



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. ELITE LIFE [Haykakan Zhamanak, 01/29/08]

The construction process going on in Armenia has been described as “elite”. This means that representatives of local “elite” live or intend to live in these buildings. In this case, only the title is not enough to be considered a representative of “elite”, it also requires money, a lot of money, because apartments in such buildings are sold at very, very high prices – several thousands of dollars for one square meter. The newly-built residential building near the “Yeritasardakan” metro station has very interesting and popular residents. Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian’s wife, Nani Oskanian, whose husband is among the uncorrupted officials, has an apartment in this building. As a reminder; Oskanian has another huge area in the Northern Avenue. Zhanna Gevorkian also has an apartment in this building. Don’t try to recall this name. You don’t know her. But you very well know his son – Armen Gevorkian, Chief of President’s Staff. It is said that Gevorkian’s mother has the most profitable area in this building, which she has given for rent for 20,000 USD monthly. President Kocharian’s son Sedrak has an apartment in this building. Well, it’s quite reasonable. It is his duty to have apartments in every newly-built elite building of Yerevan. Satenik Sarkissian, Prime Minister and presidential candidate Serge Sarkissian’s daughter, also has an apartment in this building. Mayor of Yerevan Yervand Zakharian’s daughter is also among the neighbors. Minister of Territorial Administration Hovik Abrahamian, Head of a Customs Department Surik Fahradian, Head of a National Security Department Romik Khachatryan – all these people have apartments in this building near the “Yeritasardakan” metro station. And the last and most surprising person having an apartment here is NA Speaker Tigran Torossian. His apartment is registered on his mother-in-law.

2. ARMENIAN LEADERS VISIT YERABLUR PANTHEON ON OCCASION OF DAY OF ARMY [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/08]

The Armenian president Robert Kocharian, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, the speaker of the National Assembly Tigran Torosian, the prime minister Serge Sargsian, members of the government, other high-ranking officials, top officers of the RA Armed Forces on January 28 visited Yerablur Pantheon. In the words of S. Sargsian, when visiting Yerablur, "one feels pride, regret, pain, agitation, all kinds of proud emotions mixed with each other".

"We have come to the graves of our friends, and we are proud that we fought and won with our friends," the defence minister Mikael Harutyunian stated during a talk with reporters. According to him, over 16 years since its formation, the army has demonstrated its force, which is evident to neighboring states as well.

In response to the question about his choice in the upcoming presidential elections, the defence minister replied that he long ago decided to vote for Serge Sargsian because "he is a man who can govern our state and become its supreme commander-in-chief capable of taking decisions and heading the army, if, God forbid, a war starts". Saying that everyone will make his/her decision in electing the president of the RA, the minister at the same time expressed confidence that "the majority of the army will give their votes for S. Sargsian".

3. 16th ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN ARMY MARKED WITH A NUMBER OF EVENTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/08]

The Armenian defence minister Mikael Harutyunian presented about 300 officers and 100 freedom fighters with orders and medals on the occasion of the 16th anniversary of the Armenian Armed Forces.

The head of the RA National Security Service Gorik Hakobian and the deputy head of the RA police Ararat Mahtesian handed medals for cooperation and support to the defence minister Mikael Harutyunian, the head of the General Staff of the RA Armed Forces Seyran Ohanian, the deputy minister of defence Manvel Grigorian, the commander of the NKR Defence Army Movses Hakobian and others.



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G. Hakobian presented the minister with a named sword, while the police donated two UAZ cars to the defence ministry.

On the same day a memorial plaque was opened on the house at 38 Pushkin Street (Yerevan) where Major General Movses Silikian lived in 1918-1920 (under his command the Armenian army won the Sardarapat battle). The defence minister participated in the plaque opening ceremony.

A festive concert dedicated to the 16th anniversary of the Armenian Army took place at A. Spendiarian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet in the evening.

4. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN'S PRE-ELECTION MESSAGE TO ARMENIAN CITIZENS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/08]

The candidate for presidency of the RA Levon Ter-Petrosian on January 24 sent a pre-election message to Armenian citizens. The message reads:

"On February 19 you will face the serious responsibility of building your future with their own hands.

There will be no positive changes in our country in case of Serge Sargsian's being elected, quite the opposite, all vicious phenomena that exist under Robert Kocharian will deepen even more.

- The unmerciful exploitation of the people and the accumulation of national wealth in the hands of few people will go on,
- the polarization of the society will deepen: the rich will grow richer, while the poor will become poorer,
- the monopolization of the economy will threaten the existence of small and medium business,
- the arbitrariness of law enforcement bodies, tax inspection and customs committee will continue,
- the continuous process of emigration will result in a demographic disaster,
- the disclosure of the October 27 1999 act of terrorism, other political assassinations, machinations related to gasoline and gas imports will fail,
- the political and economic isolation of Armenia will not be overcome, the danger of war resumption in Nagorno Karabakh will increase.

Whereas in case of my election, the developments diametrically opposite to the above mentioned deadlock developments will take place: elimination of the robber-state system, restoration of the constitutional order, implementation of democratic freedoms, establishment of the rule of law, creation of equal opportunities for economic entities, ensuring free competition, guaranteeing inviolability of property, conducting a constructive foreign policy, etc. In addition, implementation of all steps aimed at improving sharply the people's social conditions. These steps reflected in my program are the following:

- A threefold increase of the average salary and a fourfold increase of the average pension in the next five years,
- more rapid compensation for Soviet deposits of citizens through the issue of state bonds,
- a considerable increase in the amount of one-off benefits to mothers for a child's birth,
- granting amnesty for young men who have evaded military service,
- regulation of the formation of higher educational fees, and the development of mechanisms for control of their growth,
- the implementation of a large-scale social construction program by the state, etc.

Thus, the choice will be made not between individuals but the two possible ways of the country's development, one of which is that of inevitable destruction, while the other is a rescue way. In other words, one way is the nightmare of the current robber-state regime's rule for another ten years, while the other is the prospect of building a normal state.

Everything depends on your will and determination, your willingness to perform your political duty, and the perception of your role in building the country's future.

Perform your duty, and no fierce force, no violence, no rigging can hinder your victory".

5. OBSERVERS OF 18 LOCAL NGOs AND 4 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ACCREDITED AT RA CEC [Aravot, 01/29/08]

As of January 28, a total of 7,169 representatives of 18 local NGOs, and 4 international organizations: the OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the CIS Executive Committee and the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly were accredited at the RA Central Electoral Committee (CEC) with the aim of implementing observatory mission at the February 19 presidential elections in Armenia, NT correspondent was informed by spokeswoman for the RA CEC Tatev Ohanian.



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As of January 28, "Choice is Yours" NGO accredited the largest number of observers - 4,010, while the center for development of "Erebuni" communities accredited the smallest number - 3 observers. The deadline for accrediting observers is February 9.

6. IN CASE OF BEING ELECTED PRESIDENT, T. KARAPETIAN NOT TO CONTINUE DEEPENING ARMENIAN-IRANIAN RELATIONS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/08]

Tigran Karapetian, a candidate for presidency, the Chairman of the People's Party and the ALM holding, is discontent with the foreign policy carried on at present. As he stated at the January 29 press conference, in case if being elected, he will make essential changes in that sphere. In particular, according to T. Karapetian, he will not continue deepening Armenia's relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, as that country's President "avoided" the visit to Tsitsernakaberd memorial complex. Instead, as the PP Chairman mentioned, he will improve relations with Georgia for even more, but he does not imagine establishment of diplomatic ties with Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Touching upon the process of the election race, T. Karapetian said that the critical abilities of some candidates do not exceed the level of flinging mud at one another. "The forces, which have not been able to do helpful acts, accentuate working with the protest electorate, doing anti-propaganda to others," T. Karapetian added. Whereas, as he mentioned, he has given tractors to villagers, as well as has taken movable mammography centers to remote regions for the local women to be able to be examined there.

7. WORK OF KAPAN PREELECTION HEADQUARTERS OF CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENCY LEVON TER-PETROSIAN STOPPED [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/08]

The work of Kapan preelection headquarters of Levon Ter-Petrosian, a candidate for presidency, was stopped on January 28. The representatives of Police Syunik Regional Department and Kapan Department entered the headquarters that day demanding vacating the territory. According to the law enforcement bodies, the apartment's owner, Manushak Antonian, applied to them saying that she did not know that the apartment will be used for political purposes.

According to the members of the headquarters, they have arranged about renting the apartment with the landlady's husband, who knew for what purpose the territory was rented. "We have not signed a written agreement, we have just agreed orally and paid 160 thousand drams in advance for two months," Rafik Asrian, a member of the headquarters, said in his interview to journalists. He asserted that they have applied to Kapan Mayor's Office asking them to give a territory for the headquarters. "There is no answer from Kapan Mayor's Office yet," R. Asrian said.

After a long argument they agreed that within 48 hours the members of the headquarters are to vacate the territory. "I am a RPA member and it does not lie heavy on my conscience to leave people in the street. I have given time to them, so, let them find a territory and promote activity there," M. Antonian stated.

However, after the apartment owners left, the policemen forcibly made them vacate the territory and sealed the door. Thus, the work of L. Ter-Petrosian's preelection headquarters is stopped at the moment and the members of the headquarters are looking for a tent to put up in the town's square.

The OSCE long-term observer has been informed about the incident. He visited the headquarters and followed the development of the events.

8. POLICE DENY CLOSING LEVON TER-PETROSIAN'S CAMPAIGN OFFICE [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

Armenian police have denied today media allegations that some 20 police officers intruded into a campaign office of the former president Levon Ter-Petrosian in the southeastern Armenian town of Kapan to forcibly seal it.

Some pro-opposition media outlets claimed today that police used force to shut down the campaign office. They also said that the people who were inside the office at the moment of the 'raid' were assaulted and forced to leave it together with the campaign head.

A statement by the police said law-enforcement officers had to shut the office acting on a written complaint of a resident of the town, identified as A, which was confirmed by the governor of the Syunik province that some people had cheated him into giving his apartment for setting up a campaign office for Ter-Petrosian.



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The police's statement said the citizen asked local law-enforcement bodies to restore his property right.

The statement also said that on January 28 a squabble occurred between some supporters of the ex-president and the apartment owner who came to demand his apartment back. A little later local police officers had to go to the scene after receiving information about the squabble to prevent it and asked the people in the office to leave it.

It said the owner of the apartment gave time to Ter-Petrosian's supports to take away the furniture.

Some pro-opposition papers said today that the office had been leased by the Ter-Petrosian campaign in late December. They also quoted Roman Navasardian, the local campaign chief, as saying that the apartment owner unexpectedly decided to end the lease agreement despite being paid two-month rent in advance.

9. NEW IRANIAN AMBASSADOR HANDS CREDENTIALS TO ARMENIAN PRESIDENT [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

The newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Armenia, Mr. Seid Ali Saghayan, handed today his credentials to President Robert Kocharian.

The presidential press office said Kocharian first congratulated the diplomat on assuming his new office and then assessed the Armenian-Iranian relations as 'brilliant' saying also that the newly appointed Ambassador has inherited a good legacy.

According to Robert Kocharian, the bilateral cooperation has been effective especially over the past years and has been dynamically developing in all directions.

Ambassador Saghayan conveyed to Robert Kocharian the warm greeting of the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The diplomat also appreciated the active cooperation between Armenia and Iran and noted that it has developed especially during Robert Kocharian's tenure in office. He assured he will spare no effort to expand the existing ties.

10. ARMENIAN NA SPEAKER TIGRAN TOROSIAN RECEIVED ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO ARMENIA [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

Armenian National Assembly Speaker Tigran Torosian received today ambassador of Israel to Armenia Ehud Gol. At the meeting present were consultant to the head of the Eurasian department at the Israeli Foreign Ministry Israel Meyami and the head of the Armenia-Israel parliamentary friendship group Aram Safarian.

Armenian National Assembly press service told Armenpress that during the meeting Tigran Torosian expressed hope that the ambassador's experience will be a good basis for the development of Armenian-Israeli relations which are not on satisfactory level. The speaker also expressed hope that in near future the inter-parliamentary relations will also improve.

Tigran Torosian said that Armenia-Israel parliamentary friendship group has already been set up in the NA and its active work may promote the development of relations. The speaker said that the Armenian side does not see any obstacles and is ready to cooperate in all the spheres.

The Israeli ambassador said that they also have parliamentary friendship group with Armenia and the active cooperation of the two groups may become basis promoting the visits of parliament speakers which will give new impetus to the relations.

The ambassador assured that he will exert all his efforts to the development of Armenian-Israeli relations.

11. VARTAN OSKANIAN DISCUSSES BILATERAL ISSUES WITH ISRAELI DIPLOMATS [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

Foreign minister Vartan Oskanian received January 29 Ehoud Gali, Israel's ambassador to Armenia and Israel Meyami, a deputy director of the Eurasian Department of Israeli foreign ministry.

Armenian foreign ministry said they discussed bilateral and regional issues and expressed also their satisfaction over the current level of bilateral partnership saying there is a great potential to boost mutually beneficial ties.

The ministry said the ambassador then spoke about programs implemented with Armenian agricultural and health ministries.



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At the end of the meeting they exchanged views on a set of international issues, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and prospects for settling the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

12. POLICE OPEN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST TER-PETROSSIAN'S SUPPORTERS [Haykakan Zhamanak, 01/30/08]

On Tuesday, Armenian law-enforcement authorities accused some 150-200 supporters of ex-president Levon Ter-Petrossian of disrupting traffic in Yerevan on January 28.

A statement by the police said supporters of Ter-Petrossian drove through the streets of Yerevan on Monday in a motorcade of more than a hundred cars led by the opposition presidential candidate and refused to obey road police orders threatening to use force against them.

The unsanctioned motorcade lasted for more than an hour and ended in a rally in the city's central part.

The statement said a criminal case has been opened under a corresponding article of the Armenian Criminal Code.

13. YEREVAN AUTHORITIES TO PLANT 100 HECTARES OF TREES [Haylur, 01/30/08]

Yerevan authorities are planning to plant trees and bushes on 100 hectares of land this year. Thirty hectares of land will be planted by the Yerevan municipality and the rest by district communities.

Avet Martirosian, chief of a municipality department in charge of ecology, said some 110,000 trees will be planted in Yerevan this year. As a result, he said, per capita green area in the capital city is expected to grow from the current 6,2 square meters to 7,5 square meters.

Under the city's master plan, by 2020 Yerevan is supposed to triple its green areas to raise per capita area to almost 20 square meters.

14. CANADA HAS NEW MILITARY ATTACHÉ IN ARMENIA [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

Armenian defense ministry said Canada's honorary consul to Armenia, Artashes Emin, introduced today Colonel Michel Markos, Canada's new military attaché in Armenia to minister Mikael Harutunian.

A spokesman for the defense ministry, Seyran Shahsuvarian, said the main subject of the conversation were reforms in Armenian armed forces, particularly, introduction of civil positions in the army, civic supervision over the army and ways to keep it away from political processes.

They also discussed regional and security issues, Shahsuvarian said.

15. KOCHARIAN MEETS EU AMBASSADORS [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

President Robert Kocharian today met with ambassadors of EU member countries. Kocharian's press office quoted him as saying that Armenia is now in a very responsible period. He then expressed willingness to answer the diplomats' questions and to listen to their remarks and observations.

Robert Kocharian assessed Armenia's cooperation with the European Union as positive saying these relations have become more coordinated. He said his recent visit to Brussels was very productive where he discussed an array of concrete cooperation programs.

According to Robert Kocharian, the government is very resolute and will try to do its best for the election process not to affect its routine work. "The reforms continue and will continue," he underlined.

In a reference to the forthcoming presidential elections, Kocharian again stressed the political will of the authorities to hold the elections in compliance with international standards.

The president gave also clarifications on a set of questions, related to the pre-election process, and developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement.

16. BAGHDASARIAN'S CAMPAIGN OFFICE HEAD CALLS FOR UNITY TO CONTEST GOVERNMENT CONTENDER [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

Heghine Bisharian, a deputy chairman of the opposition Orinats Yerkir (Country of Law) party, reiterated today that none of nine presidential candidates has a chance to win the February 19 presidential election outright.



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Speaking at a news conference she argued that other opposition candidates will have to rally around her party's candidate, former parliament chairman Arthur Baghdasarian, who she said will go into the second round.

But she did not deny an option that Baghdasarian and his party may back former president Levon Ter-Petrosian if he wins as many votes as to go into the second round.

"The most important thing is that opposition candidates should rally around the one who will win the run-off," she said.

She said Arthur Baghdasarian stands ready for public TV debates with any of the candidates and repeated her claims that some of the candidates are already distributing bribes to voters, while some others are facing pressure. As an example she cited an attack on Baghdasarian's campaign office in Vanadzor.

BUSINESS

17. CBA BOARD REGISTERS DECLARATION ON REGISTRATION OF SECURITIES INCLUDING OFFER OF BONDS BY ELITE GROUP COMPANY [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/08]

At the January 29 sitting, the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) Board registered the amendment made in the rules of Central Depository of Armenia OJSC, made additions in regulations 16 "Licensing of Organizations Carrying Out Money Transfers, Registration of Branches, Regulation of Activities, and Qualification of Management" and in regulations 17 "Licensing of Organizations Carrying Out Processing and Clearing of Payment Instruments and Payment and Settlement Documents, Registration of Branches, Qualification of Management".

NT was informed by the CBA press service that based on the CBA Board's decision, Prime Insurance Brokers LLC was re-licensed, Renaissance LLC was granted a licence for dealer and brokerage sale and purchase of foreign currencies, Astvan LLC' licence for brokerage services was cancelled, and the licence for nonlife insurance granted to First Insuring LLC on November 3, 1997, was recognized as invalid.

Besides, the CBA Board made a decision to register the declration on registration of securities including an offer of bonds by Elite Group CJSC.

18. MAIN OBSTACLES TO DEVELOPMENT OF ARMENIA'S FINE ORGANIC CHEMISTRY ARE LOW LEVEL OF CUSTOMER SERVICING, IMPERFECT LEGISLATION ON SAMPLE EXPORT AND ABSENCE OF COMMERCIALIZATION INFRASTRUCTURES [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/08]

The main obstacles to development of Armenia's fine organic chemistry is the low level of services provided to foreign customers at the sector's companies and research institutes, the imperfect legislation on export of production samples and the absence of infrastructures for commercialization of developments, the director for investment attraction of the Armenian Development Agency (ADA) Natalia Artsruni told NT correspondent.

In her words, as far back as 2005, under the WB-financed program on export promotion and investment attraction and with the participation of foreign experts, the ADA developed a strategy of developing Armenia's fine organic chemistry sector, during implementation of which www.finechemicalsmarket.com website was created. The list of 5 thousand chemical substances, whose production may be organized by Armenian institutes and companies, is available on this website.

The country's capacities regarding the sector are also presented at exhibitions and business forums. However, according to N. Artsruni, very often Armenian organizations do not respond on time to the possible foreign partners' inquiries about the price and supply term of a substance as Armenian organizations do not have price-lists on supply of substances by their quantity and term, which should be constantly updated. "Those making an inquiry from abroad expect an answer to be received within 24 hours, which does not happen. Many companies need training on customer servicing. We have potential, in which the world takes interest, however, we first of all need to do homework in order to realize this potential," the ADA's official pointed out, adding that "perhaps it would be better to present 3 thousand instead of 5 thousand substances but with confidence that we are always ready to supply the given substance at the indicated price and in the indicated period".

She considered as an objective obstacle the situation when for sending a 1 or 2-gram sample to the possible foreign partner for testing, the local company has to undergo an expensive and long procedure for certification and permission, which is also used for a large consignment to be sold abroad. It was mentioned that the certification price has no essential impact on the cost price of the exported



commodity in case of exporting large consignments abroad, whereas in case of samples of chemical substances, the certification considerably increases the cost price of their export, as a result of which "we become absolutely noncompetitive". In the opinion of N. Artsruni, a legislative solution is necessary to rectify this situation. She expressed a hope that respective proposals will be worked out by thanks to the research on Armenia's business environment, which is being conducted by the Business Support Council (chaired by the RA prime minister, the secretariat is headed by the ADA) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

N. Artsruni expressed an opinion that for efficient organization of commercialization of the indicated sector's scientific developments and for reduction of risks, it is necessary to set up a respective fund which, in particular, will assist scientists with commercialization of their developments' patents. "It is often more beneficial for leading foreign companies to purchase the patent of the given scientific product than to spend money on research," she explained. She said that it may also contribute to Armenia's recognition abroad as a country of fine organic chemistry and to attraction of investments for production and research on this sphere.

According to the ADA's data, there are 4 institutes specialized in research on fine organic chemistry in Armenia. 5 companies with a total of about 200 employees operate in the production sphere.

DIASPORA

19. ARMENIA FUND LAUNCHES KHASHTARAK HEALTH CLINIC RESTORATION PROJECT [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

Khashtarak community's health clinic will undergo complete renovation as part of the Armenia Fund Rural Development Program. The subcontractor tender has already been announced and the construction works are expected to commence in the spring, a press release by Armenia Fund said.

The project will become a reality thanks to the efforts of the Armenia Fund Netherlands Affiliate who managed to rally the support of both the local Armenian community and the government of the Netherlands around the idea of improving the health care in Armenia's border villages.

Khashtarak community is one of the six villages included in the Armenia Fund Rural Development Program pilot cluster. The renovated clinic will serve the needs of all these communities, providing the community members of the border villages with a viable alternative to traveling the regional center of Ijevan to get access to health care.

The lack of efficient health care is an almost universal issue in all of rural Armenia. The health care point in Khashtarak is certainly no exclusion. Only one room in the two story building is currently in use, with the medical personnel limited to a dedicated doctor who defies the cold in the unheated building and helps the community members with advice and an occasional shot of medicine bought by the patients themselves from Ijevan. In the present situation, there is little more she can do. The clinic has received medical equipment as part of a support program but currently cannot use it as the building's abysmal conditions cannot accommodate their adequate placement and maintenance.

Thus, when the need arises, (even in the case of first aid), each community member is all alone in the difficult task of finding a running vehicle and making the several kilometer journey to the hospital in Ijevan. The situation is the same and worse in the other five villages constituting the Khashtarak cluster. There, the on the spot health care is limited to nurses who receive patients in small rooms that offer little opportunity for organizing an effective health care process.

The implementation of this project will see a full scale reconstruction of the health clinic in Khashtarak. This will include the whole spectrum of associated activities including the installation of a heating system, renovation of the leaking roof and the floor. With the reconstruction completed, this clinic will become the base for normally functioning health care system for the cluster as a whole. This is something that makes the implementation of the project all the more important.

"The idea of the cluster of villages is based on our firm belief that the small border communities will have a better chance to overcome their present isolation, to survive and develop in the modern world if they work together", says the Armenia Fund Executive Director Vahe Aghabegians. "Projects like this will help people living in these villages see themselves as an integral part of the whole and will become the basis for building mutually beneficial and effective cooperation with their neighbors."



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ARTS

20. SIRUSHO TO PERFORM ON MAY 20 IN SEMI-FINAL OF EUROVISION 2008 SONG CONTEST [Azg, 01/30/08]

Armenian pop-singer Sirusho, who is going to represent Armenia in Eurovision 2008 song contest, will perform in the first semi-final on May 20. The day of performing has been decided as a result of draw held yesterday in Belgrade.

The rules of the contest have been changed as the number of participant countries in the contest has increased.

In the first semi-final Sirusho will perform with singers of other 18 countries.

21. ARMENIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOLUTIONS IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

On the 25th of January, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) put into official circulation a Motion for a Resolution titled "The State of Cultural Heritage in Turkey" and a Motion for a Recommendation on "The Present State of Armenian Cultural Treasures in Turkey."

Cosponsored by more than 25 members of parliament representing 21 European countries and all five of PACE's political groups, the motions make reference to the Genocide and attendant dispossession of the Armenian people and call upon Turkey, among other points, to undertake a comprehensive inventory and the subsequent restoration and operationalization of Armenian and other cultural heritage destroyed or ruined during the past century, including all ancient and medieval Armenian capital cities, churches, fortresses, cemeteries, and other treasures of historic Armenia currently under its jurisdiction.

The motions, which are customarily referred to committee before being considered in plenary session, also address the freedom of expression, the teaching of genocide, minority rights and restitution, and the accomplishment of reconciliation through the truth, and look forward to "the long-awaited celebration of the Armenian cultural heritage based on a full Turkish-Armenian normalization anchored in the assumption of history, the pacific resolution of all outstanding matters, and a complete Europeanization of their relationship.

22. SUCCESS REGISTERED IN ARMENIAN-GERMAN COOPERATION IN EDUCATIONAL SPHERE [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

The delegation headed by the German ambassador to Armenia Andrea Victorini visited today Armenian Education and Science Ministry to discuss educational programs which were and are going to be carried out.

The ambassador noted that in the Armenian-German relations the educational sphere is the one where success has obviously been achieved giving the opportunity for further cooperation. She also stated that the embassy together with other cultural and educational establishments is carrying out programs for boosting cooperation.

Ara Avetisian, deputy minister in higher educational establishments affairs, said that the Armenian-German bilateral cooperation in the educational and scientific sphere already has its history, and expressed hope that the relations will boost more in future.

"For Armenia which is seeking Euro integration, the support of one of the European countries is very important. It is clear for us that that we must reach the educational system dominating in Europe for being included in one joint educational field," he said.

The two sides also underscored the teaching of German language in schools. In this respect the ambassador underscored the opening of German hall in the Yerevan State University a day before thanks to which German literature will be available for Armenian students.

Besides, Gyote Institute in collaboration with the embassy will donate a big number of books to Armenia. In February the head of the institute will arrive in Armenia. Within the framework of the visit the books will be donated to 20 schools.



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RELIGION

23. H. KHARATIAN: THERE IS NO RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/08]

According to Armenia's Constitution, religious institutions are separate from the state, and therefore, the state does not interfere in the issues of citizens' belief. The state's task is to give a legal status to this or that religious organization and to follow that they act within the law. As Hranush Kharatian, an ethnographer, the Head of the RA government's Department on Issues of Religion and National Minorities, said at the January 28 meeting on the subject "Religious Intolerance and Discrimination", "the state does not directly actively deal with religion and religious organizations." "A number of laws were adopted earlier, which regulate that sphere and lack elements containing discrimination. Therefore, I can surely say that there is no religious intolerance as such in Armenia," H. Kharatian is convinced. Nevertheless, Mrs Kharatian stated that though there is no religious discrimination and intolerance in Armenia, a great part of country's population has an internal contradiction to some religious organizations, which is moderate, and no extraordinary incident has been registered in that respect so far.

Mrs Kharatian also said that the state has returned the buildings and constructions belonging to some religious organizations, which were taken away from them in the Soviet years. They are the churches and constructions belonging to Assyrian, Greek, and Russian religious communities. Hranush Kharatian touched upon the report published by the Amnesty International organization lately, which mentioned that there is religious intolerance and discrimination in Armenia. Mrs Kharatian said that they have already expressed their position in connection with that report at the respective international instances. According to her, that is a one-sided work not corresponding to reality, as it has been prepared on the basis of the facts introduced by only one, Jehovah's Witnesses religious organization, which do not correspond to reality. When preparing the report that organization has not applied to any state structure to use the data they have.

SOCIAL

24. NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BY CITIZENS TO YEREVAN MAYOR'S OFFICE INCREASES AND MAKES 57.6 THOUSAND IN 2007 [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/08]

The "one window" system of acceptance and examination of citizens' applications and the ELPAS document circulation automated system introduced in Yerevan Mayor's Office and in 12 communities of Yerevan work efficiently at present. Grigor Melkumian, the Head of the Staff of Yerevan Mayor's Office, said at the January 29 press conference.

According to him, after the systems' introduction, the number of applications submitted to the Mayor's Office increased and made 57.6 thousand in 2007 compared with the previous years. In G. Melkumian's words, 30-35 applications were received daily in 2006, while this number was 250-280 in 2007. At the same time, repeated application complaints on the same issue have reduced.

The head of the staff said that nearly 57% applications concern the communal sphere, 17% the property sphere, 14% the urban development sphere, 5% the legal sphere. In G. Melkumian's words, answers to more than 80% applications were positive. And if a negative answer was given, they have been explained in detail on the basis of provisions of legal acts for the applicant to have a possibility to appeal against the written answer or decision of this or that official at the court.

25. RUSAL AND UNDP ARMENIA AWARD WINNERS OF 10 BEST SCHOOL PROJECTS CONTEST [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

RUSAL company in partnership with the UNDP Global Compact Armenia has announced today winners of the "10 Best School Projects" contest. For the first time in Armenia, schoolchildren from twelve educational institutions received grants of 1 million drams each to implement socially beneficial projects.

Last October 24 RUSAL signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UNDP Global Compact Armenia for 50,000 USD to implement a project named «10 BEST SCHOOL PROJECTS. The project was designed to provide schoolchildren from different schools of Yerevan with an opportunity to submit creative solutions focused on the school life improvement and compete for the funding of 1 million drams per school to realize the project.



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Forty proposals from thirty two educational institutions were submitted to the evaluation committees for the grading purposes. As a result, 10 best and 2 special projects were selected to be financed. The grading was done by "Supervisory Board" and "Children Committee" according to the system developed by RUSAL. These committees consisted of UNDP experts, Armenal's management, representatives of the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, State University, NGO and Armenal's and UNDP's employee kids.

The implementation of the best projects is planned for year 2008. Minister of Education Mr. Levon Mkrtychian in his speech welcomed RUSAL's and UNDP's joint initiative and emphasized an importance of corporate world involvement in the educational sector - "RUSAL's project is essential for current Armenia and will serve as a bright example of corporate social responsibility for others."

The UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Consuelo Vidal told the audience that it is very important to cultivate the culture of social responsibility among children and youth from school ages. It will help them to become more responsible citizens later. Project also stimulates creativity and self-confidence, as well as helps adults to better understand the importance of children's' participation and contribution to the solution of issues related to their own educational environment or neighborhood.

RUSAL ARMENAL Director Georgy Avetikyan said that this project is a first step of the UC RUSAL's long term social commitment in Armenia and cooperation with UNDP.

"Based on demand, UC RUSAL recognizes the success of the project in Armenia. This is a very good project to teach kids the basics of the corporate citizenship and implement project useful for the society."

RUSAL is the global leader in the aluminum industry, accounting for approximately 12% and 15% of global production of aluminum and alumina respectively. The company was founded in March 2007 through the merger of RUSAL, SUAL, and the alumina assets of Glencore. United Company RUSAL sells its products in 70 countries worldwide and employs 100,000 people in 19 countries, across 5 continents. UC RUSAL's operation in Armenia is ARMENAL foil mill, located in Yerevan.

UC RUSAL social projects include '100 Best Projects' for senior schoolchildren and teachers involved in teamwork and socially beneficial activities; '100 Sport Projects' to develop sports for children; "Into the future together" program to optimize the social rehabilitation environment for orphans, 'Take a step beyond the horizon' program to support the drive for self-realization, proactivity, creativity, and entrepreneurship among young people, and to prepare them for active and meaningful participation in community life.

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners. UNDP's Mandate is poverty reduction and its priorities are expressed through the Millennium Development Goals approved by the World leaders in 2000.

The Global Compact Armenia is a project of the United Nations Development Program launched in 2006 to promote the corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Armenia.

26. PHONE OF TRUST TO FUNCTION AT TAX STATE SERVICE [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

According to the assignment of the Armenian government, for making the work of the Tax State Service more transparent, the tax payers will have an opportunity to voice their issues through a trust phone which will function in the service from January 30.

Press department of the Tax State Service told Armenpress that this phone will give an opportunity to quickly respond to the issues of tax payers.

In case of issues the citizens may call 53-62-91 on each working day from 09:00 a.m. till 17:00 p.m.

27. YEREVAN MAYOR ASSIGNED STRICT CONTROL OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

Yerevan mayor Yervand Zakharian conducted today a consultation during which he assigned the police to carry out strict control to exclude the increase of public transport tariffs in the evening.

Municipality press service told Armenpress that a road police representative reported that checking visits for regulation of transport traffic continue also for banning the smoking of drivers in the public transport. Last week 7 cases of smoking of drivers in the public transport were registered.



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28. UNDP ARMENIA TO HELP CARRY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/08]

The UNDP Armenia Office will help implement this year a set of rural development programs in three Armenian provinces.

Particularly, it will help restore the irrigation network of the village of Lusadzor in Tavush province. As a result 50 hectares of land will receive irrigation water. This particular project will be implemented with the financial support of the Italian government as part of a broader reprogram for elimination of rural poverty. The village will also have a new drinking water network.

Vrezh Jijian, UNDP program coordinator, told Armenpress that the village does not have a drinking water system now and the villagers use two springs instead. The work will be started in March and end in August.

The other targeted rural communities are in the Ashotsk region of the northwestern province of Shirak. Last year the government of Norway helped establish there agricultural machinery pool to serve Bavra, Saragyugh, Sizavet and Tavshut villages.

In the framework of that project, the old Soviet-time pool was fully renovated and a fleet of several brand new machinery units have been provided including four Belarus-made wheeled tractors, one plough, a tractor-mounted mowing-machine, a baling press, a potato combine and an automated potato-planter.

Due to the new equipment, many of the plough-lands which were used previously as natural hayfields and were not cultivated properly now are available for grain crops and potato growing. This will significantly increase the per-hectare gross yield, which will be incomparably higher than the yield from hayfields.

The agricultural machinery pool will serve all the four communities of the cluster. Primary beneficiaries of the pool are the socially vulnerable families of the four villages the total number of which makes around one hundred households. These four villages will receive new agricultural machinery this year as well

An agricultural machinery pool, a flour mill and a seed station will be established also with the help of the UNDP for the village of Yeghvard in southern province of Syunik

Vrezh Jijian said they expect also funds this year to start reconstruction of a drinking water network in the village of Pokr in Meghri region of Syunik.

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Vartan Tsulikian, AGBU Armenia News Bulletin Translator/Editor

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Established in 1906, AGBU (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.