



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, June 27, 2008

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. US. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE MEETS WITH DEMONSTRATORS OUTSIDE EMBASSY [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

In connection with the visit of the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor David Kramer to Armenia, a group of supporters of the Armenian radical opposition staged a protest outside the U.S. embassy in Armenia. They demanded that the U.S. official urge the Armenian authorities to release the political figures, azatamartiks (freedom fighters) and the editor-in-chief of Zhamanak Yerevan newspaper Arman Babajanian, who were arrested under the March 1 case.

D. Kramer met with the protesters and took their letter. He said: Each of you has the right to raise your voice of protest, even at the U.S. embassy. I came to Armenia to see the events in process here and to express a hope that Armenia will return to a path of democracy. The U.S. has no problem of being on one side or another. Its goal is to assist with establishing strong democracy in Armenia.

A meeting of D. Kramer with representatives of a number of Armenian political and social NGOs was scheduled to take place at the embassy at 7:30 pm. At about 7 pm the representatives of NGOs started to arrive.

The demonstrators applauded the leader of People's Party of Armenia Stepan Demirchian, the RA Ombudsman Armen Harutyunian, members of the National Assembly "Heritage" faction, former spokesman for the RA foreign ministry Vladimir Karapetian, and the representatives of the National Movement Levon Zurabian and Arman Musinian. They met the justice minister Gevorg Danielian, the defence minister Seyran Ohanian, the ARF bureau members Vahan Hovhannisian and Levon Mkrtchian, and the RA president's advisor Garnik Isagulian with shouts: "Shame! Shame!"

2. MICHELINE CALMY-REY TO ARRIVE IN YEREVAN ON TWO-DAY WORKING VISIT ON JUNE 26 [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

A delegation led by Mrs Micheline Calmy-Rey, Federal Chancellor, Foreign Minister of Switzerland, will arrive in Yerevan on a two-day working visit on June 26.

According to the report provided to Noyan Tapan by the RA Foreign Ministry Press and Information Department, the delegation will meet with RA President Serge Sargsian during the visit.

The delegation led by Micheline Calmy-Rey will meet with RA Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian on June 27, which will be followed by their joint press conference.

3. IN ALL PROBABILITY, ARMENIA NOT TO BE DEPRIVED OF VOTE AT PACE CURRENT SESSION [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

In all probability, the delegation of Armenia will not be deprived of vote at the PACE session that started on June 23. According to Radio Liberty, by the new draft resolution of PACE Armenia is given additional time, until the session of January, 2009 for fulfillment of the requirements of Resolution N 1609. "Unless until the January session the requirements of this, as well as new resolution are fulfilled, the Monitoring Commission will present a proposal to PACE to deprive Armenia of vote during that session," the draft read.

In connection with the problem of people arrested in the post-electoral period the draft resolution calls the Armenian authorities for finishing the examination of criminal cases as quickly as possible: "They should be either closed or be sent to courts quickly." The draft mentioned that the judgments, which are only based on policemen's testimonies without additional proof or testimonies of independent witnesses, cannot be admissible. "Cases filed against those accused by Article 300 (seizure of state power) and 225 (mass disorders), RA Criminal Code, should be quashed, unless there is grounded evidence that they have personally committed acts of violence or other serious crimes," the draft read.

Welcoming the creation of the ad hoc parliamentary commission on study of the March 1 events and positively estimating involvement of local and international experts in it, the draft authors meanwhile mentioned that only commission's format "is not able to ensure independence and impartiality," and therefore, to enjoy confidence among society.



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4. REGULAR ACTIONS OF PROTEST DEMANDING RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS TAKE PLACE NEAR COUNCIL OF EUROPE ARMENIAN OFFICE AND PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE [Haykakan Zhamanak, 06/25/08]

The Special Regiment youth organization and the Movement of Armenian Women, on June 25, organized an action of protest near the office of the Council of Europe in RA. As Melisa Brown, the wife of former RA Foreign Minister Alexander Arzumanyan said in her interview to journalists, they demand that Council of Europe not postpone discussion of the issue regarding Armenia until January 2009, as in that case those arrested by the March 1 case "will remain illegally imprisoned for another seven months." The demonstrators also demand that Council of Europe officials name the above mentioned arrested people "political prisoners" in their reports and various documents, as, according to M. Brown, these people have appeared in prisons purely for their political views.

After passing a letter to the employee of the Council of Europe Armenian office the demonstrators went to the RA President's residence and continued the action in front of it. They were voicing "Freedom to Political Prisoners!," "Free, Independent Armenia!," "Serzhik, Lie!," "Struggle, Struggle Till the End!," "Serzhik, Go Away!." The demonstrators went away nearly in an hour. The actions proceeded without incidents.

5. ACCORDING TO ARMAN MUSINIAN, NATIONAL MOVEMENT HAS CLEAR-CUT STRATEGY [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

The political struggle continues in Armenia and will continue irrespective of the developments connected with the PACE Resolution. Arman Musinian, the Spokesperson of the National Movement Center, stated at the June 25 press conference. According to him, the National Movement has a clear-cut strategy, which will be presented to society step by step with the intention of giving them a surprise from time to time.

"The National Movement is absolutely content with the June 20 rally and considers its results excellent," A. Musinian said. According to him, it can be recorded that society not only is not depressed, but is ready to fight with a new force. The holding of that rally is perceived as a victory, which has caused enthusiasm in society. Besides, the rally showed that all political forces that have been united around Movement leader Levon Ter-Petrosian continue the united struggle.

Mentioning that "the political struggle should also involve the regions," A. Musinian said that the National Movement is going to hold a rally on June 28 in Gyumri. It has been already authorized. And on July 4 a rally is scheduled in Yerevan, in Liberty Square or near Matenadaran. An application for authorizing the rally has been submitted to Mayor's Office, and the answer is expected one of these days.

In connection with the demand of a dialogue with the authorities A. Musinian said that it has been brought forward by PACE with three preconditions. However, the opposition is ready for a dialogue even in case of fulfillment of only one of them, release of political prisoners. And under conditions of keeping its activists as hostages the National Movement is not able to agree to a dialogue. "Only after solving that issue it will be possible that authorized representatives on both sides sit at a table and negotiate over their future steps. The main subject of our negotiations will be clarification of the rules of political struggle and lastly, holding of special presidential and parliamentary elections," E. Musinian stated.

6. ACCORDING TO EDWARD ANTINIAN, LPPA ACTIVITY RETURNS TO LEGAL PLANE [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

"The Liberal-Progressive Party of Armenia (LPPA), on June 22, at last convened its second special congress, therefore, party's activity was brought from the illegal plane to the legal one," Edward Antinian, the newly elected Chairman of LPPA, stated at the June 25 press conference. He said that party's founding congress took place in 2004 and former LPPA Chairman Hovhannes Hovhannisian has not held a congress since then, while the RA legislation stipulates that parties should hold a congress at least once every two years. As regards sittings of LPPA Political Board, according to E. Antinian, they have been constantly held under the conditions of no quorum.

He stated that the decision to support first RA President Levon Ter-Petrosian in the presidential elections was also made with no quorum. Therefore, according to E. Antinian, that decision is deprived of legal bases. Meanwhile he explained that he and his co-thinkers are not against supporting L. Ter-Petrosian, but consider that such and any other decision should be made only legally. "If now the Political Board decides to join the National Movement, it will be just this way," he said.



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The newly elected LPPA leader touched upon the "hints" in press, according to which the disagreements in LPPA are caused by the RA authorities, which wish to take away one party from L. Ter-Petrosian's team. E. Antinian addressing to journalists said: "Are you of such a high opinion about these authorities, do you think that they have done and finished all their duties and now are establishing law and order inside opposition parties?"

7. USA HAS GOOD CANDIDATE OF AMBASSADOR TO ARMENIA [ARMENPRESS, 06/26/08]

"There is a very good candidate and we hope she will be very soon approved by the Senate. Before it, we have good charge d'affaires," U.S. Assistant State Secretary on Democratic, Human Rights and Labor Affairs David Cramer said referring to the issue on the appointment of new U.S ambassador to Armenia. He noted that it is not normal when an embassy remains without ambassador for a long time.

Referring to the Millennium Challenges program the U.S. diplomat said that the program will continue following the inner-political developments in Armenia and the issues connected with them will be discussed later. He noted that an important pre-condition of the program is the just and good governance in the country.

"After the post-electoral developments, which took place in Armenia, the program presented its concerns. I think that the best way of ensuring the continuation of the program is to return back Armenia on the path of democracy," Cramer added.

8. USA EXPRESSES ITS CONCERN ON OCCASION OF "REGRESS RECORDED IN ARMENIA" [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/26/08]

"I trust more in the information received from my colleagues: collaborators of the Embassy of the United States of America in the Republic of Armenia, than in the official news published with regard to the March 1 events by the Prosecutor General's Office of Armenia," stated David Kramer, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State and the Head of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, at the press conference, which was held in Yerevan on June 25. He said: "We are concerned about the regress, the eyewitnesses of which we were in February and March and appeal to the new government to settle the problems connected with the post-election developments, in particular, problems connected with the March 1 events, political prisoners and restriction of freedom for press and rallies."

In the words of David Kramer, the RA authorities have inexorably been suggested fully restoring all the freedoms of press and rallies, including the possibility of "A1+" for again being broadcast, releasing those detained for expressing political viewpoint, conducting a serious and trustworthy investigation, which will be accompanied by a serious dialogue, which will include the opposition and the civil society. Stating that the United States wants to see Armenia as a developing democratic country with market economy, David Kramer added: "That very kind of Armenia will be a strong partner for the United States of America."

9. ACCORDING TO RA PRIME MINISTER, IT IS BRIBERY THAT MAINLY HINDERS ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN ARMENIA [Aravot, 06/26/08]

It is bribery that mainly hinders establishment of democracy in Armenia. RA Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian expressed such an opinion on June 26 at the RA government's sitting. According to him, there is no confidence to business environment, as we "have thousands of briber-takers, and there is no guarantee that after they are dismissed the new ones will not do the same." According to the Prime Minister, structural reforms are needed for that problem's solution.

T. Sargsian said that the main discontent of people regards the bad quality of rendered services. In particular, in tax and customs spheres, where citizens most of all deal with various officials. The Prime Minister said that a higher council of introduction of a new culture of incomes' administration has been created. It will exercise control and will inform society about sanctions.

The Prime Minister touched upon provision of passports and visas saying that there is a serious problem, bribery in that sphere. Besides, there is a similar problem connected with land allocations in cemeteries. In particular, T. Sargsian said that for land allocation in connection with grand master Karen Asrian's death a bribe of 2 thousand USD has been taken from his relatives lately.



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10. GALUST SAHAKIAN CONVINCED THAT LEVON TER-PETROSIAN WILL LEAVE POLITICS [Aravot, 06/26/08]

By permitting to hold the June 20 rally near Matenadaran, the Police failed opposition's intention to instigate collisions in the center of the city. Galust Sahakian, the Vice-Chairman of the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA), a member of the RA National Assembly RPA faction, expressed such an opinion during the June 26 press conference.

"Levon Ter-Petrosian will leave in the future keeping his respect and will yield to more constructive opposition. Certainly, I am for it, but we will see whether society will accept it or not," G. Sahakian said. Touching upon the first President's June 20 statement that he will be the last person to leave big politics and leave Armenia, G. Sahakian mentioned: "As the Council of Europe recorded during its June 25 discussions that the opposition does not take part in the reforms carried out in the country, it means that the Council of Europe does not perceive L. Ter-Petrosian as a person having opposition views."

He also touched upon the information in press that the Co-reporters of PACE Monitoring Commission have estimated Armenian authorities' work in the direction of fulfillment of Resolution N 1609 as unsatisfactory. Indeed, according to G. Sahakian, "it is more than clear that the word "unsatisfactory" is not used in the practice of the whole international community, therefore, as regards Resolution N 1609, they estimated its fulfillment as not satisfactory."

As for Zharangutian (Heritage) party leader, member of the Armenian delegation in PACE Raffi Hovannisian's coming out of the delegation, according to the RPA figure, "that was one more attempt aimed at keeping oppositionist's image."

11. RA PROSECUTOR GENERAL NOT GOING TO RESIGN [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 06/26/08]

RA Prosecutor General Aghvan Hovsepian is not going to resign. Sona Truzian, RA Prosecutor General's Spokesperson, said during her June 26 interview to Noyan Tapan correspondent refuting the rumors about his resignation. "Rumors of the kind are unserious talks, some forces are just spreading invented information," she said.

It should be mentioned that Aghvan Hovsepian who was elected RA Prosecutor General by RA National Assembly with 118 votes for in September, 2007 and according to the Constitution, is to take his post for 6 years' term.

12. ACTIVIST OF HIMA YOUTH INITIATIVE BEATEN [Haykakan Zhamanak, 06/26/08]

Narek Hovakimian, a member of the Hima youth initiative, an activist of the National Movement, was cruelly beaten on June 25 by non-identified people near the Medical University. According to the National Movement statement, "the criminal administration that has seized the power" seeing that the movement is becoming larger day by day and the role of the youth increases in it, continues undertaking mean methods more often. "It is the same style of the recent beating of Hima's activist Arsen Kharatian and head of SDHP Sargis Tkhruni youth organization Narek Galstian," the statement read.

The Hima initiative mentioned in the report it spread that it condemns such violence and states that it will never give up the way it adopted and will be consistent for those guilty to be called for liability with the strictest requirements of the law.

13. NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND SDHP CONDEMN SERGE SARGSIAN'S STATEMENT ON CREATING COMMISSION OF ARMENIAN-TURKISH HISTORIANS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/26/08]

"The administration that periodically voices the problem of Armenian Genocide from different tribunes as an issue "pleasing the Diaspora" and has splendidly included it in its foreign political agenda delivered a regular blow to the issue of its international recognition," the National Movement stated touching upon the statement Serge Sargsian made during his visit to Moscow, according to which he gives consent to the Turkish side's proposal to create a commission of historians on the issue of "studying historic facts."

According to the National Movement statement, for many decades all Armenians and, in particular, Diasporan Armenians, have devoted their whole potential and all their efforts to the issue of international recognition and condemnation of the Genocide. The proposal to create a commission of Armenian-Turkish historians, according to the National Movement, was an obvious trap, agreeing to which was already to mean even if for the present to question the historic fact of the Genocide. "Today



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Serge Sargsian being the first officially gives consent to Turkey's proposal casting doubt on the historic fact of the Genocide. By doing so the person having seized the post of Armenian President either believes that this issue all Armenians are concerned with is just a small change for him or gives away his political and diplomatic ignorance incompatible with the President's post," the statement read.

The Press Service of the Social-Democratic Hnchakian Party (SDHP) also touched upon RA President's above mentioned statement. SDHP, in particular, states that one can conclude from such conduct of S. Sargsian that he either casts doubt on the historic fact of the greatest Armenian tragedy, Genocide or is not aware of those facts personally.

SDHP condemns such irresponsible statements and calls S. Sargsian for even if a little thinking about the consequences of such statements leading the nation to ruin before making them.

14. SAMVEL FARMANIAN SAYS APPROACHES OF ARMENIAN PRESIDENT TOWARDS ARMENIAN-TURKISH ARE KNOWN AND HAVE NOT CHANGED [ARMENPRESS, 06/27/08]

"The approaches of the Armenian President Serzh Sargsian over the Armenian-Turkish relations are known quite well and have not been changed and were voiced on different occasions. The president also spoke about it in Moscow as well and in his speeches he clearly spoke about them without leaving a space for misunderstanding," spokesman for the Armenian president Samvel Farmanian said in response to the question of "Azg" daily connected with some response of the speech of the Armenian president at the meeting with the representatives of the Armenian community in Moscow.

"Turkey has voiced a suggestion of creating a commission of experts which will deal with the study of the historic facts of the genocide. We are not against any study even of the obvious facts and widely recognized events. The study does not mean to put under doubt the reality of the facts but the creation of such commission will be logical after establishing diplomatic relations and opening the border otherwise it may become means of speculations and postponements. There must not be closed borders between neighboring countries in the 21st century and the regional security may become the best way of establishing stability," the press secretary said.

He considered it strange that the genocide issue is being speculated by the people who did everything on time to sink that tragic page of our history into oblivion.

15. EDWARD NALBANDIAN SAYS ISSUE ON ARMENIAN GENOCIDE CONTINUES REMAINING IN THE AGENDA OF ARMENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY [ARMENPRESS, 06/27/08]

"Switzerland has always suggested and is ready to support the improvement of the Armenian-Turkish relations if the sides apply for it," Micheline Calmy-Rey, head of the foreign affairs department of the Swiss Confederation told today at a joint press conference with the Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian.

In response to the question connected with the statement of the Armenian President Serzh Sargsian in Moscow during the meeting with the representatives of the Armenian community on creating a commission which will study the historic events after the borders between Armenia and Turkey open, E. Nalbandian said the genocide issue remains in the agenda.

"Armenia has many times stated, and today we say that we are ready to establish relations with Turkey without pre-conditions, open the borders, and we are ready to discuss all the issues in which the two countries are interested after establishing diplomatic relations and opening the borders," the Armenian foreign minister said.

BUSINESS

16. RUSSIAN INVESTMENTS IN ARMENIA EXCEED 1.2 BILLION DOLLAR MARK [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/26/08]

The meeting of the Armenian president Serge Sargsian and the Russian president Dmitry Medvedev in the Kremlin on June 24, which was concluded by the signing of a joint statement, was followed by Armenian-Russian negotiations in an extended staff, NT was informed by the press service of the Armenian president.

Suggesting to focus on the trade and economic relations, D. Medvedev said: "Progress in this regard is quite good: the growth in commodity turnover is considerable, progress by two-thirds has been made in recent period. This figure is approaching one billion dollars, and it is a good result. The amount of mutual investments is increasing too. In particular, Russian investments exceeded the 1.2 billion dollar



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mark. This is an essential milestone in our relations and a very good basis for further development of our trade and economic cooperation".

Agreeing that Russian investments have reached a high level in Armenia and the bilateral trade and economic turnover is growing, Serge Sargsian at the same time said: "Our goal is that in 12 or 18 months we will measure these indices in billions rather than in several hundred millions". He also attached great importance to development of cooperation in the humanitarian sphere.

The extended-staff negotiations were followed by a meeting of the heads of the two countries with journalists.

17. FUND FOR ARMENIAN RELIEF IMPLEMENTS PROJECT ON RESTORATION OF WATER SYSTEM IN ARTASHAT AND 27 ADJACENT VILLAGES WITH USAID FINANCING [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

With the financing of the USAID, the Fund for Armenian Relief of America (FAR) is implementing a project on restoration of the water system in the city of Artashat and 27 villages adjacent to it. NT correspondent was informed by spokesman for the FAR Levon Lachikian that the purpose of the project is to improve the water supply in this region.

According to him, within the framework of the project, it is envisaged to restore the water pipeline's accident-prone sections of about 30 km, build a new 6-km Qaghtsrashen-Artashat water pipeline, repair two reservoirs and to build a new one with a capacity of 4,000 cubic meters. The work started on June 20.

18. THREE VERSIONS DEVELOPED FOR FINANCING CONSTRUCTION IN EARTHQUAKE ZONE [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

6,985 homeless citizens, including 1,800 single elderly persons are currently registered in the earthquake zone. Approximately 77 bln drams (about 252 mln USD) is needed to provide them with apartments, the prime minister Tigran Sargsian said at the June 25 sitting of the interdepartmental commission which was set up with the aim of developing and implementing programs on provision of apartments to the families left homeless by the 1988 earthquake.

According to him, three versions have been developed for financing the construction of apartments for homeless people. By one version, the state will hold a tender for a private construction organization and assume an obligation to allocate sums from the state budget to this organization within 23 years. Every year the payments will be made at market prices.

The second version envisages creation of a mortgage fund. In the words of the chairman of the Central Bank of Armenia Arthur Javadian, the fund, which will also have a state participation, will provide part of the sum, then mortgage securities will be issued against this sum and placed within a year, after which the fund will allocate the remaining sum. It is envisaged providing the mortgage credit for 15 years at 9% interest rate. By calculations, construction of 1 square meter of housing space will cost 235 thousand drams, which, in the opinion of chairman of the State Committee of the RA Cadastre Manuk Vardanian, is a very high price. The third version is provision of vouchers.

The RA minister of urban development Vardan Vardanian announced that there are 619 incompleting construction facilities in Gyumri, only 136 of which are fit for further construction. According to the minister, if 60 fifty-apartment buildings are constructed in Gyumri, the housing problem will be solved. However, the deputy mayor of Gyumri Gagik Manukian said that none of these incomplete facilities is fit for further construction.

It was decided to work out a concept on implementation of the above mentioned work and solution of the problems by August 1 of this year.

19. HOT LINE OPERATES AT MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE FOR SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS RELATED TO PURCHASE OF APRICOT CROPS, SALE AND EXPORT OF APRICOTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

With the aim of solving the problems that arise during the export of agricultural products from Armenia, by instruction of the Armenian prime minister, an operative group was set up that functions at the RA ministry of agriculture. The head of the ministry's plant growing, forestry and plant protection department Gagik Manucharian told NT correspondent that the group consists of representatives of the ministry of agriculture, the ministry of territorial administration, the ministry of economy, the ministry of



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transport and communication, the State Tax Service, the State Customs Committee, the regional administrations of Armavir and Ararat marzes, and the RA Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Besides, a hot line (54-05-25) operates at the ministry. According to G. Manucharian, at all hours citizens may call and tell the person on duty about their problems related to the purchase of apricot crops, as well as sale and export of apricots. 4-5 phone calls are received a day, which means that people can purchase or sell crops without problems.

G. Manucharian said that in case of necessity, the hot line will operate until September - the purchase of grape crops.

20. MEASURES ON IMPROVEMENT OF BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT TO BE TAKEN IN ARMENIA IN NEXT 1.5 YEARS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/26/08]

At the June 26 sitting, the RA government approved the program of measures on improvement of the business environment in Armenia. The deputy minister of economy Vahram Ghushchian told reporters following the sitting that a number of measures will be implemented in the next 1.5 years with the aim of improving the business environment. According to him, the World Bank studies in 167 countries last year showed that Armenia made progress by several indices, but regress was registered with respect to some indices as well. Among these countries, Armenia takes 39th place, Georgia 17th in terms of improvement of the business environment.

V. Ghushchian said that by the WB study, Armenia is in 2nd place by the short duration of property registration process and in 47th place by the index of duration of an enterprise foundation. The deputy minister noted that by 2010 Armenia may become 3rd on this list. Credit receiving is also a problem, and Armenia will move from 36th to 13th position by this index. According to the WB, Armenia is in 83rd place by investment security index and takes 143rd position in terms of tax payment.

21. SECOND DIGITEC BUSINESS FORUM OPENS IN YEREVAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/26/08]

The second annual DigiTec Business Forum opened at the Yerevan Marriott Hotel on June 26 with the participation of the Armenian prime minister Tigran Sargsian. The forum has been organized by the Union of IT Enterprises of Armenia (UITE), the Union of Armenian Banks (UAB), the Republican Union of Employers (RUE) and Microsoft RA company - Microsoft's Armenian subsidiary.

At an exhibition organized within the framework of the forum, 17 companies of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector offer their products and services to enterprises engaged in other sectors of the economy. More than 15 business presentations and reports will be made at the ICT in Today's Business Conference and the Microsoft Innovation Forum. Round tables will be conducted on the introduction and use of ICT in pharmaceuticals, financial and crediting sector, health care, small and medium entrepreneurship, and cooperation of the state and business.

T. Sargsian said that the ICT development is a priority for Armenia for a number of reasons. The first reason is that the intellectual potential of the Armenian people may be the only competitive advantage of our country, and great efforts and investment should be made to use this potential. In his words, the countries, which have been able to create favorable conditions for ICT introduction, have succeeded in ensuring rapid development as they increase economic efficiency and in general, make human life more comfortable.

The prime minister attached importance to the results to be received by forum participants and to the proposals to be made during discussions. He promised that the government will assist with introduction of innovative and fresh ideas proposed during the forum.

According to Microsoft RA's director Grigor Barseghian, holding the DigiTec Business Forum and the Microsoft Innovation Forum at the same time makes these events even more significant. In his opinion, the forum participants will address the issue of importance of innovations for Armenia by discussing the global processes in the ICT sector and Armenia's role in them.

RUE chairman Arsen Ghazarian stated that the forum's slogan "Let's Ensure a Growth through Innovations" means that it is necessary to achieve a growth in the efficiency of the Armenian economy's management through solutions developed in Armenian IT sector. He expressed an opinion that with the aim of solving this problem, cooperation among ICT enterprises and those of other sectors of Armenian economy should be strengthened.

The DigiTec Business Forum will finish its work on June 27.



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22. ARARAT BANK REPORTS UNPRECEDENTED 250 PERCENT AGGREGATE GROWTH LAST YEAR [ARMENPRESS, 06/27/08]

One of the leading Armenian commercial banks-Ararat Bank- reported an unprecedented aggregate 250 percent growth last year. Speaking at its annual meeting its CEO Ashot Osipian said the bank was assessed by international financial organizations as "one of the fastest growing bank of the region."

Ararat's shares in Armenian banking system vary between 5-8 percent. According to Ashot Osipian, Ararat Bank's aggregate capital last year rose to 24.9 billion Drams growing 247 percent against 2006. Its credit portfolio rose by 2007 year-end to 9.2 billion Drams, rising 265 percent from a year before, while customer deposits rose to 11.6 billion, 278 percent up from 2006.

Bank's own capital constituted by the end of 2007 4.5 billion Drams rising 14.7 percent from 2006 and its authorized capital stock made by 2007 yearend 3.7 billion Drams, up 12.3 percent from the year before.

Ashot Osipian said last year Ararat bank received a \$5 million credit from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to help boost small and medium-sized businesses and another \$1 million credit for trade enhancing.

It also signed a credit agreement with Swiss Izmirlian Foundation on co-financing of business credits. It also is a partner of German KfW bank in offering mortgage loans.

In 2007 Ararat Bank issued for the first time 10,000 nominal corporate bonds worth 250 million Drams with 12 months repayment period. The nominal cost of each bond is 10,000 Drams. Then it carried out two extra issuances each worth 100 million Drams.

According to Ashot Osipian, last year Ararat bank was granted BB rating by Global Rating independent rating agency. Last year it joined also the Western Union international money transfer system opening the only specialized office in the South Caucasus.

Last year Ararat Bank issued also 15,000 ArcaCard plastic cards. Ashot Osipian said the number of Bank's customers grew 85 percent this year, credit investments grew 55 percent and the number of plastic cards by 70 percent. The volume of mortgage loans rose 37 percent.

DIASPORA

23. EXHIBITION OF ARTIST ANI AYVAZIAN OPENS IN ROMANIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

The opening of the exhibition of the works of Ani Ayzazian, a member of the Armenian Artists' Union and a young Armenian artist, made on silk in "batik" style, took place in the Armenian Union Club hall of Romania on June 22.

The exhibition was initiated by the Embassy of Armenia in Romania in cooperation with the Romanian Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Union of Romanian Armenians.

Yeghishe Sargsian, the Ambassador of Armenia to Romania, Archbishop Tirayr Martikian, the Primate of the Romanian Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Varujan Pambukchian, the Deputy Chairman of the Union of Romanian Armenians and a member of the Parliament of Romania, as well as the artist were present at the opening ceremony.

According to the message of the Press and Information Department of the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the visitors of the exhibition spoke favorably about the art of the young artist.

24. FIVE ARMENIANS PUT UNDER ARREST ON CHARGE OF ORGANIZING MURDER [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

Five Armenian citizens: Arthur Asatrian, David Ghazarian, Vahe Budaghian, Mihran Mkrтчian and Tigran Gyurjjan, were arrested on June 14 on the charge of organizing murder in Italy.

As the Operative-Investigative Department of the Police of the Latio region of Italy informed the Embassy of Armenia, the above-mentioned people were arrested at the moment of committing the crime with the suspicion of organizing a murder.

As the Radio Liberty was informed by the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there is no information about what the given people were doing in Italy as they were not taken account of in the Embassy of Armenia in Italy.



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25. SYSTEM OF A DOWN INTERESTED IN EUROVISION 2009 [Azg, 06/25/08]

The world-famous rock band System of a Down shows a keen interest in taking part in the Eurovision contest to be held in Russia next year. However, the soloist of the American band, Serj Tankian, has openly stated in a recent visit in Finland that this will be under one condition: if they will be able to use Eurovision as a way to make the much-debated Armenian Genocide issue known.

System of a Down is very politically active and are noted for the liberal political views expressed in their songs. They have actively campaigned to get Turkey to recognize the controversial Armenian Genocide and the subject is often-tackled in their songs. The band has many Turkish fans as well.

26. NOMINATION OF U.S. AMBASSADOR TO RA TO BE PUT TO VOTE PROBABLY ON JULY 4 IN SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

Senator Barbara Boxer secured a one-month delay in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's consideration of the confirmation of U.S. Ambassador to Armenia nominee Marie Jovanovich in response to the State Department's delay in providing timely written responses to the eight sets of written questions submitted to her by members of the panel, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

"Senator Boxer not only provided Senators with the opportunity to meaningfully review the nominee's responses, but also ensured that all Americans citizens, including Armenian Americans and those, who share the commitment to ending the cycle of genocide have a chance to study her answers and take part in the civic discourse over a diplomatic posting that has been the center of national attention since the Administration's firing of Ambassador John Evans over his truthful remarks on the Armenian Genocide," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian.

As of close of business the day before the Committee was set to vote on the nomination, the nominee had yet to respond to all Senate inquiries, with several responses only being provided hours before the scheduled vote. The Senate Committee vote will likely be held following the July 4th Congressional recess.

27. REGULAR MEETING OF ARMENIAN WRITERS OF CALIFORNIA TO TAKE PLACE ON JULY 3 [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/26/08]

The coming literary meeting of the Union of Armenian Writers of California will take place in the Public Library Hall of Glendale on July 3. There will be a free tribune for the writers to read their works. There will also be an exchange of opinions.

28. RENOVATION WORK AT OLD ARMENIAN CEMETERY OF NICOSIA TO BEGIN THIS WEEK [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/26/08]

The work for the reconstruction of the derelict old Armenian cemetery near the Ledra Palace is to begin this week. A contract has been granted to complete the renovation and construction of the cemetery, the tombs, the exterior wall, as well as the chapel in the cemetery.

"The preliminary work is complete, all the permissions are in place, and the work will be supervised by architects, who are experienced professionals," explained the Armenian Representative at the House, Mr. Vartkes Mahdessian. The whole project was made possible by a subsidy that was received from the Cyprus government through the efforts of Mr. Mahdessian. It is foreseen that the completion of the project will take about twelve months. "The boundary wall will be restored again, the small church will be renovated, all the graves will be back in their original places. This will be something we as Armenians and Cypriots will be proud of," Mahdessian added.

29. SIPAN DANCERS OF HAMA ZKAYIN TO PERFORM IN LEDRA PALACE HOTEL [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/26/08]

A multicultural event under the auspices of the Ambassador of Slovakia H.E. Dr. Anna Turenicova will take place on June 29 at the Ledra Palace Hotel in Nicosia, in which next to Greek, Turkish and Maronite cultural performances, Hamazkayin's Sipan Dance Ensemble will also participate with Armenian dances.



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30. DIASPORAN ARMENIAN UNIONS ENVISAGE TO MAKE MORE ACTIVE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN DOMESTIC LIFE OF ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/26/08]

Diasporan Armenian organizations in cooperation with the authorities of Armenia are trying to create a strategy and program for supporting the statehood of Armenia. This decision was made at the conference held by the Forum of Armenian Associations of Europe in Bratislava (Slovakia) at the end of May.

According to the information provided to a Noyan Tapan correspondent by Ashot Grigorian, the Head of the Armenian community of Slovakia and the Chairman of the Forum of Armenian Associations of Europe, it is planned that the financial assistance of the Diaspora will henceforth be directed mainly not for charitable purposes but for the development of the defence potential of the country.

It was mentioned that the Forum of Armenian Associations of Europe has made another decision: to fill the open field of the constructive opposition in Armenia. "We stress that the so-called opposition, which is of a serious danger for the statehood of Armenia, is today formed in Los Angeles and its satellite cities, where programs for supporting the so-called opposition are prepared," The Chairman of the Forum of Armenian Associations of Europe mentioned. According to him, it is their desire "to become a force, strengthening the statehood of Armenia but seriously and soundly criticizing the authority at the same time, which will help the country in the settlement of a number of important problems." Ashot Grigorian attached importance to the increase in the role of the Diaspora in the strengthening of the statehood, not as a financing force but a force having active participation in the domestic life of the country. The development of particularly the electronic press, science and education of Armenia is meant. In the opinion of Ashot Grigorian, it is also necessary to continue the use of the resources of the programs of the above-mentioned spheres of the European Union, which are being successfully implemented, for the settlement of the last problem.

Asot Grigorian also considers necessary that the Diaspora should have representatives in the representation bodies of Armenia, in particular, in the National Assembly. "There are many countries, which give seats to their communities of the Diaspora in their parliaments and through those MPs the Diaspora is actively taking part in the domestic life of such countries," he mentioned, adding: "We envisage to very actively cooperate with the Diaspora Affairs Ministry to be created in Armenia. Moreover, it is desirable that this department is headed by a representative of the Diaspora, however, if the country is not ready for it, it is desirable that an unconditionally accepted figure in the whole Diaspora should be the Minister of Diaspora Affairs."

In the estimation of the Chairman of the Forum of Armenian Associations of Europe, the role of the Public Council being created in Armenia will increase still more, if the figures of the Diaspora as well are included in that structure: " We are ready to introduce two candidates, who are taking a very active part in the public life in Europe and the United States of America and have best relations with Armenia," Ashor Grigorian said.

He mentioned that according to the Declaration adopted at the conference of the Forum of Armenian Associations of Europe, the agitation process in the direction of the recognition of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh in the countries of the European Union will start and it is envisaged to reach international condemnation of the destruction of Armenian monuments in Nakhijevan, by actively cooperating with the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to this, the Forum of Armenian Associations of Europe envisages to make more active the scientific, educational, cultural and information cooperation between Armenia and the Armenian communities of Europe, to contribute to the investment work being implemented in Armenia and coordinate the cooperation between Diasporan Armenian and Armenian businessmen, promoting the sponsorship process of the cooperation by the authorities of Armenia.

31. PRESIDENT SARKISIAN APPOINTS HRANUSH HAKOBIAN CHAIRPERSON OF STATE COMMITTEE FOR DIASPORA TIES [Hayastani Hanrapetutian, 06/27/08]

President Serzh Sarkisian decreed today to appoint Ms. Hranush Hakobian as chairperson of the Armenian Foreign Ministry affiliated State Committee for Diaspora Ties.

The presidential press service told Armenpress that by another decree on the same day president Sarkisian appointed Robert Nazarian chairman of the Public Services Regulatory Commission (PSRC) for the five-year term.

The decree comes into force on July 1, 2008.



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ARTS

32. CULTURE MINISTRY ORGANIZING CONCERTS IN LORI CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 06/26/08]

Armenian Culture Ministry is organizing a series of concerts to be held in churches and monasteries of the northeastern province of Lori on July 3-5.

The ministry's press division told Armenpress that on July 3 concerts will be held at Saint Gregory of Narek church in Vanadzor, the regional capital, and Saint Virgin Church in the village of Odzun.

On July 4 the concerts will be performed in Saint Gregory of Narek church in Alaverdi and Sanahin Monastery and on July 5 in Hakhpat Monastery. All concerts will be performed by the choir of Geghard Monastery who will sing Armenian sacred and lay music.

33. JAPAN GRANT TO BE USED FOR PURCHASE OF 18 NEW PIANOS FOR YEREVAN CONSERVATORY [ARMENPRESS, 06/26/08]

The Yerevan Conservatory hosted today a ceremony of signing an agreement by the governments of Armenia and Japan whereby the latter will give a grant to the Conservatory to upgrade its arsenal of musical instruments.

The agreement was signed by deputy education and science minister of Armenia Ara Avetisian and an aide to Japanese embassy in Moscow Toshio Yamamoto.

Toshio Yamamoto said after the ceremony that his government will make available 42.8 million yen for purchase of 18 pianos. He said the decision to award the grant is the reflection of Japan's respect of Armenian musical culture.

The Armenian deputy minister said Armenia and Japan can organize a conservatory student exchange program. Conservatory director Sergey Sarajev thanked the government of Japan for generous gift saying the establishment last bought new instruments 19 years ago.

He said new pianos are important for raising the level of teaching. They will be used also during differed concerts held by the Conservatory.

Two years ago the Yerevan Conservatory had turned to the Japan's government asking for grant to upgrade its pianos.

34. EXPO-MEDIA TO ORGANIZE 7-TH SPECIALIZED ANNUAL "WOMEN'S WORLD" EXHIBITION [ARMENPRESS, 06/27/08]

On July 4-6 the EXPO-Media exposition designing center will organize the 7-th specialized annual exhibition – the Women's World.

The press division of the center told Armenpress that this exposition 'has become a good tradition,' embracing more and more business women.

The goal of the exposition is to showcase what makes a woman's life easier at home, to present in a new way the image of a business woman, to help also businesswoman find new partners.

The exhibition will display perfumery and curative means, new services, clothes, leather accessories and so on.

RELIGION

35. ARMENIAN CHURCH TO BE BUILT IN RUSSIAN PERM [ARMENPRESS, 06/27/08]

Bishop Ezras Nersisyan, head of the Russian and Nor Nakhichevan Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, was June 26 in the Russian city of Perm to attend the ceremony of laying the foundation stone for a new Armenian church that will be called Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church.

The ceremony was attended by Perm governor and representatives of the Armenian Cultural Center of Perm.



SOCIAL

36. TWO DEFENDANTS UNDER A MARCH 1st ROBBERY CASE APPEAL TO CRIMINAL APPEAL COURT AGAINST THEIR SENTENCE [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

A complaint about the June 4 decision of Yerevan Criminal Court was filed to the RA Criminal Appeal Court on June 24. By the June 4 court decision, Armen Grigorian, Yurik Ghazarian and Hovhannes Mnatsakanian had been found guilty under Article 225, part 2 of the RA Criminal Code (mass disorder) and under Article 176, part 2, points 1 and 3 (robbery) and sentenced to 3.5 years' imprisonment each. H. Mnatsakanian had received a suspended sentence with 3 years' probation. The appeal was filed regarding A. Grigorian and Y. Ghazarian.

According to the indictment, on March 1, 2008 the above mentioned persons stole (in the presence of other people) clothes and shoes worth a total of 403 thousand drams from the Roberto shop, as well as the shop's video recording device worth 245 thousand drams.

37. GOVERNMENT CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT IN CREATION OF ARMENIA YOUTH DREAMS OF, TIGRAN SARGSIAN SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

More than 500 young people of Armenia and NKR, including representatives of youth NGOs, take part in the third youth conference under the title Youth, Reality, Prospects being held on June 25-27 in Yerevan. It is held by the Center for Organization of Youth Events with the support of the RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

According to Artur Poghosian, the RA Deputy Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, issues dedicated to state youth policy, international cooperation in the sphere of youth, problems of regional youth will be discussed during the conference. According to him, the goal of the conference is to raise awareness about youth public field, to promote youth NGO-state contacts and cooperation. Besides, modern problems related to the youth will be brought to light, the ways of their solution will be discussed during the conference.

According to RA Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian, if we wish to learn the answer to the question about our country's future, we should work with the youth. "Our country's future will be the way you, today's young people, imagine it. Tomorrow's Armenia will be like the values you have," the Prime Minister said adding that the government can support the young people in creation of Armenia they dream of.

An exhibition under the title Fair of Thoughts opened within the framework of the conference. 90 youth NGOs of RA, NKR, and Javakhk, as well as international organizations take part in the exhibition. According to the organizers, the exhibition will give its participants a possibility to present their programs, activity prospects. A competition of program bids will be also held within the framework of the program, as a result of which three youth programs will be financed.

38. COMMISSION MEETS TO ADDRESS HOMELESS FAMILIES PROBLEMS [ARMENPRESS, 06/26/08]

An inter-agency commission set up to address the problems of homeless families who lost their homes in the 1988 earthquake met today to discuss a set of related questions.

The commission was set up by Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian on June 23. The commission that comprises deputy prime minister Armen Gevorkian, finance, urban, economy, labor and social affairs ministers, chairmen of the Central Bank and cadastre committee, as well as governors of Shirak and Lori provinces and Gyumri mayor, is chaired by Prime Minister Sarkisian.

By the same decision Prime Minister Sarkisian assigned chairman of the Central Bank to propose before September 1 suggestions on how to make mortgage credits available for homeless families living in the area.

Urban minister and governors were told to prepare proposals on allocating land plots for house construction.

The government press office told Armenpress that the commission discussed today three issues-mechanisms for launching construction of houses in Gyumri, the principle of land allocation in Gyumri and the pace of construction of homes for homeless in Stepanavan and Spitak towns.

The commission discussed also ways to provide 1,800 lonely senior citizens in the disaster zone with permanent housing.



39. PRIME MINISTER SARKISIAN ATTENDS YOUTH CONFERENCE [ARMENPRESS, 06/26/08]

Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian participated today in a three-day national conference entitled Youth: Reality and Prospects started today in the government conventions hall. The conference is an initiative of the Youth and Sports Ministry's center for organization of youth events.

Representatives of over 150 non-governmental and student organizations, youth wings of political parties, as well as young people representing Armenia's national minority groups are taking part in it. The three-day conference will feature discussions on youth policies, problems and ways to overcome them.

In his speech to the participants Prime Minister Sarkisian said if the government wants to give an answer to a question about the future of the country it should work with young people. He said the future of the country will be as it is imagined now by young people and it will have the system of values which are owned by young people. He said by working closely with youth organizations the government will have a clear vision of the future.

He said in this sense the gathering may be very important for the government because it gives a unique opportunity to listen to young people, their ideas and concerns.

"A beautiful girl in the pavilion here told me that your mission is that no one has the right to forbid you dreaming. I think this conference is a unique opportunity for you to share your dreams with us and I assure you that that will be very useful for us in the first place to learn what our young people dream of," the prime minister said.

40. ARMENIAN AND SYRIA SIGN EDUCATION AND SCIENCE COOPERATION AGREEMENT FOR 2008-2011 [ARMENPRESS, 06/26/08]

Armenian Education and Science Minister Spartak Seyranian was in Syria June 21-24. Armenian Foreign Ministry press service told Armenpress that he conducted meetings with the Syrian Prime Minister Naji Otri, Higher Education and Science Minister Ghias Barakat, Education Minister Ali Saadi, the Syrian co-chairman of the Armenian-Syrian inter-governmental commission, Economy Minister Amer Hosni Lutffi as well as visited Damascus, Homs and Aleppo universities. During the all official meetings the sides spoke of the warm and friendly relations and readiness to boost them more.

Within the frameworks of the visit a program of cooperation has been signed between the two countries in the education and science sphere for 2008-2011.

On June 24 Armenian education and science minister officially opened the Armenian department of the Aleppo University. After the ceremony Armenian minister and rector of the university planted a tree in the park of the university symbolizing Armenian-Syrian friendship.

41. 3,000 CHILDREN FROM INSECURE FAMILIES OT SPEND SUMMER VACATION IN RESORT TOWNS [ARMENPRESS, 06/26/08]

Some 3,000 children whose fathers were killed in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, from insecure families and families with many children will spend part of their summer vacations in summer camps.

To cover the expenses the government has released 150 million Drams. The first shift will go to camps in Tsakhkadzor and other resorts on July 1 for a 20 day-long stay.

On Wednesday a special inter-agency commission, set up to handle this issue, met to discuss safe transportation of children, sanitary-hygienic conditions and other relevant issues.

Some 2,150 children from provinces and 850 from Yerevan are eligible to free vacation.

42. UNDP HELPS ESTABLISH FIRST CONDOMINIUM IN DILIJAN [ARMENPRESS, 06/26/08]

The UN Development Program (UNDP) has helped establish the first condominium in the resort town of Dilijan in Tavush province. The condominium has united residents of ten high-rise residential buildings of a quarter of the town called Getapnya.

Susana Bagratuni, program coordinator, told Armenpress that the Dilijan municipality and condominiums will be provided with condominium management strategy that was devised by a team of experts and other standards acts. The municipality will provide an office for successful implementation of the project while the UNDP will furnish it with new computers. She said the establishment of this condominium had been preceded by meetings with residents and town mayor.

She said two more condominiums are in the process of establishment, which will unite residents of 25 high-rise residential blocks.



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UNDP has been helping implement a variety of programs in Tavush marz. In 2005 it started cooperation with Dilijan municipality by implementing a local self-management improvement project.

43. HOUSE PURCHASE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM TO END LATER THIS YEAR [ARMENPRESS, 06/26/08]

The government is set to finish the process of issuing house purchase certificates to homeless families in the second largest town of Gyumri on August 1, 2008. The certificates will be effective until December, 2008.

Last year 256 families whose homes were destroyed by the 1988 earthquake and refugees from Azerbaijan, were given certificates. Some 154 bought apartments and houses. This year 48 families are expected to solve their housing problems.

Speaking to journalists in Gyumri on June 24 Urban Minister Vartan Vardanian said the government is ending this program because there are few apartments in the town put to sale and this is why the government will have to offer other ways of solving the problem, particularly, by constructing new apartments.

44. YEREVAN MUNICIPALITY ACCOMPLISHING DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PASSENGER TRANSPORT NETWORK [ARMENPRESS, 06/26/08]

The Yerevan municipality is accomplishing development of a new passenger transport network which is going to be approved and enforced in near future.

The transport department of the ministry told Armenpress that by the end of the year some 150 Ukraine-made Bogdan type busses will be running in the city. Some 46 buses were imported by a private company last January.

The municipality plans to increase the overall number of passenger buses by the end of the year to 467. By the end of next year the number of mini-buses will be cut by 1,600.

The city authorities emphasizes also the work of trolley-buses and will bring 20 new ones this year.

By the end of the year some 85 trolley-buses are expected to run in the city.

45. ANTI-NARCOTICS DAY MARKED IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 06/27/08]

UNDP Office in Armenia hosted an event today devoted to International Day of Struggle Against Illicit Use of Drugs and Narcotism.

Grigor Malintsian, Armenia coordinator of South Caucasus Anti-Narcotics program, told the gathering that abuse of drugs has gone beyond social, racial, cultural, religious, language and sex boundaries to have become an evil.

Nazaret Mnatsakanian, deputy head of an Armenian police department in charge of fighting illicit use and trafficking of narcotics, said the situation with this problem in Armenia, as opposed to other regional countries, is not as worrying. He said the overall number of drug addicts did not rise this year, attributing it to his department's work.

During the event the address of the UN secretary general on this occasion was read out. According to 2007 UN report on narcotics and related crime, some 200 million people across the globe use narcotics.

46. PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS OPENS ARMENIAN BRANCH [ARMENPRESS, 06/27/08]

One of the biggest auditing and consulting companies in the world, PriceWaterHouseCoopers, will offer soon its services to Armenian clients. Mike Cabina, Central and Eastern Europe director of the company, told a news conference today in Yerevan that Armenia has become the 150-th country where it opened its branch.

He said the company is a network of highly qualified specialists, experience and ideas offering a broad variety of services and consulting. The company began offering its services to Armenian clients in 2005 through its Russia and Georgia-based branches.

The Armenian branch of the firm consist of 18 highly qualified personnel. They will be offering services and consulting in energy, banking, communications, transport and consumer sectors.

Mike Cabina said the branch will offer its services not only to local but also foreign companies and organizations operating in Armenia.



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PriceWaterHouseCoopers has 766 offices and branches in 150 countries and 146,000 staff members.

47. LERNAGOG SCHOOL CHILDREN ADVOCATE TOBACCO FREE ENVIRONMENT [ARMENPRESS, 06/27/08]

Following international No Tobacco Day celebrated worldwide on May 31, the community of Lernagog recently hosted an event in the premises of a newly renovated village school, advocating tobacco free environment in the community and throughout the region.

Lernagog is one of six villages included in Comprehensive Rural Development Program, initiated and implemented by the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) since early 2006. Other communities constituting COAF's Model Cluster include Argina, Dalarik, Karakert, Miasnikian and Shenik.

The event was organized by the members of the local Youth Club on Healthy Lifestyle in close cooperation with COAF health education team. Through the mentioned club, which makes part of a chain of 30 clubs operating in four villages of the Model Cluster and one neighboring Hushakert, the local youth acquires knowledge and builds capacity on disease prevention, healthy nutrition, physical activities and healthy behavior. Other clubs focus on such areas of development as agribusiness, civic education, ecology, logics and journalism/public relations. The project is being implemented within the framework of Creation and Development of Youth Clubs, implemented in close partnership with Heifer International.

The participants and organizers built the first part of the event on question and answer scheme, discussing and covering smoking and non-smoking issues, accompanied by illustrative slides on the damages caused by active and passive smoking, and presenting some statistics on smokers throughout Armenia. As Karine Tonoyan, Head of Youth Club on Healthy Lifestyle and Lernagog School Biology Teacher noted, "This event and a number of others that we are regularly organizing is always a great tool in raising awareness and taking responsibility towards health issues among children, youth and adults. And from one event to another we get more and more enthusiastic, as we find the necessary support from our friends from COAF".

The second part of the event was dedicated to the performance, played by the Lernagog schoolchildren themselves, with the goal of advocating tobacco-free environment and conducting healthy lifestyle among youth and adults. Anti-smoking commercials and ads, as well as recommendations towards quitting smoking were widely used and advocated.

Of special importance were the stage decorations, which symbolized the Universe, divided into two parts - smokers and non-smokers. The guests and the local community could witness that the part engaging non-smokers was blossoming with flowers and flourishing with sunshine, thus promising a bright future and prosperity for its inhabitants. Meanwhile the opposite camp remained uninhabited, with its grey and gloomy colors, arousing sadness and bore and repelling the people to a brighter part of the Universe.

For the past two years, apart from classes on healthy lifestyle conducted in Lernagog and other five villages of the Model Cluster, COAF community health education program additionally included trainings and workshops on first aid, prevention of infectious diseases, management of chronic health problems, prenatal care, child care, cervical and breast cancer prevention, family planning, sexually transmitted diseases, and family violence.

48. GOVERNMENT RELEASES 1.5 BILLION DRAMS TO SHIRAK PROVINCE FOR URBAN PROJECTS [ARMENPRESS, 06/27/08]

The government has released a total of 1.5 billion Drams this year to the northwestern province of Shirak for implementation of different urban projects. The bulk of the allocation is for implementation of large-scale community and road building projects.

The government has also released 13.2 million Drams from its reserve funds to support improvement of the heating system of Family Health Center and 19 million Drams for improvement and fencing the territory of the Mental Health Center in Gyumri.

Albert Margarian, head of the provincial urban department, told Armenpress that the government approved a plan of actions designed for rehabilitation and development of Gyumri's historical and cultural legacy for 2008-2012.

As part of this program the old Shirak Hotel will be demolished in downtown Gyumri to give room for construction of the provincial library and regional museum.



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49. ARMENIA EXPORTS ALMOST 4,000 TONS OF APRICOT [ARMENPRESS, 06/27/08]

Armenia has exported 3,925 tons of apricot as of today, of which 265 tons by air. Gagik Manucharian, head of an Agricultural Ministry's department, told Armenpress that on June 26 alone 380 tons of Armenia's most famous fruit were exported.

Armenia has also exported 63 tons of sweet cherry, of which 42 tons by air. Last year this time Armenia exported only 17 tons of sweet cherry.

As of June 26 Armenian canneries procured 2,100 tons of apricot, 434 tons of vegetables, up from 210 tons of vegetable last year this time.

Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian created an inter-agency commission tasked with coordinating sale and procurement of agricultural goods. The commission comprises officials from Agricultural, Economy, Territorial Governance, Transport and Communications ministries, tax and customs committees and police.

The Agricultural Ministry has a hot telephone line for exporters and farmers to report their concerns and problems. As of today there have been 25 calls.

SPORTS

50. INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CHESS TOURNAMENT TO BE HELD IN JERMUK ON INITIATIVE OF CHESS ACADEMY OF ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/25/08]

An International Youth Chess Tournament will be held between June 26 to July 6 for the third year in the resort city of Jermuk, on the initiative of the Chess Academy of Armenia (Chairman Smbat Lputian). The contest order is Swiss, the tournament consists of 9 tours, the participants will represent 5 age groups. Besides chess players of Armenia, those from Russia, Georgia, and Iran will take part in the tournament.

After the end of Jermuk Tournament, on July 10-20, a traditional International Tournament under the title Lake Sevan will be held in Martuni. Ten strongest grand masters will take part in it. The prize fund is 6000 USD in drams. The winner will receive 2000 USD.

51. ARARAT YEREVAN CONTINUES TO BE IN LEAD OF ARMENIAN FOOTBALL HIGHEST GROUP CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT TABLE [NOYAN TAPAN, 06/26/08]

The games of the 12th stage of the Armenian Football Highest Group "Star" Championship took place on June 25. The following results were registered" Mika - Ararat 1:1, Shirak - Ulis 0:0, Cilicia - Banants 1:1, and Gandzasar - Pyunik 1:1.

The teams have the following succession in the tournament table: Ararat 26 points, Mika 21 points, Pyunik 18 points, Banants 17 points, Gandzasar 14 points, Shirak 11, Ulis 10 and Cilicia 4 points.

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