Shirak marz was awarded the prize "Best Sport Yard". The yard of Hatsarat district of the city of Gavar (mayor Gurgen Martirosian) in Gegharkunik marz and "Karmir Khach" yard of Taron-4 district of the city of Vanadzor (mayor Samvel Darbinian) in Lori marz were in 2nd and 3rd places.

The prizes were handed by the RA minister of sport and youth issues Armen Grigorian.

### 37. ARMENIAN GRANDMASTER LEADS SPAIN TOURNAMENT [ARMENPRESS, 01/12/08]

Armenia's grandmaster Karen Movsisyan has scored 6.5 points at an international chess tournament in Spain's Seville out of a possible 7.

After beating his rival in the seventh round the Armenian is ahead of all his rivals. He is followed by a Georgian chess player Levon Areshidze.

In another chess news Armenia's number one player, Levon Aronian will take today on former world champion, Bulgarian Vesselin Topalov, at a prestigious tournament in Dutch Weik-an-Zee.-0-/39/

### 38. ARONIAN EMERGES AS LEADER OF CORUS TOURNAMENT [ARMENPRESS, 01/14/08]

Levon Aronian of Armenia beat Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria in the first round of Corus Chess tournament in the Dutch town of Wijk ann Zee.

World champion Viswanthan Anand, hot favorite for the crown with his enviable record on the Dutch soil, LOST TO Teymur Radjabov of Azerbaijan.

Radjabov, along with Magnus Carlsen of Norway and Levon Aronian of Armenia, emerged as the early leaders in this category-20 tournament with victories in the opener.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, January 14, 2008

---

The remaining games of the 14-players' round-robin event ended in draws. The second Armenian in Wijk an Zee, Gabriel Sarkisian played draw in group B.

---

Produced by AGBU Armenian Representation

Vartan Tsulikian, AGBU News Bulletin Translator/Editor

*Established in 1906, AGBU ([www.agbu.org](http://www.agbu.org)) is the world's largest non-profit Armenian organization. Headquartered in New York City with an annual budget of \$36 million, AGBU preserves and promotes the Armenian identity and heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs, annually touching the lives of some 400,000 Armenians on six continents.*