



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

## TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

### POLITICS

#### 1. ZHARANGUTIUN CALLS OPPOSITION CANDIDATES FOR UNITY [Aravot, 01/21/08]

No opposition candidate for presidency is able to win the February 19 presidential elections on his own. This was mentioned in the statement of Raffi Hovaniessian's Zharangutiun (Heritage) party. Therefore, Zharangutiun calls the candidates for presidency, Vazgen Manoukian, Vahan Hovaniessian, Artur Baghdassarian, and Levon Ter-Petrossian "for implementing an extraordinary reconsideration in the tactics of the forthcoming election struggle for the purpose of the victorious unification". The statement also read that if at least two candidates for presidency do not fulfill the demand on unification, Zharangutiun will make its final pre-election decision later.

#### 2. CEC DECIDES ORDER AND SCHEDULE OF GIVING AIR TIME TO CANDIDATES ON PUBLIC TV AND RADIO [Hayastani Hanrapetutian, 01/22/08]

Armenia's Central Election Committee (CEC) defined on January 21 the schedule and order of providing free air time to presidential candidates on the Public TV and Radio. Each of nine presidential candidates will be given free air time on Public TV since January 23 until February 17.

Thus they will be given two minutes of free time and four minutes of paid time daily on Public TV beginning from January 23 to February 11 from 5:15 pm to 9:00 pm.

From February 11 to February 16 they will be given three minutes of free time and six minutes of paid air time daily and on the last day of campaigning, on January 17, they will have four minutes of free time and 8 minutes of paid time.

The candidates will also have free and paid air time on Public Radio from January 23 beginning from 1:30 pm and up to February 11 they will have 4 minutes of free time and 6 minutes of paid air time. From February 11 they will be provided with 6 minutes of free time daily and nine minutes of paid time and on February 17 they will have each 8 minutes of free time and 12 minutes of paid time.

#### 3. VAZGEN MANUKIAN CONSIDERS SENSELESS TO SPEAK ABOUT ARTSAKH PROBLEM WITHOUT NKR'S DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATIONS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

For Armenia, the most important directions in the sphere of foreign policy are: the Nagorno Karabakh settlement, the European integration, development of relations with the neighboring countries, including improvement of Armenian-Turkish relations. Vazgen Manukian, a candidate for presidency, the Chairman of the National Democratic Union, mentioned in his pre-election program.

According to his program, it is senseless to speak about the full and stable settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh problem without NKR's direct participation in the negotiations as an equal party. The main goal of these negotiations should be international de jure recognition of de facto independence already fulfilled on the basis of the self-determination right of Armenians of Artsakh, with clarification of Artsakh's borders and ensuring its natural border with the RA. The results of the negotiations should create special security guarantees for NKR population, provide conditions for its normal socio-economic development, for creation of a complete possibility for resettlement of refugees and people displaced by force. The guarantee of stability of problem's solution also essentially depends on the democratization extent of the conflict parties.

As regards other directions of foreign policy, according to Manukian, membership to the European Union should be considered as one of the main directions of RA's foreign (also domestic) policy.

Armenia-Russian Federation relations should be developed in the military, socio-economic, cultural, scientific-educational, and other spheres. RA and RF should always have special relations irrespective of their security systems.

RA should carry on active foreign policy contributing to regional integration, as well as deepening relations in different spheres with its eastern neighbors, especially Iran and Arab countries.

The candidate for presidency also mentioned that the work in the above mentioned directions supposes concrete programs based on deep analyses. It is envisaged to create state research-strategic



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centers for that purpose, where mid-term and long-term programs will be worked out, including for the sphere of foreign policy.

#### 4. ACCORDING TO V. MANUKIAN'S PREELECTION PROGRAM, PEOPLE SHOULD RECEIVE RIGHT TO HOLD REFERENDUM ON MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

Vazgen Manukian, a candidate for presidency, the Chairman of the National Democratic Union, in his pre-election program emphasizes the necessity to adopt a new Constitution.

According to the program, the Constitution should include a number of changes in the state government sphere. In particular:

1. All regions of Armenia and the city of Yerevan should have legislative and executive bodies directly elected by citizens and local budgets. The issue of a new RA administrative division was also discussed.

2. The people, in case of collecting a certain number of signatures, should receive the right to hold a referendum on issues of public importance.

3. Ensuring of a really independent judicial system. Naturally, there is a necessity to reconsider the legislation concerning the judicial system for the purpose of fighting corruption existing in the system.

#### 5. ACCORDING TO V. MANUKIAN, REFORMS OF VARIOUS KINDS SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO LIQUIDATION OF ARTIFICIAL MONOPOLIES IN ECONOMY [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

According to the pre-election program of Vazgen Manukian, a candidate for presidency, the Chairman of the National Democratic Union, the economic and social spheres are interrelated and require complex solutions.

According to him, in particular, it is necessary:

- to exclude redistribution of private property at the same time by liquidating non-formal privileges for this or that representative of business. Equal possibilities should be created for everybody. The tax policy should be equally acceptable for small, medium-sized, and big business. The property institution should be protected,

- to legislatively invalidate the amendments and addenda to the RA law On Simplified Tax adopted on July 3, 2007, in consequence of which the number of those using that kind of tax was considerably reduced. Instead it is proposed increasing the circulation subject to simplified taxation, by bringing it to 100m from 50m drams,

- to immediately stop collection of VAT from importing companies on the border. It should be collected only after realization of goods inside the country,

- to encourage at the state level and to create favorable conditions for development of innovation economy. It is possible to take a place on the foreign market only with economy based on knowledge,

- to keep the rates of raising pensions, by implementing indexation of pensions every three months, as growth of prices for goods of wide consumption will not give a possibility to the pensioners to feel increase of the funds managed by them,

- to establish a minimum amount of salary and pension to an amount adequate to the consumer basket.

According to V. Manukian, after all, reforms of various kinds should contribute to liquidation of artificial monopolies in economy. The state by legislatively creating a respective structure should carry on active anti-monopoly policy. All this, he considers, is possible only as a result of radical political reforms.

#### 6. ACCORDING TO ARTUR BAGHDASARIAN'S PREELECTION PROGRAM, IT IS ENVISAGED TO FREE OF CHARGE GIVE APARTMENT AND CAR TO FAMILIES HAVING 6th CHILD [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

Bribery, corruption will be liquidated, order will be established in Armenia in case Artur Baghdasarian, the Chairman of the Orinats Yerkir (Country of Law) party, a candidate for presidency, is elected. The OYP leader made such a statement at the January 21 presentation of his pre-election program. In particular, he said that according to the results of studies conducted by a number of international and Armenian organizations, the tax and customs spheres are the most corrupted ones in Armenia. According to A. Baghdasarian, especially in these spheres we should consistently fight bribery.

The candidate for presidency stated that amalgamation of business takes place in the recent years, in consequence of which small and medium-sized enterprises are liquidated. According to him, the created economic monopolies belong to the authorities or "oligarch groupings" supporting them. As A.



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Baghdasarian stated, his pre-election program mentioned that the rights of importing monopolists should be limited, local industry should be restored and export of local production should be initiated. In response to the question of what he is going to do, in case of being elected, for instance, with a monopoly company importing granulated sugar, A. Baghdasarian said that the latter will have a possibility to continue importing granulated sugar, but a number of other individuals or organizations will be also engaged in that business.

The OYP leader stated that he is very anxious about the current demographic picture of Armenia. "Today death rate exceeds birth rate and if it goes on like this, the RA population will decrease by nearly 600 thousand in several years," A. Baghdasarian said. He mentioned that by his pre-election program he proposes to establish a lump sum aid of 700 thousand drams for the birth of each 5th child in a family and 1m drams (nearly 3.3 thousand dollars) for the 6th child. Besides, according to the program, it is envisaged to free of charge give an apartment and a car to families having the 6th child.

## 7. VARDAN OSKANIAN MEETS WITH OSCE SECRETARY GENERAL AND NATO SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE IN SOUTH CAUCASUS IN TBILISI [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

RA Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian, who visited Tbilisi for taking part in the official inauguration ceremony of Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, during the visit, met with Marc Brichebaud, the OSCE Secretary General, and Robert Simmons, the Special Representative of NATO in the South Caucasus. Noyan Tapan was informed about it by the RA Foreign Ministry Press and Information Department.

Issues concerning the RA presidential elections, in particular, the monitoring mission implemented by OSCE, were touched upon at the meeting with the OSCE Secretary General. The interlocutors also discussed the results of the last visit of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs to the region. V. Oskanian and the Special Representative of NATO discussed the process of fulfillment of the Armenia-NATO Individual Partnership Actions Plan (IPAP) and the prospects of elaboration of IPAP renewed in the second half of the year. The sides positively estimated the active political dialogue between Armenian and NATO high-ranking officials in the recent period, R. Simmons also presented the issues on the agenda of the NATO summit to be held in April in Bucharest and NATO's cooperation with its CIS regional partners.

## 8. ACCORDING TO ARTASHES GEGHAMIAN, FIRST PRESIDENT WISHES TO "SHED BLOOD IN YEREVAN STREETS" [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

"In the recent years, by endangering my life at European tribunes, under the pressure of Turk-Azeris, I have made 21 pro-Armenian speeches, I have been "solo," but no Armenian newspaper or TV company printed or showed my speeches free of charge," Artashes Geghamian, a candidate for presidency, the Chairman of the National Unity party, stated during the January 21 presentation of his pre-election program. According to him, the day before he visited poetess Silva Kaputikyan's grave and in the moments of being in the Pantheon felt responsible for the homeland and towards the memory of great Armenian figures. Whereas, as A. Geghamian stated, some political forces and, in particular, the Armenian National Movement (ANM) party and first President Levon Ter-Petrosian wish to "destabilize the situation in the country and to shed blood in Yerevan streets."

A. Geghamian mentioned that the above mentioned forces, with participation of "pro-Levon" media, carry out black PR to his party and, as he predicted, will continue doing it much more actively. "ANM is inimitable in the respect of slander," he stated adding that neither the representatives of that party nor the current authorities are able to dispute with him over the programs.

A. Geghamian thanked the members of the National Unity party for keeping the party firm and "remaining unshakable" in spite of all kinds of insults.

## 9. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF NUP: EACH PROPOSAL OF ARTASHES GEGHAMIAN'S PRE-ELECTION PROGRAM IS SUBSTANTIATED [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

The pre-election program of the leader of the National Unity party (NUP), a candidate for presidency of the RA Artashes Geghamian differs from the programs of the other candidates by its deepness, simplicity of presentation of material and the availability of realizable promises, the NUP deputy chairman Gagik Tadevosian stated at the January 21 presentation of the program. In his words, the program is free of slogan-type expressions, and each proposal is substantiated by arguments to make it reality.



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The deputy chairman of the NUP Alexan Karapetian said that the program pays much attention to the fight against corruption. "A. Geghamian considers the fight against corruption and bribery as an important condition of ensuring national security," he stated. Besides, according to him, the NUP attaches importance to the society's control of the authorities, and the appropriate legislative basis is proposed to be created in the country with this aim.

Yet another deputy chairman of the NUP Koryun Arakelian said that A. Geghamian's program speaks about the ways of developing culture and science in greater detail than the programs of the other presidential candidates.

## 10. MEMBERS OF "LEGITIMATE PRESIDENT 2008" MOVEMENT EXPRESS CONCERN OVER ACTIONS OF ULNP AND POLICE [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

Dissidence is punishable in Armenia, the citizens who express their disagreement with the position of the authorities are subjected to persecution and terror, Gurgen Yeghiazarian, former deputy of the RA National Assembly, former deputy head of the National Security Service, made this statement at the January 21 sitting of the public-political movement "Legitimate President 2008".

"Terror has moved from streets into apartments of citizens," this is how G. Yeghiazarian described the situation when citizens are called for a testimony or a talk at a police station after they express their disagreement with the authorities' position or refuse to listen to propaganda in favor of Serge Sargsian. Among such citizens was the political correspondent of "Noyan Tapan" news agency Davit Petrosian who refused to listen to two young propagandists from "United Liberal-National Party (ULNP) who came to his house on January 12. The next day he was called to police - based on the complaint of a young woman whom he allegedly had hit.

"If you decline to listen to advertising for Serge Sargsian, you will find yourself in the police based on some absurd accusation," G. Yeghiazarian said.

He called attention to the fact that the young men from the OLNP wear expensive jackets with the party's logo and all of them are exempt from examinations and tests.

The chairman of the ecological party Armen Dovlatian announced, referring to some "well-informed sources" that 300 students have been involved in this propaganda campaign, and each of them will receive a salary of 100 thousand drams (about 330 dollars, with the average monthly salary making about 76 thousand drams in Armenia), while all these expenses are included in the financial expenditures of the presidential candidate Serge Sargsian.

People's Artist of Armenia, member of the Council of Aldermen of the Forum of Intelligentsia Yervand Manarian expressed concern over the involvement of young people in the vicious process and called on the society to condemn the actions of both the leadership of this party and the young propagandists.

## 11. SAFRASTIAN BACKS CANDIDACY OF SERZH SARGSIAN [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

On the first day of the political campaign the intellectuals gathered today in "Hayeli" club expressed hope that a civilized atmosphere of debate will be created in the country which will give an opportunity to orient on the elections. The director of Eastern Sciences Institute, Turkish-scientist Ruben Safrastian noted that he expects a civilized campaign and in the presidential elections he will back the candidacy of Serzh Sargsian.

"There was a time I worked in the staff of the first president but it does not hinder from giving my vote to Serzh Sargsian. The situation created in Armenia is a result of difficult process: a new class is being formed in the republic and the authorities have taken the responsibility of it," he said adding that unlike other countries in Armenia the social processes are developing more rapidly, Safrastian said.

The director of the Literature Institute of the Academy of Sciences Azat Yeghiazarian also expressed hope that an atmosphere of civilized debate will be created in the country which will give an opportunity to make a right choice.

"Such debate may be very useful, it will be possible to orient and not be against one and back another one," he noted. A. Yeghiazarian did not mention to him he will give his vote but he highly underscored the contact of Serzh Sargsian with the public.

"Serzh Sargsian wants to contact with different layers and do concrete activities, of course it is better than voicing slogans," he said.



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## 12. PRE-ELECTORAL PROGRAM OF ARTASHES GEGHAMIAN PRESENTED [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

The pre-electoral program of the leader of the "National Union" party, candidate for the coming presidential elections Artashes Geghamian was presented today.

The deputy head of the party Alexan Karapetian said that the core of the program is fight against corruption. Artashes Geghamian finds that one of the main factors of the dynamic development of the state is the implementation of the anti-corruption policy by the legitimate president.

In case of becoming president he will ensure oversight and transparency in the executive body, will create more transparent system for the budget oversight as well as conditions where the officials will not deal with entrepreneurship.

The deputy head said that the party today is more powerful than 2 years ago and not only with the number of members but they also believe in the ideology of the party.

"The program points all the directions which will promote the development of the country and by which the state will confront inner and foreign challenges," K. Arakelian said.

## 13. RUSSIAN PM TO VISIT ARMENIA FEBRUARY 5-6 [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

A delegation headed by the Russian Prime Minister Victor Zubkov will pay an official visit to Armenia February 5-6.

Russian ambassador to Armenia Nikolay Pavlov said that the visit of the Russian prime minister is the response visit at the invitation of the Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsian.

The membership of the delegation is being specified. During the visit the sides are expected to discuss issues on bilateral trade-economic relations, joint programs.

## 14. PRESIDENT KOCHARIAN SAYS GOVERNMENT INTERESTED IN HOLDING DEMOCRATIC POLLS [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

President Robert Kocharian said today the government is interested in holding the February 19 presidential election in conformity with international standards.

He made the remark during a meeting with ambassador Gert-Hinrich Arhens, head of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation team. Kocharian said the government has done everything possible to organize the ballot in a proper manner.

Apart from a long-term mission the OSCE/ODIHR is expected also to deploy about 250 short-term observers on February 19.

Kocharian was quoted by his press office as telling the ODIHR Mission head that the Armenian government is eager to cooperate with international observers for a good conduct of the polls.

Kocharian also expressed wish that every signal of vote fraud be carefully examined before being recorded by observers.

Ambassador Arhens said his Mission is ready for useful cooperation with the authorities. Kocharian was also said to give explanations and answers to a set of questioned raised by Arhens.

## 15. EX PACE PRESIDENT BELIEVES ELECTIONS IN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN WILL HELP SETTLE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

The former Chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Rene van der Linden, believes that the upcoming presidential elections in Armenia and Azerbaijan will help to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

"I hope that the presidential elections in both countries will be a new effort to resolve the conflict once and for all and forever," Rene van der Linden said during his interview with Trend news agency.

The presidential elections in Armenia have been fixed for February 19 and in Azerbaijan for October. On the eve of the elections, the international mediators are making efforts to strengthen the talks to settle the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict, fearing that replacing the leaders may bring the agreements reached to a gridlock.

"I was optimistic, visiting the region two years ago because talks and meetings were held between the presidents of the two countries," Linden said. "This steady resolve should exist again in settling the conflict. It is very important for the settlement of the conflict which is a serious threat for the whole region," he said.



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Speaking of his visit to the region in July 2007, Linden said that that he was not optimistic with regards to the negotiation process. "I want to believe for the change of the situation for the passed period, indeed, it is very important that both sides demonstrate a will to resolve this conflict via talks. Using other methods, including forceful methods, is unacceptable," the ex-President of PACE said.

Answering the question whether recognizing Kosovo's independence will adversely affect the 'frozen conflicts', including the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Linden said: "I do not know, but from experience, I can say that even if Kosovo becomes independent, I do not believe in the settlement of these problems".

According to him, the issue of Kosovo has been included in the agenda of the PACE's winter session and intricate discussions are being expected on this issue.

## 16. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE TO CHALLENGE ELECTION LAW AMENDMENT [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

A presidential candidate, Arman Melikian, will ask the country's Constitutional Court to repeal a provision of the election law that bans Armenian citizens living outside the country from taking part in national elections.

Speaking at a news conference today Arman Melikian, who served briefly as foreign minister of Nagorno-Karabakh, said denying Armenian citizens living abroad the right to vote was illegal.

The candidate said he knows for sure that many Armenians living now outside their country would vote for him if the law's provision were cancelled.

"I think that a sizeable portions of Armenians outside the country would vote for me in the February 19 presidential election and depriving me of their support is illegal. This is why my interests of a presidential candidate are violated and the election process is jeopardized," he said.

He said his application to the Constitutional Court was being elaborated and would be sent in in a week.

According to an amendment made in the election law last year Armenian national elections shall be held only within the Republic of Armenia.

## 17. SERZH SARGSIAN STARTS HIS CAMPAIGN FROM VAYOTS DZOR [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

Armenian Prime Minister, candidate of presidential elections Serzh Sargsian started his campaign from the Armenian province of Vayots Dzor.

Around 3,000 people gathered in Yeghegnadzor central park. Addressing to the people Serzh Sargsian said that he will get the support and trust of the people by his work. According to him, the president must mainly deal with state security issues and foreign relations, it is also the demand of the reformed constitution. He said that president must be elected through free and independent elections. Serzh Sargsian said that it must not be forgotten that Armenia and Karabakh are facing issues.

"Voting for us means voting for you as all our thoughts and wishes are connected with the progress of the country, we want to go towards prosperity of Armenia," Serzh Sargsian said.

Sargsian also addressed to the people in Malishka, presented his thoughts in Vaik, in Jermuk where he participated in the opening of Jermuk branch of Chess Academy. Tomorrow Sargsian will meet with the residents of Syunik province.

## 18. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN ASSURES THAT POLITICAL FIGHT ENTERS NEW ROUND [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

As part of the political campaign candidate for presidential elections, first president of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosian and the political forces supporting him gathered today in the "Freedom" square.

The leader of the Armenian People's Party Stepan Demirtchian assured that "one-round elections will be conducted and their candidate will win in them." The leader of the "Republic" party Aram Sargsian said that their candidate is going to the elections for registering his victory.

In his speech Levon Ter-Petrosian noted that among his many mistakes was his resignation on February 3. "If I had resigned in April we would not have to conduct elections on such cold days." In his speech he criticized the authorities as well as stated that from today their fight enters a new round. "We have reached a breaking point where a word ends and work starts," the first president said.

Levon Ter-Petrosian also noted that "for the sake of bright future of the country they are ready to exert efforts and bear deprivations. It is difficult but possible if each of you displays will, determination and



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self-sacrifice," he said, reciting the work of Armenian distinguished poet Yeghishe Charents "Vision of Death".

After the rally, its participants headed by the first president walked in the several central streets of the capital.

## 19. "LEGITIMATE PRESIDENT 2008" MOVEMENT EXPRESSES PERPLEXITY ABOUT INACTIVITY OF PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE REGARDING STATEMENT OF PRIME MINISTER'S BROTHER [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

The "Legitimate President 2008" public-political movement will send a letter to the RA prosecutor general's office in connection with the threats made against the opposition by Alexander Sarkissian, deputy of the RA National Assembly, brother of the RA prime minister Serge Sarkissian. This was stated by the chairman of the Homeland and Honor party Garnik Markarian at the January 21 sitting of the movement.

He expressed his perplexity at the fact that despite a number of publications, the prosecutor's office has not shown any interest in whether Alexander Sarkissian truly made any statement about the possible liquidation of the opposition or not.

The Forum of Intelligentsia on January 11 applied to the movement "Legitimate President 2008" with the request to hold a sitting to discuss the publication in the December 27 issue of "Haykakan Zhamanak" ("Armenian Time") newspaper. According to this publication, A. Sarkissian stated in the presence of many people: "We did not kill so many people in the parliament to relinquish power to others so easily and quietly today. If necessary, we will kill as many".

The Forum called on the Movement to invite the editor-in-chief of the newspaper Nikol Pashinian and Alexander Sarkissian to the next sitting to either confirm or refute this information, and in case of necessity - for applying to the RA Prosecutor General's Office with the request to start a criminal case against either Sarkissian or Pashinian. The latter stated earlier that he bears full responsibility for the December 27 publication. There has been no response from A. Sarkissian so far.

## 20. VAHAN HOVHANNISIAN: I DO NOT MAKE PROMISES, I ASSUME OBLIGATIONS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

The start of the pre-election campaign of the ARF's presidential candidate Vahan Hovhannisian was celebrated at Yerevan's Armenia-Marriott Hotel on January 21. "I do not make promises, I assume obligations and sign under them," Vahan Hovhannisian stated in his speech delivered before his supporters and ARF members. According to him, restoration of justice through system changes in Armenia forms the basis of his program.

V. Hovhannisian said that in case of becoming president, he guarantees restoration of the system of free elections, elimination of the clan system and monopolies, a take-off development of the country, promotion of exports, increasing the role of the army, and involvement of the NKR as a negotiation side in settlement of the Karabakh conflict.

The presidential candidate stated that he will do all this with the support of his team rather than on his own. He presented members of the ARF leadership, the ARF parliamentary faction and the government standing next to him on the stage as members of his team.

In his words, trying to communicate directly with voters, he uses the method of signing agreements with them. The agreement bears the candidate's signature put below the obligations assumed by him, as well as the signature of the citizen trusting him - below the personal data on this voter. According to V. Hovhannisian, more than 125 thousand such agreements have already been signed.

## 21. RAMKAVAR-AZATAKAN PARTY OF ARMENIA TO SUPPORT NO CANDIDATE IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

The Ramkavar-Azatakan Party of Armenia (RAPA) keeps away from the process of supporting any candidate in the presidential elections to be held on February 19, not taking part in agitation or anti-agitation for any candidate. This was mentioned in the statement of RAPA Republican Board. RAPA made such a decision in consideration of the circumstances that the process of Dashink and National Revival parties' joining RAPA, which started in autumn, cannot finish until the presidential elections, as well as registering that neither before the 2007 RA parliamentary elections nor before the



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2008 presidential elections a strong ideological pole was formed in the opposition sphere, which could be a real alternative to the authorities.

The document also mentioned that RAPA most of all attaches importance to organization of fair and legal elections and calls those responsible for elections' quality for once more not damaging Armenia's international reputation but using the electoral process in order to absolutely remove the word combination "illegitimate" from Armenia's political system.

## 22. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN: KOCHARIAN-SARGSIAN ADMINISTRATION WILL BE THROWN INTO HISTORY'S DUMP [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

"Our struggle is entering a new stage. We have reached a turning point, where words end and acts start," Levon Ter-Petrosian, the first RA President, a candidate for presidency, stated at the January 22 rally in Liberty Square of Yerevan.

According to him, everything, which was to be said about the essence of the current Armenian administration, the destructive prospects of its reproduction, and the necessity to avoid it, has been already said. L. Ter-Petrosian said that during three months he tried to prove that Robert Kocharian's and Serge Sargsian's power is a "thief, robber, anti-popular power," as a result of the criminal activity of which Armenia has appeared in a difficult political, economic, and social situation. According to the first President, he also tried to prove that there is a real possibility of avoiding that sad prospect and building a normal state, which is based on the real fact that the current administration is a hateful power alien to the people, the moral values of which have nothing in common with national psychology, culture, real interests of Armenia, and even Artsakh.

According to L. Ter-Petrosian, the February 19 presidential elections give the people a possibility of not only building country's future with their own hands, but also of healing the deep insult the people experienced in 1998 and in 2003, when the victories of Karen and Stepan Demirchians were extorted from the people. "Therefore, February 19 will be not only my victory, but also the victory of Karen Demirchian, Stepan Demirchian, and Vazgen Sargsian, and the Kocharian-Sargsian administration will be thrown into the history's dump," L. Ter-Petrosian said.

Stepan Demirchian, the leader of the People's Party of Armenia, Aram Sargsian, the Chairman of the Hanrapetutiun (Republic) party, and Nikol Pashinian, the leader of the Alternative public initiative, also spoke at the rally. The latter said that the first President's meetings in the Armenian regions show that L. Ter-Petrosian is not only opposition's, but also people's common candidate.

A procession along Yerevan's central streets was announced after the rally. The procession was led by Levon Ter-Petrosian and its motto was "We Will Win!"

## 23. PROSECUTORS DENY STORY ABOUT BEATING TWO OLD WOMEN [ARMENPRESS, 01/23/08]

The office of Armenia's prosecutor-general has denied today a report posted on the website of A1+ newspaper claiming that two old women were beaten by criminal-looking men for attending a meeting with ex-president Levon Ter-Petrosian on January 21.

The story on A1+ website said before reaching the town of Ashtarak Ter-Petrosian and his supporters met with residents of Kuchak village in central Aragatsotn province which was held not in the village but on the roadside. The story quoted several residents of the village as saying that before Ter-Petrosian and his escort arrived a car approached the residents, two men got out of it and attacked two old women.

The story also quoted Ter-Petrosian as saying later in the day that these men were 'brave' enough to beat two old women.

Sona Truzian, a spokesperson for the office of prosecutor-general told Armenpress that the story was checked and it emerged that no such accident occurred in Kuchak village. She cited the community head and local police as denying the alleged accident.

## 24. ARTHUR BAGHDASARIAN PROMISES TO CUT TAXES IF ELECTED PRESIDENT [ARMENPRESS, 01/23/08]

A presidential candidate Arthur Baghdasarian promised to cut taxes in the event of winning the February 19 presidential election.

Addressing a gathering of entrepreneurs running small and medium-sized businesses as part of his election campaign Baghdasarian said 'cutting taxes means economic growth and creation of new jobs.'



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Baghdasarian, a former parliament chairman, promised also to cut both value added taxes (VAT), profit taxes and the mandatory social payment tax.

Baghdasarian said his election manifesto highlights small and medium-sized businesses and listed a set of 'strategic' provisions, particularly, low-interest rate credits, to boost this type of entrepreneurship.

Stepan Aslanian, chairman of the Armenian Union of Businessmen running small businesses, said the organization has decided to back Baghdasarian in the election.

In a related news Sergey Bagratian, director of the National Center for Applied Economy, said today a comparative analyses of the economic segments of election programs of four candidates-Serzh Sarkisian, Levon Ter-Petrosian, Artashes Geghamian and Vahan Hovhanesian, has revealed that none gives a specific schedule for materializing their economy-related promises.

He said all pledge to raise drastically wages and pensions, but no one says anything concrete about boosting a concrete industrial sector.

## **BUSINESS**

### **25. HEAD OF ARMENIAN-RUSSIAN UNION SUGGESTS CREATION OF ARMENIAN-RUSSIAN BUSINESS COUNCIL [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]**

The head of the Russian-Armenian Union Ara Abrahamian suggested today at the Armenian-Russian business forum that a business council be set up for carrying out more coordinated work in finding new partners and in the involvement of investments. At a joint press conference with the Armenian Trade and Economic Development Minister Nerses Yeritsian, Ara Abrahamian said that there exists successful working experience, he heads business councils set up with 8 countries – France, South Korea, Argentina, Brazil, African countries, including Nigeria.

In the business council it is suggested to include members of the government and businessmen. The establishment will be located in Yerevan and Moscow, works will be carried out with executive bodies and businessmen, investment programs will be presented which according to him, is very important as the opportunities of Diaspora are being used in Armenia a little because the businessmen are not aware of created favorable conditions. Abrahamian said the permanently functioning body will greatly promote the development of small and medium-sized business.

He informed that the businessmen participating in the forum are representatives of big companies and have serious attitude towards the opportunities of making investments. Besides, it is possible to make Armenian big companies also make investments in Russia.

Armenian Trade and Economic Development Minister Nerses Yeritsian said that the government will be continuative in the implementation of the ideas which were voiced at the conference and the suggested establishment will give an opportunity to focus on the programs.

### **26. IFAD TO PROVIDE 11.9 MILLION USD TO ARMENIA [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]**

Armenian ambassador to Italy Ruben Shugarian and the chairman of the IFAD Lennard Bage signed today a financial contract between Armenia and IFAD on "Market Opportunity to Farmers" program.

Armenian Agriculture Ministry press service told Armenpress that according to the agreement 11.9 million USD will be provided to Armenia which will directed towards the development of small enterprises in villages.

### **27. RUSSIAN NATURAL GAS IMPORTS TO ARMENIA GROW 20 PERCENT IN 2007 [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]**

Deliveries of Russian natural gas to Armenia last year grew nearly 20 percent over the previous year to 2.054. billion cubic meters.

In 2006 overall 1.7 billion cubic meters of Russian gas had been shipped to Armenia across Georgia.

Shushan Sardarian, a spokeswoman for Armenian-Russian HayRusGazard joint venture, said natural gas consumption last year grew 19 percent to almost 1.9 billion cubic meters, up from 1.6 billion in 2006.

She said consumption by households last year grew 33 percent to about 535 million cubic meters. Industrial consumption also grew 18 percent to 406 million cubic meters.



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A slight decrease was reported in energy sector which consumed 507 million cubic meters against 511 million in 2006.

## 28. RUSSIAN AND ARMENIAN FINANCIAL SUPERVISION AGENCIES SIGN COOPERATION AGREEMENT [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

A Russian federal agency in charge of financial supervision, Rosfinmonitoirng and Armenian Central Bank's financial monitoring service have signed today in Yerevan a cooperation agreement.

Central Bank governor Tigran Sarkisian told journalists that the agreement was the first one which the Central Bank signed with a foreign financial investigation agency.

He explained that under this agreements Russian and Armenian agencies will share information regarding financial crimes and exchange also their experiences.

The Central Bank governor added that the agreement also envisages that senior Armenian officials could have extensive training courses in Russia.

Oleg Markov, chief of the Russian agency, said last year Armenian and Russian colleagues exposed three cases of financial crimes and 15 more are being investigated.

## 29. SLOVAK COMPANY PLEDGES TO BUILD 15 HYDRO POWER PLANTS FOR NAGORNO-KARABAKH [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

A Slovakian VUJE company has pledged to build 15 small hydro power plants for Nagorno-Karabakh.

Ashot Grigorian, an Armenian businessman living in Slovakia and chairman of an organization seeking to boost bilateral ties, said the agreement was reached by members of a Slovakian business delegation and Nagorno-Karabakh officials when they met in Yerevan the other day.

Ashot Grigorian said Slovak specialists will visit Nagorno-Karabakh in February and March for a first-hand knowledge. He said VUJE plans also to build two small such plants in Armenia.

Grigorian said Slovak Exim bank plans to give a 30-50 million euro loan to Armenian banks at 6-9 percent interest rate.

## 30. GOOD OPPORTUNITIES EXIST FOR FOUNDATION OF JOINT VENTURES IN ARMENIA BY RUSSIAN BUSINESSMEN [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

The Armenian president Robert Kocharian on January 21 received the delegation of participnats of the Armenian-Russian economic forum held in Yerevan on the initiative of the Union of Armenians of Russia (UAR). Welcoming the holding of this forum, he said that bilateral economic links have become a locomotive of the Armenian-Russian cooperation, thanks to which Russian capital has been attracted to many sectors of Armenia's economy and its attraction is expected to increase even more.

The Russian businessmen in their turn stated that they see good opportunities for founding new joint ventures in Armenia and specific directions will be specified soon.

According to the RA president's press service, the opportunities of implementing new programs based on reassessment of potential of Armenian enterprises that were interrelated with Russian industry in the Soviet time were also discussed at the meeting.

## 31. "KAMURJ 2008" 5th INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC FORUM TO BE HELD IN TSAKHKADZOR ON FEBRUARY 15-18 [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

"Kamurj 2008" ("Bridge 2008") 5th international economic forum will be held in Tsakhkadzor on February 15-18. NT was informed by "Master" international integration assistance center - the event's organizer that representatives of diplomatic and commercial missions accredited to Armenia of various European, Middle East, Asian and American countries will participate in the forum. Over 10 countries have already expressed intention to send their official delegations to the forum.

The plenary sitting of "Kamurj 2008" will be held under the slogan "International Economic Cooperation. Priorities, Trends, Opportunities". During the forum, the following round tables will be conducted: "Armenia as a Financial Center", "Small and Medium Entrepreneurship. Prerequisites for Development", "Transport and Logistics. Problems and Prospects", "Information Society. Information and Communication Technologies Development Strategy", "Construction Industry. Description of the Process and Methods", "The Commercial, Industrial and Investment Potential of Moscow. Efficient Cooperation



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Ways", and "The Investment Attractiveness of the Region. Competitiveness, Diversification and Efficiency".

The co-organizer of "Kamurj 2008" is the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen (Employers) of Armenia, its official sponsors are the RA Ministry of Trade and Economic Development, the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Bank of Armenia and the Armenian Development Agency.

## 32. IN ORDER TO DEVELOP RUSSIAN-ARMENIAN ECONOMIC RELATIONS, CURRENT CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN LEGISLATIONS OF TWO COUNTRIES NEED TO BE REMOVED, RUSSIAN-ARMENIAN BUSINESSMAN SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

In order to develop Russian-Armenian economic relations, it is necessary to remove the current contradictions between the legislations of the two countries and to reduce corruption in Armenia, Murad Muradian, the chairman of the board of directors of BAMO Russia-based group of companies, said during a talk with NT correspondent. According to him, the development of these relations proceeds from interests of Armenians living in Armenia and Russia. Considerable investments have been made in Armenia both by Russian-Armenian businessmen and big Russian companies in recent years.

BAMO plans to finish repairs of K. Demirchian Sport and Concert Complex (its property) by the autumn of this year, even though in accordance with BAMO's obligations to the Armenian government, repair work has to be completed by the end of 2008. Repair work is being done more quickly so that events can be held at the complex in the autumn. 20 million dollars has already been spent on repairs of the complex, while the total amount of investments will make 30 million dollars.

M. Muradian said that BAMO plans to carry out mining work near Kajaran, the geological exploration of copper and molybdenum mines is underway, for which BAMO has received the respective licences from the state. M. Muradian also intends to implement other investment projects in Armenia.

In the words of Vardges Artsruni, director general of Interstroy Developments concern operating in the construction sector, there are great prospects for development of Armenian-Russian economic relations, and they should be promoted to a much higher level than today. He pointed out that Armenia has always been notable for its high-tech industry, and foreign, first of all Russian, capital should be attracted for its further development.

V. Artsruni expressed an opinion that the major problem in development of economic links between Armenia and Russia is improvement of transport communication. "Armenia should run the transport blockade and normalize its communication with Russia," he said, adding: "Russia should certainly assist its strategic partner in this issue".

Although V. Artsruni has not yet made investments in Armenia, being a member of "Revival of Shoushi" Fund, he has such an intention. By the way, he organized the construction of the new Mother Church of the Russian diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Moscow.

## 33. FOREIGN INVESTMENTS IN ARMENIA'S REAL SECTOR OF ECONOMY LAST YEAR ROSE TO \$600 MILLION [ARMENPRESS, 01/23/08]

Foreign investments in Armenia's real sector of economy last year rose to over \$600 million, according to trade and economic development minister Nerses Yeritsian.

Speaking at a news conference today the minister said the volume of investments in the first nine months of 2007 rose 58 percent from a year before.

The bulk of foreign investments went last year into mining, telecommunications, IT and aviation sectors.

The biggest foreign investors were Russia (\$176 million), Lebanon (\$134 million), Argentina (\$25 million, USA (\$21 million) and Germany (\$20 million).

According to the minister, investments in IT sector last year amounted to \$10 million. The sector reported a 30 percent growth. According to preliminary figures, some 480,000 foreigners visited Armenia last year, who spent here \$410 million, by \$110 million more than in 2006.

## DIASPORA

### 34. TURKISH MINISTER URGES PROBE INTO POLICE ROLE IN DINK'S MURDER [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

Turkey's justice minister has called for a "serious" probe into claims that security forces were involved in the murder last year of ethnic Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, news reports from Turkey said.



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"Certain members of the security forces are said to be linked to this murder," Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin said in an interview published Monday in the daily Sabah. "Every allegation must be considered a tip-off and seriously investigated," he said.

Thousands marked the first anniversary of Dink's assassination on Saturday with protestors accusing the authorities of ignoring the alleged protection the suspected gunman and his associates received from the police.

"If what they (the police) did was a crime, they must be definitely punished," the minister said.

Dink's murder prompted fresh calls for the elimination of the "deep state" -- a term used to describe security forces acting outside the law to preserve what they consider Turkey's best interests. Lawyers for Dink's family say the police withheld and destroyed evidence to cover up the murder, including footage from a bank security camera in downtown Istanbul near where Dink was gunned down on January 19, 2007.

The charge sheet says police received intelligence as early as 2006 of a plot to kill Dink organized in the northern city of Trabzon, home of self-confessed gunman Ogun Samast, 17, and most of his 18 alleged accomplices currently on trial. A taped telephone conversation between a policeman and a suspect shortly after the killing suggests the officer knew of the plot in advance. The tape, leaked to the media last year, includes degrading comments about Dink.

Dink, 52, campaigned for reconciliation between Turks and Armenians, but nationalists hated him for insisting the World War I massacres of Armenians under Ottoman rule was an act of genocide -- a label Ankara fiercely rejects. Only four members of the security forces have been indicted in connection with the murder, but face minor charges unrelated to the killing itself.

Sahin also said a draft proposal to amend the controversial Article 301 of the Turkish penal code under which Dink was given a suspended six-month jail sentence for "denigrating Turkishness" would be submitted to parliament in the coming days. The law has been criticized as a threat to freedom of speech in Turkey, which is engaged in membership talks with the European Union.

Police said that around 8,000 people had gathered Saturday outside the central Istanbul offices of the bilingual Turkish Armenian weekly set up by Dink in 1996. With black and red banners carrying messages such as "We are all Armenians", those present included members of his family, personal friends, journalists, human rights campaigners and also ordinary members of the public.

Turkish newspapers on Saturday were unanimous in calling for the authorities to "shed all possible light" on the assassination. "A year after his death, scandals and dozens of questions remain unanswered," the daily Milliyet said on its front page, noting that "justice hasn't moved forward an inch" in shedding light on the affair.

## 35. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES SHOULD BE ASKED FOR MORE THAN JUST GENOCIDE AFFIRMATION [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08] By Harut Sassounian, Publisher, The California Courier

'In every U.S. presidential election for the past several decades, Armenian-Americans, including this writer, have gone to great lengths to make sure that they supported the candidate that acknowledged the Armenian Genocide during the campaign and, even more importantly, promised to do so after the election.

This was a worthwhile effort as it encouraged political participation by the Armenian American community in the presidential elections and transformed the Armenian Genocide into a national campaign issue. There were, on occasion, heated debates among Armenians as to which candidate had the strongest record on the Armenian Genocide and which one was most likely to carry out his campaign promise.

But, alas, almost all of the presidential candidates, be they Democrats or Republicans, after benefiting from the Armenian community's lavish campaign contributions and their votes, either forgot about this subject altogether or issued annual commemorative statements on April 24, substituting various euphemisms for the word genocide. For example, Presidents Clinton and Bush, when they were candidates, promised in writing that, if elected, they would officially acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. Not only did they fail to keep their word upon election, but went ahead and vehemently opposed and obstructed the adoption of non-binding commemorative congressional resolutions that intended to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide.

As another presidential campaign is underway now and a few states have already held their primary elections, once again members of the Armenian-American community have started asking the same old question: Which candidate has acknowledged the Armenian Genocide and which one is most likely to utter the words Armenian Genocide after he or she becomes President?



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I suggest that this year Armenian Americans adopt a new approach. U.S. Presidential candidates should no longer be asked to promise that, if elected, they would say "Armenian Genocide." To begin with, such a request gives the false impression that the genocide is not recognized already and that a candidate's or a future president's uttering of this word will make a significant difference in the pursuit of the Armenian Cause. Do American-Jewish groups demand that presidential candidates promise to say "Jewish Holocaust" after the election? Of course not. Such a request would automatically raise a question as to why the next president needs to confirm that the Holocaust occurred. The same argument would apply to the Armenian Genocide.

After decades of struggle for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by parliaments of scores of countries, twice by the U.S. House of Representative in 1975 and 1984, by the European Parliament, a United Nations human rights committee, and hundreds of Genocide and Holocaust scholars, why would Armenian Americans put such an overwhelming record of acknowledgment in doubt by asking a US president to acknowledge it?

Furthermore, a very prominent U.S. President, Ronald Reagan, did acknowledge the Armenian Genocide back in 1981 in a Presidential Proclamation. What would Armenians gain if another president simply repeated what has already been said by his or her predecessor more than 25 years ago?

Armenians should treat the Armenian Genocide as an acknowledged fact similar to the Holocaust. And just as no candidate could even think of running for the highest office of the land if he or she denies the Holocaust, the same should be true for the Armenian Genocide.

Due to years of admirable efforts by the Armenian-American community, almost all of the presidential candidates have a clear record of acknowledging the Armenian Genocide (particularly Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, John Edwards and Rudy Giuliani; less so John McCain, Mike Huckabee and Mitt Romney).

Of course, Armenians would not be opposed to having presidential candidates reaffirm the Armenian Genocide. Candidates realize that such supportive statements would benefit their own campaigns as Armenian Americans would back them for simply telling the truth.

What requests should Armenians present to U.S. presidential candidates? In recent weeks, two Armenian American organizations sent questionnaires to all the presidential candidates and asked for their positions on the following issues:

- Commemorating the Armenian Genocide
- Giving more Foreign Aid to Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh)
- Placing restrictions on U.S. aid to Azerbaijan
- Lifting of the Turkish blockade of Armenia
- Self-determination for Artsakh
- Presidential Visit to Armenia
- Appointment of qualified Armenian-Americans to governmental positions

I would add one more issue: Denouncing violations of Armenian minority rights in Turkey. Once the candidates confirm their positions on these issues, Armenian-American voters can then make an informed decision on whom to support in the next presidential election.'

## ARTS

### 36. JUBILEES OF A NUMBER OF ARMENIAN FAMOUS FIGURES TO BE MARKED AT STATE LEVEL IN 2008 [Hayastani Hanrapetutian, 01/22/08]

By the RA government's decision, jubilees of a number of prominent Armenian artists, politicians, scientists will be marked at state level in 2008, including the 100th anniversaries of world-famous astrophysicist Viktor Hambartsumian and classic of world literature William Saroyan, which are on the list of UNESCO 2008 jubilees.

As Noyan Tapan correspondent was informed by the Art Department of the RA Ministry of Culture, the following jubilees will be marked this year: the 125th anniversary of composer Romanos Melikian and the 100th anniversary of composer Nikoghos Nikoghosian, the 100th anniversary of architect Rafael Israyelian, the 80th anniversary of painter Minas Avetissian and the 125th anniversary of painter Hakob Kojoyan, the 150th anniversary of writer Shirvanzade, the 100th anniversary of writer William Saroyan, and the 70th anniversary of writer Mushegh Galshoyan, the 125th anniversary of state and military figure Drastamat Kanayan, the 100th anniversaries of scientists Viktor Hambartsumian and Artem Alikhanian, the 100th anniversary of Catholicos of All Armenians Vazgen I.

Besides, the 50th anniversary of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, the 75th anniversary of the Armenian Engineering University, the 50th anniversary of the Armenian State Dance



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Ensemble, and the 75th anniversary of A. Spendiarian National Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet will be marked at state level in 2008.

According to the same source, besides the above mentioned jubilees, a number of jubilees will be marked at the departmental level in the current year.

## 37. ARMENIAN EDUCATION AND SCIENCE MINISTRY AND BRITISH COUNCIL CARRY OUT "WORK AND SKILLS" PROGRAM [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

Armenian Education and Science Ministry and the British Council are carrying out "Work and Skills" program which is directed towards the development of middle specialized education.

An official from the public relations department of the ministry told Armenpress that the program is aimed at promoting the increase of the quality of the specialized education and their relevance to the international standards.

The main element of the program is the exchange of experience which will be carried out within the framework of cooperation with educational establishments.

Within the framework of "Work and Skills" program workshops will be conducted directed towards the developing study programs, assessment of quality. For encouraging young personnel competitions will be organized.

## 38. SHUSHI WILL CELEBRATE ITS 15TH ANNIVERSARY AT OPERA HOUSE IN ARMENIA [Azg, 01/23/08]

Shushi has several exciting performances planned for this year, beginning with the group's participation in Holy Martyrs 50th Anniversary Celebration Concert in Queens, on January 27, 2008. Shushi will have the opportunity to perform with the Holy Martyrs Hye Bar Group, and the Shoghaken Folk Ensemble, which recently performed in France, and will tour 23 cities in United States, including New York City, at Carnegie Hall, on January 26, 2008.

In the spring of this year, with much anticipation, Shushi will travel to Canada. Following a second invitation from the AGBU Montreal Chapter, Shushi will perform at the AGBU 50th Anniversary in Canada in Montreal (at Vanier College, Quebec), on April 12, 2008. The event, which will be chaired by Mr. Boghos Kichian, will feature popular vocalists from Los Angeles, Ca., Babin Boghosian, Hovig Krikorian, Armen Hovannesyanyan and Salbi Mailian, with Andranik Mouradian serving as musical director. The event will also highlight Noune Avetisyan, for poetic recitation. In the collaboration of Mr. Kichian and Seta Paskalian-Kantardjian, artistic director and choreographer of Shushi, this promises to be another acclaimed event.

Shushi has planned a second performance in Canada, a Toronto debut (at the Toronto Center for the Arts), on April 13, 2008, by invitation from the AGBU Toronto Chapter. The program, dedicated to the Armenian Genocide of April 24, will be chaired by Mr. Eugene Karadjian, Chairman of the Toronto AGBU chapter, and Ms. Salpi Der Ghazarian, the Executive Director. The program, including performances by those Armenian popular vocalists (listed above), will be memorable in marking the significance of the Armenian Genocide in the hearts of the audience.

This summer, with great excitement, Shushi will be traveling on a two-week trip to Armenia and Karabagh, from June 26- July 11, 2008. The group will perform at the opera house in Armenia, in a celebratory event sponsored by the Armenia Fund Armenia. This special event was organized in August, 2007 when Seta Paskalian-Kantardjian traveled to Yerevan to meet with Mr. Vahe Aghabegians, Executive Director of the Armenia Fund, Armenia Himnadram and Mr. Ara Vardanyan, Deputy Executive Director of Hayasdan All Armenia Fund.

Arrangements were also made through the Director of the National Opera and Ballet Theatre, Mr. Kamo Hovhannisyanyan, and Mr. Jirayr Dickranian, the Administrative Director.

More than 50 Shushi members, along with close to 50 parents and family members, anxiously await the tremendous opportunity to perform in both Canada and Armenia. While numerous details are involved in assuring the success of Shushi's performances, its committee members remain diligent in assisting Seta Paskalian-Kantardjian, in great appreciation for her steadfast dedication to the group, for the past 15 years.



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39. ARMENIA TO HOST DAYS OF TAJIK, GERMAN AND IRANIAN CULTURES [ARMENPRESS, 01/23/08]

Armenia will host this year a string of major cultural events, including days of culture of Tajikistan, Germany, Iran.

The press office of the culture ministry said to Armenpress the dates of these events are being specified. It also said days of Scandinavian and Russian cultures will also be held.

Days of Armenian culture will be held in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Germany and Scandinavian countries.

40. JAPANESE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE MATENADARAN \$23,000 THIS YEAR [ARMENPRESS, 01/23/08]

The government of Japan and Matenadaran Institute of Old Manuscripts in Yerevan have signed a memorandum under which the Japanese government will give the Armenian institution a \$23,000 grant this year, which it will spend on buying equipment for restoration of manuscripts.

The news was announced by Sona Alaverdian, a spokeswoman for the Institute.

The Matenadaran collection, totaling almost 17,000 manuscripts, is by far the most extensive and richest depository for Armenian manuscripts in the world. These manuscripts are known for their outstanding illuminations, considered to be among the most beautiful ever created.

41. 2007 STATE AWARDS HANDED IN LITERATURE AND ART CATEGORIES [ARMENPRESS, 01/23/08]

A ceremony of awarding 2007 state prizes to prominent representatives of culture and arts community was held today in the presidential residence.

A poet, David Hovhannes, was awarded in the category of literature for a book called 'New Chronicle'.

Composer Ruben Sarkisian was awarded in the category of music for several works.

Painter Paravon Mirzoyan was awarded for a series of paintings. Jim Torosian, Roland Martirosian, Henzel Hakobian, Gagik Galstian and Artsrun Segoyan were awarded for their contribution to architecture.

## RELIGION

42. REQUIEM CEREMONY IN THE MOTHER SEE [Azg, 01/22/08]

A requiem ceremony in memory of the assassinated Editor-in-chief of Agos newspaper of Istanbul Hrant Dink took place on January 20 in the Mother See of St. Etchmiadzin presided by Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II. The information was provided by the press service of the Mother See.

## SOCIAL

43. AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT DONATES 300,000 WORTH EQUIPMENT TO GYUMRI HOSPITAL [Lraber, 01/22/08]

The government of Austria donated over 300,000 euros worth modern mobile infant transport incubators and respiratory devices to a children's hospital in Armenia's second largest town of Gyumri.

The hospital was built by the Austrian government after the 1988 earthquake that leveled the town to the ground.

Ashik Daribaldian, head of infant rehabilitation division of the hospital, said to Armenpress the donation is very important for safe transpiration of infants.

He said the advantage of the donation is that the incubators can easily move the early born infants to a hospital. He said the staff had a training course in Austria.



#### 44. 2009-2011 YEREVAN HEALTH SPHERE PROGRAM TO BE WORKED OUT THIS YEAR [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

The repairs of Yerevan's St. Gregory the Illuminator and St. Mother of God medical centers being implemented with the World Bank (WB) funds will be finished this year. As Armen Soghoyan, the Head of the Health and Social Security Department of Yerevan Mayor's Office, said at the January 21 press conference, these hospitals will be also provided with modern medical equipment.

According to A. Soghoyan, the introduction of the family medicine institution will continue in Yerevan this year. In his words, 81% Yerevan's population has already chosen its healthcare primary link doctor. 43 district doctors and 43 nurses will pass retraining within the framework of the WB credit program this year. 427 family doctors and 285 family nurses will work in Yerevan by the end of the year. It was also mentioned that this year it is envisaged to strengthen ties among the Ambulance service, polyclinics and hospitals, which will contribute to patients' permanent treatment.

The head of the department also said that the 2009-2011 program of Yerevan health sphere will be worked out this year.

#### 45. ARMENIAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SPHERE IS AT STAGE OF REFORMS AND DEVELOPMENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

The Job Skills vocational education program being implemented in Armenia within the framework of cooperation between the British Council and the RA Ministry of Education and Science has a purpose of assisting vocational education system's improval and development. Within the framework of this three-year program, it is envisaged to repair 11 vocational education institutions, to work out 80 criteria regulating the sphere, to organize retraining of lecturers and top employees, as well as students abroad. Artak Aghbalian, the Head of the Vocational Education Department of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, said this at the January 21 program's Armenian presentation at Yerevan Informatics College.

According to A. Aghbalian, this sector of Armenian education was destroyed and lost its former significance in consequence of the change of socio-economic relations. However, this system, which is very important for development of country's economy, has taken the way of reforms and restoration for already two years.

A. Aghbalian said that at the end of the program Job Skills being implemented with the assistance of the British Council, in 2010, Armenia will have 12 multi-function vocational education institutions, which will provide the regions with proper specialists. At the same time, he said that the labor market is being studied, and specialists will be trained according to the demand.

A. Aghbalian also said that within the framework of the program, Ministry's representatives have already visited European and Asian countries for several times for the purpose of exchanging experience and passing retraining. And Yerevan Informatics College having 1500 students cooperates with the institutions of the same name in Great Britain and Israel.

Levon Mkrtchian, the RA Minister of Education and Science, who was present at the event, said that the Job Skills program implemented by the British Council will not only contribute to restoration of vocational institutions, but also will promote strengthening and development of business-vocational education ties: businessmen should order the vocational institutions the specialists they need, by investing sums for their education. He is convinced that if this tie is created, "we will have both high-quality specialists and jobs, and we will have no excess of specialists on the labor market." Minister L. Mkrtchian said that the state has allocated 5bn 898m drams to the vocational education sphere in 2008.

It should be also mentioned that the Job Skills program is implemented in 17 countries of South East Europe.

#### 46. RESULTS OF JUDICIAL REFORMS DICUSSED BY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

Consultations are now being held at regional and Yerevan's community bodies of the RA prosecutor's office with the participation of the RA prosecutor general Aghvan Hovsepian and his deputies, NT correspondent was informed by the spokeswoman for the RA prosecutor general Sona Truzian. She said that the purpose of these consultations is to raise the problems that have arisen in the process of judicial reforms and require legislative solution. It is envisaged developing a legislative package for solution of these problems and submit it to the government for discussion.



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According to the same source, heads of other law enforcement bodies: the police and the National Security Service, as well as of local government bodies are participating in the consultations.

## 47. "HEALTH DAYS" TO BE HELD AT YEREVAN POLYCLINICS FROM JANUARY 25 TO FEBRUARY 2 [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

"Health Days" will be held at polyclinics of Yerevan from January 25 to February 2 on the initiative of the Union of Health Organizations and with the assistance of the mayor of Yerevan. The head of the Health Care and Social Security Department of Yerevan municipality Armen Soghoyan said at the January 21 press conference that during the indicated period the best specialists of the in-patient medical system will give advice to citizens. According to him, they will mainly receive patients whose treatment at polyclinics did not have the desired effect.

## 48. ARMENIA FUND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO VISIT USA [ARMENPRESS, 01/23/08]

The Armenia Fund said its Executive Director Vahe Aghabegians will be on a week long working trip to the USA starting January 24. During the visit, Mr. Aghabegians will conduct a series of meetings with the members of the Armenian community in the Bay Area, in northern California.

The central topic on the agenda is the discussion of a number of initiatives to be implemented as part of the Rural Development Program. Mr. Aghabegians will be accompanied by Maria Mehranian, the chairman of the USA Armenia Fund Western Region.

While in San Francisco, Mr. Aghabegians will also meet representatives of the local Armenian community. The community has committed to support the establishment of a milk collection unit in Azatamut community of Tavush region. When realized, this initiative will help substantially increase the volume of milk production in the region. Perhaps most importantly, it will provide the community members of all the neighboring villages with a stable and dependable source of income.

The latter component effectively underlines the key task of the Rural Development Program. Launched in 2007, the Program aims at comprehensive and sustainable development in the border villages of Armenia and Karabakh. At the end of the day this means helping people in these communities help themselves.

At their core, all the massive infrastructural amendment and economic development facilitation initiatives to be carried out within the Program are ultimately aimed at creating a favorable environment for people to want to stay in their villages and build a better future with their own hands.

Mr. Aghabegians will also have meetings in Los Angeles with the fund's US east and west coast affiliates and discuss organizational issues and future plans.

## 49. ARMENIA FUND LAUNCHES VETERINARY SERVICE IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE [ARMENPRESS, 01/23/08]

After a period of research and coordination with its partners, The Armenia Fund Rural Development Program said it launches an initiative aimed at revitalizing the veterinary services in the six border villages of Tavush region.

The Armenia Fund Public Relations Department said in a press release that these communities are included in the Program's pilot Khashtarak cluster. The project will be realized by the Strategic Development Agency NGO with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Izmirlian Foundation.

The current state of the veterinary services in the communities concerned is inadequate for a place where cattle breeding practice and the associated dairy production are considered the main cornerstones in the regional economic revival plan.

The local veterinarians lack the equipment and medicine stock necessary for performing anything but the state sponsored quarterly vaccinations. When a need arises, the farmers are on their own in the quest to find a running vehicle, get to the regional center of Ijevan, buy the medicine and take it back in time so that the veterinarian is able to help the animal.

A delay in any of these actions often results in the medicine being too little too late to save the life of the animal from an otherwise mundane disease. Another important issue hindering the normal development of the veterinary practice is the fact that the veterinarian is seldom paid and provides most of the services as a "neighborly favor".

This means that to sustain himself, the veterinarian needs to look elsewhere for income, making the veterinary practice merely a philanthropic hobby. The implementation of the initiative will tackle all



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these issues by creating a working mechanism. Apart from providing in depth trainings both to the veterinarian and the farmers, this mechanism will ensure that the veterinarian has his own stock of medicine and up to date professional equipment. After an initial support period of a year, the enterprise will be sustained via monthly payments made by the community members.

These monthly payments constitute a fraction of the sum a villager spends each time he travels to the city to get medicine for his cattle. This monthly fee will also ensure that the veterinarian has normal income and can concentrate on his profession as a main means for living.

This project is also remarkable for the fact that it will come to life thanks to a three way collaboration between The Armenia Fund, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Izmirlian Foundation. This kind of channeling of resources to the focus area is one of the core tasks of the Rural Development Program and the key to its success.

"We believe that it is only through uniting the efforts of all the organizations and individuals we can produce feasible results and a long lasting change in the lives of people in the border communities", said Hayk Petrosian, a coordinator of The Armenia Fund.

## SPORTS

### 50. ARMENIAN MEN AND WOMEN CHESS CHAMPIONS TO BECOME KNOWN ON JANUARY 21 [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

The games of the last tour are fixed for January 21 in the Armenian Men's and Women's Chess Championships being held in Tigran Petrosian Chess House. In the Men's Tournament, leaders after 12 tours, Karen Asrian, Artashes Minasian, and Tigran L. Petrosian have 7.5 points each.

Siranush Andriasian and Lilit Galoyan share the first and second places with 5.5 points each in the Women's Tournament.

### 51. LEVON ARONIAN IN LEADERS' GROUP WITH 5 POINTS IN WIJK AAN ZEE INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

In the 7th tour of the International Chess Tournament being held in the city of Wijk aan Zee, Holland, Levon Aronian defeated Teymur Rajabov (Azerbaijan) and in the 8th tour drew the game with Shahriyar Mamedyarov (Azerbaijan). After 8 tours, the leader is Magnus Karlsen (Norway). Levon Aronian and Vladimir Kramnik (Russia) take the 2nd and 3rd places with 5 points each. L. Aronian will compete with Pavel Elyanov (Ukraine) on January 22.

In tournament B, Gabriel Sargsian in the 8th tour was defeated by Mikhail Krasenkov (Poland) and takes the 13th place on the tournament table with 2.5 points. Sergei Movsisian representing Slovakia defeated Vuter Spulman (Holland) and is in the lead with Etienne Bakro. Each of them has 5 points. January 21 is announced a rest day in the tournament.

### 52. ARMENIAN NATIONAL TEAM DEFEATED BY NEW ZEALAND'S NATIONAL TEAM IN 3rd TOUR OF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP OF HOCKEY PLAYERS AGED 20 AND BELOW [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/21/08]

The Armenian national team was defeated by New Zealand's national team in the 3rd tour of 3rd-group tournament of World Championship of Hockey Players aged 20 and below being held in the capital city of Serbia, Belgrade. The Armenian hockey players will compete with Serbs on January 22.

### 53. ARMENIA STAR PACHAJYAN OFF TO SWEDEN [ARMENPRESS, 01/22/08]

GAIS FC of Sweden's Göteborg have signed Armenian Player of the Year Levon Pachajyan from FC Pyunik on a four-year contract. The 24-year-old midfielder scored ten times in 23 appearances as Pyunik secured a seventh straight league title in November and was ever-present for Armenia in 2007.

He becomes the fourth key player to leave Pyunik during the transfer window following the departures of Agvan Mkrtchian, Alexander Tadevosian and Robert Arzumian, joining a GAIS side sitting fourth from bottom in the Swedish Allsvenskan.

Pachajyan arrived at Pyunik in 2003 and won the Armenian championship in each of his five seasons with the club. He admitted in December, however, that it was time to test himself abroad and after impressing on trial with GAIS he took the plunge.



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"Every Armenian player dreams of playing for a top European club and playing in a major league," said Pachajyan, who has been capped 18 times.

"It is exactly the same for me. It is a massive honor to play for a big European club, but it is hard to earn a move to one. First you have to establish yourself in one of the more modest leagues."

54. KAREN ASRIAN AND LILIT GALOYAN BECOME CHESS CHAMPIONS OF ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/22/08]

The Armenian men's and women's higher league chess championships finished on January 21 at Tigran Petrosian Chess House. In the men's tournament, Karen Asrian and Artashes Minasian gained 8 out of 13 possible points each and shared the first and second places. K. Asrian became champion of Armenia with his coefficients. Samvel Ter-Sahakian, Tigran Kotanjian, and Tigran L. Petrosian shared the 3-5th places with 7.5 points each.

Lilit Galoyan and Siranush Andriasian shared the first and second places with 6.5 out of 9 possible points each in the women's tournament. L. Galoyan became champion of Armenia with her coefficients. Nelly Aghinian took the third place with 5.5 points.

Monetary prizes were given to the winners and prize-winners. Prime Minister Serge Sargsian, the Chairman of the RA Chess Federation, was present at the awarding ceremony.

55. LEVON ARONIAN IN THE LEAD AGAIN [ARMENPRESS, 01/23/08]

In the 9th round of the Corus International Chess Tournament underway in Wijk aan Zee, Holland, Armenian Grand Master Levon Aronian played a draw with Grand Master Pavel Elyanov of Ukraine. Aronian currently shares the 1st and 2nd places with Magnus Carlsen of Norway.

In Group B Sergey Movisyan is leading with 6 points. In Round 9 Grand Master Gabriel Sarkisian of Armenia played a draw with Ethiene Backroy of France.

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