



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. ARMENIAN PRESIDENT SIGNS LAW ON CHANGE IN WATER DISCHARGE FROM LAKE SEVAN [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 08/25/08]

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan on August 22 signed a law on making amendments to the RA Law on Approval of the Annual and Complex Programs of Measures on Restoration, Preservation, Reproduction and Use of the Ecosystem of Lake Sevan, NT was informed by the RA president's press service.

2. STATE COMMISSION CREATED FOR PREPARATION FOR 500th ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDATION OF ARMENIAN PRINTING [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 08/25/08]

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan on August 22 signed an order on the creation of a state commission for the preparation of measures on the 500th anniversary of foundation of Armenian printing. The state commission will be headed by the Armenian president.

According to a press release of the RA president's press service, the Commission is composed of the following persons:

Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II (by consent),
Armenian prime minister Tigran Sargsian,
deputy prime minister of the RA, minister of territorial administration Armen Gevorgian,
chief of the RA presidential staff Hovik Abrahamian,
foreign minister of the RA Edward Nalbandian,
minister of culture of the RA Hasmik Poghosian,
minister of finance of the RA Tigran Davtian,
minister of education and science of the RA Spartak Seyranian,
mayor of Yerevan Yervand Zakharian,
assistant to the president of the RA (the Commission's secretary-coordinator of measures) Vigen Sargsian,
chairman of the Council of the Public Television and Radio Company of Armenia Alexan Harutyunian (by consent),
president of the RA National Academy of Sciences Radik Martirosian,
deputy of the RA National Assembly Victor Dallakian (by consent),
deputy of the RA National Assembly Armen Ashotian (by consent),
director of the National Library of Armenia Davit Sargsian (by consent),
director of the M. Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts Harchia Tamrazian (by consent),
rector of Yerevan State University Aram Simonian (by consent),
director of the National Archive of Armenia Amatuni Virabian (by consent),
chairman of the Union of Writers of Armenia Levon Ananian (by consent).

3. HOVIK ABRAHAMIAN ELECTED DEPUTY OF RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY [Azg, 08/25/08]

By preliminary results of the by-election of a deputy of the RA National Assembly by the majoritarian electoral system held in electoral district No 17 (Ararat marz) on August 24, 33,322 electors voted for, 155 - against the only candidate - the chief of the RA presidential staff, member of the ruling body of the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) Hovik Abrahamian.

NT correspondent was informed by spokesperson for the RA Central Electoral Commission Tatev Ohanian that out of the total number of electors (58,757) in the indicated electoral district that includes the city of Artashat and 24 adjacent rural communities, 33,881 electors or 57.5% participated in the voting. 332 voting papers were recognized as invalid, the number of inaccuracies made 28.

To recap, the four parties of the coalition: RPA, ARF, "Prosperous Armenia" party and "Orinats Yerkir" party endorsed the candidacy of H. Abrahamian nominated by a decision of the RPA ruling body. Hovik Abrahamian will act as a deputy of the NA instead of his brother Henrik Abrahamian whose powers as a deputy were terminated ahead of time.



4. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN AND PETER SEMNEBY DISCUSS REGIONAL SITUATION AND INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN ARMENIA [Haykakan Zhamanak, 08/25/08]

The first Armenian president Levon Ter-Petrosian had a meeting with the EU Special Commissioner in the South Caucasus Peter Semneby in Yerevan on August 24. The charge d'affaires of the European Commission Delegation to Armenia Raul de Luzenberger and political advisor Andrey Didenko also took part in the meeting.

NT was informed by the head office of the Armenian National Congress that during the meeting the sides exchanged opinions on the situation in Georgia, its impact on Armenia, and the possible solutions of the frozen conflicts. The internal political situation in Armenia, as well as the problems related to the political prisoners and their trials were also discussed.

5. SERZH SARGSYAN: ATTEMPTS TO RESIST WITH ARMED FORCES IN A STRUGGLE FOR RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION ARE FRAUGHT WITH SERIOUS MILITARY AND GEOPOLITICAL CONSEQUENCES [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/25/08]

An interview of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan was published in the August 23 issue of Der Standard daily. Below is the full text of the interview.

Question: "Be a friend with Russia and do not become a close friend with the West," wasn't it a lesson that Moscow taught the South Caucasian countries by invading Georgia?

Answer: If we look at Armenia's history, we will see that friendship with Russia has never been a compulsory measure for Armenia. Needless to say that one never makes friends, let alone - keeps friends by force. I wouldn't like to speak for other countries, but at least Armenia is extremely open, sincere and consistent in its relations with Russia. Moreover, I can tell you that our strategic partnership with Russia has never prevented us from establishing normal and efficient cooperation with other countries in the region and outside it and with international organizations. This is evident from our joint programs with the EU and NATO and dynamically developing relations with European countries, the U.S. and Iran.

Q: It is not for the first time that Armenia perceives a serious impact of a Russian-Georgian crisis. What would you advise your Georgian partners concerning their relations with Russia?

A: To give advice is an ungrateful task. In recent years the pivot of our policy has been that in our extremely sensitive region, small states must do their best in order to reduce rather than strain the possible contradictions between superpowers. It is quite easy to derive short-term benefits from contradictions that regularly arise in each region between great powers. It is much more difficult but also much more useful to try to cooperate sincerely in a field of common interests. Taking into account all the challenges we have to face, it is senseless to create new dividing lines and artificial ideological camps.

Q: An important Russian military base is stationed in Armenia. Does Armenia benefit from Russia's hegemony in the South Caucasus?

A: Like any other state, Armenia benefits from sovereignty. In our era, this sovereignty also includes participation in efficient international and regional systems of security. In this respect Armenia has made a decision to join the Collective Security Treaty Organization. The fundamental document of this organization envisages that an attack on one of the member states means an attack on all of them. I think that today military bases are a symbol of efficient cooperation rather than hegemony.

Q: What conclusions can be made from the invasion of Georgia - for another "frozen conflict", the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

A: The tragic events in South Ossetia showed that in the South Caucasus, attempts to resist with armed forces in a struggle for the right of self-determination are fraught with serious military and geopolitical consequences. The recent developments clearly demonstrated the real danger of an arms race, unfounded increases in the military budget and bellicose statements in the South Caucasus. At the same time these developments proved that a free will of the people struggling for its self-determination should form the basis of settlement of such conflicts and the solutions should be based on such a will because the opposite approaches will inevitably result in ethnic cleansing and violation of international humanitarian law. These events once again revealed the importance of efficient operation of the regional infrastructures, highways, transport nodes and pipelines, as well as ensuring their alternatives and formation of most extensive networks.

Q: In fact, Turkey has never responded to Armenia's proposal to establish diplomatic relations without preconditions. Now you even invite the Turkish president to Armenia. What makes you assume that the leadership of Turkey is more open for dialog?

A: Today we are ready to establish relations with Turkey without preconditions. In general, Armenia has always been faithful to the political course it announced. Today there is a situation in our



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

relations, from which no one benefits, quite the opposite, many suffer. I am sure that there is no sense in and necessity for being constant adversaries, it is evident that the problem of regulating our relations has matured and this step will be mutually beneficial both for the Armenian and Turkish societies. If you remember, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan said months ago that in this period the doors are open for a new dialog. I am sure that if there is a desire, we can have such a dialog, and a visit of President Gul to Armenia will strengthen these positive tendencies. A few days ago my Turkish counterpart stated that Turkey has no enemies in the region. I am convinced that a practical stipulation of this statement will be tangible steps on regulation of the relations and these steps may give real results. We may have various problems but we will not be able to solve them if we do not speak to each other at a level appropriate for civilized states and if there are no proper political relations between our countries.

6. THE CAUCASUS MOMENT [Azg, 08/25/08]

By Vartan Oskanian

International Herald Tribune, published: August 24, 2008

Although we could see the clouds gathering, the recent Georgia-Russia confrontation shook us all. No one had allowed themselves to believe that mixed messages and complicated agendas would come to such a head, causing so much devastation, loss of life and geopolitical chaos.

The South Ossetia conflict should not be viewed solely through the larger prism of Georgia-Russia relations. This is an ethnic conflict, after all, and one of several in the Caucasus. It is a warning to the international community: If pipeline safety is a concern now, then imagine the very real dangers that an Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict over Nagorno Karabakh would create.

Therefore, in order to seriously tackle the more difficult conflicts throughout this region, the comparatively more straightforward security and stability issues must be resolved first - and quickly. Conflicts in the region would be viewed in a wholly different, more reassuring and tolerant context if there were a binding and strong security pact that assured non-use of force.

These conflicts are not frozen. In the absence of a security pact, there is an arms build up that is in itself destabilizing, distorting national budgets and hampering the normal development of civil society. Yet in the Caucasus, our countries and peoples have lived under a common umbrella far more than we have been divided. Today, we share a common vision of European integration, a vision that is greater and more enduring than issues that divide us. It is in the broader context of European integration that our issues should be resolved.

Although integration with Europe is not controversial, NATO expansion is. Never in history has a grand coalition formed to defeat a particular enemy survived after the task was completed. Not after the Napoleonic wars, not after World War I and not after World War II.

After the West's Cold War victory, two things happened. NATO tried to reinvent itself by directing its attention and resources to other regions and addressing other problems. Containing Russia was not a declared intention. And NATO created the Euro Atlantic Partnership Council, which invited all Eastern Bloc and former Soviet republics to participate.

This was visionary and potentially sustainable. After all, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe extended their efficacy in that way by including the remnants of the USSR. Not only did they remain relevant and viable, they contributed immeasurably to our own growth and development.

But NATO also planned to continue and even expand in the same form, even after its stated goal had long been met. Given the changed security environment and Russia's great security sensitivities, this was, it appears, a strategic mistake.

Georgia's eagerness to get into NATO is understandable. But the security benefits to Georgia that NATO membership would bring would be offset by the creation of a dividing line in the Caucasus, and its attendant security challenges.

Perhaps this is the Caucasus moment: A historic opportunity, in the context of a new regional security pact, for Brussels, Washington and Moscow to meet with Tbilisi, Yerevan and Baku and create a nonaligned Caucasus, free of security memberships and adversarial alliances. Such positive, engaged, inclusive neutrality will be possible and beneficial all around.

This would be in the best interest of this highly combustible region. A U.S.-Russia confrontation at the Georgia-Russia level will make life very difficult, not just for us here in Armenia but also for Azerbaijan and Turkey.

It is in the context of these existential security issues that we must view the recent Turkish proposal for a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

The idea of such a pact was floated already in 1999. The concept found favor because there were fresh memories of the use of force in our region, and the urgency of security arrangements was evident. Opposition to Russian interests was not yet deep and there were no tensions through proxies. But even during such a honeymoon, the idea didn't become reality.

Today, force has been used again, and perhaps for that reason, the idea has resurfaced. But today, with the threat of a renewed Cold-War mentality, divisive lines may be drawn through these mountains and all regional relations will become unimaginably complicated. That is, where there still are relations.

Turkey's proposal is therefore interesting and the urgency is not lost on anyone. But the concept must be developed right and implemented well. But we've been down this road before in this part of the world, where good intentions were sidetracked by the very political problems they were meant to resolve.

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation pact, for example, was created precisely for the purpose of bringing together those who otherwise shared no common forum for economic cooperation and the resolution of problems. But it's effectiveness has been limited because Turkey lacked the commitment to use the forum as a way to relate with a country like Armenia, with whom its borders are closed.

The proposal today, in this new tense environment, must be more serious and sustained. It must marginalize no one. Security issues are intertwined, and they ought to be addressed in a stability pact with a comprehensive, strong security component.

During his visit to Baku last week, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed the Turkish plan and publicly made reference to Armenia's inclusion. It is also a fortuitous coincidence that President Abdullah Gul of Turkey has been invited by President Serzh Sargsian of Armenia to watch the Turkey-Armenia FIFA World Cup qualifying match on Sept. 6 together.

This offers an opportunity for these two neighbors to discuss common security challenges and pave the way for a region of peace.

7. ARMENIA RECEIVED NO CONCRETE PROPOSAL ON SOUTH CAUCASIAN STABILITY AND COOPERATION UNION IDEA [ARMENPRESS, 08/26/08]

No concrete proposals concerning a Turkish idea to build a South Caucasian Stability and Cooperation Union was conveyed to Armenia, Tigran Balayan, Armenian foreign ministry's a.i. head of press division, told Armenpress.

Tigran Balayan said to Armenpress there was no timetable of meetings to implement the idea. He said Armenia did not receive any proposal to that end either.

Last week Armenian foreign minister Edward Nalbandian said the official Yerevan has always been for talks with Turkey, especially on regional cooperation and security issues.

He welcomed Turkish prime minister Recep Erdogan's intention to start talks with Armenia on these issues.

8. VICE PRIME MINISTER PAYS WORKING VISIT TO ARAGATSOTN PROVINCE [ARMENPRESS, 08/26/08]

Vice prime minister, territorial minister Armen Gevorkian, paid today a working visit to Aragatsotn province and during a consultation with the region's officials in Ashtarak, the administrative center of the province, discussed an array of important issues, including the community budget revenues collection rate, the effectiveness of social services' work, preparations for new schooling year and others.

The press division of the territorial ministry told Armenpress that Amen Gevorkian was eager to learn the status of urban development projects implemented in the province. The press division said as a result of discussions ways to solve the existing problems were outlined.

Among other things the problem of drinking and irrigation water was also discussed. Particularly, the state water committee was told to present concrete proposals on improving water supplies to 7 communities of Talin region.

Based on the findings of studies conducted by the presidential oversight service it was ordered to eliminate defects of the Yerevan-Gyumri highway and make it comply with inter-city road standards.

In Ashtarak the vice prime minister visited a new vehicle examination point equipped with modern devices.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

9. RUSSIA RECOGNIZES SOUTH OSSETIA AND ABKHAZIA INDEPENDENCE [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 08/26/08]

Russia has formally recognized today the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two provinces that broke away from Georgia in early 1990-s. The statement was made by Russian president Dmitry Medvedev.

In a statement publicized today Medvedev said the need to seek a decision was prompted by the created situation.

"Taking into consideration the free expression of will by peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and being guided by the UN Charter provisions, the 1970 declaration on the principles of the international norms on friendly relations among peoples, the Final 1975 OSCE Helsinki Act and other international and basic documents I signed a decree on the recognition of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by the Russian Federation," the statement said.

Dmitry Medvedev called on other governments to follow Russia's example. "This is not an easy choice, but it is the only way to save people's lives," he said.

Medvedev discussed today the situation around South Ossetia and Abkhazia in his residence in the southern Russian Sochi with prime minister Vladimir Putin, heads of both chambers of parliament, foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and other top government officials.

Residents of Sukhumi, Abkhazia capital, hailed the decision by a firework.

10. ARMENIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS DETERMINED TO CONTINUE STRUGGLE UNTIL ACHIEVING ITS FINAL OBJECTIVES [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/26/08]

At about 10:30 am on August 25, a group of nearly 100 men, some of whom wore police uniform, while others were in civilian clothes, broke into Northern Avenue and took away all the stands and posters put up in the avenue, breaking and tearing them. NT was informed by the head office of the Armenian National Congress (ANC) that their actions were accompanied by bad language.

"Being in internal squabbles and crisis, the regime is terrified by the authority and efficiency of the sit-down strike in Northern Avenue. Keeping 76 political prisoners as hostages, the authorities have cowardly engaged in a fight with their pictures and the true information that is presented to the public," is said in a statement of the ANC.

It is stated that prior to the September 5 rally, a large-scale action of joining the Armenian National Congress and the signature collection with the aim of taking Robert Kocharian before the Hague international court is under way in Northern Avenue. According to the statement, the authorities understand that the activation of the society, failure of the political trials, the worsening economic crisis in the country, and the unprecedented terror against business make a mighty nature of the ANC's September 5 rally inevitable so the authorities have to resort to desperate violence and illegalities.

Appealing to everyone for restraint and patience, the ANC states that these unbalanced steps of the regime cannot break the will of the ANC and hundreds of thousands of citizens who support ANC, who are determined to continue the struggle until reaching the final objectives and getting rid of this anti-popular regime.

11. RUBEN SAFRASTIAN DOES NOT RULE OUT THAT PRESIDENTS OF ARMENIA AND TURKEY WILL DISCUSS IDEA OF "SOUTH-CAUCASIAN PLATFORM" [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/26/08]

It is not ruled out that in case of the Turkish president's visit to Yerevan, in addition to issues related to Armenian-Turkish relations, he will discuss with his Armenian counterpart the Turkish side's initiative of creating a "South-Caucasian platform", director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the RA National Academy of Sciences Ruben Safrastian told NT correspondent.

In his words, the idea of creating a "South-Caucasian platform" that envisages developing the regional cooperation in the format of Russia, Turkey and the three South Caucasian countries is part of Turkey's policy in the Caucasus. In particular, Turkey pursues its geopolitical goals and tries, through realization of this idea, to strengthen its influence in the South Caucasus and to distance itself from the policy of the West, including the U.S, in this region and play an independent role.

In the opinion of R. Safrastian, taking into account the visits of Turkish leaders to Moscow and Baku, this initiative has undergone development recently. At the same time, he expressed a doubt that Russia may agree that the initiatives of Turkish diplomacy should be put into practice as Russia is not interested in the strengthening of Turkey's positions in the Caucasus.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

To recap, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan has invited his Turkish counterpart Abdullah Gul to a qualifying match between the national football teams of Armenia and Turkey which will be held in Yerevan on September 6. So far Ankara has not given an official answer to this invitation.

The Armenian-Turkish land border has been closed by Ankara since 1993. Turkey's precondition for opening the border is considerable progress in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, as well as Armenia's renunciation of its demand to recognize the 1915 events in the Ottoman Empire as genocide.

12. ACCORDING TO LEVON ZURABIAN, AUTHORITIES TRY TO MOVE STRUGGLE FROM POLITICAL FIELD INTO FIELD OF FORCE [Haykakan Zhamanak, 08/27/08]

Despite the regime's aggressive actions which are accompanied by brute force, People's Movement will continue its just struggle, coordinator of the center of the Armenian National Congress (ANC) Levon Zurabian stated at the August 26 press conference.

In his words, the attack on the sit-down strikers early August 25 and the police actions on seizure of the stands and posters with photos of political prisoners bear evidence of "a low intellect of those in power" who are in a state of panic today. According to L. Zurabian, realizing that they have been defeated in the political field, the authorities are trying to move the struggle into a field of force. "The authorities have lost their cool and are trying to stop the popular movement by brute methods. However, it will not save them and the power pyramid will collapse anyway. By using repressive means, the dictatorship may only gain a temporary victory," L. Zurabian said.

As regards the actions that ANC is going to take in response to the steps of the authorities, L. Zurabian stated that ANC will adapt the popular movement to the strengthened dictatorship and will find methods of struggle which will be in line with the new realities. In his words, it is obvious that all these steps of the authorities are aimed at preventing the opposition meeting to be held on September 5. The representative of the ANC assured those present that the opposition will not succumb to provocation and get into a clash.

13. POLICE ARREST 4 YOUNG OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS ON AUGUST 26 [Aravot, 08/27/08]

At about 1:20 pm on August 26, a group of policemen detained four young activists of the opposition in Yerevan's Northern Avenue and took them to the police station of Kentron community, spokesman for the Armenian National Congress (ANC) Arman Musinian announced at a press conference on the same day.

According to him, during the arrest, one of the detainees, Tigran Arakelian suddenly had a heart problem and was taken to hospital. However, immediately after his admission to the hospital, eight policemen arrived there and drove the young man to the police station, despite his poor health. A. Musinian said that T. Arakelian is a member of the youth wing of the Armenian National Movement (ANM). He found it difficult to give the names of the three other men.

The head of the ANM's youth wing Karen Karapetian told reporters that yesterday evening an old man suddenly attacked a young activist of the opposition and stabbed him in the hand.

14. ARMENIA HAS ALWAYS STOOD FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF ALL CONFLICTS [ARMENPRESS, 08/27/08]

"Armenia has always stood and continues to stand for peaceful resolution of all conflicts," an acting spokesman for Armenian foreign ministry, Tigran Balayan, said today, adding that Armenia believes strongly that military way is a hopeless way.

He made the remarks when asked to comment on Armenia's position after Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia's independence.

He said such conflicts should be resolved based on the free expression of will of peoples.

15. YOUTH PARTY OF ARMENIA URGES PARLIAMENT TO RECOGNIZE THE INDEPENDENCE OF ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH OSSETIA [ARMENPRESS, 08/27/08]

The Youth Party of Armenia urged today the country's parliament to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The party chairman, Vahan Babayan, said to a news conference that the 'move stems from the geopolitical logic of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution.'

He said what had happened in South Ossetia was a blatant U.S. and Europe's attempt of aggression and destabilization of situation in the South Caucasus.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

He said his party had warned in the past many a time that the superpowers would try to destabilized the South Caucasus.

He said the crisis that has affected heavily commodity supplies to Armenia may develop into a fuel and food crisis.

16. OSCE MISSION CONDUCTS REGULAR MONITORING OF LINE OF CONTACT IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH [ARMENPRESS, 08/27/08]

In accordance to an advance agreement with the authorities of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) the OSCE mission conducted today a regular monitoring of the line of contact between the armed forces of Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh on Aghdam-Barda road section.

The press division of the foreign ministry of NKR told Armenpress that the monitoring on the Nagorno-Karabakh armed forces' side was conducted by Irji Averlen and Vladimir Chuntilov, field aides to the OSCE chairman-in-office personal envoy

Before heading to the line of contact, the OSCE officers had a briefing with administration of Askeran region of the NKR under whose jurisdiction the section is.

The monitoring proceeded according to the timetable and no breaches of the ceasefire were registered. On the NKR side the OSCE officers were accompanied by representatives of the NKR foreign and defense ministries.

17. U.S. ADJUTANT GENERAL FROM KANSAS STATE VISITS ARMENIAN DE-MINING CENTER [ARMENPRESS, 08/27/08]

Pot Banting, Adjutant General and Maj.-General from the U.S. State of Kansas visited today the humanitarian de-mining center of the Armenian defense ministry and discussed a set of questions with chief of the engineering troops department Maj.-General Vostanik Adoyan and Colonel Ara Movsisian, head of the de-mining center.

The U.S. General also took a stroll around the de-mining center and spoke to sappers. He was said that Armenians sappers have been in Iraq since 2005 for a humanitarian mission.

Ara Movsisian presented to the guest what the center has done since its inception with the help of the U.S. government. It is equipped with modern technique, mine detecting dogs and the best deminers, 160 of whom have international certification.

The center's sappers have been detecting and eliminating mines across Armenia with the focus on frontline areas in Tavush and Syunik provinces.

On behalf of the Armenian defense minister Vostanik Adoyan awarded a certificate of honor to U.S. Lieutenant Douglas Van who conducted de-mining classes for Armenian troops.

Pot Banting said he makes annual visits to Armenia within the frameworks of Armenia-Kansas cooperation program and is very proud of the high level bilateral partnership.

The de-mining center has been active since 2002.

BUSINESS

18. WORLD BANK TO STUDY REFORMS IN ARMENIA'S STATE PROCUREMENT SECTOR [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/26/08]

A number of problems related to improvement of Armenia's state procurement system were discussed at the August 25 meeting of the Armenian minister of finance Tigran Davtian and the head of the World Bank's procurement assessment mission Naushad Khan.

T. Davtian said that several measures were taken in order to improve the state procurement system: a draft strategy of reforms in the procurement system was submitted to Armenian government for approval, and a new package of by-laws on procurement was already approved by the government. At the same time, according to the minister, the sector has problems of improvement, and the assistance of international structures, especially the World Bank, is of great importance.

According to the press service of the RA ministry of finance, the WB representative said they intend to study the reforms being implemented in Armenia's state procurement sector, after which an assessment of the state procurement procedure of the country will be undertaken and presented to the Armenian side. N. Khan said that there have been many changes since the last assessment in 2004, so the system is in need of a new assessment.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

19. CBA BANS ARMENIAN BANKS FROM PARTICIPATING IN "WESTERN UNION" [Aravot, 08/26/08]

At the August 22 sitting conducted by the CBA chairman Arthur Javadian, the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) Board made a decision to ban the Armenia-based banks from participating in the Western Union (WU) money transfer system.

According to the CBA PR service, the banks were instructed to cancel their agreements with WU in the order envisaged by these agreements.

The decision was made with the aim of reducing the riskiness of the banks as there have been cases of ungrounded violation of provisions of the agreements that WU had signed with Armenian banks. For example, provision of services was discontinued in branches of some banks, which may disrupt the normal operation of banks, affect their financial state and create unforeseeable situations in the money transfer system, as well as to affect the economic, financial and real sectors of the country.

20. AUCTION HELD ON PLACEMENT OF STATE BONDS OF AMGT39265093 ISSUE [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/26/08]

An action on placement of state (treasury) short-term bonds of AMGT39265093 issue with a redemption period of 39 weeks was held on August 26.

The bonds subject to placement amounted to 1.5 billion drams, the demand made 2 bln 131 mln 238 thousand drams. The placement of bonds made 1.5 bln drams. The placement proceeds made 1 bln 411 mln 222 thousand 39 drams. The weighted average yield from placement made 8.2956%, the maximum yield - 8.4444%.

According to the press center of the RA ministry of finance, 12 dealers and the treasury participated in the auction.

21. GOODS FROM GEORGIA ALREADY REACH ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/26/08]

29 wagons of wheat that left Georgia on August 26 have already reached Gyumri. Besides, 21 wagons of various goods are now at the Sadakhlo customs point on the Armenian-Georgian border and will soon be moved to Armenia. Goods are now being transported into Armenia by a railway bypassing the bridge which was exploded in the Georgian city of Gori.

2,800 tons of gasoline and 3 thousand tons of wheat are now in the Georgian port of Poti. A total of 310 wagons of goods to be imported into Armenia are in the Georgian railway. Out of the indicated wagons, 177 are loaded with grain, 123 - with various goods, and 10 are loaded with gasoline. The train with 10 wagons of gasoline has already reached Khashuri section of the Georgian railway.

22. ARMENIA EXPECTS MCC TO RESUME ALLOCATION OF FUNDS STARTING FROM 2009 [ARMENPRESS, 08/27/08]

In early September the Millennium Challenges Armenia (MCA)-Fund will submit a bid to the Millennium Challenges Corporation (MCC) to ask for funding for its four quarter projects.

Ara Hovsepian, MCA executive director, told journalists on Tuesday that the MCC board meeting scheduled for early in September, will discuss among other things, also the status of projects implemented in Armenia and will decide on future funding for it.

Ara Hovsepian said the MCC and the government in Yerevan agreed that a major road reconstruction program of 2008 that was to be funded by the MCC, will be funded by the Armenian government. He said the government has decided to release \$16.8 million to that end.

"We expect the MCC to resume allocation of funds for concrete road building projects starting from 2009," Ara Hovsepian said.

The MCC has so far released about \$20 million for Armenia, part of which was spent on implementation on concrete projects and the other part is being spent on other ones.

23. SOME 130 TRAIN CARS WITH WHEAT, FUEL AND OTHER COMMODITIES ARRIVE IN ARMENIA FROM GEORGIA [ARMENPRESS, 08/27/08]

A total of 130 train cars laden with wheat, fuel and other commodities have arrived in Armenia in the last 2 days from Georgia, a spokeswoman for the transport and communications ministry, Susana Tonoyan, told Armenpress.

She said that 72 cars were laden with different commodities, 48 with wheat and 10 with petrol.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

She said another 15 train cars with wheat and 7 with mixed commodities are waiting to cross into Armenia at Sadakhlo border crossing.

She said there are 191 more train cars in Georgia with Armenia-bound goods. Ninety-two are laden with crops and 99 with mix commodities. She said 10 cars with petrol and 13 with wheat are in Poti port and will head soon for Armenia.

24. THREE COMPANIES QUALIFY TO FIGHT FOR THE THIRD MOBILE PHONE OPERATOR LICENSE [ARMENPRESS, 08/27/08]

Three of the six companies that submitted bids to win a license to operate the third mobile phone service have qualified for the next stage, a spokeswoman for the transport and communication ministry said today.

Susana Tonoyan said they are the Orange company owned by France Telecom, the joint British-Irish CEO Blackrock Communications and the Swedish M\$A Tele2 AB.

She said overall some 17 companies wished to bid for the license but the majority failed to submit the required documents. She said the qualifying companies will have to submit their proposals within the next 40 days.

DIASPORA

25. BIURAKN HAKHVERDIAN WITH GOLD MEDAL AT BEIJING OLYMPICS 2008 [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/25/08]

Armenian-Dutch Biurakn Hakhverdian playing in Dutch water polo team got gold medal as The Netherlands won the gold medal in the Women's Water Polo competition. The Netherlands beat the United States 9-8.

Biurakn Hakhverdian was born in the Netherlands. She is 23 years old.

26. A STORY ENTITLED "D.C. MAKES A STATEMENT ON ARMENIAN GENOCIDE" WAS POSTED IN AN AMERICAN QUARTERLY [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/25/08]

The Armenian Genocide Museum of America would like to call our attention to a story entitled "D.C. Makes a Statement on Armenian Genocide" posted on Congressional Quarterly. The Museum notes that the Quarterly is a non-partisan authoritative source of information. Below we present the above-mentioned story.

"Late last year, lawmakers balked under pressure from the Turkish government, which warned against the United States officially declaring a century-old massacre of Armenians as genocide. Apparently, the District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment doesn't scare that easily.

The city agency has given its stamp of approval to convert the former Federal-American National Bank into the Armenian Genocide Museum of America, according to public records.

"Visitors to the museum will come to understand the Armenian Genocide as the prototype for modern crimes against humanity, including the Holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda and Darfur," a Web site for the museum says.

The debate over whether to declare the deaths of 1.5 million Armenians in the former Ottoman Empire nearly a century ago heated up in Congress when Bush administration officials warned that such a move would threaten U.S. relations with Turkey. The resolution (H Res 106) was approved in the House Foreign Affairs Committee, but was never sent to the floor."

27. ABOUT 1,350 REFUGEES TAKE SHELTER IN JAVAKHK [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/26/08]

Refugees have appeared for the first time in Javakhk as a result of the strained Georgian-Ossetian conflict. Local residents give shelter to refugees whose number is increasing from day to day since August 10.

A-info agency reported that by unofficial data, there are 1,347 refugees in Javakhk, including 820 in Akhalkspha, 238 - in Akhalkalak, 217 - in Ninotsminda, and 72 in Tsalka.

The work on providing refugees with food and lodging was organized in the regions on the first days of hostilities thanks to efforts of the local government bodies and residents.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

28. UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR ARMENIANS TO RECLAIM THEIR PROPERTIES IN TURKEY [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/26/08] By Harut Sassounian, Publisher, The California Courier

Armenian citizens of several Middle Eastern countries may have a unique opportunity to reclaim their properties in Turkey without hiring a lawyer or going to court.

A Turkish newspaper reported last week that the government of Turkey has been negotiating with Syria, Iraq and Egypt over conflicting land claims of those citizens who lost their properties after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan took up this long-standing issue during their recent meeting in Turkey, but failed to come to a mutually acceptable solution, according to an article by Ercan Yavuz in the August 23, 2008 issue of Today's Zaman. Turkey claims that its citizens own a total of 750,000 acres of land in Syria, Iraq and Egypt. Turkish officials also claim that the Syrian government confiscated lands belonging to citizens of Turkey. In a reciprocal move, in 1966, Ankara confiscated the properties of Syrian citizens living in Turkey. After lengthy negotiations, Turkey and Syria signed a protocol in 1972 and created a joint commission to document the disputed properties. "Turkish citizens hold 2,411 title deeds in Syria, of which 2,108 are slated for evaluation by the commission," Today's Zaman reported.

The commission reportedly confirmed that Turkish citizens own 2,534 real estate plots in Syria, involving 250,000 acres of land, 1,576 houses and 3,533,844 Syrian liras. Some of these deeds were rejected by the Syrian government, while the status of more than 700 others could not be resolved. Syria also rejected 276 out of 987 submitted files; and 711 cases have not yet been decided upon, according to Mr. Yavuz's article. Syria reportedly confirmed that Turkish citizens own about 250,000 acres of land in Syria, while claiming that its citizens own an equal amount of land in Turkey. Turkey, on the other hand, claimed that its citizens own twice as much land in Syria.

Turkey has had a similar dispute with Iraq and Egypt. Iraq adopted a law in 1961 restricting Turkish citizens to buying no more than one house and one workplace. Iraq then ordered the sale or confiscation of properties belonging to Turkish citizens, according to Today's Zaman. In 1985, Turkey and Iraq agreed to allow property owners in their respective countries five years to file a claim. The due date was subsequently extended twice. Turkey sent 87 files of land claims to Iraq, 53 of which were reportedly accepted by Iraq. In all, Turkey claimed that its citizens own in Iraq about 160,000 acres of land, 150 buildings, 11 charitable foundations, more than 2 million Iraqi dinars and 8,000 pounds sterling. On the other hand, Iraq claims its citizens own 48 buildings and 11 plots of land in Turkey. The American invasion of Iraq interrupted the settlement of these claims.

Turkey also signed an agreement with Egypt in 1982 to solve their property disputes. According to Today's Zaman, 1,590 files have been submitted by Turkish citizens who claim property ownership in Egypt. The Egyptian government has reportedly accepted 256 of these files. In addition, Turkey claims that the Egyptian government, agreeing that 31 charitable foundations in Egypt belong to citizens of Turkey, paid more than \$95,000 to 72 Turkish citizens.

Leading Armenian organizations in Syria, Iraq and Egypt should contact their respective government officials and verify the information published by Today's Zaman. If the Turkish report is accurate, these organizations should urge Armenian citizens of their countries, including those living overseas, to submit to them copies of their property deeds or other documentary evidence of ownership. The organizations would then pursue the inclusion of Armenian claims in the negotiations being held by their respective governments with Turkey, demanding either the return of Armenian-owned lands or fair compensation for the lost properties.

The key advantage of this approach is that Armenians do not need to hire lawyers and go to court, as the officials of the three Arab countries, on behalf of their citizens, are negotiating directly with their Turkish counterparts to settle such reciprocal claims.

This is a unique opportunity that Armenians need to take advantage of immediately. Once the outstanding property ownership disputes are settled, Armenian citizens of Syria, Iraq and Egypt may never again have the opportunity to reclaim their properties located in Turkey.

29. HRANUSH HAKOBIAN DISCUSSES COOPERATION WITH RAUL DE LUZENBERGER, HEAD OF EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S DELEGATION [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 08/27/08]

Head of Diaspora Committee of the Armenian foreign ministry, Hranush Hakobian, received on August 26 Raul de Luzenberger, head of the European Commission's Delegation to Armenia.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

The press division of the ministry told Armenpress that during the meeting Hranush Hakobian stressed the importance of the EU's New Neighborhood Program and the role of all structures that operate within the frameworks of the Partnership Cooperation Agreement.

At the same time she proposed a set of projects which can be carried out on the EC's funding. They refer to training of personnel as part of Twinning program, providing expertise services to legislation drafted by the Diaspora ministry as well as to assist Armenian communities in Europe to maintain their language and culture.

Ambassador Luzenberger was said to express his gratitude to Hranush Hakobian for these interesting initiatives, voicing also his readiness to help implement those of the projects which in his opinion are in tune with EC's priorities.

ARTS

30. COUNCIL OF EUROPE 'WHITE BOOK' ON INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE WILL BE PRESENTED IN ARMENIA [ARMENPRESS, 08/26/08]

The White Book of the Council of Europe on inter-cultural dialogue will be presented in Armenia on October 8-9. The book won the approval of the Council of Europe foreign ministers when they met earlier this year on May 7.

Gayane Durgarian, a press officer for the Armenian ministry of culture, told Armenpress that concurrently Armenia's culture policy will be presented within the frameworks of the Council of Europe Compendium Program. The gathering will also discuss ways of strengthening Armenia's culture cooperation with the Council of Europe.

Gabriella Bataini-Dragoni, head of the Council of Europe directorate in charge of education, culture, heritage, sport and youth issues, will arrive in Yerevan at the invitation of Armenian culture minister Hasmik Poghosian to take part in the event.

31. EXHIBITION OF YOUNG PAINTERS OPENS AT "HayArt" [Azg, 08/26/08]

An exhibition of paintings by graduates of Terlemezian School Karen Grigorian and Albert Bernetsian opened at HayArt cultural center on August 25. More than 40 still lifes and landscape paintings are on display.

In the words of the center's director Rita Sharoyan, their center aims to present young artists to the public, to smooth their way. "We give such an opportunity to them, and God grant that this will be their most modest exhibition," she said. According to her, the works of both young painters have interesting colors and can cause a good mood. In her opinion, K. Grigorian and A. Bernetsian are promising painters.

The exhibition will last until August 31.

RELIGION

32. SECRETARY GENERAL OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES CONFERENCE VISITS ARMENIA [ARMENPRESS, 08/26/08]

On August 23 a delegation, led by Kolin Williams, secretary general of the European Churches Conference, arrived on an official visit in Armenia.

The department of information of the Holy See Mother Etchmiadzin told Armenpress that on August 24 the delegation members were present at a holy liturgy and a ceremony of bishops ordination. They also visited the Holy See's museums, other churches and historical structures.

Today the delegation was received by Catholicos Karekin II, head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Karekin II was reported to express his pleasure on the cooperation between the Armenian Church and European Churches Conference focusing also on the need of forging closer ties.

The head of the Armenian Church spoke on challenges faced by Armenian Church, the current status of the Church and its relations with the government.

The delegation visited also the Gevorkian Seminary and met with representatives of several ecumenical organizations stationed in Armenia.

Armenia joined the European Churches Conference in 1997. It has a representative in its central headquarters and three representatives in its committees.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

SOCIAL

33. GOVERNMENT RELEASES 31 MILLION DRAMS TO UPDATE ARMENIAN RED BOOK [ARMENPRESS, 08/26/08]

The government of Armenia has released 31 million Drams for the nature protection ministry to prepare the updated version of the Armenian Red Book.

The two-volume edition is about Armenia's fauna. It will be released by the end of the year.

Tatiana Danielian, head of a ministry department dealing with bio-diversity and water resources protection issues, told Armenpress that about 40 specialists of the ministry in cooperation with colleagues from the Biology and Zoology Institute of the National Academy of Sciences are doing field researches in Lori, Vayots Dzor, Tavush, Gegharkunik and Kotayk provinces to learn the condition of species which are on the brink of extinction and design moves to ensure their protection and reproduction.

She said as a result of studies the scientists defined a list of 200 species of plants and 10 species of animals to be included in the Book for the first time.

Tatiana Danielian said also the council of scientists has decided to organize an effective supervision over the species which are on the brink of extinction, which she said is mainly due to social-economic changes which affect bio-diversity.

34. DELIVERY OF GOODS TO ARMENIA FROM GEORGIA AND IRAN NORMALIZES [ARMENPRESS, 08/26/08]

Gagik Martirosian, an aide to prime minister and head of a task force, set up to coordinate delivery of goods to Armenia from neighboring Georgia and Iran, told Armenpress that Armenia-bound carriages are moving over the alternative bridge near the town of Kaspi, 40 km off the central Georgian town of Gori.

The main bridge blown up on August 16 is still being repaired. About 100 carriages passed over the bridge heading for Armenia and part of them have crossed into Armenia today morning, according to Martirosian.

Carriages are bringing wheat, fuel and other commodities, including foodstuff and building materials. Some 200 carriages laden with same goods are waiting in line to go over the bridge. Gagik Martirosian said the lines on both sides of the bridge are expected to disappear in 2-3 days.

He said flour, fuel and other commodities are being brought to Armenia also by trucks from the Georgian port of Batumi. He added that unloading of ships resumed in Batumi and Poti ports of Georgia and besides goods are arriving from Iran.

35. CARD PRESENTS TRADITIONAL ARMENIAN DISHES [Azg, 08/26/08]

About 500 traditional Armenian dishes were presented today at an annual presentation handled by the Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD).

Anna Karapetian, program coordinator, told reporters the goal was to restore and maintain traditional Armenian dishes. She said all dishes were prepared by old receipts kept by grandmothers in their kitchens.

Joseph Pennington, U.S. charge d'affaires in Armenia, said this program supported by CARD embraces some 100 communities across Armenia and among other things, it gives young people an opportunity to mix and make new friends.

The event proceeded under traditional Armenian music and dances. On the sidelines a book called Traditional Armenian Dishes was presented.

36. EDUCATION AND SCIENCE MINISTRY LICENSES 71 DRIVING SCHOOLS SINCE 2007 AUGUST [ARMENPRESS, 08/27/08]

Armenian education and science ministry has licensed 71 driving schools since 2007 August, including 23 this year.

Varuzhan Khachatryan, head of analytical and information division of the ministry's Licensing and Accreditation Agency, told Armenpress that licenses are provided based on the findings of studies conducted by transport and communications ministry.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

He said some of applications by schools were rejected, but he added that these schools have the right to bid again in case they meet all requirements, such as technical equipment, availability of classrooms, teachers and training facilities.

37. SIXTY-THREE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO BE RENOVATED BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1 [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 08/27/08]

Sixty-three educational institutions in Armenia are in the process of renovation currently. The funding comes from the government and local budgets. The customer of the repair program is the urban ministry.

Gor Kamalian, head of an urban ministry department in charge of construction policy, told Armenpress that the repair in all institutions, except for few schools, will be accomplished before September 1, when the schooling year begins, but the repair will not disrupt classes.

The government has released over 11.8 billion Drams this year for repair and reconstruction of educational institutions and 2.2 billion drams came from community budgets.

SPORTS

38. ARMENIAN OLYMPIANS IN 37th PLACE BY NUMBER OF MEDALS WON [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/25/08]

The ceremony of closing the 29th Summer Olympic Games took in Beijing on August 24. Sportsmen of 88 out of the 204 countries - participants in the Olympic Games have won medals. China is in 1st place (51 gold, 21 silver, 28 bronze medals), followed by the teams of the US (36+38+36) and Russia (23+21+28).

Armenian sportsmen have won 6 bronze medals and took 37th place, Azerbaijan is in 29th place (1 gold, 2 silver, 4 bronze medals), while Georgia is in 32nd place (3 gold and 3 bronze medals).

A celebration in honor of Armenian Olympians will be held in Yerevan's Republic Square on August 26. The event starts on 6 pm.

39. YOUNG ARMENIAN CHESS PLAYERS SHARE 5-6th PLACES AT WORLD CHESS OLYMPIAD [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/25/08]

The World Youth Under 16 Chess Olympiad with the participation of 26 teams finished in Mersin (Turkey) on August 24. The Armenian team composed of Samvel Ter-Sahakian, Vahe Baghdasarian, Hayk Vardanian and Hayk Tamazian earned 24 points and shared 5th-6th places with Georgian team. The teams of India and Russia earned 28.5 points each and shared 1st-2nd places. The chess players of the Philippines took 3rd place (27 points), the team of Azerbaijan - 4th place (24.5 points).

40. ARMENIAN JUDOIST GRIGOR IVANIAN WINS GOLD MEDAL OF ISTANBUL TOURNAMENT [ARMENPRESS, 08/26/08]

Armenian judoist Grigor Ivanian, 55 kg, took the gold medal of an international, under 20 tournament in Turkish Istanbul.

Other Armenian athletes, Tigran Varosian, 60 kg, Hovhannes Dermishian, 66 kg, and Artyom Baghdasarian, 73 kg, took silver medals.

Garik Gevorkian, 81 kg, was the fifth, while Gor Kharizian and D. Nikoghosian, 90 kg both, came in 7-th.

Overall 15 Armenian judoists took part in the Istanbul competition.

41. BRONZE MEDAL WINNER HRACHIK JAVAKHIAN RETURNS FROM BEIJING OLYMPIC GAMES [NOYAN TAPAN, 08/26/08]

A bronze medal winner at the 29th Summer Olympic Games, boxer Hrachik Javakhian of the city of Vanadzor returned to Armenia from Beijing at midnight of August 25. Sport fans of Lori marz together with Vanadzor mayor met him at Zvartnots Airport with an offering of bread and salt, songs and dancing. The medal winner was handed a laurel wreath by the President of the National Olympic Committee Gagik Tsarukian, the RA Minister of Sport and Youth Issues Armen Grigorian and the President of the Boxing Federation of Armenia, Lieutenant General Hayk Harutyunian.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

H. Javakhian is the third Armenian boxer to win an Olympic medal after Vladimir Yengibarian - champion of the 1956 Melbourne Games, and Davit Torosian - a bronze medal winner at the 1972 Munich Games.

NT correspondent was informed by Gurgun Gevorgian, President of the Vanadzor Committee of Sports, an Honored Trainer of the USSR that Vanadzor municipality will present H. Javakhian with an apartment and a car. Javakhian's personal coach Gevorg Misakian will also receive an apartment.

42. PRESIDENT SERZH SARGSYAN COMMENDS SIX ARMENIAN ATHLETES WHO WON BRONZE MEDALS AT BEIJING OLYMPIC GAMES [ARMENPRESS, 08/27/08]

President Serzh Sargsyan went on stage yesterday evening to congratulate six Armenian athletes who won bronze medals at the Beijing Olympic Games. The stage was erected for popular singers to perform for thousands of people gathered at Republican Square to honor the athletes.

Addressing the crowd before the concert president Sargsyan said Armenian athletes upheld the honor of Armenian sports in China winning their medals in a tough, but fair competition.

According to the president, billions of people across the world saw Armenians not only in struggle but also on podium.

"People who might have never heard of Armenia saw its flag being raised in honor of our sportsmen and Armenia has become more recognizable," he said.

The president also commended the medal winners for their contribution to popularizing mass sports, adding that he had traveled personally to Beijing to back our athletes. He said he is sure that Armenian athletes are capable of achieving higher targets as there are all grounds for it with tens of new modern sporting facilities built across the country.

President of the Armenian National Olympic Committee Gagik Tsarukian thanked the president for his constant support to the athletes. He also thanked ex-president Robert Kocharian for his role in reviving sports in Armenia and also the government and the National Assembly.

With six bronze medals Armenia came in 79-th in the country rating.

43. ARMENIA NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM TO START PREPARING FOR TURKEY GAME SEPTEMBER 1 [ARMENPRESS, 08/27/08]

The Danish head coach of Armenia's national football squad Jan Poulsen will bring players together on September 1 to get down to taking on Turkey's national team for 2010 World Cup qualifier, scheduled for September 6 at Yerevan's Hrazdan Stadium.

The press division of the Armenian Football Federation (AFF) told Armenpress that all players of the national team playing outside the country are expected in Yerevan on August 31.

Brazilian Markos and Arthur Minasian, both play for Ararat FC, will hardly be in the team as Markos was banned by FIFA to play for Armenia while Minasian suffers from a serious injury.

According to FIFA rules, foreigners can play for a country if they played for its FC for at least 5 years. In this sense Markos does not qualify.

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