



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 8, 2008

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. WHO WILL BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF OUR COUNTRY ACCORDING TO BRITISH SOCIOLOGISTS? [Azg, 02/08/08]

On February 6, British "Populus" sociological organization presented the results of the survey conducted in Armenia.

According to the organization's Founder and Strategic Director Andrew Cooper they conduct similar surveys by request of many well-known British and international news agencies and private companies.

The survey in Armenia was conducted by request of Armenian Public TV/Radio company council. It's not the only survey in Armenia, it is foreseen to conduct another survey and an Exit poll on Election Day.

The survey was conducted in January 21-29, in different provinces of Armenia, by casual choice, among about 1500 citizens. According to Mr. Cooper this number is enough to get acquainted with public mood.

The analysis of the survey results was made in London, and the survey was conducted by Armenian Sociological Association under British supervision.

Andrew Cooper mentioned that their organization has high rating, and they have no interests in the elections of Armenia.

53 percent of the questioned think that the developments in Armenia keep right course. 47 percent don't share the opinion.

The Founder and Strategic Director of "Populus" mentioned that there is a serious progress here according to surveys conducted in April and October.

51 percent of the questioned are optimistic about the country's future, and 9 percent - pessimistic. The percentage of the optimists among the youth is higher – 61 percent.

The number of the people, who think that coming elections will be fairer and freer increased by 5 percent (30 percent), 24 percent have opposite opinion.

The strongest influence on the elections have TVs – 93 percent, 88 percent attach great importance to the meetings with the candidates, 83 percent – discussions with family members, 80 percent – the Press, and then comes radio- 78 percent.

"Populus" is interested in following questions: "Who will better solve unemployment problem in Armenia?" – Serge Sarkisian – 43 percent, Arthur Baghdasarian – 28 percent, then come Vahan Hovhannisian, A. Geghamian, Ter-Petrosian, etc.

To the question "Who will make the economy stronger?" – Serge Sarkisian got 41 percent, A. Baghdasarian – 26 percent, etc.

In the settlement of Karabakh conflict the present Prime Minister has got 54 percent, then comes Vahan Hovhannisian – 14 percent, L. Ter-Petrosian – 13 percent, etc.

In Genocide recognition issue 40 percent rely on Serge Sarkisian, 17 percent- Vahan Hovhannisian, 12 percent – Arthur Baghdasarian and 11 percent – Levon Ter-Petrosian.

In the question of national security the leader is Serge Sarkisian (46 percent), then comes Arthur Baghdasarian – 18 percent, Vahan Hovhannisian – 14 percent.

In the settlement of social and economic issues the leader is again Serge Sarkisian.

In the struggle against corruption Serge Sarkisian has the lowest rating – 28 percent, according to 19 percent Arthur Baghdasarian will struggle against that disaster, Geghamian and Ter-Petrosian have 12 percent each, and Vahan Hovhannisian – 11 percent.

Summarizing this part of the survey Andrew Cooper mentioned that Serge Sarkisian holds the lead unequivocally.

According to the survey, the ratings of the parties (from 1 to 100 unit) are the following – Republican Party – 56,89, "Prosperous Armenia" – 46,49, "Orinats Erkir" – 46, 33, ARF Dashnaktsutyun – 41, 74, "National Unity" – 34,04, ADP – 32,57, People's Party – 32,21.

56 percent of the questioned answered that they are going to participate in the elections, 24 percent mentioned of the probability of their participation in the elections.

The results of the question "who will you vote for?" is the following: Serge Sarkisian – 50,7 percent, Arthur Baghdasarian – 13,4 percent, Levon Ter-Petrosian – 12,6 percent, Vahan Hovhannisian –



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7,6 percent, Artashes Geghamian – 6,4 percent, Tigran Karapetian – 4,5 percent, Vazgen Manoukian – 3,2 percent. The rest of the candidates have got lower percentage.

According to Populus the rating of the Prime Minister increased by 8 percent compared with October.

Andrew Cooper concluded that the Armenian citizens are optimistic in the future of Armenia and think that the country has taken the right course, consequently, the Strategic Director of the Populus will not be surprised if Serge Sarkisian wins the presidential elections with "good results", as he is more supported than the other candidates taken together.

2. POLIRIZED ATTITUDE OBSERVED TOWARDS SERGE SARGSIAN AND LEVON TER-PETROSIAN DURING PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/06/08]

The campaign of the candidates running for the post of the RA President has essentially been equally covered during the period between January 21-30 by the 8 TV companies of Armenia: "H1", "ALM", "Armenia", "H2", "Yerkir Media", "Kentron", and "Shant". This statement was made by Boris Navasardian, the Chairman of the Yerevan Press Club, at the press conference held on February 6, introducing the results of the second stage of the observation of the coverage of the presidential elections being held by them. According to him, most of all Prime Minister Serge Sargsian was covered during the above-mentioned period (29 442 seconds), and least of all Aram Haroutiunian, the Chairman of the National Agreement party (12 720 seconds).

Boris Navasardian mentioned that except "Yerkir Media", a polarized attitude is observed towards Serge Sargsian and Levon Ter-Petrosian and a proportional impartiality towards the other candidates in the materials broadcast by the other TV channels. Thus, 93 out of the 99 mentioning dedicated to the Prime Minister were positive and 6 negative, as regards Levon Ter-Petrosian, there were 72 negative and no positive mentioning. Moreover, according to the Chairman of the Yerevan Press Club, particularly two public TV channels are striking with partiality. He mentioned that the "Kentron" TV Channel, in particular, arrests one's attention with its negative coverage dedicated to the first President of the Republic of Armenia. All this allows Boris Navasardian to assume that, at present, the political struggle is sharper than it was during the parliamentary elections.

According to the results of the observation, the index of the participation of the presidential candidates in the debating programs of mass media is still low, which is conditioned by the circumstance that they are not so much ready for a public dialogue.

3. "NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC UNION, NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, UNION OF NATIONAL DEMOCRATS AND NATIONAL STATE PARTY INTEND TO UNITE IN FUTURE," HEAD OF VAZGEN MANUKIAN'S PRE-ELECTORAL HEADQUARTERS SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/06/08]

The National Democratic Union headed by Vazgen Manukian, a candidate running for the post of the RA President, and the National Democratic Party, the Union of National Democrats, as well as the National State party supporting him intend to unite during the forthcoming one year, creating one big party. This statement was made by Samvel Shahinian, the Head of the pre-electoral central headquarters of Vazgen Manukian, at the press conference held on February 6. In his words, that would be not an artificially created union but a union based on a national-democratic ideology.

Samvel Shahinian mentioned that the headquarters of Vazgen Manukian is true to its adopted tactics, according to which crowded rallies and regional visits are not important at all. According to him, the National Democratic Union held crowded mass rallies in certain settlements during the previous elections, however Vazgen Manukian received rather few votes in those very places. The contrary thing also happened, when, in the words of Samvel Shahinian, after not so crowded rallies the Leader of the National Democratic Union received most of the votes in that very settlement.

Samvel Shahinian explained the small number of the headquarters of Vazgen Manukian in regions with the fact that "in the current century of communications, when all the issues can be settled by mobile phones, the great number of headquarters is not only a dissipation but also an overindulgence."

4. CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS OF LEVON TER-PETROSIAN APPLIES TO CENTRAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION WITH DEMAND TO INVALIDATE REGISTRATION OF SERGE SARGSIAN'S CANDIDATURE [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/06/08]

The central pre-electoral headquarters of Levon Ter-Petrosian, a candidate running for the post of the RA President, has applied to the Central Electoral Commission with the demand to invalidate the



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registration of the candidature of Serge Sargsian. As Aram Manukian, a member of the Armenian National Movement administration, stated at the press conference held on February 6, Serge Sargsian has infringed Article 79 of the Electoral Code, which prohibits candidates to make extra-fund expenses for the purpose of the campaign.

In the words of Aram Manukian, they are sure that the Central Electoral Commission will dismiss the application and they will apply to court with the same issue. "I can prove with tens of documents how Serge Sargsian is making use of the administrative resources. For the purpose of organizing his campaign he makes a complete use of his authority, means and levers," the member of the Armenian National Movement administration said.

5. HEAD OF PRE-ELECTORAL HEADQUARTERS OF VAZGEN MANUKIAN DOES NOT EXCLUDE THAT LEADER OF NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC UNION WILL RECEIVE ARF'S ASSISTANCE IN SECOND STAGE OF ELECTIONS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/06/08]

Vazgen Manukian, the Leader of the National Democratic Union, and a candidate running for the post of the RA President, is conducting negotiations with the ARF Dashnaksutiun, Zharangutiun (Heritage) parties and other political forces on these days with regard to the tactics in the forthcoming presidential elections. As Samvel Shahinian, the Head of the pre-electoral headquarters of Vazgen Manukian, stated at the press conference held on February 6, it is expected that those negotiations will have their results in the second stage of the elections, in which, in his conviction, Vazgen Manukian will, certainly, take part with the candidate of the authorities.

Samvel Shahinian gave a negative answer to the question of whether it is possible for the Chairman of the National Democratic Union to remove his candidature in favor of Vahan Hovhannisian, the candidate nominated by the ARF Dashnaksutiun. And in response to the question of whether the contrary variant is possible, that is to say, the candidate of the ARF Dashnaksutiun will leave the further struggle in favor of Vazgen Manukian, the speaker answered: "Why not?"

6. TWO PUBLIC OPINION POLLS GIVE PRIME MINISTER HUGE LEAD [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

Head of a local polling and research center unveiled today the findings of another of public opinion surveys which found that nearly half of eligible Armenians have made a final decision on who to vote for in the February 19 presidential election.

Aharon Adibekian, head of Sociometr center, said this figure was derived from a comparative analysis of six surveys conducted late last and this year.

Speaking at a news conference Mr. Adibekian, whose surveys have been criticized by opposition as lacking credibility, 'because they are commissioned by the government', said 12 percent of voters are still swinging and 11 percent did not wish to reveal the name of their candidate. Therefore, said Adibekian, it appears that some 68 percent of eligible voters are expected to go to the polls. The voter turnout in regions beyond Yerevan is expected to be even higher.

Some 25 percent of respondents are not interested in politics at all and in all likelihood they will boycott the February 19 ballot. Four percent of Armenians cited their fundamental opposition to national elections and will ignore the ballot too while three percent are still undecided about their participation.

According to Aharon Adibekian, 67 percent of those who have made a final decision, who make 45 percent, will vote for prime minister Serzh Sarkisian, 13 percent for a former parliament chairman Arthur Baghdasarian, 11 percent for ex-president Levon Ter-Petrosian, five percent for a deputy parliament chairman Vahan Hovhannesian, 2 percent for Vazgen Manukian and 1 percent for Artashes Geghamian, Three other candidates-Arman Melikian, Tigran Karapetian and Aram Harutunian will get each less than 1 percent.

Aharon Adibekian said based on these figures there is a very little probability of a run-off because, according to his calculations, even if the swinging segment who are 16 percent, votes for opposition candidates that would not affect the final results.

He said even if two or more opposition candidates decide to team up and contest the election with one joint candidate that would neither impede prime minister to win the election outright as overall the opposition would garner less than 30 percent of all votes.

Aharon Adibekian further said the poll showed that ex-president Levon Ter-Petrosian 'enjoys' the highest negative popularity rating of almost 40 percent while prime minister Sarkisian's negative reputation rating is 9 percent. That of Arthur Baghdasarian is 3 percent.

The poll also revealed that 73 percent of residents receive related information from TV channels. The second important source of information are routine conversations and rumors.



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Today were unveiled also findings of another public opinion poll that was commissioned by the government-controlled Public TV and Radio Council to a British Populus research center. The field work was done by the Armenian Sociological Association, also criticized by the opposition, on Januarys 21-29 among 1,500 respondents and according to its chief, Andrew Cooper, the Armenian poll has a margin of error of 2.6 percent.

According to the Populus poll, 50.7 percent of respondents will vote for Serzh Sarkisian, 13.4 percent for Arthur Baghdasarian and 12.6 percent for Levon Ter-Petrosian. Vahan Hovhanesian will get almost 8 percent of the vote.

The Populus poll also revealed that 56 percent of Armenians will go to polling stations on the voting day. Also 57 percent think that Armenia is on the right track. Most optimistic in this sense, according to Cooper are young people. Fifty-four percent of people aged 18-34 believe their and their families' living standards would improve in the next 12 months.

The survey also revealed Armenians' treatment of foreign counties and international organizations. Thus, 88 percent named Russia as Armenia's most reliable partner, which is followed by France (70 percent) and the EU (63 percent).

7. KOCHARIAN RECEIVES RUSSIAN PREMIER [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

President Robert Kocharian received today a Russian delegation headed by Russian prime minister Viktor Zubkov. The meeting was attended also Armenian premier Serzh Sarkisian and other officials.

Appreciating the upward development of Armenian-Russian relations, Kocharian said they have a brilliant perspective. According to Robert Kocharian, the economic ties have become the locomotive of bilateral cooperation, resulting in multi-million Russian investments in Armenia's energy, transport, communication and other sectors.

The Armenian president specially underscored the dynamically developing collaboration in the filed of infrastructures.

The parties noted that the annual commodity turnover is approaching \$1 billion and praised the productive work of the Armenian-Russian Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation.

The interlocutors emphasized the importance of bilateral relations in humanitarian, cultural and educational spheres, as well.

The Russians had been earlier received by parliament chairman Tigran Torosian.

8. ANM IN 'HARMONIES' TALKS WITH ORINATS YERKIR AND ZHARANGUTYUN [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

Aram Manukian, a senior member of the Armenian National Movement (ANM) of ex-president Levon Ter-Petrosian, said today former president's allies are negotiating with representatives of many different political groups and public organizations to win their support to ex-president's presidential bid.

Aram Manukian, who spoke at a news conference, said also 'there is a harmonious work' with the opposition Orinats Yerkir (County of Law) party of Arthur Baghdasarian and the Zharangutyun (Heritage) party of Raffi Hovhanesian in verifying voter lists and also on the level of precinct election commissions.

Earlier Raffi Hovhanesian and his allies confirmed the decision to cede hundreds of seats in election commissions reserved for his Zharangutyun (Heritage) party to allies of opposition presidential candidates Levon Ter-Petrosian and Vazgen Manukian.

Under Armenia's Election Code, president Robert Kocharian and the five parties represented in parliament, including Zharangutyun, each appoint one member of the Central Election Commission (CEC) and its more than 1,920 district and precinct-level divisions. Two other commission seats are controlled by a government body overseeing the Armenian judiciary.

The code also stipulates that only those individuals who attend special courses organized by the CEC can become commission members. Zharangutyun says that only about 1,000 of its members and supporters have obtained licenses required for sitting on the bodies that will conduct the February 19 presidential election.

"I have serious grounds to say that our cooperation (with Heritage and Country of Law) will materialize and before February 9 we shall offer a surprise," Aram Manukian said.

"Everything is moving in line with our scenario and the results are very promising. We even conducted a public opinion survey, but will not unveil its results. On February 9 we shall stage another rally and then our candidate is likely to convene a news conference for media," he said.



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Manukian said their candidate will not unleash a revenge campaign against rivals and no government officials will be affected after Ter-Petrosian is elected president and only those who ever committed crimes will be held responsible.

He also urged Arthur Bagdasarian to withdraw from the race and throw his weight behind Levon Ter-Petrosian.

9. RUSSIAN PRIME MINISTER VISITS GENOCIDE MEMORIAL [Hayastani hanrapetutiun, 02/07/08]

Russian prime minister Viktor Zubkov today visited Tsitsernakaberd Genocide Memorial and laid a wreath of flowers at the memorial to the Armenian Genocide victims and planted a fir tree in the "Friendship" alley

Accompanied by the director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Hayk Demoyan, Mr. Zubkov was shown around the memorial.

The Russian premier was accompanied by the mayor of Yerevan Yervand Zakharyan, deputy foreign minister Gegham Gharibjanyan, Armenian ambassador to Russia Armen Smbatyan and others.

To remind, in 1995 the Russian State Duma passed a resolution to condemn the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

10. CANDIDATE ARAM HARUTYUNIAN CONDUCTS MEETINGS IN SYUNIK [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

Candidate for Armenian presidential elections, the head of the "National Reconciliation" party Aram Harutyunian conducted on February 5 and 6 meetings with the people of Syunik.

During the two days the candidate met with the residents of Sisian, Agarak, Meghri, Kajaran, Kapan and Goris.

In his speech the candidate said that he is aware of the issues of each province and in general he knows the issues of an Armenian citizen. According to his party, the first issue is Karabakh conflict, and then comes job issue, justice, salaries, pensions, expensive life.

"We differ from other candidates as we present approaches connected with this issues – creation of economic parliament, reform of electoral system, adoption of law on opposition," he said, adding that he is sure that if they give an Armenian person a job, if they create opportunities for him/her he/she will make our country blossom. "We have established a state so that the Armenian person will not leave it," he said.

11. CEC CALLS ON ELECTORS NOT TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO PEOPLE INTERESTED IN PASSPORT DATA [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

The chairman of the Armenian Central Electoral Commission Garegin Azarian made today a statement calling on electors not to provide information to the people interested in their passport data.

"Information is being spread as if passport data is being collected from citizens. Though collection of the passport data cannot have impact on the expression of will of an elector or be a basis of bothering the electoral process, I call on you on behalf of Central Electoral Commission not to give information to the people interested in passport data," G. Azarian said.

12. VAZGEN MANUKIAN PLANNING TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

The leader of the National Democratic Union party Vazgen Manukian is planning to create National Democratic Movement, the head of the pre-electoral headquarter of the candidate Samvel Shahinian told today at a press conference. In the movement the "national" or "democracy" will not be separated. "In today's electoral fight we see that these two ideas are separated and in this way the natural processes cannot be ensured in the 21st century," Shahinian said.

According to him, these circumstances create the vital necessity of creation of National Democratic Movement which also exists in USA and Europe.

Today Manukian was going to discuss his idea with the representatives of the parties backing him.



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13. LAW-ENFORCEMENT BODIES WANT BAGHDASARIAN TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT RECEIVING DEATH THREATS [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

Armenian law-enforcement bodies have launched an investigation into a presidential candidate, Arthur Baghdasarian's allegations that he has received death threats.

Sona Truzian, a spokeswoman for the Office of the Prosecutor-General, told Armenpress the probe is being handled by the chief investigation department of the police.

Former parliament speaker Arthur Baghdasarian claimed to have received death threats from the Armenian authorities when he rallied thousands of his supporters for a February 3 demonstration in downtown Yerevan.

But his claims were dismissed the following day by prime minister Serzh Sarkisian as a campaign ploy designed to mislead the public. Nevertheless, prosecutor-general Aghvan Hovsepien instructed the Armenian police to launch an investigation.

"I received a murder threat last night and if something happens to me, the current authorities will be directly responsible for that," Baghdasarian said on February 3.

Sona Truzian told Armenpress that Mr. Baghdasarian was asked to come to the Prosecutor-General's office on February 5 to provide information about the alleged threats which prosecutors say is important to ensure his security and to track down the person who threatened him.

The Prosecutor-General Office also suggested that Baghdasarian may authorize someone else to pass the information to law-enforcement bodies in case he could not do it himself because of his heavy campaign schedule. Ms. Truzian said Mr. Baghdasarian promised to do so on February 7.

14. RUSSIAN PM SAYS SARKISIAN WILL SUCCEED [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

Before going aboard a plane to fly back home yesterday evening Russian prime minister Viktor Zubkov said to journalists that regardless of the outcome of the February 19 presidential election in Armenia, Armenian-Russian partnership will not be affected and it will develop the way it has been doing for years.

The Russian prime minister attributed the dynamic and steady relationships to very warm relationships between heads of both government

"I would like to wish success to Serzh Sarkisian and I think he will succeed because he does his job honestly and with spirit," he said.

He, particularly, singled out Serzh Sarkisian's zeal in boosting economic relations with Russia.

15. TER-PETROSSIAN'S RALLY IN ARTASHAT MARRED WITH VIOLENCE [Aravot, 02/07/08]

Armenian authorities have started a criminal investigation into an incident that occurred yesterday in the town of Artashat during a campaign rally by ex-president Levon Ter-Petrosian.

A group of people were said to hurl stones at supporters of Levon Ter-Petrosian in an attempt to disrupt the rally.

The incident was condemned by Ter-Petrosian as a government "provocation" aimed at derailing his election campaign. The investigation was started after a bodyguard of Ter-Petrosian, Sarkis Hovanissian, lodged a written complaint with police in Artashat.

A spokeswoman for the Office of the Prosecutor-General, Sona Truzian, said to Armenpress that two local women lodged complaints with local police saying they were attacked by Ter-Petrosian's supporters receiving bruises. Police ordered a medical examination.

16. PROVOCATION IN ARTASHAT WAS ORGANIZED BY STATE STRUCTURES, IS SAID IN STATEMENT OF CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS OF LEVON TER-PETROSSIAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/07/08]

During the February 6 meeting of the RA presidential candidate Levon Ter-Petrosian with voters in Artashat, "a group of hooligans started throwing stones, pieces of ice and concrete at meeting participants and in the direction of the platform, on which there were the first Armenian president and representatives of the forces supporting him". NT was informed by the central headquarters of Levon Ter-Petrosian the Nikol Pashinian who was conducting the meeting asked the policemen present to ensure the meeting's security to prevent this provocation and call these persons to order but policemen did not take any actions. The governor of Ararat marz Alik Sargsian was inactive too.



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"Not calming down, the group of hooligans began throwing stones at the car of L. Ter-Petrosian. Then 7-8 persons attacked Colonel of State Security Service Sargis Hovhannisian - the deputy head of L. Ter-Petrosian's security service, who was at the car. He received injuries to the head and was taken to hospital," is said in the statement issued on the same day.

According to the statement authors, it became known that the provocation had been organized by the National Assembly deputy Jonik Abrahamian - brother of Hovik Abrahamian, and by the head of the regional municipality's social security unit, who is also the chairman of the district electoral commission. The police were instructed not to intervene, and this instruction was carried out.

"We state that no provocation instructed and organized by the criminal authorities will unsettle us and stop our triumphant election campaign that will end in our inevitable victory on February 19. What has happened is the last scratches of the robber-state authorities which are incapable of conducting logical debates and are now in agony. We state that after February 20 all instigators will appear in court and will be held accountable under law," the statement reads.

17. SERGE SARGSIAN: "AUTHORITY OF FUTURE PRESIDENT OF ARMENIA IS TOO IMPORTANT FOR ME" [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/07/08]

"The authority of the future President of Armenia is too dear and too important for me and I will do my best for the future President of Armenia to be authoritative," Serge Sargsian, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and a candidate running for presidency, stated in the February 6 sitting of the RA National Assembly in response to the question of Zaruhi Postanjian, a member of the Zharangutiun (Heritage) party.

Touching upon the observation of the MP, according to which people, in particular teachers of schools of general education, are forcedly brought to his pre-electoral meetings, Serge Sargsian mentioned that as a result of a simple calculation of the teachers of schools in any community "a modest number" appears. "Do we really need that modest number to arouse dissatisfaction among people?" the Prime Minister said. In the words of Serge Sargsian, they know the "songs" about forced participants in the rallies very well.

Referring to another observation, according to which since the moment of the registration of the RA Electoral Code the candidates running for the post of the RA President in state service are to temporarily be released from the performance of their working duties, Serge Sargsian stated that it does not apply to the post of the Prime Minister, as it is a political one. "If anybody had doubts, he/she could apply to the constitutional Court, to the Administrative Court and those courts could make those decisions," he said.

18. ALL ARMENIAN TV COMPANIES CARRY OUT BLACK PR AGAINST LEVON TER-PETROSIAN, ARAM MANUKIAN CONSIDERS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/07/08]

All Armenian TV companies carry out black PR against presidential candidate Levon Ter-Petrosian: the reportings covering his election campaign are extremely polarized and distorted. Aram Manukian, a member of the Armenian National Movement (ANM) party Board, stated at the February 6 press conference. In his words, that is why the presidential candidate has refused to speak on those TV companies with "ordered journalists and ordered questions."

According to A. Manukian, only the candidates-placemen of the authorities are content with the coverage of the media. "I consider them fungi. That is, if there was no tree, there would be no fungus, either. And if L. Ter-Petrosian was not a candidate for the elections, these four of five candidates would have no occupation," the ANM Board member said.

In his words, they have released more than 2000 DVD disks for conveying L. Ter-Petrosian's words to the people, as well as for showing he real picture of the election campaign and have spread them both in the regions and in Yerevan. A. Manukian said that a national movement has been formed in the regions and in Yerevan and people go to the meetings with L. Ter-Petrosian of their own free will and not forcedly.

19. ARFD, RAPA, AND SDHP CALL FOR DECLARING 2008 YEAR OF 20th ANNIVERSARY OF ARTSAKH MOVEMENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/07/08]

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Artsakh movement, the ARFD Bureau, the Central Board of the Ramkavar-Azatakan Party of Armenia, and the Central Board of the Social Democratic Hnchakian Party have made a decision to jointly mark the 20th anniversary of Artsakh movement in



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Armenia and in the Diaspora, to jointly oppose to the anti-Armenian policy Azerbaijan continues to carry out, and to jointly raise the issue of recognition of the Armenian people's rights by Turkey.

The three traditional Armenian parties, on February 6, applied to all Armenians:

"To declare year 2008 a year of the 20th anniversary of Artsakh movement and to jointly mark it. To continue the work of securing the results of Artsakh struggle with all means.

To jointly continue the work of the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide until the Republic of Turkey responsible for the Genocide also changes its attitude to the Armenians by recognizing the rights of the Armenians and by fully making up to the Armenian people for that crime committed against mankind.

Henceforth by declaring February 28 a day symbolizing extermination of Armenians of Sumgayit and Baku, to make efforts to inform the international public opinion and all states pointing out to the criminal policy carried out to the Armenians by Azerbaijan's all, past and current authorities.

Lastly, to spare no efforts to support the development and strengthening of Armenia-Artsakh state structure."

20. ARMY OF LEVON TER-PETROSIAN'S SUPPORTERS GROWS MORE AND MORE, ARAM MANUKIAN SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/07/08]

"In the recent period a great number of members of pro-governmental parties, as well as people from headquarters of other presidential candidates join L. Ter-Petrosian's headquarters, and soon the members of the Bargavach Hayastan party will also join us." Aram Manukian, a member of the Armenian National Movement (ANM) party Board, stated at the February 6 press conference.

Touching upon the possible unification of RA presidential candidate Artur Baghdasarian and L. Ter-Petrosian, A. Manukian said that it would be a right step. However, in his words, if even this unification does not happen, L. Ter-Petrosian will win all the same. According to him, the sympathy for the first Armenian President is in "resonance" with the authorities' antipathy. "If even we do nothing, Serge Sargsian has two enemies, his brother Sashik and Robert Kocharian. The latter should be more unbiased and not express an opinion of the candidates. While R. Kocharian's statements do harm to the very S. Sargsian," A. Manukian emphasized.

He expressed confidence that the national movement will contribute to reduction of the number of people rigging the elections, as they also wish a peaceful power shift. Mentioning that the army of Levon Ter-Petrosian's supporters grows more and more, A. Manukian said: "Don't think that the National Security, the Internal Affairs, the parliament, and the Ministers support S. Sargsian. That pyramid is destroyed quickly, as we will have an absolutely different situation in some days." He also added that the people "will learn pleasant news" until February 9.

According to the member of the ANM Board, in case L. Ter-Petrosian comes to power they are not going to retribute somebody: only those who have problems with the law will be called for criminal liability. "I am convinced that very soon you will learn information about a number of non-disclosed cases, including the accident of the A-320 plane," A. Manukian said.

21. ARA ABRAHAMIAN: INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DOES VERY LITTLE TO MAKE TURKEY KEEP ELEMENTARY RULES OF HUMAN CO-EXISTENCE [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/07/08]

There are many interethnic and interciviliation problems in the South Caucasus and in Near East, which are played up in the implication of creation of a new world order and are reflected in the policy of the leading countries. It is not a mere accident that the foreign political subjects touched upon in the U.S. presidential election campaign mainly relate to Iraq and the Israeli-Palestine conflict, as well as settlement of relations between the United States and Iran. This was mentioned in the text of speech of Ara Abrahamian, the Chairman of the World Armenian Congress, made at the international conference on the subject "The countries of the Caucasus and Near East as possible partners in the process of formation of a regional security system."

According to him, the power actions of the United States and NATO cause anti-American moods in Near East and serve the goals of those, who try to present that conflict as a war between Islamic and Western civilizations.

He said in his speech that Russia should carry out more active policy in the region in order to jointly with China, India, and a number of European countries contribute to reconsideration of the not well thought-out policy of the U.S. in the region.

Touching upon the issue of interethnic conflicts in the South Caucasus, A. Abrahamian mentioned that in spite of the international community's active participation, the Nagorno Karabakh,



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Georgian-Abkhazian, Georgian-Ossetian conflicts are still far from mutually acceptable solutions.

According to him, statements on the necessity of power settlement of the conflicts are often voiced in some capitals of the region, the regional countries are involved in arms race. Though Washington and Moscow try to cooperate over settlement of the problems of the South Caucasus, that cooperation is not intensive enough and has not yielded tangible results so far. At the same time it was mentioned that NATO's entering the South Caucasus may change the balance existing in the region and damage Russia's interests, which may make the region a conflict zone and aggravate relations between Russia and the United States.

The speaker also mentioned existence of many problems between Armenia and Turkey. According to A. Abrahamian, Turkey, which has committed the Armenian Genocide, continues keeping Armenia in a blockade, puts forward preconditions to Armenia for establishment of diplomatic relations and raising the blockade. In his words, the UN Security Council, the European Union, the United States, Russia, and the whole international community do very little to make Turkey, which is striving for joining EU at any price, keep the elementary rules of human co-existence and international relations.

22. NOR ZHAMANAKNER PARTY DEMANDS THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT BODIES ENSURE NORMAL PROCESS OF RA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' ELECTION CAMPAIGN [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/07/08]

On the occasion of the incident, which happened the day before during the rally of RA presidential candidate Levon Ter-Petrosian and the political forces supporting him in Artashat, the Board of the Nor Zhamanakner (New Times) party, on February 7, made a statement demanding that law enforcement bodies immediately undertake preventive measures and ensure normal process and security of the RA presidential candidates' election campaign.

"Scandalous incidents were recorded in Artashat during the previous presidential elections as well, when in 2003 the head of the preelection headquarters of RA presidential candidate Aram Karapetian was stabbed with knife. The authorities and especially law enforcement bodies not only failed to draw conclusions from it, but also contributed to deepening of the criminal situation in conditions of criminal negligence and connivance. The incidents of Artashat make the current situation more eminent especially on the background of populist statements having nothing in common with reality, voiced by Serge Sargsian on virtual grounds, as well as nonsense presented by Robert Kocharian on television from time to time and allegedly concerning the stability of the situation," the statement read.

23. CURRENT PERIOD IS CRUCIAL FOR COUNTRY, ARMENIAN PRESIDENT SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/07/08]

During the February 6 meeting of the Armenian president Robert Kocharian and the European Union troika headed by Dimitri Rupel - the foreign minister of Slovenia currently presiding over the EU, the sides exchanged ideas about cooperation with the EU and addressed the European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan, NT was informed by the RA president's press service.

Speaking with satisfaction about dynamically developing cooperation of Armenia and the EU, R. Kocharian said that thanks to the joint action plan, the relations have become more coordinated. He welcomed the opening of a new diplomatic mission of the European Commission in Armenia, which will allow to establish closer cooperation.

As for the upcoming presidential elections, R. Kocharian said that the current period is a crucial one for the country. "We are interested in holding good elections in line with international standards and we have done everything in order to organize these elections in the best way," he stated.

The Armenian president told the guests about latest developments in negotiations on peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict and presented Armenia's approaches to problems of energy security and regional cooperation.

24. SERZH SARGSIAN CONDUCTS MEETINGS IN ARMENIAN PROVINCE OF LORI [ARMENPRESS, 02/08/08]

Candidate for presidential elections, Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsian conducted today meetings in a number of settlements of the Armenian province of Lori. Everywhere the candidate was pointing out that the trust and faith of the people makes him move forward with firm steps basing on the vote of trust of the people. According to him, there are two ways of building state – democratic when a



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person who wants to become leader asks votes, trust from the people and the second way is when a candidate views the people from above.

"I am for the first option, I ask your vote and trust and I am sure that together we will build better Armenia. The way I passed, my experience and knowledge allow me to say that together we may quicken the development process of the country," he said.

S. Sargsian called on the people to be patient towards the negative impulses thrown by other candidates. He expressed assurance that people who lose their conscience blacken our reality will remain with shame and will understand that in that way they cannot come to power.

In Vanadzor and Spitak towns Sargsian said that the main issue there is absence of jobs and noted that a successive work will be carried out for solving the issue.

"The strive and wish of Armenian people to live helped to overcome many problems. During the past 20 years we saw earthquake, blockade and war and not effective management. We hope that such tragedies will not occur but at the same time we must improve the system of management, eliminate all bad phenomena – corruption and bribery," he said.

S. Sargsian called to organize good and fair elections on February 19 and before that to thoroughly study the programs of candidates to understand what is being suggested.

The candidate also conducted meetings in Nor Khachakap, Ghursali, Karadzor communities.

25. AZERBAIJANI RULING PARTY SPEAKS ABOUT MILITARY WAY OF CONFLICT REGULATION [ARMENPRESS, 02/08/08]

The executive secretary of the Azerbaijani ruling "Yeni Azerbaijan" party Ali Ahmedov stated today in Baku that "if Armenia does not implement the assignments of the international community connected with the liberation of Azerbaijani lands, Azerbaijan will have to use its military force."

According to him, the regulation of Karabakh conflict in a peaceful way is "the best variant but if the negotiations give no results, Azerbaijan will have a right to liberate its lands through any way. The international organizations cannot deprive Azerbaijan from that right," Ahmedov added.

"Azerbaijan is for peaceful regulation of the conflict but if it is impossible to settle the conflict in a peaceful way Azerbaijan will have to apply the only way for the liberation of its lands," he said, adding that the international organizations must undertake concrete steps for reaching stability in the region and "force Armenia to liberate the occupied lands".

26. ARTHUR BAGHDASARIAN CONDUCTS MEETINGS IN ARAGATSOTN [ARMENPRESS, 02/08/08]

During the pre-electoral campaign candidate for Armenian presidential elections Arthur Baghdasarian visited the Armenian province of Aragatsotn for the second time. Earlier he conducted meetings with the people of Talin, today he met with the people of Aragats, Kuchak villages and afterwards with the people of Aparan.

The head of the pre-electoral headquarter of Arthur Baghdasarian, Heghine Bisharian and the deputy head of the party Mher Shahgeldian referred to the certain elements of the pre-electoral program of their candidate, in which they underscored the regulation of job issues, loosening of social tension through sharp increase of pensions, allowances and salaries.

Highly underscoring the coming presidential elections, Arthur Baghdasarian called on the people to orient in a right way and make a worthy choice giving preference to a candidate who has realistic program.

27. IT'S YOUR CHOICE TO HAVE 300 OBSERVERS IN SYUNIK ON FEBRUARY 19 [Aravot, 02/08/08]

It's Your Choice - the largest domestic election monitor in Armenia - that has 4,000 volunteers and offices and chapters in all provinces and 12 communities of Yerevan, will deploy over 300 observers in all 153 election precincts in the southern province of Syunik.

Angela Makyan, head of the provincial chapter of the organization, said to Armenpress two observers will be watching the process of voting at each polling station.

The organization is also watching now preparations for the February 19 presidential election. It held many meetings with ordinary voters to explain voting procedures and their rights.



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28. NAGORNO-KARABAKH FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS CENTER TO PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL TIES [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 02/08/08]

The government of Nagorno-Karabakh has decided to establish a foreign ministry affiliated center for international cooperation.

Nagorno-Karabakh foreign ministry said to Armenpress the new center will be headed by Ms. Janna Krikorova, who served as secretary general of the ministry.

The new center will be seeking to establish, promote and deepen international ties of Nagorno-Karabakh. It will also aim at advertising Nagorno-Karabakh abroad. It will have an expertise council comprising diplomats and experts. The new center will be based in the town of Shushi.

BUSINESS

29. PRIMARY GOAL OF CBA IN 2008 IS TO ENSURE PRICE STABILITY [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/06/08]

At the February 5 sitting, the RA National Assembly took notice of the 2008 program of monetary and credit policy of the Central Bank (CBA). The CBA chairman Tigran Sargsian in particular said that this year the CBA will continue the strategy of shifting to inflation targeting. In implementing this strategy, the CBA will mainly be guided by the major and primary goal of ensuring price stability. The target index of inflation was established at annual 4% +/- 1.5% for 2008-2010. Overall inflation: growth of the index of consumer prices, which represents the growth of the index of prices of 470 consumer goods and tariffs of services, was established as the index of inflation. At the beginning of each quarter, the CBA board will make a decision on directions of the monetary and credit policy for each quarter, based on forecasts about inflation, scenarios of development of the world economy, as well as inflation risks.

30. EXCHANGE RATE OF ARMENIAN DRAM GROWS BY 0.9% AGAINST U.S. DOLLAR IN JANUARY 2008 [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/06/08]

There was 2.4% and 0.9% growth in consumer prices and the exchange rate of the Armenian dram against the U.S. dollar respectively in Armenia in January 2008 as compared with December 2007. According to the RA National Statistical Service, 2.4% growth of consumer prices was accompanied by a 0.3% fall in the exchange rate of the Armenian dram against the dollar in the same period of last year.

The average settlement exchange rate of the Armenian dram against the dollar made 306.98 drams in January 2008, which is by 15.6% lower than the respective index of January 2007 (363.71 drams).

31. "ARMAVIA" TO IMPLEMENT YEREVAN-LOS ANGELES FLIGHT [Azg, 02/08/08]

The owner of the "Armavia" airlines Mikhail Baghdassarov has recently conducted negotiations in Great Britain for hiring "Boing-767" airplane. This plane is expected to be used for the implementation of Yerevan-Los Angeles trans-Atlantic flights, which are going to be implemented starting May, 2008

Mr. Baghdassarov said today that two flight directions are being developed – Yerevan-Amsterdam-Los Angeles and Yerevan-New York-Los Angeles.

"Armavia" is going to carry out Yerevan-Marseilles-Yerevan flight in summer when the necessary works for its implementation will be finished.

Speaking about price policy, M. Baghdasarov said that the company is functioning in conditions of strict competition but in spite of that it is trying not to increase the price of tickets.

The owner of the airlines also said that the Armenian aviation is moving with the demand of the time which may be witnessed by acquiring of a completely new "Airbus-319" in 2009. The initial 1.5 million USD has already been paid and next year the Armenian side will get the airplane right from the factory.

32. ARMENIAN IT COMPANIES TO OPEN NEW REPRESENTATIONS ABROAD [ARMENPRESS, 02/08/08]

Bagrat Yengibarjian, the director of Armenian Enterprises Incubator Foundation (EIF), told Armenpress that more representations of Armenian IT companies abroad will open this year.

He said Armenian IT companies have already representations in Canada and Austria and this model will be used to open new representations in the USA, Europe and Arab countries. He said both acting representations' annual earnings are about \$1 million.



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Armenian IT companies will also showcase their products at annual CeBit fair in Germany Hanover on March 4-9 and on May 10-22 they will also take their products to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for IT world festival.

33. ERICSSON WINS IMS CONTRACT WITH ARMENTEL IN ARMENIA [ARMENPRESS, 02/08/08]

Sweden's Ericsson said it has been selected by ArmenTel, VimpelCom's operator in Armenia, as the supplier and systems integrator of an IP Multimedia Subsystem solution that will deliver a next-generation network, supporting integrated fixed and mobile services.

Under the agreement, Ericsson will transform ArmenTel's existing fixed network into an IMS-based, fixed and mobile convergent network.

The deal includes Ericsson systems integration services of required IP-platforms and applications to enable convergent IMS service offering, such as IP telephony and multimedia services to consumers and business customers. Ericsson will also provide a wide range of professional services, including consulting and support.

IMS-based services enable personalized communication through various media such as voice, text, pictures and video. Ericsson's IMS solution is an end-to-end offering for fixed and mobile operators. It supports the introduction of flexible and scalable advanced services across a range of end user devices, while helping operators leverage their existing investments. IMS also represents the evolution of converged mobile and fixed-control networks to all-IP, providing flexibility to support broadband services.

Dmitry Pleskonos, Vice President of VimpelCom, says: "We are glad that long-term cooperation with Ericsson as mobile systems supplier served as a basis for the extension of our partnership in such an important area as mobile-fixed convergence, where we see great potential. Ericsson's advanced end-to-end solution will allow our subscribers to enjoy a wide range of hi-end telecom services."

Zoran Lukovic, Vice President, Ericsson Eastern Europe and Central Asia, says: "We are proud to become ArmenTel's partner in this milestone project. Ericsson IMS offers an attractive user experience by enabling telecom operators to combine today's and tomorrow's applications in an integrated service offering."

Ericsson is the world's leading provider of technology and services to telecom operators. The market leader in 2G and 3G mobile technologies, Ericsson supplies communications services and manages networks that serve more than 185 million subscribers. The company's portfolio comprises mobile and fixed network infrastructure, and broadband and multimedia solutions for operators, enterprises and developers. The Sony Ericsson joint venture provides consumers with feature-rich personal mobile devices.

Ericsson is advancing its vision of 'communication for all' through innovation, technology, and sustainable business solutions. Working in 175 countries, more than 70,000 employees generated revenue of USD 27.9 billion (SEK 189 billion) in 2007. Founded in 1876 and headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, Ericsson is listed on the Stockholm, London and NASDAQ stock exchanges.

Ericsson IMS is an end-to-end solution that gives operators immediate revenue opportunities when evolving to all-IP operations. It enables seamless access to a wide range of new multimedia services across both fixed and mobile networks. Ericsson's IMS solution includes a converged IMS core infrastructure, as well as application servers and service enablers for common functions that can be reused by multiple fixed and mobile applications. The IMS solution is a part of Ericsson's Full Service Broadband offering.

34. SAINT VIRGIN HOSPITAL HAS RENOVATED INTENSIVE CARE DEPARTMENT [Hayots Ashkhar, 02/08/08]

Health minister Harutyun Kushkian opened today the renovated department of intensive care and rehabilitation at Saint Virgin hospital in Yerevan.

The renovation was funded by a World Bank credit. The department is furnished now with modern equipment. The minister said the department is intended for children but also treats grown-ups.

He said one of the government's priorities for the next three years is to have modern hospitals and clinics not only in Yerevan but also outside it.

Last year the hospital treated 1,100 patients, the majority were new born babies with different defects.

Over 1 billion Drams were spent to make this hospital comply with European standards.



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DIASPORA

35. BERKELEY CITY COUNCIL CALLS ON US CONGRESS TO ADVANCE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE RESOLUTION [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

The Berkeley City Council unanimously passed a resolution calling on the United States House of Representatives to advance H.Res.106, the Armenian Genocide Resolution, reported the San Francisco Bay Area Armenian National Committee (Bay Area ANC).

"Your action tonight will help send the message that Berkeley does not want our country to bow to foreign intimidation on a matter as fundamental as genocide," said Bay Area ANC Chairwoman Roxanne Makasdjian in thanking the Council for adopting the resolution.

The measure was introduced by Councilman Kriss Worthington, who worked with the Bay Area ANC in drafting the language for the resolution. A number of Armenian Americans were on hand and spoke during the public comment portion of the Council meeting, including members of the Armenian Youth Federation and the University of California Berkeley Armenian Student Association.

"I'm glad to see Berkeley once again stand up for human rights," said Shant Hagopian, a UC Berkeley student and Bay Area ANC activist. "This resolution is one more step forward on the path to justice.

36. UAF SHIPPED TO ARMENIA \$56 MILLION OF AID IN 2007 [ARMENPRESS, 02/08/08]

The United Armenian Fund contributed to Armenia during the fiscal year 2007, \$56 million of humanitarian assistance almost twice as much as during the previous year. The supplies consisted primarily of medicines and medical supplies, according to the latest audit of its financial statements.

The UAF spent less than 1% of its total revenues on administrative expenses, allocating the remaining 99% to assisting the people of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, according to the audit.

During its 18 years of operations, the UAF delivered to Armenia a grand total of \$502 million worth of relief supplies on board 144 airlifts and 1,494 sea containers.

The UAF is the collective effort of the Armenian Assembly of America, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Armenian Missionary Association of America, the Armenian Relief Society, the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America and the Lincy Foundation.

37. THREE INITIATIVES OF THE ARMENIA FUND IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH [ARMENPRESS, 02/08/08]

The Armenia Fund said its infrastructure initiatives in Nagorno-Karabakh for the last month include three projects - renovation of the secondary school in Togh village, construction of a school extension to the school in Aknakhbiur village and a kindergarten in Mataghis village.

Renovation of the Togh School in Hadrut region is extremely important for the whole area. During the 1988-1990 Karabakh conflict the school and facilities suffered greatly and the building fell into disrepair: the roof is leaking and no longer safe, with no running water, there is no proper sanitation.

Cold winter days added to hardships and discomfort. With the village water pipes frozen due to unprecedented low temperature, for more than a month now the villagers depend on the water carried from nearby springs.

Residents say that it will be another month before the running water be restored and life is back to normal in the community. Today, some 100 students attend the school. They have their classes on the ground floor of the old school building, as well as are hosted by the nearby music school.

Although rooms are heated by wood stoves, and are warm enough to sit in, students look forward to the completion of the renovation, when they will be able to have classes in well-lit, clean and heated classrooms. The Togh School was built in 1979. The left-side block of the building is being renovated within the Artsakh Rebirth Project (project cost AMD 139 million, around US\$ 462.5 thousand). Currently, landscaping of the building and reinforcement of its foundations are being carried out.

Within the coming months, internal water network and heating system will be built, refurbishment will be implemented. School surroundings will be improved too, to provide a welcoming environment for the students to be in.

"I will finish school this year and, unfortunately, will not have a chance to enjoy the new school conditions, but the junior class students are absolutely delighted at the prospect of clean and beautiful classrooms," says Galina Avetissyan, an 11th grade student. Galina's favorite subjects at school are



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biology and chemistry, and she is quite certain about her plans for the future. She will enter the medical university, qualify for a surgeon, and then go back to her home village in the hope that it will then have a hospital, and she will be able to help the villagers, make their lives less tough. The only health facility in the community of over 700 is a small healthcare point. All those in need of professional medical assistance are rushed to Stepanakert hospital.

"We thank the Armenia Fund for its invaluable support to us. For years we have been trying really hard to teach and educate our children as best as we could, but provision of adequate education under these circumstances is not very realistic. It feels great to know that in a few months we will have a modern school with enough space and facilities to also accommodate children from the neighboring communities of Jrakviz, Mariamadzor, Taghut, Tsakuri Hakaku, Mokhrenes, Tumi," Vladik Ghahryan, director of the school said. Students also carry on with classes of piano, pipe, painting and chess.

"Not for a single day we disrupted classes, not even during those harsh months of wartime with private homes sheltering us," the director added proudly. The new extension to the Aknaghbiur School with the community of over 330 aims at increasing the school capacity. The two-story building has 8 classrooms which is not enough to properly accommodate the 88 students attending the school. With extension in place the school will have 4 more classrooms. The school management expects to have the number of students rise to 120 in a few years. The project (cost AMD 24 million, around US\$77.5 thousand) is being implemented through the sponsorship of The Armenia Fund French local committee.

Currently the former school of the Mataghis village in Martakert region is being rebuilt into a kindergarten. The project (cost AMD 15 million, around US\$ 66.5 thousand) is sponsored by the Armenia Fund Lebanese local committee. Donors have also taken care of the furniture for the place, so a nice surprise awaits youngsters of the village and their parents in a few months. It is noteworthy, that in 2007 The Armenia Fund completed construction of the new school in Mataghis. The deputy director of the school Nelli Gasparyan thanked the Armenia Fund working group for the support the Fund had given and said they were very pleased that more young people choose to stay in the village thanks to the new modern school – a welcome place for school children to study and young teachers to teach in.

During years, the Armenia Fund has given much attention to young people and their education by addressing their needs and interests. Along with the implementation of the Artsakh Rebirth Project, the Fund adopted and launched the Rural Development Program in Armenia and Karabakh which will provide a comprehensive solution to the problems of rural areas where there is a growing concern with the quality of life." said Vahe Aghabegians, the executive director of the Armenia Fund.

ARTS

38. PARAJANOV MUSEUM TO PUBLISH ALBUM OF WORKS OF PARAJANOV [Azg, 02/07/08]

Exhibition of works of Sergey Parajanov opened on January 30 in Kiev where about 60 works of the master were presented. Director of S. Parajanov house-museum Zaven Sarkissian told at a press conference that the exhibition was organized in Ukrainian National Fine Arts Museum which provided three big halls for the conduction of the exhibition.

"Such exhibition was organized in Kiev as Parajanov spent his mature years there and some members of his family and relatives are living there," he said.

Z. Sarkissian said that Parajanov house-museum is also expected to publish an album about Parajanov in which his 150 works will be presented.

39. ARMENIA SHOWCASED ITS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AT BERLIN FAIR [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

Over 30 Armenian companies producing brandy, wines, vegetable and fruit preserves, honey and dried fruits showcased their products at International Green Week fair in Germany's Berlin last month.

Armenian agricultural minister David Lokian led the Armenian delegation participating in it. Armenian companies were assisted greatly by German KfW bank and GTZ organization.

Farming issues and global supply and demand were discussed at a special forum.

More than 400,000 visitors attended the exhibition, which was in its 73rd year. Around 100,000 products were on display by 1,610 exhibitors from 52 countries.



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40. AZERI JOURNALIST SPEAKS IN FAVOR OF CULTURAL DIALOGUE WITH ARMENIA [ARMENPRESS, 02/07/08]

Nagorno-Karabakh is the main obstacle for Azerbaijan to restore its territorial integrity while Azerbaijan remains the major obstacle for Nagorno-Karabakh to fully exercise its right to self-determination, said an Azerbaijani journalist today in Yerevan.

Zulfugar Farzaliyev represents Azerbaijan at an international conference in Yerevan started today entitled "The Caucasus and the Middle East as Potential Partners in the Process of Forming Regional Security System."

The Azeri journalist said despite the ongoing negotiations societies in both countries should themselves start seeking ways of reconciliation and understanding through cultural dialogue and people's diplomacy.

"We are in a state of no war nor peace and many people in Azerbaijan perceive this as a military defeat and the problem is to persuade these people to launch a dialogue with Armenians," he said.

In his opinion, both nations should work to eliminate and throw away the image of enemy already deeply entrenched among Azeris and Armenians.

"A generation is growing now that has no idea that Armenians and Azeris used to have normal relations. It is more difficult to force a nation to love their neighbors than to force them to love the whole humanity," he said.

"One good move will be followed by another one. If we restore one monument and save one manuscript that will be a step towards peace," he said.

He said he was impressed seeing a Muslim mosque restored in central Yerevan.

"Our goal is to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during our life span and not to leave it to the next generation," he said.

41. TAMANIAN ANNEX OF NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ARMENIA TO BE REPAIRED WITH FUNDS OF 2008 RA STATE BUDGET [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 02/07/08]

The Tamanian annex of the National Library of Armenia will be repaired with the funds of the 2008 RA state budget. As Noyan Tapan correspondent was informed by David Sarkissian, the Director of the National Library of Armenia, the repairs estimate was made up as early as in 2005, but due to the growth in prices for building materials in the past 1-2 years it is being reconsidered at present. Nevertheless, 300m drams (nearly 968 thousand USD) has been allocated from the state budget for the present.

According to D. Sarkissian, the annex was built in 1939 and has not been fundamentally repaired up to present. The Tamanian annex, according to him, is one of the historic-architectural monuments of Yerevan. After the repairs, library's cultural, as well as incunabular and rare literature funds will be placed in the annex. Besides, it is envisaged to open a library museum with a permanent display in the annex, which will be dedicated to the 500th anniversary of Armenian book's publishing.

42. ARMENIAN BARITONE WINS GOLD MEDAL OF PAVEL LISITSIAN COMPETITION [ARMENPRESS, 02/08/08]

An Armenian baritone singer Gevork Hakobian was awarded the gold medal of the first international competition in Moscow dedicated to famous baritone opera singer Pavel Lisitsian.

The Grand Prix was awarded to Roman Burdenko of Russia. Liam Bonner of the USA was also awarded gold medal. Thirty-seven singers from 13 countries participated in the first and second rounds of the competition.

Pavel Lisitsian was an outstanding Soviet baritone opera singer of Armenian descent who performed in the Bolshoi Opera, Moscow from 1940 until his retirement from stage in 1966.

RELIGION

43. CATHOLICOS KAREKIN II RECEIVES CHAIRMAN OF RF GOVERNMENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/06/08]

Receiving Viktor Zubkov, the Chairman of the RF government, on February 6, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II was pleased to touch upon the centuries-old friendship between Armenian and Russian peoples the developing relations between the two states and cooperation in different spheres.



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The Patriarch in the person of Prime Minister Zubkov thanked the RF authorities for the careful and considerate attitude to the Armenian community in Russia.

In his turn, V. Zubkov presented the results of his visit to Armenia assuring that Armenian-Russian cooperation will continue developing.

According to the Information Services of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, during the meeting they touched upon the current warm relations between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church.

SPORTS

45. ARMENIAN CHESS PLAYERS PERFORM SUCCESSFULLY IN INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS [ARMENPRESS, 02/08/08]

Armenian chess players Avetik Grigorian and Gevorg Harutyunian gaining 6 points from possible 7 are among the leaders of an international championship held in the Iranian town of Urmia.

In women championship Lilit Galoyan, Siranush Andreasian and Liana Aghabekian have gained 5 points after 6 rounds and are also among the leaders of the championship. The tournament is topped by Nino Batsiashvili who has 5.5 points.

Vardan Khojoyan participating in an open chess championship held in Moscow has gained 5 points after the 5 rounds and is among the leaders. Armen Vardapetian has 4.5 points from 5 possible.

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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.