



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, June 23, 2008

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. IF FIRE IS OPENED ON ARMENIAN SETTLEMENTS FROM AZERBAIJANI POSITIONS, ARMENIAN SIDE WILL GIVE ADEQUATE RESPONSE, ARMENIAN MINISTER OF DEFENCE SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

If fire is opened on Armenian settlements from Azerbaijani positions, the Armenian side will give an adequate response, the RA minister of defence Seyran Ohanian stated during the June 19 talk with reporters.

Speaking about the tragic events in the village of Chinar the day before, the minister said that the Armenian side took adequate measures. At the same time he underlined that the Azerbaijanis' positions in the area allow them to fire at the Armenian settlement at any moment.

S. Ohanian informed reporters that the Armenian president gave instructions to take measures both of preventive character and for elimination of the consequences in such cases. "I have instructed the commanders that in such cases we must use the respective punitive measures against Azerbaijanis. We must keep under constant pressure those gun-platforms from which fire is opened," he noted.

To recap, on June 18 residents of Chinar village in Tavush marz 50-year-old Rafik Saghoyan and 21-year-old Levon Petrsian were doing agricultural work when Azerbaijanis opened aimed fire on them from a stronghold located on a height. R. Saghoyan was killed on the spot, while L. Petrosian was badly wounded and died while being taken to hospital.

2. SERGE SARGSIAN: ARMED FORCES WILL NOT BE IN NEED OF MEANS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

The Armenian president Serge Sargsian on June 19 met with the commanders of the RA Armed Forces. The meeting took place in the defence ministry's building under construction where the president familiarized himself with the process of construction work. He instructed to hold the opening ceremony of the building on September 21, noting that from that day on the army will be commanded from the new location.

After touring the building, the president heard the defence minister's report on the work done and the problems of the army, after which he listened to proposals and questions of the officers.

Stating that he has always given great importance to such problems as the country's security and defensive capacity and the strength of its armed forces, S. Sargsian assured those present that "his energy has not decreased". "Despite the socioeconomic problems of the country, the armed forces will not be in need of means for defence of our country," the supreme commander-in-chief of the armed forces declared. At the same time, he pointed out that "there will be no splendor and wastefulness", and the allocated funds will be spent efficiently.

3. POLICE NOT TO PERMIT JUNE 20 RALLY OF OPPOSITION TO BE HELD IN UNALLOWED PLACE [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

If the June 20 rally of the opposition is held in the place indicated by the Yerevan municipality - in the area adjacent to Hrazdan Stadium, the police will not intervene in the holding of this mass event, the first deputy head of the RA police, Major General Armen Yeritsian said during the June 19 meeting with reporters. In his words, the police will not permit to hold a rally in a place not allowed by the municipality. He added that they have operative information that there may be mass disorder in downtown Yerevan and citizens' lives and health may be endangered. He explained that the area adjacent to Hrazdan Stadium is large, so the police will carry out its tasks more easily.

A. Yeritsian appealed to citizens to be vigilant: "The policemen will carry out their tasks, we will not allow mass disorder and crimes to occur, and if there are such cases, then our position will be strict and the rights of people will not be violated". Thus, the police refute the statement made by Levon Zurabian, former spokesman for the first president of Armenia, that the police prevent and do not allow citizens to hold rallies, marches and demonstrations on June 20.

In response to questions of reporters, A. Yeritsian noted that those who say "no matter if there are another 10 victims" are mistaken. "Each victim - irrespective of the fact on whose side this person is,



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causes pain to us," he said. As for the statement of the opposition members that they can keep public order and peace, A. Yeritsian said: "We have some vacant positions, if they have no previous convictions, we can give them jobs".

Responding to the question about whether they have information about people's being armed, the deputy head of the police replied: "It is likely. Work is being done in this direction and we will have information". He gave an affirmative answer to the question "are any preventive steps being taken?", and when a reporter asked him if "any extra forces will be moved into the capital city?", A. Yeritsian said: "No, our forces in the capital city are sufficient". "We have the respective equipment which can be used, but a clash between people and police is undesirable," A. Yeritsian stated.

4. FINES OF 80 THOUSAND DRAMS IMPOSED ON EACH OF FOUR DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH NARCOTIC DRUG USE ON MARCH 1-2 [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

The court of general jurisdiction of Yerevan's Kentron and Nork-Marash communities on June 19 imposed a fine of 80 thousand drams on Hovhannes Simonian, Karen Martirosian, Grigor Habashian and Khachik Stepanian who are charged under the RA Criminal Code's Article 271, Part 1 - use of narcotic drugs. Their case opened within the framework of the case on mass disorder in Yerevan on March 1-2 was examined by court by accelerated order, NT was informed by spokeswoman for the RA Cassation Court Alina Yengoyan.

On the same day the Yerevan Criminal Court sentenced Grigor Aghamalian, who is charged under the CC Article 225, Part 4 (mass disorder), to one-year imprisonment.

5. EVERYTHING WILL BE DONE TO HOLD OPPOSITION RALLY PEACEFULLY, SUREN SURENIANTS SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

The June 20 rally of the National Movement will be held in the territory near Matenadaran, though the Mayor's Office has declined the application of holding a rally in that place. As Suren Sureniants, a member of the Hanrapetutiun (Republic) party's Political Board, said at the June 20 press conference, in political respect Armenia has traditional places of holding rallies, Liberty Square and territory near Matenadaran. Besides, holding of the rally near the Hrazdan stadium authorized by the Mayor's Office is not expedient, as, according to S. Sureniants, that place is very small and inconvenient in the respect of communications.

According to S. Sureniants, they will do their best to hold the rally peacefully. And if the policemen block the way leading to Matenadaran, according to him, the rally will be held where the way will be blocked, "and it will once more record that Armenia is a police state."

According to S. Sureniants, the organizers are ready to cooperate with the Police to ensure the normal process of the rally. He said that he will conduct the rally, Levon Ter-Petrosian, Chairman of the Hanrapetutiun (Republic) party Aram Sargsian, PPA Chairman Stepan Demirchian will make speeches. He also said that no march and sit-down strike is envisaged after the rally.

6. ARRESTS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES SASUN MIKAELIAN, MYASNIK MALKHASIAN AND HAKOB HAKOBIAN ARE ILLEGAL AND UNGROUNDED, DEFENCE LAWYERS SAY [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

The arrests of National Assembly deputies Sasun Mikaelian, Myasnik Malkhasian and Hakob Hakobian are illegal and ungrounded, lawyers Melania Arustamian and Arthur Atarbekian said at the June 20 discussion "Political Persecution of RA National Assembly Deputies and the Legal Regime of Arrest" organized by the national civil initiative.

In particular, according to M. Arustamian - lawyer of M. Malkhasian and H. Hakobian, in his March 4 petition to the National Assembly for involvement of these deputies as accused persons in the criminal case and receiving permission for their arrest, the RA prosecutor general noted that there are sufficient grounds "which we have not seen until today". In the petitions for choosing arrest as precautionary measure, the investigation body did not substantiate how these persons can hinder the investigation of the case while not being in prison. The investigation body announced that expert examinations would be made but it did not familiarize the defence lawyers with its decisions on expert examination, although it is obliged to do so.

The investigation body did not check H. Hakobian's statement about his innocence, despite the fact that by the principle of presumption of innocence, a person is not obliged to prove his/her innocence.



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Lawyer A. Atarbekian said that the charges against Sasun Mikaelian are ungrounded, no concrete actions of S. Mikaelian aimed at usurping state power and involvement in mass disorder accompanied with killings have been indicated. According to the lawyer, a few days ago yet another charge was brought against his client - keeping illegal ammunition by a preliminary agreement of a group.

Member of the NA "Heritage" faction Zaruhi Postanjan in her turn said that there were no well-grounded suspicions in the RA prosecutor general's petition to the NA with the request to involve 4 NA deputies (NT: the fourth deputy - Khachatur Sukiasian is wanted by police) as accused persons and give permission for their arrest, while in the petition for extending their precautionary measure, all the circumstances given in the previous petition were almost recopied and presented to court.

The RA Omdsman Armen Harutyunian proposed that in case of their questions remaining unanswered, the lawyers write applications and submit them to the RA Ombudsman Office, from where these applications will be sent to the competent bodies. He said that during his meetings with representatives of European structures, the Ombudsman often finds himself in a difficult situation because he does not know what to answer. During the meeting with the Ombudsman, the PACE rapporteur on Armenia's issue John Prescott asked him: if the parliament granted the permission to deprive the indicated deputies of their immunity, there must have been enough evidence for it - then why has the case not been sent to court for several months? - And if there was not any well-grounded evidence, it means that a political decision was made. A. Harutyunian also expressed perplexity at the fact that no case was opened in connection with 10 deaths on March 1 and 2. "We fail to get an answer to the question about whether a case on these 10 deaths was opened or not - and if not, why?" The ombudsman underlined that a public man must give answers to the questions proceeding from his authority. If he does not answer, then a question arises: to what extent does this person act within the limit of his authority?

7. RUBEN KARAPETIAN PLURALISTICALLY APPOINTED RA AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE TO LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

Under RA President Serge Sargsian's June 20 decree, Ruben Karapetian, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Armenia to the Arab Republic of Egypt, was pluralistically appointed RA Authorized Representative to the League of Arab States.

8. CURRENT ARMENIAN AUTHORITIES DO NOT WISH TO FORM COMMUNITY OF CITIZENS LIVING BY LAW, HRANUSH KHARATIAN SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

Though after the March 1 events the authorities stated that their first and foremost task is to gain society's confidence, the four-year activity of Public Television, to put it mildly, was aimed at liquidating the crumbs of that confidence. Ethnographer Hranush Kharatian stated at the June 20 press conference.

According to her, H1 did its best to liquidate that confidence and "everything done by the television was a special aggressive step against the authorities." "By Public Television they called robbers people taking part in the rally, a thought was periodically voiced that Armenian society has been split at the bidding of some Buddhist-Masonic or Jewish-Masonic groupings, which further deepened society's distrust to the authorities," H. Kharatian emphasized.

According to H. Kharatian, the authorities-society dialogue cannot take place, as they treat society by shaking their fist, shaking their finger, and sometimes kicking. "In my opinion, we have a crisis of power in general, and it is a phenomenon that continues since 1993," she said.

According to Alvard Petrosian, a member of the NA ARFD faction, today the authorities "make every effort" to start a dialogue with society. While the opposition is not willing to do it, as, according to her, "first RA President Levon Ter-Petrosian is not able to conduct a dialogue with society. As A. Petrosian evaluated, there can be no dialogue between the current President and the first President, as they are in different poles. "I think both the authorities and the opposition first of all should have started a dialogue with the people," A. Petrosian said. She also considers inadmissible the fact that the opposition tries to speak with the authorities by the language of ultimatums.

Opposing to the deputy, H. Kharatian said that she has an ultimatum to the authorities and it regards respecting the Constitution, executing the law. However, according to her, the current Armenian authorities do not wish to form a community of citizens living by law. "Unless the authorities do it, citizens will take to the streets to protect their right," she said.



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9. POLICEMEN TRY TO VACATE STREET NEAR MATENADARAN FROM DEMONSTRANTS, AS OF 19:00, RALLY NOT STARTED YET [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

As of 19:00, the opposition rally has not started yet, there are no speeches yet. Policemen in camouflage uniforms try to vacate the street from demonstrators to give cars a possibility to unimpededly run by Mashtots Avenue near Matenadaran.

10. POLICEMEN NO LONGER HINDER HOLDING OF OPPOSITION RALLY IN YEREVAN CENTER [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

Dozens of thousands of people had gathered in the territory near Matenadaran at about 17:00. Their number increased almost three-fold in an hour. The way to Matenadaran's hill was blocked by the policemen from 9:00 am. The policemen were armed with shields and clubs. However, after the demonstrators blocked Mashtots Avenue hindering the street traffic, the policemen gave way to the people that occupied the square leading to Matenadaran. As of 18:25, the rally had not started yet, but the policemen no longer hindered holding of the rally in the territory near Matenadaran. As of 18:40, first RA President Levon Ter-Petrosian joined the demonstrators.

11. RUBEZH 2008 COMMANDER-HEADQUARTERS EXERCISES' FIRST STAGE TO START ON JULY 22 IN YEREVAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

Artur Baghdasarian, the Secretary of the RA National Security Council, on June 20, held a working consultation with the participation of heads of operative groups of state government bodies involved in the Rubezh 2008 commander-headquarters exercises of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to be held in the territory of Armenia.

According to the report provided to Noyan Tapan by the RA President's Press Office, during the consultation, proper instructions and explanations were given for properly preparing for the coming exercises and holding them. The first stage of the exercises will start on July 22 in Yerevan.

12. OPPOSITION RALLY EXPECTED TO START AFTER INSTALLATION OF LOUD SPEAKERS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

As of 7:30 pm, the rally scheduled to start at 6:00 pm on June 20 in the area adjacent to Yerevan's Matenadaran has not begun yet. As NT correspondent reported, police are taking no actions to prevent the holding of the rally. There is traffic in the avenue near the place of the event. The first president of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosian and other opposition figures are standing on the Matenadaran platform, but the loud speakers have not been installed yet, because the road leading to Matenadaran's height has been closed by policemen since 9 am. The rally is expected to start after installation of loud speakers.

13. OPPOSITION RALLY BEGINS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

On June 20, the rally of the opposition started 2 hours later than was scheduled - at 8 pm, in the area adjacent to the Matenadaran, a place not allowed by the authorities.

14. DAVIT SHAHNAZARIAN: ROBERT KOCHARIAN COMMITTED PREMEDITATED MURDER ON MARCH 1 [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

Despite the promises of the police to ban the unapproved rally of the opposition, the rally did take place on June 20 and quite a lot of people attended it. The area adjacent to the Matenadaran was filled with people as far as the crossroads of Mashtots Avenue and Isahakian Street, which, however, did not block the traffic.

The rally started two hours later than was scheduled (6 pm) due to the absence of loud speakers. At the beginning, those present observed a moment's silence in memory of the March 1 victims, as well as honored those co-thinkers who are either in prison or have gone underground.

The commander of the Shoushi special battalion Zhirayr Sefilian, who was recently released, said in his speech that there is no ideological political struggle in Armenia today, but there is resistance led by the national movement. According to him, the movement against the return of the liberated territories (the movement is led by Z. Sefilian) has some differences with Levon Ter-Petrosian but it does not prevent



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them from cooperating. "Our purpose is to get rid of this regime rather to make Levon Ter-Petrosian president," Z. Sefilian declared.

"There is a state of emergency to all of us until there is even one political prisoner in Armenia," member of the Armenian National Movement (ANM) board Davit Shahnazarian stated. In his words, early in the morning of March 1, the former president Robert Kocharian "without warning attacked" the people in Liberty Square, and on the evening of that day he "committed a premeditated murder, for which he must be subjected to criminal responsibility". According to the speaker, another 3 officials are to blame for the March 1 events and must be punished: former minister of defence Mikael Harutyunian, former head of the president's security service Grigory Sarkisov and the prosecutor general Aghvan Hovsepian. "This rally which was approved at the last moment proves that civil society does exist in Armenia," D. Shahnazarian said. In his words, the people has restored its right to protest and will restore the other rights as well.

Speeches were made by the chairman of People's Party of Armenia Stepan Demirchian, the leader of "Republic" party Aram Sargsian, chairwoman of the Social Democratic Hunchak Party Lyudmila Sargsian, other leaders of the opposition. The leader of the National Movement Levon Ter-Petrosian made a speech at the end of the rally, those presented welcomed him by chatting for a long time. "This is not an ordinary postelection situation because the March 1 events took place," he pointed out. He said that the purpose of the rally is to show once again to the country's authorities and the international community that the people does not recognize the results of the presidential election. He stated that rallies will continue and informed those present about the further plans of the National Movement.

15. IN OPINION OF LEVON TER-PETROSIAN, ROBERT KOCHARIAN SHOULD STAND TRIAL OF ICJ, AND TITLES OF NATIONAL HEROES SHOULD BE CONFERRED ON VICTIMS OF MARCH 1 EVENTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

At the beginning of his speech at the June 20 rally, the first Armenian president Levon Ter-Petrosian asked those present to observe a moment's silence in memory of 10 citizens killed during the March 1 events. Speaking about those events, he said the postelection situation in Armenia cannot be considered as an ordinary postelection one because "the Mongol-Tatar regime opened fire on its own people". "Be sure, sooner or later these criminals will be held responsible to the people," L. Ter-Petrosian stated. In his words, the second president of the RA Robert Kocharian must stand a trial of the International Court of Justice in the Hague for what happened on March 1. This statement of the leader of the National Movement was followed by the crowd's chanting: "Now!" L. Ter-Petrosian noted that if it had been within his jurisdiction, it would have been possible to punish R. Kocharian now - without delay.

L. Ter-Petrosian proposed that those killed during March 1 events should be given titles of national heroes. He reminded that Russian president Boris Yeltsin conferred such titles on the four people who died during the 1991 Putsch, and said that Armenia should take a similar step.

16. MOST IMPORTANT DEMAND OF LEVON TER-PETROSIAN IS RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

"It is no accident that today's rally is being held before the PACE sitting, at which Armenia's issue will be discussed," the first president of the RA, leader of the radical opposition Levon Ter-Petrosian said at the June 20 rally. In his words, the 20,000-strong rally shows to "PACE and OSCE bureaucrats" that the conscious section of the Armenian people neither recognizes the results of the February 19 election nor acknowledges Serge Sargsian as the country's president. In response to this, the crowd chanted: "Serzhik, go away!" L. Ter-Petrosian said that henceforth Europeans should stop considering the Armenian people as a third world people and showing racist attitude to it. He noted that in general, the only problem of any bureaucrat is to keep his own "warm seat". If observers of international organizations worked well, as L. Ter-Petrosian put it, then "why every next election would be worse than the previous one?"

Reminding that one of the requirements of the PACE resolution 1609 is to release political prisoners, the first president declared that at present his only and most important demand to the authorities is "to free political prisoners". According to him, today there is much speculation about whether the imprisoned persons are political prisoners indeed. Whereas, all the arrested members of the National Movement are, in the opinion of L. Ter-Petrosian, victims of political reprisal. Addressing president Serge Sargsian, he said: "Serge, we used to be friends, I can be on informal terms with you, and so can you: you'd better stop this madness".



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17. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN: DIALOG WITH AUTHORITIES CAN BE ONLY ABOUT THE EARLY ELECTIONS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

On June 20, the National Movement led by the former President Levon Ter-Petrosian held a meeting in Yerevan, the first since March 1st, as the authorities had so far prohibited the opposition leader to hold meetings.

In his speech before some 20,000 people, Levon Ter-Petrosian said the only worthy subject he sees in the PACE Resolution 1609 is the demand to free all political prisoners, according to him, now 86 people. He blasted the authorities who claim that there are no political prisoners in Armenia, and applied in a friendly manner to Serge Sargsian encouraging him to free the prisoners ("Serge, you used to be my friend, I allow myself to apply you in a non-formal way, you have the same right. Why not to stop this madness?"). He called the PACE not to apply any punitive measure against Armenia if the political prisoners are freed by the time of the PACE discussion on Armenia.

Ter-Petrosian said two other major demands of the said Resolution are not very important, including that of creating an independent body for examining the events of March 1st. He declared that under these authorities no fair investigation is possible. As an evidence, he presented that fact, that up to now, no criminal cases were opened for those killed on March 1st, no one guilty for vandalism and robbery was even accused. "This is because those who committed such crimes, were the men of Robert Kocharian and Serge Sargsian, and not those who were in the opposition meeting", he said. He declared that the former president Robert Kocharian was to blame for the killings of March 1st and that Kocharian may be brought to the Hague court for crimes against humanity.

As for the "dialog" with the authorities, Ter-Petrosian said the dialog may be only about holding early presidential and parliamentary elections as the Movement does not recognize the current authorities as legitimate. "Every opposition has two roles. First, trying to go to power. Second, to force the current authorities to make good things. We would be happy if these authorities do good things, nevertheless they have not done any so far," the former president said.

Although the authorities had previously banned holding the meeting near the Matenadaran hill (a usual site for meetings), the Movement had said it would ignore this ban and called the people to gather near the Matenadaran. The hill was initially blocked by police, however, after brief negotiations, the block was removed and the people was allowed to go to the hill. No incidents were reported.

18. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN: ORDERLINESS AND OBEDIENCE TO LAW ARE MOST DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF NATIONAL MOVEMENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

The most distinctive features of the National Movement are its orderliness and obedience to the law, the first Armenian president Levon Ter-Petrosian stated at the June 20 rally. In his words, no car was even scratched during dozens of rallies and the sit-down strike organized in the last ten days of February, quite the opposite, all these events were of peaceful nature until the moment when the authorities opened fire on peaceful demonstrators.

L. Ter-Petrosian underlined that none of the activists arrested on the March 1 case has been charged with using arms or plundering a shop, and such charges could not have been brought. In the opinion of L. Ter-Petrosian, the skinheads of the oligarchs supporting the authorities are the authors of the hooligan acts committed on March 1. The first president also spoke about the press information that the members of Karabakh's special detachment took part in the forceful dispersal of demonstrators. "If this is the case, the NKR president Bako Sahakian must be declared persona non grata in Armenia".

According to the first president, it is monstrous that no policeman has been held accountable for the March 1 events. In his words, the fact that the relatives of those killed during the March 1 events have not been recognized as victims is a monstrosity too. He proposed paying monetary compensation to the relatives of those killed, saying that it will not alleviate their grief but at least it will ease the burden of their cares. He added that the compensation must be paid from the pocket of the former president Robert Kocharian.

The leader of the National Movement declared that the movement will act and continue its struggle only within the law. At the same time, he pointed out that in general, laws on approval of rallies are needless as it is the constitutional right of the people to hold rallies.

The next rally is scheduled for July 4.



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19. PRESIDENT SERZH SARKISIAN TO PAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO MOSCOW ON JUNE 23-25 [ARMENPRESS, 06/20/08]

Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian will pay an official visit to Moscow on June 23-25 at the invitation of the Russian Federation President Dmitry Medvedev.

The presidential press service told Armenpress that during the official visit Serzh Sarkisian is scheduled to meet with Dmitry Medvedev, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, chairman of the Federation Council (upper chamber of the Russian parliament) Sergey Mironov and State Duma (lower chamber of the parliament) Boris Gryzlov.

President Serzh Sarkisian will lay a wreath at the Unknown Soldier grave. Armenian president will also meet with representatives of the Armenian community of Russia and prominent Russian experts.

20. AMBASSADORIAL NOMINEE TO ARMENIA DEFINES 1915 TRAGEDY AS "GREAT CALAMITY" [ARMENPRESS, 06/20/08]

"The U.S. government – and certainly I – acknowledges and mourns the mass killings, ethnic cleansing, and forced deportations that devastated over one and a half million Armenians at the end of the Ottoman Empire. The United States recognizes these events as one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century, the "Medz Yeghern" or Great Calamity, as many Armenians refer to it. That is why every April the President honors the victims and expresses American solidarity with the Armenian people on Remembrance Day," U.S. ambassadorial nominee to Armenia Marie Yovanovitch said at the hearings at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 19.

According to her, the Administration understands that many Americans believe that the events of the past should be called "genocide." It has been President Bush's policy, as well as that of previous presidents of both parties, not to use that term. The President's focus is on encouraging Turkish citizens to reconcile with their past and with the Armenians. He seeks to support the painstaking progress achieved to date.

President Bush believes that the best way to honor the victims is to remember the past and to look to the future to promote understanding and reconciliation between the peoples and governments of Armenia and Turkey. A key part of that effort is to end Armenia's isolation in the region by encouraging normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey and the opening of their land border.

"The Armenian government has requested that we facilitate this process. It will not be easy nor will it likely be quick, but there are some hopeful signs. President Bush believes that normalization can and should be achieved. The result would be an improvement in the life of every Armenian. My priority would be to support the efforts of the United States in working towards regional stability by facilitating Armenian-Turkish relations and a peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan. Every year scores of soldiers die along the line of contact with Azeri forces in Nagorno-Karabakh. The status quo in both situations is unacceptable, a deterioration unthinkable and clearly not in U.S. or regional interests.

Some progress has been made in both areas recently. Success would bring security to Armenia and great economic opportunities. This is a goal worth pursuing, and, if confirmed, I would give it my utmost attention -- not only by supporting government-to-government discussions -- but by promoting people-to-people contacts and partnerships, and other cross-border and regional initiatives. Contact begins to build trust, and trust is the necessary first step to reconciliation and conflict resolution," Yovanovitch stated.

She said promoting good governance in Armenia is also a key U.S. goal. "Our relationship with Armenia is broad and deep, both on a bilateral level and between our peoples. The United States was among the first to recognize Armenia's independence, and the first to establish an Embassy in Yerevan. Over the past seventeen years, the United States has provided close to \$2 billion in assistance and materially improved the lives of millions of Armenians. While challenges remain, we expect our partnership will continue to strengthen, and that we will continue to cooperate in all areas. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to ensure that U.S. interests are promoted and protected, that the bilateral relationship flourishes, and that Armenia's isolation ends and regional stability is enhanced," Marie Yovanovitch said.

The nominee was also questioned by Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) who twice blockaded the confirmation of the former candidate of George Bush Richard Hoagland.

The voting of the candidate will be conducted after the nominee answers on written questions which were sent to her by Senators Barak Obama, Barbara Boxer and others.



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21. ARMENIA AND SYRIA TO COOPERATE IN HEALTH SPHERE [ARMENPRESS, 06/20/08]

A delegation of experts of the Armenian Health Ministry coordinating the works of the Armenian and Syrian health ministries, which is in Damascus June 17-20, met with the Syrian Health Minister Maher al-Husami. Armenian Foreign Ministry press service told Armenpress that the minister pointed out the resolute readiness of the Syrian side to develop cooperation in different sectors of the health spheres.

During the meetings discussions have been conducted over concrete fields of cooperation. The Armenian delegation visited MEDICARE 2008 exhibition and participated in the conference of Syrian medical union.

At the end of the negotiations the sides signed declaration of the first joint session of the two health ministries of the countries.

22. ARMENIAN PRESIDENT CONDUCTS WORKING MEETING WITH ARMEN MOVSISIAN [ARMENPRESS, 06/20/08]

Presidential press service told Armenpress that President Serzh Sargsian conducted today a working meeting with the Energy and Natural Resources Minister Armen Movsisian.

23. SERZH SARGSIAN LEAVES FOR MOSCOW [ARMENPRESS, 06/23/08]

At the invitation of the Russian President Dmitri Medvedev Armenian President Serzh Sargsian left today for Moscow on an official visit. The delegation of the president comprised of Deputy Prime Minister Armen Gevorgian, who is also territorial governance minister, Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, Energy and Natural Resources Minister Armen Movsisian, head of the NA's science, education, culture and youth affairs permanent commission Hranush Hakobian and other officials.

Armenpress correspondent reports that in the evening the president will meet with the representatives of the Armenian community.

On June 24 Serzh Sargsian will have a face-to-face conversation with his Russian counterpart which will be followed by the extended meeting.

Within the frameworks of the official visit Serzh Sargsian will have meetings with the Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Chairman of the Federation Council Sergey Mironov and State Duma Boris Gryzlov.

The president is also expected to meet with the head of the ITERA company Igor Makarov. S. Sargsian will also put a wreath on the memorial to the unknown soldier. The delegation headed by the president will arrive back on June 25.

24. OSCE MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS TO BE IN ARMENIA JUNE 27-28 [ARMENPRESS, 06/23/08]

OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs Yuri Merzlyakov, Bernard Fassier and Matthew Bryza will be in Armenia June 27-28. Tigran Balayan, spokesman for the Foreign Affairs Ministry, told Armenpress that the co-chairs are expected to meet with the President Serzh Sargsian, Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian.

The aim of the visit of the co-chairs is to continue the negotiation process and make the positions of the two sides closer to each other.

BUSINESS

25. SECOND DRAFT PROGRAM ON DEVELOPMENT OF TAVUSH MARZ SUBMITTED TO GOVERNMENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

The second draft program on development of Tavush marz (province) was developed and submitted to the RA government. The draft-related proposals of departments were sent to the RA minister of territorial administration. After being amended, the program will be submitted to the government for approval, the governor of Tavush marz Armen Ghularian announced at the June 20 press conference.

He linked successful implementation of the program to the fact that the program of proportional territorial development of the RA has been reflected in the pre-election program of the Armenian president and in the 2008-2012 programs of the government. According to the regional governor, the first program (2003-2007) cost 70 bln drams (about 229.5 mln USD) and the UK DFID allocated 1 million pounds for its implementation. Among the program's priorities were development of communities,



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agriculture, social sectors (education, health care, social security) and small and medium business. The second program will also involve environmental protection sector (problems of forest restoration, garbage disposal, sanitary cleaning, mine operation, water resource management).

During the press conference, the British ambassador to Armenia Charles Lonsdale said that they and the regional governor also discussed the development programs which were worked out and are being implemented with the assistance of the DFID-financed Armenian Regional Development Project. Although the UK finishes these programs' financing in 2008, the programs will be funded from other sources, the ambassador said, adding that the programs implemented in Tavush marz and Ijevan may serve as an example for other Armenian marzes and cities.

According to the DFID Armenia Office director Artashes Darbinian, in launching its cooperation with Armenia, the DFID selected Tavush and Gegharkunik marzes because their authorities had a great desire to assist with the programs, which was reflected in their successful results. Among the programs completed in Tavush marz are the regional development program and the Program on Public Sector Reforms. The speaker attached importance to involvement of regional NGOs in the indicated programs' implementation, which contributes to their rapid process.

C. Lonsdale who had paid his first visit to Tavush marz (Ijevan, Haghartsian, Dilijan) said that the marz left a positive impression on him. In his words, although there are no programs on regional tourism development, they plan to expand cooperation with unions of businessmen, which will also promote tourism. In his opinion, Armenia has great potential for tourism development, but this potential is not being used to the full. He pointed out the low level of infrastructures' development in Armenia: the absence of pedestrian roads near the sights, lack of maps, the small number of high-quality, affordable lodgings in rural areas. On the other hand, the ambassador attached special importance to the Armenians' ability of free, immediate communication.

26. IN JANUARY-MAY ARMENIA'S FOREIGN TRADE TURNOVER AMOUNTS TO \$1 BILLION 982.1 MILLION [ARMENPRESS, 06/20/08]

According to the rapidly collected information in January-May of the running year Armenia's foreign trade turnover amounted to 1 billion 982.1 million USD 29.6 percent up from the same span of the 2007.

An official from the Armenian National Statistical Service told that in January-May the exports from Armenia amounted to 421.9 million USD or 130 billion AMD which as compared with the same span of 2007 is up 0.2 percent.

The volume of exports in January-May increased by 40.8 percent as compared with the same span of the past year amounting to 1 billion 560.2 million USD or 480.9 billion AMD.

27. GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA MAKES FINAL MODIFICATIONS OF MOBILE OPERATOR TENDER TERMS [ARMENPRESS, 06/23/08]

The government of Armenia is making the final modifications of terms of a tender which it is going to announce to choose the third mobile phone operator.

Mariam Stepanian, the press secretary of the Public Services Regulatory Commission (PSRC), told Armenpress that the official announcement is expected after the government publicizes the tender procedure.

She said the announcement will be posted in influential foreign newspapers to inform as many companies as possible.

The government formally approved the terms of the tender during a recent session. Transport and communication and finance ministries were ordered to make some amendments to the procedure of holding the tender.

DIASPORA

28. HAIG ASHDJIAN RECOGNIZED AS WINNER OF GREEK TENNIS +55 INTERNATIONAL SENIORS EVENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

Former Cyprus Davis Cup star Haig Ashdjian of Larnaca won the +55 International seniors event at Omilos Athinon in Greece. In the Finals he overcame Greek champion Demetris Yanakopoulos with the following score: 0-6, 6-1, 6-1, the Gyrahayer reports.



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29. NOURITZA MATOSSIAN'S "HEART OF TWO NATIONS" CHOSEN FOR SCREENING AT GOLDEN APRICOT FILM FESTIVAL [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

Armenian Cypriot writer Nouritza Matossian's "Heart of Two Nations" has been chosen for screening at the Golden Apricot Film Festival, which will take place in Yerevan between 13-21 July in Yerevan. The documentary is about assassinated Armenian journalist Hrant Dink and his interviews with Nouritza Matossian.

Nouritza Matossian is a writer, actress, broadcaster and human rights activist. She writes on the arts, contemporary music, history and Armenia. Matossian is the author of the book "Black Angel, A Life of Arshile Gorky", which was published in 1998. Ararat, the award-winning film by Atom Egoyan, was partly inspired by Black Angel. Matossian broadcasts on the BBC and contributes to several newspapers and magazines, including The Independent, The Guardian, The Economist, and The Observer. She was Honorary Cultural Attache for the Armenian Embassy in London from 1991-2000.

She spent her childhood in Cyprus. She was educated in England, she graduated from the University of London, then studied music and theatre in Dartington and Paris; she has a command of nine languages.

ARTS

30. SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN FESTIVAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA TO ARRIVE IN YEREVAN THIS WEEK [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

Schleswig-Holstein Festival Symphony Orchestra will perform on June 25 at Aram Khachatrian Concert Hall. The conductor is Christoph Eschenbach and the soloist is Daniel Muller Schott (cello). Bernstein, Dvorzhak, and Tchaikovski are in the concert program. The concert is part of the Prospects of 21st annual Yerevan festival.

Schleswig-Holstein Festival Symphony Orchestra consists of the 100 best young performers of the world, who are selected in advance every year. The orchestra travels about several cities of Europe on tours every year, and Yerevan has been chosen as one of the six cities this year. The orchestra will leave Dresden for Yerevan, then for Vilnius, from where it will leave for Saint Petersburg to Valery Georgiyev Festival. It is an exclusive fact that one of the greatest conductors of the century, Christoph Eschenbach, arrives in Yerevan with the orchestra along with superstar soloist Daniel Muller Schott. It is the first time in festival's history when a symphony orchestra consisting of 100 members arrives in Armenia.

The Prospects of 21st festival was founded in 2000. Its Chairman is composer Stepan Rostomian. The festival has reached an unprecedented art quality and was first in the whole region to become a member of the European Festival Association. Among festival's guests in different years were: Yuri Bashmet and Moscow Soloists Orchestra, Gidon Kremer and the Kremerata Baltika Orchestra, Vienna Boys Choir, London Symphonietta, Kronos Quartet, Tokyo String Quartet, Borodin Quartet, Hilliard Ensemble, Hortus Musicus ensemble, Amadinda Percussion Instruments Orchestra, soloists Misha Mayski, Boris Berezovski, Steven Isserlis, Christoph Poppen, David Geringas, and other famous performers.

The 9th Prospects of 21st festival of 2008 was opened in April with days of Krzysztof Penderecki in Armenia (five concerts), which was followed by Days of Rodion Schedrin in Armenia (four concerts) on June 11-14. Both of them were a success.

The festival's sponsor is the RA Ministry of Culture. Its main partner is the Yerevan magazine. The festival is held under the high patronage of RA President Serge Sargsian.

31. JUNE 21 - MUSIC HOLIDAY IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 06/21/08]

Today, on June 21, a musical festivity will take place in Yerevan organized for already the second time by the Armenian Ministry of Culture and French embassy in Armenia. The springs of the event, called "Fete de la Musique", which has already become an international holiday, take to France.

Starting from 1982 the French Ministry of Culture has been conducting the event every year during which professional and amateur musicians perform in the open air.

Armenian Culture Minister Hasmik Poghosian told yesterday that this will be a really great holiday. "This festivity is being held in various countries I am happy that it is becoming a traditional event here as well. Armenian music lovers get an opportunity to listen to different genres of music," she said.



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French ambassador to Armenia Serzh Smessow expressed his delight that in Armenia a greater attention has been paid to this holiday and pointed out that all the musicians who will participate in it are volunteers. He also added that in future it is expected to organize these concerts in the Armenian provinces as well.

The ambassador said that in France the "Fete de la Musique" concerts are being held not only in the capital but in other towns as well. In Paris an extraordinary holiday mood is dominating and more than 400 concerts are taking place.

The event will kick off in Yerevan at 17:30 with a jazz concert near Armenia-Marriott hotel, "Sanktus" and "Paros" music bands will perform in North Avenue. "Arm lao" rock group will perform near the "Art Bridge" café, rock concerts with the performance of "Dogma", "Empirey" and "Bambir" will take place in Charles Aznavour square.

People who love folk instrumental music may hear it near Martiros Sarian monument, the opera studio of the Komitas Conservatory will perform near Komitas monument. French songs may be heard near "Coffee de Paris" café. The concerts will start at different hours and will last until late at night.

"Fete de la Musique" is being held in 340 towns of 110 countries.

SOCIAL

32. GROUP OF OMBUDSMAN'S STAFF VISITS VARDASHEN PENITENTIARY [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

The group on restoration of criminal legal and servicemen rights of the RA Ombudsman's Staff on June 19 visited "Vardashen" penitentiary of the RA ministry of justice where the group met with the deputy head of the penitentiary, Colonel S. Petrosian. According to a press release of the RA ombudsman's office, S. Petrosian informed the group members that as of June 19, 5 persons were on hunger strike and that all of them were told about harmful consequences of a hunger strike and were warned that the penitentiary administration does not bear responsibility for the consequences.

Accompanied by the deputy head of the penitentiary, the group members met with those on hunger strike who told them that they demand that arrest as precautionary measure with respect to them be changed and the requirements of PACE resolution 1609 be fulfilled. The prisoners on hunger strike said that they are under the supervision of doctors and receive medical aid in case of necessity.

According to them, a psychologist regularly visits them.

One of the prisoners said that he has been in prison since December 10, 2006, noting that he was convicted under the RA Criminal Code's Article 301 - public calls to usurp state power, which, in his words, contradicts Article 27 of the RA Constitution. Based on an application-complaint, the employees of the Ombudsman's staff also met with prisoner S.S, who was arrested in Georgia on March 8, the following day at 9 pm he was moved to Yerevan where was charged under Article 225 Part 2 of the RA CC - immediate participation in mass disorder, later the charge was replaced with the charge envisaged by Part 1 of the same article - organization of mass disorder. The accused said that no investigation action has been taken so far: he met only once with an investigator in May, after which no judicial action has been taken. He claimed that the charge against him is illegal, and he does not consider himself guilty. The prisoners did not express discontent with the administration and conditions of Vardashen penitentiary.

33. SALARIES OF DOCTORS AND NURSES TO CONTINUE GROWING BY ABOUT 30% ANNUALLY IN ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

At the June 19 sitting, the government approved the draft decision on the 2008-2012 strategy on primary health care of the population of the RA and the program of measures on its implementation. The RA minister of health Harutyun Kushkian told reporters following the sitting that within the next 5 years, the draft decision envisages an annual 30-35% growth of allocations for outpatient and polyclinic services in the ministry budget: the allocations will grow from 19.1 bln drams (about 62.6 mln USD) in 2008 to 47 bln drams in 2011. The minister explained that this amount will allow to expand the range of laboratory diagnostic services and the increase the list and amount of medicines provided free of charge or at reduced prices.

H. Kushkian said that with the aim of improving medical services, it is envisaged to repair 50 outpatient departments and 110 obstetric units. According to him, salaries of doctors and nurses will continue growing by about 30% annually, the process of free choice of doctors will go on, while starting from 2009, the financing of primary health care will be done based the number of registered services.



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34. "OBJECTS" BEING BUILT IN INTERVALS BETWEEN TREES IN IJEVAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

Until 1990s, tall beautiful trees grew in the center of the city of Ijevan and along the banks of the Aghstev River, which gave a unique charm to this regional center of Tavush marz. As NT correspondent reported from Tavush marz, over the past ten years a lot of trees have been cut down mercilessly in order to clear space for various facilities. "Deep pruning" of trees along the highway, on the left bank of the river was done recently. The huge trees were thrown into the river so that the flow will take them away. The municipality has allocated areas for various "objects" on the right bank, in the intervals between the trees. In the opinion of local residents, the huge trees that "hamper" the newly-built shops will dry up and die.

35. 45 CONSTRUCTION WORKERS GO ON TOKEN STRIKE IN KAPAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/20/08]

45 employees of Architect Oleg Skokarev LLC went on token strike on June 19. They told NT correspondent that although the employer pays their wages on time, they demand increasing their average salary in connection with the recent rise of prices.

The company director Garegin Shokarian said that the wages are paid based on the amount of work done, no rise in wages is expected, and "if they do not want to work, others will take their place".

The strikers are paid 2,500-3,000 drams daily and an additional sum of 300 drams for an hour of overtime work. They are engaged in construction of Kapan's business center based on the order of the Zangezur Copper and Molybdenum Enterprise.

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37. ABOUT 3000 JOBLESS PEOPLE RECRUITED FOR PAID PUBLIC WORKS [ARMENPRESS, 06/20/08]

About 3000 jobless people were recruited by June 15 by the Paid Public Works Program. The state employment center of the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry told Armenpress that about 53 percent of them will be involved in road repair, tree planting, public parks and street restoration projects.

Some 27 percent will be engaged in water reservoirs and irrigation systems repair and reconstruction, 9 percent will be working to eliminate consequences of accidents, another 8 percent will repair old people houses and medical establishments.

The preference in recruitment is given to jobless people and members of insecure families. The wage for one day of work is 2000 Drams subject to taxes and mandatory social payments.

This program will last for three months.

38. AMBASSADOR TO EGYPT TO REPRESENT ARMENIA AT LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES [ARMENPRESS, 06/20/08]

President Serzh Sarkisian signed a decree today to appoint Ruben Karapetian, who serves as Armenian ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Egypt, to combine this job with duties of Armenia's authorized representative to the League of Arab States.

The news was reported to Armenpress by the presidential press office.



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39. NATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTE OFFICIAL CHARGED WITH BRIBE TAKING [ARMENPRESS, 06/20/08]

Armenian law-enforcement officials said today they have found ample evidence proving that Vachagan Astanian, head of preliminary military and physical training and safe biological activity of the National Education Institute of the Education and Science Ministry, forced teachers of preliminary military training of secondary schools in Kapan and Sisian regions of Syunik province to give him bribes, each 30,000 and 25,000 Drams, a total of 820,000 drams threatening otherwise to disqualify them after recurrent certification course.

According to law-enforcers, Vachagan Astanian took bribes a year ago before the end of a recurrent certification.

On the basis of collected evidence Vachagan Astanian is charged with three counts of Armenian criminal code.

40. NINETY SIX GRADUATES RECEIVE 20 POINTS AT UNIFIED FOREIGN LANGUAGE EXAMS [ARMENPRESS, 06/20/08]

About 96 applicant-graduates received the highest 20 points from the unified foreign language exams held on June 17. It is the 1.1 percent of the 8,389 applicant-graduates who took the exams. Press officer of the Assessment and Testing Center Gayane Manukian said that 1,557 applicant-graduates received 18-19.75 points.

She said 56 applicant-graduates from 7,313 answered correctly to all the 80 assignments of the English exam, 20 applicant-graduates gave correct answers to all the assignments of French exam.

Twelve applicant-graduates received 20 points from German exam, eight applicant-graduates received 20 points from Spanish exam. As to the Italian language exam, no one of the applicant-graduates received 20 points.

The average mark of the exams is 14.9 points. Around 225 graduates failed the exam. The unsatisfactory mark has been received by 209 graduates mainly from English language exam, 15 graduates received unsatisfactory from German and one from French.

No one of the graduates received unsatisfactory from Italian and Spanish language exams. The appeals will be received until June 21, 6:00 pm.

41. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF LABOR AND SOCIAL RESEARCH PLANS TO CREATE NATIONAL SOCIAL ATLAS [ARMENPRESS, 06/23/08]

The National Institute of Labor and Social Research (NILSR) of the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry plans to create the National Social Atlas.

According to Gyulnara Hovhanesian, NILSR director, a methodology was developed in line with international standards for social security index mapping and a pilot mapping project was conducted.

She said basic indices maps of provincial pension systems were also designed and created. She said work in this direction continues.

In her words, the mapping methodology will be used in social sector, particularly, in creation of demographic and population aging maps and the National Social Atlas.

"If we have such maps every five years we can see clearly the impact of the government's policy in provinces. Social maps are the summary of the final results of the government's policies," she said.

She said about 50 maps are already ready, the population aging map will be ready this year and the National Social Atlas will be prepared in 2009.

42. FRENCH TO BE PROMOTED AS THIRD FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR ARMENIAN SCHOOLS [ARMENPRESS, 06/23/08]

The French University of Armenia hosted today a French language promotion event. It was organized by the University in cooperation with the French embassy in Yerevan, the Armenian Association of French Teachers and Alliance Francaise organization for teachers and principals of secondary schools.

The focus was on advantages that knowledge of French offers. The teachers and principals were from secondary schools which teach other foreign languages.



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According to France's ambassador Serge Smessow, although Armenia and France have close links the French language is not as strong here. He welcomed the Education and Science Ministry's plan to start next year teaching the third foreign language to secondary school students.

Suzan Gharamian, chairwoman of the Alliance Francaise said French is the language of culture and an international language, adding that they would like to encourage school principals to choose it as the third foreign language.

43. ARMENIA AND FRANCE SIGN EMERGENCY COOPERATION AGREEMENT [ARMENPRESS, 06/23/08]

Armenian Emergency Minister Mher Shahgeldian and Michel Vozel, chairman of the Regional Council of the French Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur (Marseille) signed on June 19 in Marseille a cooperation agreement on prevention and management of emergencies.

The press division of the Armenian Foreign Ministry told Armenpress that the agreement envisages a close cooperation between Armenian Emergency Ministry and Armenian rescue service with the French Civil Defense Without Borders organization.

The two agencies will cooperate in prevention and management of emergencies, personnel training, exchange of technical expertise, information and consultation, joint search for structural funds, operative intervention into large-scale calamities and disasters as well as technical and logistical assistance.

The Armenian minister, who was invited to visit France by API International Educational Association, on June 20 met with French Interior Minister Madame Michele Alio-Marie for a discussion of cooperation issues.

SPORTS

44. ARTHUR ABRAHAM SCORES SECOND WIN OVER EDISON MIRANDA WITH FOURTH-ROUND STOPPAGE [ARMENPRESS, 06/23/08]

The German-based Armenia-born Arthur Abraham scored a second win over Edison Miranda of Columbia with a fourth-round stoppage.

In the first three rounds almost an equal fight was taking place, and in the fourth Abraham activated his efforts.

The first telling blow was a left to the head that put Miranda down and although he beat the count, another left soon after repeated the trick and the end was in sight. After the third blow of Abraham Miranda, who earlier promised to take revenge in the ninth round, could not continue the fight and gave up.

"I am happy that I had a successful fight and presented me at my best to the American sport lovers. Now I am ready to fight for the title of a champion with Oscar La Hoya," Arthur Abraham said after the fight.

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