



TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. ACCORDING TO ARAM SAFARIAN, AMONG THOSE DETAINED THERE ARE ALSO PEOPLE PUT UNDER ARREST "FOR POLITICAL MOTIVES" [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

The RA authorities are taking real steps in the direction of the implementation of the points of the April 17 resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe concerning the democratic institutions of Armenia. This statement was made by Aram Safarian, the Secretary of the Bargavach Hayastan (Prosperous Armenia) faction of the National Assembly, at the press conference, which was held on May 14. He qualified as "aspersion" the rumours, according to which those steps of the authorities are allegedly of imitative character and the latters are just striving to throw wool over the eyes of the European community.

In the conviction of Aram Safarian, today, it is useless to speak about the necessity for holding extra-parliamentary or presidential elections. At present, as he declared, one should focus on the resolution passed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and its implementation. The resolution, according to Aram Safarian, is liable to implementation both for the authorities and the opposition. In order to throw off the home political tension, in his words, "it is necessary that the two sides display kind and yielding attitude." In addition to this, according to the representative of the Bargavach Hayastan party, it is necessary to give posts to opposition members and an opportunity for bringing their speech to notice through media to the extra-parliamentary opposition in order to make audible the voice of the parliamentary opposition.

Referring to the criminal cases filed in connection with the March 1 events, Aram Safarian mentioned that within the frameworks of the latters "among those detained there are also people put under arrest for political motives." He reaffirmed the position of the Bargavach Hayastan Party concerning the detained political figures and freedom fighters: that is people, who have fulfilled actions by infringing the Criminal Code must be punished and those, who have been detained for political activities must be set free.

2. HRAYR KARAPETIAN'S CANDIDATURE TO BE NOMINATED FOR NA VICE-SPEAKER'S POST [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

Changes have been made in the leading staff of the Orinats Yerkir and ARFD National Assembly factions. NA Speaker Tigran Torosian stated at the May 19 NA sitting.

According to the decision made during the Orinats Yerkir faction's sitting, Heghine Bisharian, faction's former Secretary, has been elected faction head and Khachik Haroutiunian, who has joined the faction lately, has been elected faction Secretary. The above mentioned change is conditioned by appointment of former faction head, party Chairman Artur Baghdasarian Secretary of the Security Council and according to it, stopping his deputy powers ahead of the schedule.

By the ARFD faction's decision, Vahan Hovhannisian, the former NA Vice-Speaker, has been elected faction head. He will replace Hrayr Karapetian on the faction head's post. Hrayr Karapetian's candidature will be nominated for the NA Vice-Speaker's vacant post. According to T. Torosian, political discussions with coalition parties have finished and it will be right to solve the issue of NA Vice-Speaker's election during the current four-day session.

3. RA NA REGULAR FOUR-DAY SESSION STARTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

The work of the RA National Assembly regular four-day plenary session started on May 19. More than 40 issues and 5 international agreements submitted for the ratification of the RA President are on the agenda. The agreement On Permanent Mission of the Asian Development Bank signed on January 23, 2008 in Manila and on January 30, 2008 in Yerevan between the RA government and the Asian Development Bank was ratified. The prevailing part of the adopted bills envisage amendments and addenda to a number of laws in force. The bill On Firm Names and the legislative package On Inventions, Useful Models, and Industrial Samples adopted in the second reading are an exception.

After the voting the parliament started discussing the bill On Making Amendments to the RA law On Holding Gatherings, Meetings, and Marches. According to the author of the latter, NA Speaker Tigran



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

Torosian, it has been worked out as a result of the discussions held in April in Yerevan jointly with the experts of Council of Europe Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR. The experts' conclusion is positive, but it is mentioned that "the quality of any law depends on the circumstances of both its planning and use."

4. DOCTOR EXAMINING ARAM KARAPETIAN RESTORED TO HIS JOB [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

Armen Gasparian, the doctor-cardiologist examining Aram Karapetian, the leader of the Nor Zhamanakner (New Times) party, has been restored to his former job. Noyan Tapan correspondent was informed about it by doctor A. Gasparian.

It should be mentioned that the cardiologist of the Erebuni Medical Center had examined A. Karapetian and expressed concern over his health condition at the May 15 press conference, stating that he should be immediately taken to a specialized medical center. The next day A. Karapetian was moved to the Erebuni Medical Center and the same day the center administration informed A. Gasparian that he is dismissed from his job.

A. Gasparian also said that Aram Karapetian's condition remains bad, his blood pressure is still high, and, according to the diagnosis, he needs a long treatment.

5. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS OF HUNGER-STRIKE DEMANDING ARAM KARAPETIAN'S RELEASE REACHES 10 [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

Members of the Special Regiment newly created youth organization organized a march on May 19 in Yerevan in protection of Aram Karapetian, the leader of the Nor Zhamanakner (New Times) party, who is in custody at present. As Noyan Tapan correspondent was informed by initiative's activists, action's goal was to express support to A. Karapetian having health problems.

Voicing "Freedom to Political Prisoners!," "Now!," "Free, Independent Armenia!," "Struggle, Struggle Till the End!," the young people from territory near Yerevan Agricultural University, by Terian, Isahakian, Abovian streets reached the building of the RA Prosecutor General's Office. They joined Hrachya Sargsian, a member of the NZP Board, and six opposition activists, who went on termless hunger-strike 5 days ago near the Prosecutor's Office building demanding A. Karapetian's release. It should be mentioned that another 3 persons, Violeta Ghazarian, Karine Asaturova, and Khachatur Davtian joined the hunger-strike's seven participants on May 17 and 18.

H. Sargsian stated near the Prosecutor's Office building surrounded by policemen that A. Karapetian's condition is grave: he receives nitroglycerine by a dropper. In spite of that fact, as he added, the TV companies' information services report obviously false information, according to which, allegedly, the health condition of the NZP leader has improved. According to H. Sargsian, by doing so, the authorities try to create an imitation that allegedly A. Karapetian can be also cured in an isolator, and therefore, to prolong his restraint, arrest, by another two months. "We will treat the people, who carry out a political order today just like the authorities treated the people on March 1," H. Sargsian said.

From the Prosecutor's Office building the demonstrators went to the first instance court of Kentron and Nork-Marash communities, where examination of the mediation presented to the preliminary examination body on prolonging A. Karapetian's arrest by another two months was to take place at 16:00. As the court sitting was to be held behind closed doors, the action of protest continued in front of the court building.

6. THERE IS A NEED OF PARTIES' UNIFICATION, POLITICAL SPHERE'S CLARIFICATION IN ARMENIA, ALBERT BAZEYAN CONSIDERS [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

The political system in Armenia is incomplete and having more than 70 parties is too much for a state, as there cannot be so many ideologies and state development models. Political figure Albert Bazeyan expressed such an opinion at the May 19 press conference adding that there is a need of political parties' unification, political field's enlargement and clarification in the country.

He said that the National Revival (Bazeyan was its Chairman), Dashink (Alliance) parties and the Ramkavar-Azatakan Party of Armenia have been de facto united today. According to A. Bazeyan, this process will be permanent: discussions and consultation meetings with individual parties, individual political figures acting in the same ideological sphere are organized. "Its goal is to create an influential political force enjoying confidence of certain strata of society, which will be able to take part in our country's political processes, elections," he said.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

A. Bazeyan said that all legal problems of parties' unification process have been solved, only some organization problems remain. According to him, preliminary conferences of local structures will take place in autumn, which will be followed by the "enlarged" party's congress.

7. OPPOSITION DOES NOT TAKE PART IN YEREVAN PREFECTS' ELECTIONS, CONSIDERING THEM ANTI-CONSTITUTIONAL [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

The National Movement led by Levon Ter-Petrosian will take part in local self-government elections in autumn. Arman Musinian, L. Ter-Petrosian's Spokesperson, informed journalists about it on May 19.

According to him, the opposition movement does not take part in the elections of Yerevan prefects, as it considers those elections anti-constitutional. A. Musinian said that according to the constitutional amendments, as far back as in late 2007 a law on Yerevan was to have been adopted, Yerevan's status was to have been determined and mayor's elections were to have been held. However, they were postponed. In his words, it is five months Yerevan is in an anti-constitutional status with its anti-constitutional mayor, all decisions made by which are also anti-constitutional.

8. ACCORDING TO PRELIMINARY RESULTS, ARTUR GEVORGIAN ELECTED PREFECT OF DAVTASHEN COMMUNITY [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

According to the preliminary results of the May 18 prefect's elections of Yerevan's community of Davtashen, Artur Gevorgian, the deputy Davtashen prefect, has been elected prefect. He is the nephew of former National Assembly deputy Ruben Gevorgian.

As Noyan Tapan correspondent was informed by Tatev Ohanian, the Spokesperson of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), 15 585 or 56% of the total number of community's voters, 27 785, took part in voting. 15 366 voters voted for the only candidate, 123 voted against. 92 ballot-papers were recognized invalid. The number of inaccuracies is 16.

9. ACCORDING TO PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF MAY 18 AVAN PREFECT'S ELECTIONS, TARON MARGARIAN REELECTED PREFECT [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

According to the preliminary results of the May 18 prefect's elections of the Avan community of Yerevan, current prefect, RPA member Taron Margarian has been reelected.

As Noyan Tapan correspondent was informed by Tatev Ohanian, the Spokesperson of the RA Central Electoral Commission, 18 857 or 53.1% of the total number of Avan's voters, 35 475, took part in voting. 18 578 voters voted for the only candidate, 105 voted against. 174 ballot-papers were recognized invalid. The number of inaccuracies is 6.

10. ACCORDING TO PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF MALATIA-SEBASTIA COMMUNITY'S MAY 18 PREFECT'S ELECTIONS, DAVID OHANIAN ELECTED [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

According to the preliminary results of the May 18 prefect's elections of Yerevan's Malatia-Sebastia community, RPA member David Ohanian, the head of the trade and service department of the same prefect's office, has been elected prefect.

As Noyan Tapan correspondent was informed by Tatev Ohanian, the Spokesperson of the RA Central Electoral Commission, 30 673 or 32.1% of the total number of community's voters, 95 436, took part in voting. 29 914 voters voted for the only candidate, 471 voted against. 282 ballot-papers were recognized invalid. The number of inaccuracies is 62.

11. ACCORDING TO PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF MAY 18 ELECTIONS OF NORK-MARASH PREFECT, VARAZDAT MKRTCHIAN REELECTED [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

According to the preliminary results of the May 18 prefect's elections of Yerevan's Nork-Marash community, current prefect, RPA member Varazdat Mkrtchian has been reelected. 3 072 voters voted for him.

As Noyan Tapan was informed by Tatev Ohanian, the Spokesperson of the RA Central Electoral Commission, the other two candidates, non-partisans Garnik Martirosian and Ashot Margarian, received 49 and 212 votes, respectively. 3 393 or 38.3% of the total number of community's voters, 8 863, took part in voting. 60 ballot-papers were recognized invalid. The number of inaccuracies is 1.



12. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AGAIN REVISES CURRENT LAW ON MEETINGS, ASSEMBLIES, RALLIES AND DEMONSTRATIONS [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

The RA National Assembly on May 19 started discussing in the first reading the bill on amendments and additions to the amended on March 17 RA Law on Conducting Meetings, Assemblies, Rallies and Demonstrations. The bill was prepared by the NA speaker Tigran Torosian based on the joint conclusion of the Council of Europe Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR and the provisions of the memorandum adopted as a result of joint discussions of the above mentioned structures and Armenian experts.

The bill, in particular, allows to conduct spontaneous mass public events, but for a limited period of time - 6 hours. By the bill, any following mass event regarding the same problem cannot be considered spontaneous and shall be held in accordance with the procedure that envisages notification of the mayor's office. By the bill, a spontaneous event is a peaceful public event, which has not been announced beforehand and which requires an immediate response to a concrete phenomenon or event.

The bill also invalidates the March 17 law's provision, by which "in case of mass public events' turning into mass disorder which has resulted in deaths, the authorized body - with the aim of preventing new crimes, and if other preventive means are exhausted - may temporarily ban the holding of mass public events until the circumstances of the crime and the criminals are revealed".

Another proposed amendment establishes the right to dispute in court a decision banning the holding of a mass public event. By the bill, the court makes a decision within 24 hours. The court's ruling to invalidate a decision banning a mass public event takes effect from the moment of the ruling's publication.

The chairman of the NA Standing Committee on State and Legal Issues, head of the Armenian delegation in the PACE David Harutyunian underlined the importance of bringing the current law into line with the European Convention on Human Rights and considered it crucial "to give a civilized form to the law", especially as the Venice Commission experts have expressed a positive opinion about the bill under discussion.

"Heritage" faction was against the bill. In the opinion of its members, the amendments proposed are of cosmetic character and are not aimed at Armenia's democratization. In their opinion, it is necessary to return to the law in force before March 17 and to reject the current amendments.

The representatives of the factions of the 4 parties forming the political coalition spoke in support of the bill. At the same time the newly elected head of ARF faction Vahan Hovhannisian said that the positive position of their faction is conditioned by the fact that on March 17 the parliament took "a step backward, and now by taking half a step or 3/4 of a step", it tries to return to the law in effect before March 17. In his words, if the indicated step backward had not been taken, the PACE resolution 1609 about the state of democratic institutions in Armenia would not have been so strict.

13. MOST ARRESTS MADE SINCE MARCH 1 HAVE POLITICAL REASON, ALBERT BAZEYAN CLAIMS [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

Most of the arrests made since March 1 have a political reason, political figure Albert Bazeyan stated at the May 19 press conference, calling on the authorities to release the prisoners, especially azatamartiks (freedom fighters). In his words, the azatamartiks displayed their political position and supported the presidential candidate whom they preferred. A. Bazeyan considered as unconvincing the accusations (usurpation of state power by force, keeping of illegal weapons and ammunition), based on which the arrests have been made. According to him, cartridges and unusable arms should not be used to make accusations against this category of people. "Finally, the state is responsible for the fact that there are so many arms and ammunition in the society today. A policy on their elimination should have been conducted," he said.

A. Bazeyan stated that the azatamartiks have made a great contribution to the liberation of Artsakh and the defence of state borders. In this respect, according to him, at least the precautionary measure with respect to them should have been changed. "An amnesty should be granted. I am sure that in case of their release, they will not hinder the court investigation," he said. In the words of A. Bazeyan, he was against involving the Yerkrpah Union of Volunteers and "Trial of Spirit" organization in politics, because these are social structures and if the political factor becomes primary in such organizations, a split of these structures takes place.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

14. ALBERT BAZEYAN SAYS "WE ARE AIMED AT CREATING INFLUENTIAL POLITICAL FORCE WHICH WILL HAVE TRUST OF THE PEOPLE" [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

The inner-political field of Armenia must be clarified by uniting and enlarging of the parties as the existence of more than 70 parties in a such small state is not necessary, and it is obvious that there is no such number of ideologies and models of the development of the state, head of the "National Revival" Party Albert Bazeyan said today at a press conference.

"That is the reason why we have started the process: "National Revival" and "Alliance" parties stop their functioning, they are withdrawn from the state registration and their legal successor is Armenia's Ramkavar-Azatakan party. This process will not be limited with the uniting of three parties only, it is a continuative process. Discussions, meetings are being held with the political figures functioning in the same ideological field. We are aimed at establishing influential political force which will also have trust of the people and will be able to participate in all the inner-political processes," A. Bazeyan said.

He noted that many other political forces announce about the necessity of uniting and enlarging. According to him, all the legal issues of the uniting of the three parties have almost been solved, just organizational issues have been left.

In fall conferences will be held with the joint local establishments and afterwards the assembly of the party will take place, during which the name of the new political force will be decided. The center of the party will be in Armenia. He also said that the leadership of the party has not yet been decided. The agreement will be reached at the assembly.

15. OFFICIAL OPENING OF 30TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ARF TO TAKE PLACE MAY 21 [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

The official opening of the 30th general assembly of ARF will take place on May 21 in the session hall of the Armenian government.

Press service of the ARF Bureau told Armenpress that representative of ARF Bureau Hrant Margarian will present a report at the opening. Afterwards, the assembly will continue its work in Tsakhkadzor.

Representatives of establishment of ARF functioning in 30 countries will be present at the general gathering which is being called once in four years and clarifies the political strategy of the party.

At the end of the assembly the party will elect the senior executive body – the Bureau – which is governing the activity of the party until the next general assembly. Members of the Bureau are elected from different countries, they are residing in Yerevan.

16. PARLIAMENT APPROVES DRAFT LAW ON "MEETINGS, RALLIES AND MARCHES" IN ITS FIRST READING [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

Armenian parliament approved in its first reading the draft law on making changes in the law on conducting "Meetings, Rallies and Marches".

Ninety three parliamentarians voted for, 6 against (from "Heritage" faction) and one, Viktor Dallakian, abstained from voting.

The changes have been developed taking into consideration the suggestions of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and Council of Europe Venice Commission. The conclusion of the mentioned establishments over the draft law was positive.

After the voting, the author of the draft law, parliament Chairman Tigran Torosian called on the members of parliament to present suggestions before the second reading.

Afterwards the parliamentarians continued the discussion of 2007 budget performance.

In parallel with the session the closed secret elections of deputy parliament speaker were held. The only nominated candidate is Hrayr Karapetian.

17. HRAYR KARAPETIAN ELECTED DEPUTY PARLIAMENT SPEAKER [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

Hrayr Karapetian has been elected today the deputy speaker of the Armenian National Assembly. Around 101 parliamentarians participated in the closed secret voting, 97 of them voted for, 1 against, 2 voting papers were found invalid.

Hrayr Karapetian thanked his colleagues for trust which he said is very obliging. He said he will use all the opportunities for the benefit of the National Assembly and the homeland.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

18. IN MESSAGE TO ARMENIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BENITA FERRERO-WALDNER UNDERSCORES FURTHER COOPERATION [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian received on May 19 the head of the Delegation of the European Commission to Armenia Raul de Lutzenberger.

Foreign Ministry press service told Armenpress that during the meeting the sides discussed the pace of implementation of the EU's New Neighborhood program, referred to the prospect of development of EU-Armenia cooperation, spoke about regional issues.

Raul de Lutzenberger conveyed to the minister the message of the EU Commissioner on Political Affairs Benita Ferrero-Waldner. In her message she particularly said, "Our cooperation and the implementation of the EU New Neighborhood Action plan and our permanent dialogue over foreign policy issues means that we have a full agenda, and I hope to cooperate with you during the coming years.

You will have an important role in the implementation of the EU New Neighborhood action program and in cooperation with EU establishments and international partners".

19. AMBASSADOR OF SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC HANDS OVER HIS CREDENTIALS [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

Ambassador of South African Republic Andies Venter (residence Kiev) handed on May 19 the copies of his credentials to the Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian.

Armenian Foreign Ministry press service told Armenpress that greeting the ambassador, E. Nalbandian wished him success in his high mission and expressed readiness to support in developing bilateral relations between Armenia and South Africa.

The ambassador presented the inner and foreign policy of his country and said that the authorities of the South African Republic underscore the development of relations with Armenia in economic and other spheres.

Andies Venter is third ambassador of South African Republic to Armenia.

20. SPOKESMAN FOR FIRST ARMENIAN PRESIDENT: BUT FOR MARCH 1 EVENTS, AFTER CONSTITUTIONAL COURT'S DECISION ALL OF US WOULD HAVE GONE HOME AND PREPARED FOR NEXT ELECTION [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

The authorities are continuing arrests of opposition members: people are arrested and forced to sign illegal documents, Arman Musinian - spokesman for the first president Levon Ter-Petrosian said at the May 19 press conference. In his words, a dialog with the authorities is impossible as long as opposition figures are arrested and kept as hostages. Besides, the authorities should make amendments in the law on meetings, assemblies, rallies and demonstrations and conduct an independent inquiry into the March 1 events. According to A. Musinian, the fulfillment of these conditions is indicated by the PACE as a precondition for dialog.

In his opinion, the current authorities of Armenia cannot organize an independent investigation. He said that no real step in this direction has been taken since March 1. Despite the fact that 10 people died after receiving gunshot wounds, it is still unclear where and under what circumstances it happened, and who are searched in this connection. No criminal cases were opened in connection with plundering some shops.

A. Musinian stated that the opposition does not accept the Constitutional Court's decision about the presidential election and intends to continue its struggle. "But for the March 1 slaughter and the decision of the CC, all of us would have gone home and prepared for next election," the spokesman for the first president pointed out. In his opinion, if a state of emergency had not been declared, the CC decision could have been a different one. He said that the main purpose of the March 1 events was to do so that "there would be no people in Liberty Square at the time of the CC's taking a decision". A. Musinian declared that the opposition will apply to the European court in order to dispute the results of the presidential election. According to him, the package of documents is ready but the date of applying to court has not been determined yet.

21. SITUATION IN ARMENIA WILL CHANGE ONLY IN CASE OF LEGAL ELECTIONS, A. BAZEYAN SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

"A struggle of persons rather than an ideological, program struggle is going on in Armenia's political field," political figure Albert Bazeyan said at the May 19 press conference. According to him, this



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

is evident from the fact that various political forces (in terms of ideology) have united around the presidential candidate Levon Ter-Petrosian. In the opinion of A. Bazeyan, in this respect there is a serious confrontation in relations of the authorities and the prevailing opposition.

In his words, a policy of distorted liberalization is being conducted today in Armenia, there is no free economic competition, and an atmosphere of distrust reigns in the society. The reason, in his opinion, is that false elections have been held for years in Armenia. "This situation has been continuing in Armenia since the 1996 presidential election," A. Bazeyan said, noting that the situation will change for the better in case of holding legal elections, which, according to him, depends on the authorities.

22. TERM OF ARAM KARAPETIAN'S ARREST EXTENDED [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

The court of Yerevan's Kentron and Nork-Marash communities (presided by Judge Gayane Karakhanian) on May 19 extended the term of arrest of the chairman of New Times party Aram Karapetian for another two months, NT correspondent was informed by A. Karapetian's lawyer Harutyun Baghdasarian. To recap, A. Karapetian is charged under the RA Criminal Code's Article 333 - false crime reporting (in connection with the so called "Meghri swap project"). Lawyer Baghdasarian said that the court decision will be disputed in the Appeal Court, the Cassation Court, and the European Court of Human Rights. He pointed out that A. Karapetian is ill and needs constant medical care, whereas his arrest has been extended.

The RA Criminal Appeal Court left unchanged the general jurisdiction court's decision to extend the former foreign minister Alexander Arzumanyan's arrest for another two months. To recap, A. Arzumanyan is charged under the CC Article 300 Part 1 (usurping state power) and Article 225 Part 3 (organization of mass disorder accompanied with murder).

23. MEETING BETWEEN LEVON TER-PETROSIAN AND CE DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL HELD [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

The meeting between Levon Ter-Petrosian, the first President of the Republic of Armenia, and Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, was held in Yerevan. The latter was accompanied by her assistant Gianluca Esposito and Bojana Urumova, the Special Representative of the CE Secretary General to Armenia. The demands of Resolution 1609 adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on April 17, which have been introduced to the authorities of Armenia, as well as their implementation process were discussed during the meeting. This information was provided by the RA first President's Press Office.

24. NA SPEAKER NOT GOING TO WORK ANYWHERE ELSE BUT PARLIAMENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

"I said still before the May 12 elections that I am not going to work anywhere else but the parliament," Tigran Torosian told journalists on May 19 in connection with the rumors circulating about the possible resignation of the post of the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia and appointment as an ambassador. He expressed regret that "nonsense, gossips become part of the work of journalists as well." "On the contrary, in my opinion, it is you, who should assist that those senseless mechanisms, which are applied for creating certain problems, are not paid attention to," the NA Speaker said.

25. CHANGES MADE IN STAFF OF ARMENIAN DELEGATION IN PACE [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

Vahe Hovhannisian, the representative of the Bargavach Hayastan (Prosperous Armenia) faction, has been substituted by Naira Zohrabian, a member of the same faction, in the staff of the Armenian delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. This information was provided to a Noyan Tapan correspondent by the faction. The change is conditioned by the preterm stopping of the deputy competences of Vahe Hovhannisian.

The representative of the Orinats Yerkir (Country of Law) faction has also been substituted in the staff of the delegation. Mher Shahgeldian, who has been appointed Minister, has been substituted by given faction member Artashes Avoyan.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

26. PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS OVER ARMENIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS BEING HELD IN YEREVAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

The possibility of Armenia's and Turkey's joint efforts under the circumstance of global challenges and threats was discussed at the international conference organized on May 20 in Yerevan. Armenian and Turkish experts, representatives of diplomatic missions accredited in Armenia and a number of international organizations, students took part in the conference organized by the Eurasia Cooperation Fund and the Analytical Center for Globalization and Regional Cooperation.

The dialogue and cooperation program between Armenia and Turkey, which has been implemented by the Eurasia Cooperation Fund since 2006, contributes to improvement of relations among people, cooperation between NGOs and business circles, which creates a basis for regional integration, stability, and countries' economic development. Steven Banks, the Head of the Political Department of the U.S. Embassy, said. In his words, the United States with active diplomatic efforts tries to contribute to establishment of contacts between Armenia and Turkey, but these efforts of NGOs can also assist in the issue of establishment of diplomatic contacts.

Stepan Grigorian, the Director of the Analytical Center for Globalization and Regional Cooperation, said that public discussions over Armenian-Turkish relations can be more efficient, as they are held in an unconstrained atmosphere. According to him, in spite of many problems, there are also some issues, in connection with which the two countries' interests may coincide. In the political scientist's opinion, in particular, the Kosovo problem is among them, the independence of which has been recognized by Turkey, and Armenia will recognize it sooner or later.

27. PEOPLE WHOSE SONS NOT EQUAL BEFORE LAW AND DEATH UNABLE TO HAVE VICTORIOUS HOMETLAND: PRIME MINISTER TIGRAN SARKISIAN [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

"A people whose sons are not equal before law and death are unable to have victorious homeland," Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian quoted today from a prominent military leader Garegin Nzhde when delivering his keynote speech to parliament members on the 2007 budget performance.

He explained that number one issue now is to create equal taxation conditions for all businessmen so that all be equal before law. "This is the only road to our victory," he said.

He noted that the 2007 budget was exclusive in a sense that the government succeeded in 12 months to raise revenue collection rate by 33 percent and raise their share in the GDP by 1.6 percent.

Tigran Sarkisian described these figures as 'unprecedented,' especially that the share of taxes in the GDP in 2006 rose only 0.2 percent.

"We realize well that the progress in 2007 is not yet sufficient for us to calm and say that we have solved all our problems. Quite the contrary, the performance of 2007 budget has also exposed a string of serious problems related to taxation and customs administration," he said.

He reminded that the 2007 budget had been based on programs, saying this approach should be consolidated because that gives the parliament an opportunity to supervise budget spending.

He said the reported economic indices were quite impressive but also obligating. He said GDP last year rose 13.8 percent and inflation rate was 6.6 percent, while the budget deficit was 1.5 percent.

"If we compare these figures with figures of other former Soviet republics we shall see that from this perspective the past year was successful, which places serious problems before the government to maintain the trend," he said.

28. VARTAN ARAMIAN APPOINTED DEPUTY FINANCE MINISTER [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian dismissed today David Avetisyan as deputy finance and economy minister, the government press office said.

It said by another decree the prime minister appointed Vartan Aramian as deputy finance minister.

Vartan Aramian was born in 1975 in Yerevan. He graduated from economy department of Yerevan State University in 1997. In 2004 he had an intensive training at Fletcher School of Taft University in the USA.

From 1999 to 2006 he held a variety of positions in the Central Bank of Armenia. From 2006 until this appointment he was Armenia's representative at the CIS inter-governmental hard currency committee. Since 2007 he has been lecturing at the French University of Armenia. He is married.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

29. ARMENIA HIGHLY UNDERSCORES PARTNERSHIP WITH GREAT BRITAIN [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian received today ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain Charles Lonsdale.

Armenian Foreign Ministry press service told Armenpress that greeting the guest the minister said that Armenia gives great importance to the partnership with the United Kingdom and expressed assurance that by joint efforts it will be possible to increase the level of partnership and efficiency of cooperation in all directions. The minister pointed out the importance of continuing Armenian-British bilateral programs and development and implementation of the new ones.

The ambassador on his turn assured that British embassy in Yerevan will exert all the necessary efforts for the development of bilateral relations.

During the meeting the interlocutors also referred to regional issues, Armenia's relations with neighboring countries and developments over Nagorno Karabakh conflict regulation.

30. A. ASHOTIAN SAYS IF ARMENIA DOES NOT FORWARD PRE-CONDITIONS NEITHER COUNTRY HAS A RIGHT TO DO IT [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

Dictating pre-conditions in Armenian-Turkish relations means not wanting the normalization of relations, member of the Republican party's parliamentary faction Armen Ashotian said on May 20 at the "Global Challenges and Threats: Possibility of Joint Efforts between Armenia and Turkey" conference.

According to him, if Armenia is not forwarding pre-conditions neither country has a right to do it. Armenia has stated that it is ready for unconditional relations.

"Geopolitical triangles in relations are deniable: the third side is always unnecessary especially in such serious relations. We must speak with each other and for each other, we must find a general platform," the parliamentarian said.

A. Ashotian said recognition of Nagorno Karabakh, open ways of communication, international recognition of the Armenian genocide and stability and peace in the region are Armenia's global issues. As to Turkey, it seeks membership to the European Union, country's territorial integrity and Turkish union. He said that the interests are not coinciding.

Ashotian said that USA has positive impact on the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations. As to Iran and Georgia he said they are not quite interested in the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations. Azerbaijan is viewing the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations as danger to its interests. He said the European Union may become the best platform for Armenian-Turkish relations.

David Hovhannissian, director of the YSU Civilization and Cultural Researches Center, said that the EU indirectly plays an important role as on its way to EU membership Turkey is becoming more democratic, more open country. He does not share the opinion that Europe will make Turkey regulate its relations with Armenia but said it may indirectly have positive impact on it.

31. MEDIATION MUST BE ORGANIZED IN A RIGHT WAY, A. RUSTAMIAN SAYS [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

"If Raffi Hovhannissian is trying to come out as a mediator, I think the way of organization is not chosen in a right way as he must inform about such initiative beforehand: such suggestion is not being made immediately because each of us has its busy schedule," representative of the ARF Bureau Armen Rustamian said yesterday to reporters referring to the letter the head of the "Heritage" parliamentary faction Raffi Hovhannissian sent to the heads of forces which formed political coalition and Armenian first president Levon Ter-Petrosian by which he invited them to "late but still urgent discussion for the regulation of the crisis".

According to Rustamian, a mediator must first of all have the initial agreement and not bring the people before a fact through a letter. He said he personally cannot participate in the meeting as he is going to take part in the event dedicated to the 80th anniversary of establishment of Pan-National Armenian Educational and Cultural Union.

"If we are speaking about mediation, it has its right way for serving its purpose and reaching the goal, and if Raffi Hovhannissian is a side, and I think that he is more a side than a mediator as he supported L. Ter-Petrosian, was by his side, - his being a mediator is a little bit difficult to understand. But for the side I think it was a good sign to participate in the session of the task group set up to coordinate



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

the implementation of suggestions of the PACE resolution,” Rustamian said, adding that R. Hovhannissian could have raised the issue there where everyone was present.

He noted that the task group is now working over a document which refers to all the issues pointed out by R. Hovhannissian. “Moreover it has clear suggestions over nine directions, clear steps are pointed out and will be carried out,” he said.

Rustamian also said that it is important to get prepared for a dialogue, conduct an initial discussion and not to sit and start speaking about something from zero. Rustamian greeted the participation of Raffi Hovhannissian in the works of the task group.

The “Heritage” party has participate in the session of the task group and presented its package of suggestions for the implementation of the PACE resolution.

32. SAMVEL FARMANIAN APPOINTED NEW PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SECRETARY [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

President Serzh Sarkisian signed a decree on May 20 to dismiss Viktor Soghomonian as a presidential press secretary.

The presidential press service told Armenpress that by another decree Serzh Sarkisian appointed Samvel Farmanian as presidential press secretary.

Samvel Farmanian was born in 1978 in the village of Spandarian of Shirak province. In 1995 he graduated from Academics College of Gyumri, in 2001 he graduated with honors from the History Faculty of Yerevan State University.

In 2001-2003 he studied at Sweden’s Lund University’s Center for Eastern and Southeastern Studies having defended with distinction his master’s theses.

In 2003-05 he worked for the Open Society Institute in Armenia, in 2005-06 he worked as an aide to parliament speaker on foreign policy issues.

In 2007 he was elected secretary general of the United Liberal National Party. He is the author of many research papers and media articles. He is married and has two children.

33. PRESIDENT SARKISIAN REORGANIZES NUCLEAR AND RADIATION SAFETY INSPECTION INTO COMMITTEE [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

President Serzh Sarkisian signed a decree on May 20 to reorganize the nuclear and radiation safety state regulatory inspection affiliated with the Nature Protection Ministry’s staff into government-affiliated nuclear safety regulatory state committee.

The presidential press office told Armenpress that a supplement was made to Armenian president March 15, 2002 decree on establishment of the Republic of Armenia’s government structure, which now has a new number 11 point in its section 2 which should read “11. nuclear safety regulatory committee.”

The government was instructed to adopt relevant decisions stemming from this decree.

34. PRESIDENT SERZH SARKISIAN ADDRESSES MESSAGE TO PARTICIPANTS OF ARF GENERAL CONFERENCE [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

President Serzh Sarkisian addressed today a message to delegates and guests of the general conference of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) party.

The presidential press office said the message reads as follows.

“I welcome the delegates and guests of the general meeting of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. Traditionally as a political force whose biography is closely intertwined with Armenia’s new history, our people’s liberation struggle, recognition of the historical justice and heroic battles of our recent history, the ARF has played and is playing a special role in the political life both of Armenia and Diaspora.

Being one of traditional Armenian parties, the ARF was able to swiftly and basically reestablish itself in the homeland to have pushed by its presence the culture of political competition to a higher level. As a party represented in the National Assembly it is now a component of the coalition government bringing its important contribution to the stability and development of our country.

Today our country is facing serious challenges, whose solution demands the combined efforts of all Armenian citizens. All individuals and organizations concerned over their solution have their role in this.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

We have to upgrade the political environment and our economy, to restore public solidarity, repair Armenia's international image, give a new content to Armenia's ties with its Diaspora and achieve a peaceful solution to Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) conflict.

These problems are not insoluble. Their solution demands persistent and joint work, clear cut concept and objectives and emphasizing of national interests by all political forces.

I am confident that together with our reliable partner- the ARF- we shall be able to build a more democratic, protected and strong state.

I wish delegates of the general meeting successful course and effective work."

BUSINESS

35. MIKA-CEMENT SIGNS AGREEMENT ON SUPPLY OF 200 THOUSAND TONS OF CEMENT TO SOCHI [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

Armenian company Mika-Cement has signed an agreement on supply of 200 thousand tons of M-400 and M-500 cement for the construction of Olympic facilities for the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi. The supply will be done based on bids of construction organizations, NT correspondent was informed by the director general of Mika-Cement Naira Martirosian.

According to her, the supply will not be limited to the indicated amount as it is envisaged building a large number of facilities in Sochi, in particular, an Olympic district, with thousands of organizations to be involved in their construction and the supply of building materials, particularly, cement.

N. Martirosian considered it possible that orders for other types of cement will be placed by Sochi, adding that Mika-Cement is ready to perform these orders. "The company has launched an investment program on operation of a second technological line, and orders for part of the necessary materials have already been placed," she said, finding it difficult to tell the time of the program's completion. N. Martirosian explained that considerable investments are needed for the investment program of a second new modern line. Besides, it will be necessary to involve a lot of contractors, especially organizations operating mines of raw materials. In her words, Mika-Cements will have the opportunity to produce 800 thousand tons of cement annually instead of the current 400 thousand tons after the second technological line is put into operation.

She said that about 30% of the plant's production is exported to Russia, Georgia and Iran. Clinker, a half-finished product of cement, is also exported to Georgia. Mika-Cement currently employs 935 people and the number of employees will not considerably grow after the second technological line's operation as the current groups of workers will service the second line as well.

36. NEICHO VELICHKOV APPOINTED GENERAL DIRECTOR OF "ARMENTEL" [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

Neicho Velichkov has been appointed the general director of "ArmenTel" company which is providing services of "Beeline" brand communication services in the territory of Armenia.

Public relations department of "Beeline" told Armenpress that the deputy head of the "Vimpelcom" company's business development in CIS countries department Dmitri Pleskonos said that "Armentel" is an important element of the company's business and in many issues it is a resolute element of "Vimpelcom's" development strategy. "In Armenia we have licenses for all kinds of communication and while choosing general director we were guided by the successful experience of management of Neicho Velichkov.

N. Velichkov noted that the most important issue of the company will be the development of "Beeline" brand in Armenia, increase of quality of communication and service.

37. BEELINE PROMISES TO DIGITIZE FIXED TELEPHONE LINES IN 2-3 YEARS [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

There are a total of 395 fixed telephone exchange stations in Armenia, but only 73 have been digitized, mainly in the capital city Yerevan. Anush Beghloyan, a press officer for Beeline mobile and fixed telephone operator, told Armenpress that digitization of 40 more stations is in the process.

She said the priority is given to telephone exchange stations which service more subscribers. They make 56 percent of all exchanges.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

new head office in Yerevan and 4 branches of HSBC Bank Armenia. The bank's shareholders reinvested the sums to be received as dividends.

A large - 32% share of HSBC Bank Armenia in the Armenian mortgage market bears evidence of a high quality of services provided by the bank to its customers, while the bank's share in the deposit attraction market grew to 26%. According to T. Slater, among the bank's customers are about 40 thousand natural persons and 3.6 thousand legal entities. The staff of the bank increased by 78% to 339 people in 2007.

T. Slater added that the tendencies to the improvement of the bank's economic indices and customer services and the growth of investments will continue in 2008. It is planned to open 3 branches in 2008, the bank's national service center (in May), to launch the provision of Internet banking services (by late 2008). In late May the bank will also increase the duration of its daily work.

T. Slater announced the 2007 results of HSBC Bank Group in 84 countries: the revenues grew by 24% to 87.6 bln USD, while the pre-tax profit grew by a record 16% to 24.2 bln USD.

41. ZVARTNOTS AIRPORT SERVICES MORE THAN 372 THOUSAND PASSENGERS IN FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF 2008 [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

Zvartnots International Airport serviced 372,179 passengers in the first 4 months of 2008, which is more by 41,861 passengers than in the same period of 2007. In the indicated period, 218,233 passengers departed from Zvartnots, and 153,946 ones arrived - as compared with 186,913 and 143,405 passengers respectively in January-April 2007.

NT correspondent was informed by spokeswoman for the Main Department of the RA Civil Aviation Gayane Davtian that cargo transportation made 2,709 tons in January-April 2008, growing by 82 tons on the same months of 2007.

The number of take off-landings at Zvartnots Airport made 2,566 in the indicated period, increasing by 316 on the same period of 2007.

Shirak Airport of Gyumri services 6,319 passengers, while cargo transportation made 2 tons in January-April 2008, which is fewer by 5,267 passengers and less by 2.7 tons as compared with the same period of 2007.

DIASPORA

42. DIOCESE OF ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH IN GEORGIA ESTABLISHES FACT OF INFRINGEMENT OF SAINT NORASHEN CHURCH [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

The Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Saint Church in Georgia expresses concern and indignation "in connection with the act of infringement of the Saint Norashen church and the territory near the church organized by Father Taniel Sikinchelashvili, a clergyman of the Georgian Orthodox Church." According to the report provided to Noyan Tapan by the Diocese, the Saint Norashen church was built in the middle of XV century as an Armenian Apostolic Saint Church and has been included in the Armenian Diocese in Georgia since the day of its foundation. In the 30-s of XX century the church along with other religious constructions was closed for religious activity and was used as a book storehouse. After the restoration of state independence the Georgian government did not return the church to its legal historic owner.

Now Father Taniel and a group of workers working under his guidance are building an iron fence including religious elements characteristic of the Georgian Orthodox Church for the purpose of enclosing the Saint Norashen church building and the territory near it. The Armenian Diocese considers that act as Georgian side's violating the agreement reached between the Armenian Apostolic Saint Church and the Georgian Orthodox Church on civilized solution of the issue of belonging of the Saint Norashen church and the other four churches in the town of Tbilisi.

Father Taniel said that soon he is going to start "restoration" work inside the church building, after which divine service will be conducted by clergymen of the Georgian Orthodox Church there.

In connection with the above mentioned, the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Saint Church in Georgia officially, in a written form applied to the Patriarchate of the Georgian Orthodox Church, as well as to the proper state structures, which, according to the report, have not undertaken any active steps yet to prevent the aggressive act, which caused bewilderment and discontent among the parish of the Armenian Diocese in Georgia, considering that circumstance as a violation of their constitutional rights for religious freedom and equality of religious rights.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

"The Armenian Diocese reminds the Georgian side about the agreement reached, strongly demands its observance, otherwise the development of events can result in unpredictable consequences," the report of the Diocese read.

43. MEETING BETWEEN ARMENIAN AND TURKISH YOUNG PEOPLE TAKES PLACE IN KARS [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

20 Armenian young men left for the town of Kars on the initiative of the Association of Young Women of Armenia to take part in the program under the title Role of the Youth in Social Work.

According to the Association, the group of Armenian young men is headed by Lilit Asatrian, the Chairwoman of the organization.

Program's goal is to mitigate the stereotypes among youth in Armenia and Turkey, to give them a possibility to get acquainted with the two countries' cultures, and to form cultural understanding through voluntary work.

A working discussion on subjects of communication, dialogue, and peace will be also organized within the framework of the program, as well as a visit to Ani is planned.

The group will return to Yerevan on May 19.

44. ARMENIAN SUMMER GAMES TO BE HELD ON JUNE 20-22 IN CALIFORNIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

The Buchanan High secondary school of California will hold the 38th annual Armenian Summer Games on June 20-22. Those taking the first three prize places will receive special medallions and all participants will receive tickets of a picnic organized after the meeting.

45. ARUSYAK SAHAKIAN TO GIVE LECTURE ON ARMENIAN WOMAN'S IMAGE IN PASADENA [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

Ethnographer Arusyak Sahakian will give a lecture under the title "Armenian Women as Leaders and Political Figures Over Centuries" on June 14 in Pasadena. According to the reports of local Armenian media, the lecture is organized by the Armenian Woman organization of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU).

46. TURMEPA TAKES MEASURES TO SAVE LAKE VAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

Lake Van, the fifth largest lake in Europe, is dying, Internet sites report, saying that unless urgent measures are taken, the lake will dry up within the next 10-15 years. The Turkish Marine Environment Protection Association (TURMEPA) has included Lake Van in its project "Limitless Blue" that has been carried out for two years to save coastlines. As it works to protect a coastline of 8,333 kilometer from Hopa to Iskenderun, TURMEPA plans to save Lake Van as well. The association has organized an event to clean the shores of the lake.

47. VANDALS DESECRATE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE MONUMENT IN VALENCE [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

The Memorial to the Armenians Genocide victims was desecrated in Valence, France, on May 15 night. The vandals painted an illegible inscription on the monument base. The Coordination Council of the French Armenian Organizations from Drome-Ardeche area's (COADA) deposited a complaint to the Police office of Valence. 7 Armenian memorials - in Saint-Chamond, Creteil, Lyon, Valence (France), Cardiff (UK), Budapest (Hungary) and Lviv (Ukraine) - have been desecrated since January 2008.

48. AZNAVOUR, JIGARKHANYAN, BITOV, SPIVAKOV RECEIVE KAROT AWARD [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

The first-ever Karot award ceremony took place in the State Kremlin Palace in the framework Days of Armenian Culture in Moscow festival. French singer of Armenian origin Charles Aznavour, actor Armen Jigarkhanyan, writer Andrey Bitov and conductor of the Russian National Philharmonic Orchestra Vladimir Spivakov received the award for their contribution to development of Armenian culture and art.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

The renowned French singer could not attend the ceremony. The statuette in form of a vine will be handed to him later, in the Russian Embassy in Paris.

49. GENOCIDE TEXT PULLED FROM HIGH SCHOOL READING LIST [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

A text about genocide has been pulled from the recommended reading list of a new Toronto public school course because of objections from the Turkish-Canadian community, the author says. Barbara Coloroso's *Extraordinary Evil: A Brief History of Genocide* was originally part of a resource list for the Grade 11 history course, *Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*. The book examines the Holocaust, which exterminated six million Jews in the Second World War; the Rwandan slaughter of nearly one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 1994, and the massacres of more than a million Armenians in 1895, 1909 and 1915. But a committee struck to review the course decided in late April to remove the book because "a concern was raised regarding its appropriateness". The Committee determined this might be included in a course on the social psychology of genocide because of her posited thesis that genocide is merely "the extreme extension of bullying".

50. ADAM SCHIFF URGES U.S. LEADERSHIP TO CALL UPON TURKEY TO LIFT ITS BLOCKADE OF ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

Congressman Adam Schiff has introduced a bill urging the President and Secretary of State to call upon Turkey to immediately lift its ongoing blockade of Armenia. The "End the Turkish Blockade of Armenia Act" requires a report from the Secretary of State within 30 days of final passage that will outline steps taken by the U.S. to end Turkey's blockade of Armenia. "We need to step up pressure on Turkey to lift the draconian blockade of Armenia, permitting Armenian businesses to fully participate in the global economy and assisting Armenia's integration into Europe," said Adam Schiff.

Rep. Schiff is a member of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues and the co-founder of the Democratic Study Group on National Security. He serves on the House Appropriations Committee, the House Judiciary Committee, and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

51. "10 POEMS EVERY ARMENIAN KNOWS" PROGRAM TAKES PLACE IN WATERTOWN [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

The "Ten Poems Every Armenian Knows" literary program was held by poet Diana Der-Hovanessian and Berj Chekijian in the Armenian Library and Museum of America in Watertown. This information was provided by the local websites.

52. S. ASTOURIAN TO DELIVER SPEECH ON FIRST REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA IN CANADA [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

Professor S. Astourian from the Berkeley University of California will give a lecture entitled "The first Republic of Armenia" on May 26 in the Sourp Hagop School of Canada. The lectures will continue on May 27, 28, 29, 30. The lecture series is organized by the literary committee of Hamazkayin-Sanahin.

53. CATHOLICOSATE OF GREAT CILICIAN HOUSE TAKES PART IN MEETING OF WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND CHURCH FAMILIES [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

Bishop Narek Aleemzian, the Head of the Interchurch Relations of the Catholicosate of the Great Cilician House, was the chairman of the second meeting of the consultation commission of secretaries of the World Council of Churches and Church Families, which took place in the Geneva headquarters of the World Council of Churches on May 13-15. The objective of the commission is to make the existing cooperation between the World Council of Churches and the Church Families deeper. His Holiness Narek stressed the importance of this meeting as a meeting link for regional and world interchurch relations and attached importance to the imperative needs of the cooperation and common posture on the issues all the churches are interested in.

It was decided to convene the next sitting of the commission in June 2009 in Geneva.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

54. WILSON COLLEGE OFFERS ARMENIAN WOMEN TWO FOUR-YEAR FULL-TUITION SCHOLARSHIPS [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

Wilson College, America's oldest women-only college, is offering two full-tuition four-year scholarships to Armenian women from anywhere in the world, as part of its new Global Citizenship Initiative program. The scholarships are supported by the Hagop Bogigian Fund, a bequest by the millionaire more than 85 years ago. Originally, part of his bequest was to help all women.

55. ALL-RUSSIAN EXHIBITION CENTER PREPARES FOR ARARAT LAND'S TREASURES HOLIDAY [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

The All-Russian Exhibition Center is going to organize a national staged holiday under the title Ararat Land's Treasures. It will be dedicated to the culture and history of Armenia. This information was provided by the Press Service of the All-Russian Exhibition Center. The visitors can see colored sketches dedicated to Armenian culture, jewelry wares, music works, and works of modern designers. They can also taste Armenian national dishes, barbecue, knotsi, khashlama, gata, and even newly baked lavash. The pictures of Armenia's monuments and everyday life will be screened.

56. NEARLY 100 ARMENIAN SUNDAY SCHOOLS FUNCTION IN RUSSIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

Nearly 100 Armenian Sunday schools function in different regions of the Russian Federation. As Noyan Tapan correspondent was informed by the RA Ministry of Education and Science, the most part of courses of Armenian in Russian schools and Armenian educational institutions is in the Krasnodar territory: only in the town of Sochi Armenian lessons are organized in 16 schools. Teaching of Armenian in the form of optional lessons is organized in a number of schools of Novosibirsk.

Nine Armenian Sunday schools function in the Stavropol region's different cities. There are two Armenian schools in the town of Rostov-on-Don, Rostov region, but lessons of the Armenian language are organized in three Russian secondary schools. Besides, there are two study groups of Armenian language.

In the Moscow region Armenian children go to the Armenian Sunday school attached to the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Russian Federation, Pushkino's and Ivanovo's Erebuni Armenian Sunday schools. Lessons of Armenian are also organized in Moscow Mutli-Cultural Educational Complex, in the Luys cultural center, as well as in some kindergartens. Lazarians' Center of Armenian Education of Saint Petersburg also does much work in teaching of Armenian.

Armenian educational institutions also function in the Saratov, Ryazan, Voronezh, Volgograd, Omsk, Smolensk, Pemza, Krasnoyarsk, Kaliningrad, Tyumen, Astrakhan regions. They are both Sunday schools and cultural centers attached to the Armenian community or the church.

57. ANKARA TO RECALL AMBASSADOR FROM ARGENTINA FOR "POLITICAL CONSULTATION" [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

Turkey plans to recall its ambassador from Argentina to Ankara for "political consultations," in reaction to Buenos Aires' recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Ambassador Hayri Hayret Yalav is expected to be recalled to review bilateral relations with Argentina. Argentinean Ambassador to Turkey Brugo Marco is currently in Buenos Aires.

In April 2008, Argentina's Senate proclaimed April 24 the Day of Reconciliation and Respect. The Turkish Foreign Ministry announced that the move conflicts with historical facts and is a violation of the international law, and State Minister Mehmet Aydin cancelled a planned April 28-29 visit to Argentina, which hosted -Alliance of Civilizations- initiative meant to promote dialogue between the Islamic and Western publics.

ARTS

58. ARMENIAN PIANIST WINS SECOND PRIZE OF PAN-GERMAN COMPETITION [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

The German city of Saarbrücken hosted on May 9-17 the 45-th pan-German competition called Young Musicians Perform. The competition attracted over 2,000 participants.

A Germany-based ethnic Armenian musician, Mher Beglarian, told Armenpress that a 16 year-old ethnic Armenian pianist, Astghik Beglarian won the second prize of the competition.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

She played the works by Mozart, Debussy and Armenian composer Edward Mirzoyan.

Astghik Beglarian is the winner of many competitions, including the international competition of young pianists in Munich.

59. FIRST SEMI-FINAL OF "EUROVISION 2008" SONG CONTEST TO TAKE PLACE MAY 20 [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

Participants of "Eurovision 2008" international song contest are conducting their last rehearsals on the eve of the contest which will kick off in Belgrade tomorrow.

Head of the external communication department of the Armenian Public Television Diana Mnatsakanian told Armenpress that today Sirusho will participate in the first experimental concert. Delegation consisting of singer Hayko, Suzan Margarian, general producer of Public Television Hrach Keshishian, singer Razmik Amian and Tigran Petrosian are accompanying Sirusho.

In the semi-final which will take place on May 20 Sirusho will perform the 14th. Participants representing 19 countries will perform on that day. The next semi-final will take place on May 22 and the final on May 24.

60. FIRST COMMUNITY THEATER FESTIVAL OVER IN KAPAN [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

The first national community theater festival entitled 'We and Our Provinces' ended in Kapan in southern province of Syunik. The festival was held under the high sponsorship of President Serzh Sarkisian and with the support of the Ministry of Culture.

The closing ceremony was held on May 19 evening in a Kapan hall. All participants were awarded letters of gratitude. The Kapan state-run drama theater performed a play dedicated to the 150-th anniversary of the famous Armenian playwright Alexander Shirvanzade.

The organizers of the festival say this is going to be a traditional event. This unprecedented festival was organized by Khald non-governmental organization. Its chairman, Karapet Ter-Petrosian, told Armenpress that it cost huge efforts. He added that the festival will become a traditional one.

The festival brought together 7 theater companies from six provinces. Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian sent a message to them to hail their initiative.

61. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN ARMENIA TO MARK WILLIAM SAROYAN'S CENTENARY [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

The year of 2008 was declared by UNESCO as William Saroyan's Year. In this connection the Armenian Ministry of Culture, the Bryusov Linguistic University in Yerevan and the Union of Armenian Writers are planning to hold an international conference on October 6-10 dedicated to the writer's centenary.

The press division of the Ministry of Culture told Armenpress that the goal of the conference will be to elucidate different aspects of Saroyan's creative legacy from the perspective of reviewing it as a cultural value.

The conference will bring together experts from Armenia, USA, Europe and former Soviet republics who will speak about Saroyan's language and style, his esthetics and other aspects of his talent.

The first two days of the five-day conference will be in Yerevan and then its participants will move to the resort town of Tsakhkadzor.

62. ARAM KHACHATURIAN MUSEUM TO HOST FESTIVAL [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

Aram Khachaturian Museum in Yerevan will house a musical festival on June 6-14 dedicated to the great composer's 105-th birthday anniversary and the 30-th anniversary of the museum.

Armine Grigorian, the director of the museum, told Armenpress that the festival will feature performance of contemporary Armenian music. On June 6, which is Khachaturian's birthday, a new exposition, authored by Haykaz Kochar, will open in the museum.

The festival will feature famous singers Anna Mailian, Gayane Geghamian, Arsika piano trio, a string quartet named after Khachaturian and Renesans ensemble.

The festival will be held with the support of Culture Ministry.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

SOCIAL

63. SERGE SARGSIAN TO PRESIDE OVER AT 17th SITTING OF HAYASTAN ALL-ARMENIAN FUND'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

Armenian President Serge Sargsian will preside over at the 17th sitting of Board of Trustees of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund to be held on May 27 in Yerevan. NKR President Bako Sahakian, Armenian and NKR Prime Ministers Tigran Sargsian and Arayik Haroutiunian, Ministers Edward Nalbandian and Tigran Davtian, will also take part in the annual sitting. They have been taking these posts after the sitting held in June 2007 and are members of Board of Trustees officially.

Vahe Aghabekiants, the Executive Director of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, will present Fund's initiatives implemented in Armenia and Artsakh, including those carried out within the framework of the Rural Development Program.

According to the information provided by the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, during the sitting, Fund's long-term goals, short-term programs, and urgent issues, as well as Fund's coming fund-raising telethon's details will be discussed and decisions on them will be made.

On May 26, the eve of the sitting of Board of Trustees, a solemn ceremony of awarding the RA President's prizes will take place in the RA President's residence. The names of winners in 13 nominations will be announced and the RA President personally will award the prizes. The RA President's prize is the considerable contribution of Boghosian Fund to Armenia's cultural life, since 2001.

64. PROGRAM ON HUMAN AND INSTITUTIONAL POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BEING IMPLEMENTED IN ARMENIA ON INITIATIVE OF AED [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/19/08]

With the financing of the USAID and on the initiative of the Academy for Educational Development (AED), a program on development of human and institutional potential is being implemented in Armenia.

NT was informed by the AED Yerevan Office, experience of various countries is being studied during pension reforms in Armenia. The instructive trip to Sweden and Estonia organized thanks to efforts of the USAID, the AED and Services Group Inc. has allowed 15 experts of the working group on pension reforms in Armenia to study the experience of making reforms in the pension system. Numerous meetings and discussions of high-ranking officials, who implement reforms and make decisions in the pension system, as well as representatives of pension funds and the private sector, and experts were held during the instructive trip.

The process of pension reforms and the basis for their legal regulation and financial security, including a number of disputable and requiring urgent solution issues, have been discussed during the program. Discussions on the working group's experience and knowledge about pension reforms are continuing. The working group has developed a document which is at the initial stage but already envisages the logic of work to be done for the implementation of pension reforms. The experience of other countries is also being examined.

65. NINETY-NINE SCHOOLS IN YEREVAN TO BE REPAIRED THIS YEAR [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

Onik Vatian, head of the Yerevan municipality department in charge of education issues, told a press briefing today that 99 secondary schools in the city will undergo major repair within this year.

According to him, 50 of these schools will have their winter heating systems repaired and 49 others will undergo major repairs. The repair in 80 percent of schools is already underway, he said.

He said the Urban Ministry has released 4.15 billion Drams and the municipality 2 billion Drams to fund this program.

This program does not include five secondary schools that are being reconstructed on funds from Lincy Foundation, the repair of which is nearing completion.

Onik Vatian said 49 school boilers were put into action last year instead of originally planned 44. Also 27 sporting schools were repaired last year and 3 new gyms were constructed.

He said out of 202 secondary schools in Yerevan only 9 do not have special classrooms for conducting military classes, but according to him, this problem will be solved this year.



66. PUBLISHING HOUSE RELEASES FIRST VOLUME OF BIG SCHOOL ENCYCLOPEDIA
[ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

'Armenian Encyclopedia' publishing house has released the first volume of Big School Encyclopedia.

Hovhannes Ayvazian, chief editor-director of the publishing house, told Armenpress that the new edition differs from previous ones both in terms of its volume and the way the articles are presented.

The encyclopedia comprises four volumes. The first two are about natural sciences, geography, medicine, fauna and flora, ecology and nature protection issues. They have 414 articles and about 1,300 illustrations.

The third and four volumes will be on history, languages, literature and humanities.

67. "CAUCASUS 2007" CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

"Caucasus 2007" conference will be held in Yerevan May 22-23 organized by the Caucasian Media Institute in collaboration with Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency, Eurasian Cooperation Foundation and Henrich Byol Foundation.

An official from the Caucasian Media Institute told Armenpress that scientists, journalists, political figures from Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey and USA will participate in the conference which is aimed at summing up the year of 2007 for the South and North Caucasus.

Among the topics of the discussion are "Influence of West and the Policy of Caucasus in 2007", "Russia's Policy in South and North Caucasus in 2007", "Turkey's Policy Towards South Caucasus in 2007", "Unrecognized Republics of the South Caucasus in 2007", "Caucasian Conflicts and Kosovo Precedent" etc.

68. CONFERENCE ON GENDER ISSUES HELD IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

During the recent years Armenia has undertaken serious steps for gender equality, prevention of violence against women.

Armenian Labor and Social Affairs Minister Aghvan Vardanian said today at "Gender Issues in Armenia: Developments and Problems" one-day conference that the development of humanity cannot go on when the rights of women and their opportunities are restricted.

"Gender equality is not only directed towards creating favorable conditions for women. First of all such an environment must be ensured so that women be able to have their contribution to the development of the country," A. Vardanian said.

Gender discrimination, unequal distribution of resources, violence against women is serious impediment to the progress of the society.

"It is obvious that the economic, social spheres demand active participation of women. It is very important to ensure education of the women and increase their role in different spheres," the minister added.

He pointed out that in the 2008-2012 program of the new government for the first time the gender equality issue has been registered as a priority. The ministry is developing several draft legislations for making reforms in the legislative field.

Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe Maud de Boer-Buquicchio noted that violence against women is violation of human rights. "It is an issue which exists in all the countries and in all layers of the society. It must be voiced frequently and the guilty must be punished," she said.

Deputy head of the OSCE Armenian Office Mark Bojanic said that in Armenia women are presented in different spheres in a very poor way. In the National Assembly women parliamentarians comprise only 9 percent, number of women in business management sphere is also little.

The aim of the conference is to inform the stakeholders about the gender issues, ongoing programs, as well as voice the current issues and clarify the further steps. The event was organized by the Armenian Labor and Social Affairs Ministry.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

69. PAN-ARMENIAN EDUCATION CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN JULY [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

On July 25-27 the Armenian Education and Science Ministry will organize the third pan-Armenian educational conference.

The press division of the ministry told Armenpress that the conference participants will discuss a wide scope of issue pertaining to major problems faced by Armenian schools outside Armenia, consolidation of ties between Armenia and its Diaspora and other issues.

The conference will be attended by experts and representatives of educational establishments from Armenia and its Diaspora.

70. SESSION OF THE COMMISSION DEALING WITH MISSING PEOPLE, PRISONERS AND HOSTAGES TAKES PLACE [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

Session of the commission dealing with missing people, prisoners and hostages took place today in the Armenian Defense Ministry chaired by the head of the commission, Armenian Defense Minister Seiran Ohanian.

Spokesman for the ministry Seiran Shahsuvarian told Armenpress that the minister greeted the members of the commission expressing assurance that it will continue its effective work.

The deputy head of the commission, deputy chief of the police, General-Lieutenant Ararat Mahtesian delivered a report on the activity of the commission. During the session it was decided that hence, the commission will call its session every quarter.

The minister said that soon he is going to meet with the relatives of the missed people. The participants also discussed the current state of partnership with the Azerbaijani commission.

71. PRIME MINISTER SARKISIAN CONDOLES DEATH OF PROMINENT ECONOMIST [ARMENPRESS, 05/20/08]

Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian expressed his condolences today over the sudden death of Eduard Aghajanov, an independent economist and political analyst, who served as dean of economy department of the Russian-Armenian (Slavonic University).

According to the government press office, the message of condolences reads, as follows.

"I learned with pain about the death of Eduard Aghajanov, a well known economist and political analyst and dean of economy faculty of the Slavonic University.

Eduard Aghajanov was a remarkable and active personality known for his unique economic analyses. He was not indifferent towards ongoing processes and developments in his country and had clear-cut theoretical approaches towards these issues. I convey my deep condolences to his family, relatives and friends."

72. EXAMS OF YEREVAN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS TO BE HELD ON JUNE 2-20 [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

The exams of Yerevan comprehensive schools will be held on June 2-20. As Onik Vatian, the Head of the Education Department of Yerevan Mayor's Office, said at the May 19 press conference, the pupils of the 4th, 9th, and 11th forms will take exams. According to him, the process of preparation of organization of state final joint exams for the 11th form has finished. This year besides the Armenian Language and Literature subjects, the leavers will take united final exams in Mathematics and Foreign Language.

O. Vatian assured that proper and equal conditions for holding of exams have been created for all leavers. He said that application-bids filled by leavers had been collected earlier and presented to the Knowledge and Testing Center of the RA Ministry of Education and Science. According to O. Vatian, examination tests have been already brought from England. They will be given to schools just on the examination day. The united exams will be held in examination centers. 19 such centers have been already created in Yerevan. Video cameras will be installed in the centers.

It was also mentioned that the number of leavers of comprehensive educational institutions within the jurisdiction of the Mayor's Office is 11 592 this year.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

73. LAUNCHING OF "1918 HEROIC BATTLE OF GHARAKILISA" BOOK TAKES PLACE IN RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY [NOYAN TAPAN, 05/20/08]

The launching of the "1918 Heroic Battle of Gharakilisa" book took place in the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia on May 20. The authors of the book are candidates of historical sciences, independent MP of the National Assembly Viktor Dallakian and senior lecturer Armen Marukian. The book is a collection of documents and materials. The printing of the book has been sponsored by Karen Karapetian, the Head of the Republican Party of Armenia faction of the National Assembly. As Viktor Dallakian mentioned, the co-authors found it expedient to organize the launching of the book on the eve of the 90th anniversary of the May heroic battles: Sardarapat, Bash - Aparan, Gharakilisa.

"I am sure that will become a good tradition, irrespective of the fact that we had MPs before, who published books, we organized no such events, we should have started some day," Tigran Torosian, the Speaker of the National Assembly, said. He also expressed an opinion, according to which such facts speak about the great potential of the parliament and are among the important and honorable sides of the parliament. The NA Speaker expressed hope that like at present, in future as well the parliament will have saved means "for printing such good works with the assistance of the parliament."

74. NATIONAL ARCHIVES RESTORES 67,00 PAGES OF DOCUMENTS [ARMENPRESS, 05/21/08]

Some 67,000 pages of archival documents were restored in the first quarter of this year by Armenian National Archives. It also checked 151,400 micro images and coded 130,000 archival cases.

Amatuni Virabian, head of the National Archives, told Armenpress that these materials have to be processed with special chemicals otherwise they will be destroyed. He said the National Archives has reserve microfilmed copies of many documents which are available to researchers.

He said 22,780 documents and materials were provided to researchers and visitors in the first quarter.

Amatuni Virabian said the National Archives is obtaining valuable materials and documents about prominent Armenians. He said the National Archives is working towards creation of a modern database that will facilitate drastically the work with archival materials. He said in the first quarter 11,907 electronic files were developed.

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