



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, September 29, 2008

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION SHOULD BE WAGED WITH RESPECT TO MAJOR CASES WHICH ARE IMMEDIATELY CLOSED, CHAIRMAN OF "INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS" ORGANIZATION SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

On the initiative of the RA Prosecutor General's Office, the third cluster consultation "The Peculiarities of Prevention, Detection and Investigation of Corruption Crimes", this time on a republican scale, will be held in Yerevan in October. The two previous consultations were held with the participation of law enforcers of Armenia's southern and northern regions. The September 25 meeting of the Prosecutor General Aghvan Hovsepian with representatives of NGOs was dedicated to finalizing the cluster consultations.

The Chairman of Investigative Journalists organization Edik Baghdasarian said that the real fight against corruption should be waged with respect to those major cases which, in his words, are immediately closed. For example, two months ago Armenia exported thousands of tons of bananas to Bahama Islands. Investigative Journalists, however, was informed from the Bahamas that no bananas were received there from Armenia. If such major cases are disclosed, "something will change," S. Baghdasarian said, adding that "people do not trust the law enforcement system".

According to the prosecutor general, "the banana case" has not been closed, just the law enforcement bodies, unlike journalists, have difficulty taking investigative actions in those countries, with which Armenia has no agreements on legal help. A. Hovsepian expressed his disagreement with the claim that investigators are illiterate and unprofessional.

The representatives of NGOs attached importance to informing the population about corruption, but they said that the price of social advertising on television is equivalent to that of commercial advertising.

The NGOs proposed that they should be given the opportunity to make speeches on corruption problems at consultations to be held in Yerevan. They also proposed increasing the number of NGOs that participate in such consultations.

2. CONSCRIPTION OF MEN OVER 18 WITHOUT RIGHT OF POSTPONEMENT LIKELY FROM SPRING OF 2010 [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

The amendments to be made in the Law on Compulsory Military Service, according to which men over 18 will no longer have the right of postponement, will take effect no sooner than in the spring of 2010, the head of the Legal Department of the RA Ministry of Defence Sedrak Sedrakian said at the September 25 press conference. According to him, the bill is still being developed and has not yet been submitted to the government. Only after being approved by the government, it may be discussed at the parliament.

He said that in case of the bill's adoption, it will not apply to the students having the right of postponement at that moment. S. Sedrakian added that some privileges will be envisaged for students of higher educational institutions to be conscripted into the army, and the problems related to them are still being discussed.

As for amendments to the Law on Defence, this bill has already been put on the agenda of the National Assembly and will be discussed on October or November.

3. SERZH SARGSYAN DOES NOT NEED ROBERT KOCHARIAN'S RETURN TO POWER, HOVHANNES HOVHANNISIAN CONSIDERS [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

The Russian-Georgian conflict has made a serious impact on Armenia's home political situation, and the questions were changed by 180 degrees in the region as a result of the war," Hovhannes Hovhannisian, the Chairman of the Liberal Party of Armenia, stated at the September 26 press conference.

Touching upon RA President Serzh Sargsyan's foreign policy, H. Hovhannisian said that he mainly tries to solve two problems and in difference to former RA President Robert Kocharian, he tries to come out to the international arena through the Armenian-Turkish relations and the Nagorno Karabakh



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settlement. "It is a very large and difficult game. Today Armenia led by S. Sargsyan with very weak playing cards has sat at a large card-table and plays with the greatest powers of the world," H. Hovhannisian said adding that it is impossible to achieve something with this tactics, with a corrupted power, with non-established institutions. And the result of the game, according to him, will become clear in a month or two.

According to him, at present the opposition reconsiders its strategy. "We should not forget that the public has not received yet answers on the March 1 events from the RA authorities. Therefore the opposition has no right to be passive, and the rallies should be continued," H. Hovhannisian emphasized.

In response to the question of whether Robert Kocharian's return to power is possible, H. Hovhannisian said that the former President with his character will not agree to take another post. Besides, the current power, especially S. Sargsyan do not need R. Kocharian's return.

4. PROBLEM OF ARMENIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS WILL NOT BE SOLVED EITHER UNDER CURRENT OR FUTURE GENERATIONS, POLITICAL SCIENTIST LEVON MELIK-SHAHNAZARIAN CONSIDERS [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

The opening of the Armenian-Turkish border is fraught with much dangers, including in economic respect: in particular, it will do much harm to Armenia's light industry. However, as political scientist Levon Melik-Shahnazarian said at the September 26 press conference, the greatest danger is that Turkey will start accusing Armenia of giving camps to Kurdistan Workers Party.

According to L. Melik-Shahnazarian's observation, at present Turkey competes with Russia, Iran and the United States to expand its influence in the region. Touching upon Turkey's readiness to play the role of a mediator in the issue of Nagorno Karabakh settlement, the political scientist said that Armenia does not need such a mediator. According to him, the mediator, which considers itself and Azeris as different elements of the same people, cannot be unbiased.

L. Melik-Shahnazarian affirmed that the problem of Armenian-Turkish relations will not be solved either under the current or the future generations. "Civilization is the basis of contradictions of these relations. And in order to overcome it we need to live in the same civilization for many and many centuries," he said.

The political scientist in general welcomed RA President Serzh Sargsyan's speech on September 25 at the UN General Assembly. However, he does not agree to the sentence "on occupying Azeri territories." According to him, the President should have said not Azeri territories but territories occupied by Azeris.

5. ACCORDING TO ARARAT ZURABIAN, EVERYBODY KNOWS IN ARMENIA WHO FALSIFIES ELECTIONS [Haykakan Zhamanak, 09/26/08]

The radical opposition, even if it wishes, is not able to falsify the local self-government elections, as it does not have a sufficient number of members in the commissions. Ararat Zurabian, the Board Chairman of the Armenian National Movement party, a candidate for prefect election in the Kentron community of Yerevan, stated at the September 26 press conference responding to the assertion Gagik Beglarian, the current prefect and candidate for prefect made in his interview to Radio Liberty, according to which the opposition is going to commit falsifications in the elections of the Kentron community. "Everybody knows in Armenia who falsifies the elections, and it is just impermissible to speak about falsifications allegedly prepared by the opposition," the ANM leader said.

According to A. Zurabian, normal holding of the September 28 local self-government elections depends on country's higher authorities: they have a single chance even if once to organize an electoral process at the proper level. He also touched upon the rally scheduled for September 26 evening and the statement of RA Police Chief Alik Sargsian that one day the Police will no longer tolerate unauthorized events. "God forbid recurrence of March 1. The Police can intervene only in case of violation of public order, but they should not be the first to violate the law," A. Zurabian said. He affirmed that in general not authorizing and not permitting rallies is evidence of fear of the authorities. According to him, a public sector has been formed in the country today, which "terrifies" the authorities.

A. Zurabian said that according to the data of the survey conducted, he has two-fold more votes in the Kentron community than it will be required for gaining a convincing victory. He also added that in case of preventing 50% expected falsifications his victory will be ensured.



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6. NUMBER OF YOUNG MEN RETURNING TO ARMENIA TO DO MILITARY SERVICE IS ON INCREASE [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 09/26/08]

During the last conscription, about 300 young Armenians from abroad were conscripted into the fixed-period military service, the head of the Legal Department of the RA Ministry of Defence Sedrak Sedrakian stated at the September 25 press conference. According to him, quite a lot of young men returned to Armenia in recent years: previously they used to return from Russia to serve in the army, whereas now there are also young men from other countries, including European ones.

S. Sedrakian said that those young men of the call-up age, who intend to return to Armenia or receive their passports, apply through their relatives to the law enforcement body or the military registration and enlistment office of their former place of residence, informing them about their intention to return and do military service in Armenia. After their return, the criminal cases against them are quashed and they are given the opportunity to serve in the army.

S. Sedrakian informed those present that under the law in force since 2004, the young men who reached the age of 27 have the right not to be subjected to criminal responsibility by paying a fixed sum to the state. Since 2004, 2 billion 300 million drams has been transferred to the state budget. Young men shall pay 10 thousand drams to avoid each conscription, their presence is not mandatory and the procedure may be implemented by their relatives. S. Sedrakian said that the law applies only to young men who were aged 27 and over before October 31, 2007. However, several NGOs have requested to extend this period, and the issue is being discussed now.

In the words of the chairwoman of "Mother of Soldier" NGO Greta Mirzoyan, the number of those willing to do military service in homeland would have been greater, if the young men who live abroad had been better informed about the details of this process. The NGO assists young men with their problems related to receiving information and returning to homeland. With the support of the NGO, nearly 100 young men who returned from abroad have been conscripted into the Armenian army in the past two years.

7. SOCIETY IS ONE INDIVISIBLE BODY, RPA MEMBER SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

Society is one body that cannot be divided by the characteristic of votes given to some or other political force, member of the National Assembly Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) faction Artak Davtian said at the September 26 discussion on the possibility of political dialog in Armenia. The discussion was held at the National Press Club. In his words, unity is the basis and major precondition of the RPA's activities. For that reason the program of the president and the government contains some provisions on forming the society's trust.

According to A. Davtian, the violations committed at the February 19 presidential election were the consequence of the fierce electoral struggle that took place between the ruling and opposition forces. The opposition tried to convince the society that the authorities are to blame for all the problems and difficulties in the country. The result was the extreme intolerance shown by part of the society which led to the March 1 events.

A. Davtian stated that the ad hoc parliamentary committee on inquiry into the March 1 events will soon finish its work, and the society will get the answers to all its questions.

He said that the parliament will soon discuss the amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, based on which the rights of the parliamentary opposition will be extended. In the opinion of the RPA deputy, it is time for the opposition and ruling political forces to consider each other opponents rather than adversaries.

8. OPPOSITION TO ENGAGE IN DIALOG IF AUTHORITIES DISPLAY WILL TO REVEAL TRUTH [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

The opposition is prepared to engage in dialog if the authorities display a will to reveal the truth, member of the Armenian National Movement (ANM) Aram Manukian declared at the September 26 discussion at the National Press Club.

In his words, it has been a year that the country's society has been split, but the authorities have not revealed the truth which would allow the rebellious section of the society to believe the authorities. A. Manukian said that at the February 19, 2008 presidential election, power was usurped by means of rigging, violence and slaughter. The March 1 events were the derivative of the February 19 election, and the existence of political prisoners is the consequence of the March 2 events. In his opinion, each step of



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the authorities is aimed at covering up their previous step, and this practice is continuing today: the police are terrorizing the relatives and friends of the political prisoners in Northern Avenue.

According to the speaker, the authorities do not display any will to eliminate the main cause of the current situation. Until now it has not been announced what happened in Liberty Square on the morning of March 1st, who gave that order and at what hour, and whether the demonstrators were warned in advance or not. A. Manukian said that the authorities have claimed for 7 months that the demonstrators were armed but no concrete fact has been made public so far. There are policemen who are suspected of committing murders but none of them has been arrested, whereas 75 innocent people have been imprisoned, 29 of whom were convicted based on the evidence of policemen only.

9. MEETING OF OPPOSITION STARTS IN NORTHERN AVENUE [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

The meeting organized by the Armenian National Congress (ANC) on September 26 started with people's chanting "Freedom", "Levon is President", "Struggle, Struggle Till the End". The main subjects of the meeting are the election of head of Yerevan's Kentron community to be held on September 28, and the analysis of the internal political situation in the country.

Member of the Armenian National Movement party Aram Manukian stated that the opposition has done considerable work on the eve of the election of the Kentron community head, with about 700 activists of the opposition being involved in this work. He said that there is a panic among the members of the team of the current head of the Kentron community Gagik Beglarian - the rival of the ANC's candidate Ararat Zurabian, as the rivals of A. Zurabian are aware of the difference in votes to be received - not in their factor. At the same time A. Manukian underlined that the opposition has a problem with keeping its votes. He added that today there are all the opportunities for the opposition to be able to keep the votes it will receive.

The chairwoman of the Social Democrat Hunchak Party Lyudmila Sargsyan called on all residents of Kentron community to vote at the election and to defend their votes. In her words, A. Zurabian's victory will be everybody's victory because for months on end the people has been struggling for protection of its rights. L. Sargsian spoke about the rumors spread by the authorities to the effect that the popular movement is allegedly weakening. Addressing the meeting participants (many thousands of those present), she declared that although Armenia is small, the opposition will always find a place for holding its meetings.

It was announced at the meeting that the representatives of the ANC have met with international observers who are currently in Armenia and informed them about the existing problems.

10. ABDULLAH GUL: "TURKEY IS FOR NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH ARMENIA" [ARFMENPRESS, 09/26/08]

President of Turkey Abdullah Gul is for the normalization of relations with Armenia, press service of the Turkish president cited him as saying.

"We are planning to create such an atmosphere between Turkey and Armenia, which will promote the regulation of all the issues existing between the two states," Abdullah Gul stated at the meeting with the representatives of Turkish community in the USA on Thursday in New York.

A. Gul noted that Armenian President Serzh Sargsian made a resolute step by inviting him to Armenia to watch the football match between the national teams September 6.

"I went to Armenia not only to watch the football competition, but also to discuss the details of cooperation between the two neighboring countries, as well as issues connected with Azerbaijan and the situation in Caucasus," Gul said. According to him, the main aim of the visit was to create favorable conditions for the normalization of relations. "I am sure we succeeded in it," Turkish president stated.

"Today's situation in the Caucasus tells us only one thing: all the existing issues must be solved through negotiations and dialogue. Freezing of the existing conflicts is very dangerous, they can burst out any moment," Abdullah Gul pointed out.

He noted that Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia understand this position and the upcoming trilateral meeting pursues good aims.

"I have a big hope that everything will normalize between our countries," Turkish president concluded.



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11. ARMENIAN PRESIDENT MEETS PRESIDENT OF CYPRUS AND UN SECRETARY GENERAL IN NEW YORK [ARFMENPRESS, 09/26/08]

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan met today in New York with the President of the Cyprus Republic Dmitris Khristofias.

During the meeting the heads of the two countries noted about the high level of inter-state relations between Armenia and Cyprus and pointed out about the great mutual respect of the peoples of the two countries towards each other coming from history.

The president of Cyprus highly assessed the role of the Cyprian Armenian community in the consolidation of friendship between Armenia and Cyprus. Serzh Sargsyan on his part thanked his Cyprian counterpart for the state care towards the Armenian community.

With the request of D. Khristofias, Serzh Sargsyan presented his approaches towards the regulation of Armenian-Turkish relations. The president of Cyprus, on his turn, presented to the Armenian president the details of the current round of negotiations over the regulation of the Cyprus issue. During the meeting an arrangement has been reached over conducting mutual official visits.

Afterwards, Armenian president conducted meeting with the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. During the meeting the sides referred to a number of regional issues, including Karabakh conflict regulation process and current Armenian-Turkish dialogue.

UN Secretary General highly assessed the “football diplomacy” of the Armenian president and the visit of the Turkish President Abdullah Gul to Yerevan, expressing readiness to promote the improvement of Armenian-Turkish relations.

12. ARMENIAN, AZERBAIJANI AND TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTERS MEET IN NEW YORK [ARFMENPRESS, 09/26/08]

Meeting of the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers Edward Nalbandian and Elmar Mammedyarov took place today in New York with the participation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen and personal representative of the OSCE chairman-in-office Andrzej Kasprzyk.

After the meeting the U.S. co-chairman Matthew Bryza told the reporters that the conversation between the sides was very practical. “We have discussed all the existing elements for the further regulation of the conflict. We find that in near future the meeting of the two presidents may take place. Of course, today we do not expect any turning points as it is the first case when there was an opportunity to exchange opinions after the recent developments in Georgia and before the presidential elections in Azerbaijan. We do not expect that as connected with the Azerbaijani elections now or later any change of the format of the negotiations will take place. This format brings its contribution, functions normally and we see that the ministers agree with it,” the U.S. diplomat said.

According to him, what the co-chairs did during the last months was the organization of the meeting of the presidents of the two countries which took place in Saint Petersburg.

“During these months the level of trust between the two presidents has increased and I can say it from the style of work of the ministers, how they listen to each other and respect each other. I cannot predict when the notable results will be registered: it happens when the atmosphere is favorable, the leaders have trust towards each other which is now forming. I cannot say what in the negotiation process will be but now we have realistic expectations, presidents now know each other, have trust and the regulation process is now more realistic,” Bryza said.

Referring to the issue that Azerbaijan was putting under doubt recently the efficiency of the work of the Minsk Group, the diplomat said that currently working atmosphere exists for expecting progress.

“Of course, during all this time the cease-fire regime has not been violated but there was mutual hostility, deep emotionality. In my opinion, the presidents must be guided towards peace and overcome even personal distrust so that the peoples of the countries follow them, cooperate with each other, even establish economic partnership. Nothing concrete may be if the two leaders spent little time with each other. That is why we want to see their meeting as soon as possible,” he said.

Referring to Turkey’s recent activation in the regional processes, M. Bryza said that Turkey is member of the OSCE Minsk Group but it is not its co-chairing country. “It is clear for us that the format of three co-chairing countries will continue functioning and will not change and if Turkey has a constructive contribution to the process we will greet it,” the U.S. diplomat said.

After the meeting, Edward Nalbandian had a face-to-face conversation with his Turkish counterpart Ali Babajan which was followed by Nalbandian-Mammedyarov-Babajan meeting.



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13. NEXT MEETING OF OPPOSITION TO BE HELD ON OCTOBER 17 [Haykakan Zhamanak, 09/27/08]

The next meeting of the Armenian National Congress (ANC) will be held on October 17, and a march is envisaged after the meeting, the ANC coordinator Levon Zurabian announced at the September 26 meeting of the opposition.

He called on the residents of Kentron community to take an active part in the election to the local self-government bodies and to give their votes to the ANC's representative, candidate for the head of the Kentron community Ararat Zurabian. "We are sure of our victory and we will celebrate our victory on September 28, and even if we fail to confront the rigging, let no one become hopeless, we will continue our struggle, it is impossible to stop the people," L. Zurabian declared.

Another representative of the ANC David Shahnazarian stated that it is impossible to stop the popular movement, it will not die away for the simple reason that a society, which will struggle for its rights till the end, has formed today in Armenia. In his words, what the authorities have failed to understand so far is that "our current task is to liberate Kentron (Center) from the occupation regime, then to liberate Yerevan and the whole republic."

D. Shahnazarian said that at the October 17 rally the opposition will summarize the way passed since March 1 and present its new strategy.

14. BONE FRACTURES IN VIDEO FILM ON MARCH 1-2 EVENTS ARE NOT PARTS OF HUMAN BODY, DIRECTOR OF FORENSIC EXAMINATION CENTER OF HEALTH MINISTRY CLAIMS [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/27/08]

At the September 26 sitting, the National Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on Inquiry into the March 1-2 Events in Yerevan and Their Causes discussed issues related to some scenes of the video film on the indicated events, which was spread by the opposition. It was mentioned that after watching the video, the committee sent it to the RA Prosecutor General's Office for an expert conclusion, as well as applied to the respective bodies with some questions. With the aim of receiving explanations to these questions, the head of the investigation group on the indicated case Vahagn Harutyunian, investigator Vaghinak Mkrtchian, and the director of the Forensic Scientific Practical Center of the RA Ministry of Health Shota Vardanian were invited to the sitting.

Tigran Karakhanian, Garik Hovakimian and Roman Grigorian - the three young men sitting at the wall of the French embassy in Yerevan, as shown in the video film - were also invited to attend the sitting. "The committee wants to state once again that it has no intention to conceal anything from anybody, it will try to answer all the questions raised, and, naturally, the commission will give answers through the investigation body, experts and witnesses," the head of the committee, secretary of the NA "Republican Party of Armenia" (RPA) faction Samvel Nikoyan said.

The first question was about the video's scenes, in one of which there are dark stains on the wall of the French embassy, while in another scene these stains are absent, which, according to S. Nikoyan, some people believe are blood stains that were later removed. This version was flatly denied by the head of the investigation group and the young men who did not rule out that the stains might be left by a "Molotov cocktail" hitting the wall. V. Harutyunian said that although an expert conclusion has not been prepared yet, he can declare on behalf of the investigation group that the marks on the wall are not blood stains. It was mentioned that the wall is made of basalt so it would be difficult to remove stains, especially blood, from that wall. In his words, the embassy employees who were questioned also said that the wall had not been cleaned. According to the young men - witnesses, they were detained by police on suspicion of having stolen goods from shops, then kept for some time at the wall of the embassy and later taken to a police station where they were questioned and set free, and throughout that time no violence was committed by law enforcers against them or anybody else.

As regards the accident when a UAZ car ran down a citizen, the head of the investigation group said that the man who was run down was Gevorg Tevanian, 27, of the village of Marmarashen (Ararat marz), who was questioned as a witness, later a victim in the case under investigation. The identity of the person who ran down G. Tevanian has not been established yet because, according to eyewitnesses, before the accident the car (a vehicle of police troops) was seized from its driver by a 30-year-old man who later took to flight.

The video film's next scene, on which the committee focused, was the one showing a jaw and other parts of a body lying in the street. S. Vardanian gave explanations in this connection, stating that a copy of the conclusion will be submitted to the committee within a week. It was indicated, however, that the appropriate experts examined the video film and "it was definitely substantiated that the bone



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fractures in the video are not parts of a human body but parts of a piglet, a piglet's cheek-bone, and a tongue of a sheep or calf." As for the large amount of blood and the thick layer of it in the scene, it was explained that those who filmed "used a combination of shade and some liquid which was quite a clever editing."

15. ARMENIAN PRESIDENT ASSESSES HIS VISIT TO NEW YORK AS NORMAL [ARMENPRESS, 09/29/08]

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan normally assesses his September 23-26 visit to USA describing the program of the visit as very full.

"The warmest and exciting part was the meeting with the community and particularly with the pupils of the Armenian school. I told the children who came to St. Vartan Church too that we also must be tolerant and competitive and that our strength is in our variety. From Armenia the Diaspora is seen in another way but in place of course the strength is seen. I was proud that we have compatriots who are strong," the president said at a short conversation with the reporters.

As to the trilateral meeting of Armenian, Azerbaijani and Turkish foreign minister, the president said that there were no much expectations from it. "Overall several meetings took place, but there is no concrete result which I can note now but be sure that they are a part of the whole and the result will by all means be seen," the president assured.

16. THE "RULE OF BEHAVIOR" FOR THE CANDIDATES OF GYUMRI LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTAL BODIES APPROVED [ARMENPRESS, 09/29/08]

"Rule of Behavior" for Gyumri local self governmental bodies has been worked out at the Gyumri public council. It was approved September 26 during the 8th session of the council and will be passed to all the candidates of local self governmental bodies by the beginning of the pre-electoral campaign - October 6.

Through an attached letter the candidates will be asked to get acquainted with the "Rule of Behavior" and to state their positions over accepting or rejecting the latter's principles.

Afterwards the council will widely inform about the feedbacks of the candidates on the "Rule of Behavior".

During the whole electoral campaign the council will control the behavior of all the candidates and will periodically inform the voters so that they could better orient in the elections. During the pre-election campaign the Gyumri's public council will publish two conclusions one October 10 and 17 and the next one 3 days before the elections on October 23.

For those candidates who accept it, the "Rule of Behavior" functions from the official beginning of the campaign up to the moment when they stop being candidates and are recognized either a winner or a loser in the elections.

17. THREE CANDIDATES FOR THE MAYOR OF GYUMRI REGISTERED [ARMENPRESS, 09/29/08]

Three candidates for the mayor of Gyumri have been registered in the electoral constituency N34 – the present mayor Vardan Ghukasian, member of parliament Martun Grigorian and a member of Gyumri council of elders Karapet Nersisian.

The head of the electoral constituency N34 Sayat Minasian told Armenpress that each candidate has a unique strategy of activity before the elections and during them. Those who want to be nominated as candidates must hurry, because according to the Armenian Electoral Code the deadline is October 1.

According to predictions, a hot struggle is expected among the candidates of mayor of Gyumri, as well as among the members of council of elders. According to S. Minasian, 23 citizens have already been registered as candidates for the council of elders.

Elections of head of the community and council of elders will also be held in Artik the second town of Shirak province, and elections of council of elders – in Maralik.



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BUSINESS

18. CRITERIA OF BREAD PRICES AND WEIGHT TO BE PUT IN MANDATORY USE FROM OCTOBER 1 [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

At the September 25 sitting of the Armenian government, the Chairman of the RA State Commission on Protection of Economic Competition informed the government about complaints received from citizens in recent period. The complaints were about cases of giving short weight of bread, and the discrepancy between weight of bread products and their prices.

According to the RA government's press service, in this connection the Minister of Economy Nerses Yeritsian said that a law will take effect on October 1, which establishes mandatory requirements for the criteria of bread weight and their prices, as well as for availability of the respective scales at trade points. Local authorities have been sent instructions, by which they have definite obligations in this issue.

ARTS

19. 45 COMPANIES OF ACTORS FROM 30 COUNTRIES TO TAKE PART IN HIGHFEST 5th INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

45 companies of actors from 30 countries of the world will perform on 17 stages of Yerevan in the days of the Highfest International Performing Arts Festival to be held between October 4 to 12 in Yerevan. Companies of actors arriving in Yerevan from Great Britain, the United States, Russia, Canada, Germany, Australia, Italy, Spain, Israel, France, and other countries will present multi-genre, pantomime, dramatic, puppet performances, as well as modern dance theaters' best performances to the Armenian spectator.

As festival director Artur Ghukasian reported at the September 26 press conference, renowned artists, chairmen of international festivals, theater critics will be present at the festival, who on the spot will hold seminars and round tables dedicated to cultural policy and art management in Armenia.

A festival dedicated to the 100th anniversary of American Armenian writer William Saroyan will be held for the first time this year within the framework of Highfest. Performances by the motives of the great writer's works will be shown during the festival: 9 Armenian and 7 foreign companies of actors will present their performances. A Festival of Puppet and Children's Theaters will be also organized.

This year world-famous playwright Mark Ravenhill (United Kingdom) will take part in the festival. In the days of the festival he will stage his play Lost Paradise jointly with Armenian actors.

The festival head also said that this year the RA Ministry of Culture has allocated 35m drams for festival's organization. In consequence of the conflicts in the region 4-5 companies of actors, in particular, from Latvia, Luthuania, Sweden, have refused to take part in the festival. According to A. Ghukasian, they did not mention in their letters of refusal that he reason is political, but "it is spoken in the lobbies that Armenia is Russia's partner."

20. MINAS AVETISIAN'S WALL-PAINTING TOROS ROSLIN'S BIRTH BEING RESTORED [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

On the occasion of painter Minas Avetisian's 80th birth anniversary, a jubilee exhibition of painter's works will be opened at the National Gallery of Armenia in October. Later, in the spring of 2009, an exhibition of Minas Avetisian's works will be also organized in Moscow and Florence.

Sona Haroutiunian, an Adviser to the RA Minister of Culture, said this at the meeting held on September 25 at the Novosti Armenia club. According to her, thanks to specialists, who have already arrived from Italy on the occasion of the jubilee, one out of eleven wall-paintings of the painter is being restored. It is Toros Roslin's Birth, which was at Gyumri Electrotechnical Factory. The other four wall-paintings of Minas are also at the same factory. They also need urgent restoration.

Painter's son Arman Avetisian said that the state has allocated 5m drams for the restoration of wall-painting Toros Roslin's Birth. However, according to him, the other 10 wall-paintings also need restoration. Three out of the other wall-paintings of M. Avetisian are in Yerevan and the rest are in the Shirak region.

A catalogue of Minas' works will be published and a film on the process of wall-paintings' restoration will be shot with the assistance of Moscow Foundation of Armenian Culture.



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21. COOPERATION AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN MINISTRIES OF CULTURE OF ARMENIA AND SLOVAKIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 09/26/08]

Armenia's and Slovakia's Ministers of Culture Hasmik Poghosian and Marek Madaric signed a Cultural Cooperation Agreement on September 26. According to Hasmik Poghosian, this was a long-awaited agreement for both countries, as cooperation between Armenia and Slovakia developed very slowly: cultural contacts existed at the level of individual organizations, and now they will start developing at the state level. The sides have already discussed a number of issues, the implementation of which will make cultural cooperation more active.

The Minister said that already next year it is planned to organize Days of Armenian Cinema, to organize an exhibition of S. Parajanov's collages in Bratislava. Tours of A. Spendiarian Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet and of Armenian State Philharmony to Bratislava are also planned next year. An agreement on holding Days of Armenian Culture in Slovakia will be reached soon.

Marek Madaric, the Minister of Culture of Slovakia, said that cultural cooperation should be the logical continuation of friendly relations formed between the two countries. According to the Minister, the sides will not start cooperation with large projects, but will work stage by stage.

RELIGION

22. NEW BUILDING OF SHOGHAKAT TV COMPANY OPENED [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 09/27/08]

The new building of "Shoghakat" TV Company was opened in Yerevan on September 26, 2008. The opening ceremony was presided over by His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians.

The new building has been renovated by the financial assistance of national philanthropists Vache and Tamar Manoukians.

As the press office of the Holy See of St. Etchmiadzin reported, the opening speech was made by Father Vahram Melikian, Head of the St. Etchmiadzin information service, who spoke about the history of "Shoghakat" TV company from the very first days of its establishment, its goals and future programs.

Afterwards, His Holiness Karekin II held a consecration ceremony and addressed those present thanking Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan for his support in purchasing the building, Mr. and Mrs. Vache and Tamar Manoukians for their sponsorship, the workers, and the employees of the Shoghakat TV Company, expressing hope that "Shoghakat" company, in this new building and with its new programs, will become a beloved and awaited channel in every family.

"During all these years the staff of the Shoghakat TV company has presented to the people the history of the Armenian Apostolic church, the holy rituals, church holidays, our spiritual culture and values. Shoghakat TV Company has played a huge role in strengthening Christian faith in the hearts of the sons and daughters of our church and in helping them gain spiritual knowledge. Today, when our church still feels the need of sufficient number of clergymen, the role of this TV company becomes even more important", said His Holiness.

Vache Manoukian also addressed the people emphasizing the necessity of church preaching for every individual and expressed hope that with the blessing of His Holiness Karekin II next year the programs of Shoghakat TV Company will be spread in the Diaspora through satellite, giving an opportunity to our world-spread compatriots to be a part of events taking place in their Homeland.

Then, RA Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan and Vache Manoukian cut the red ribbon. The guests walked in the new building getting acquainted with the conditions and capacities of it.

23. HOLY SEE'S ST. VARTAN-ST. HOVANESS MKRTICH BAPTIZING CHAPEL CONSECRATED [Azg, 09/27/08]

The newly-built baptizing chapel in the north of the St. Etchmiadzin Cathedral was crowded yesterday. The groundbreaking ceremony of the St.Vartan-St.Hovaness Mkrtych baptizing chapel presided over by Catholicos Karekin II had taken place two years ago. The chapel has been built with the sponsorship of former RA Prime Minister Armen Sargsyan (London, England) and his family. Yesterday, the baptizing pond and the four columns of the chapel named after four evangelists have been consecrated with holy Myron. The architect of the new baptizing chapel is Jim Torossian. The construction was done by "Horizon-95" LLC (director Gagik Galstian). After the prayers His Holiness delivered a speech of blessing and gratitude address to the family of the benefactor, the workers, and everyone present, among whom were Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan, spiritual fathers of sister churches and others. The first baptizing ceremony also took place afterwards.



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SOCIAL

24. ARMENIAN DEPUTY FM MEETS WITH ARMENIA AND TURKEISH STUDENTS [ARFMENPRESS, 09/26/08]

Armenian deputy foreign minister Arman Kirakosian, on the initiative of the “Civil Society Institute” met today with the Armenian and Turkish students, young specialists of international relations and political science spheres.

Armenian Foreign Ministry press service told Armenpress that the deputy foreign minister presented to the students the main directions of the Armenian foreign policy, its position towards international and regional issues.

With the request of the Turkish students he also referred to the recent developments in Armenian-Turkish relations.

25. DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO BE WORKED OUT FOR EIGHT ARMENIAN PROVINCES [ARFMENPRESS, 09/26/08]

Development programs will be worked out for eight Armenian provinces, according to the concept on development of Armenian provinces which has been recently approved at the outside session of the government.

Such like programs developed for Tavush and Gegharkunik provinces for 2005-2008 have been successfully brought to life. The 2009-2012 development programs of these provinces have already been worked out and will soon be presented for the approval of the government.

Deputy territorial governance minister Vache Terterian said today at a press conference that the experience of Tavush and Gegharkunik provinces showed that the other eight provinces also need the development programs.

“We must be able to see all the provinces in comparison and plan our work in a way that from year to year the differences between them reduce. For smoothening the differences, we must be able to give right assessments and understand what means may bring to equal development of the provinces,” the deputy minister said.

According to him, while forming the programs meetings will be organized with the heads of communities of the provinces, population, representatives of NGOs and a package of suggestions will be prepared.

V. Terterian said that the results of studies showed that the development index is low in Shirak, Gegharkunik, and Aragatsotn provinces.

26. NUMBER OF VISITORS OF MUSEUMS FUNCTIONING IN THE SYSTEM OF CULTURE MINISTRY REACHES 210,257 IN THREE QUARTERS OF THE YEAR [ARMENPRESS, 09/29/08]

The number of visitors of the museums functioning in the system of Armenian Culture Ministry reached 210,257 in the three quarters of the running year. In 2007 their number reached 336,955. About 48 museums are functioning in the system.

Deputy head of the ministry’s cultural heritage and cultural values department Nora Dayan told Armenpress that they also pay a serious attention to the fulfillment of the collections of the museums. In the same span of the running year they were fulfilled with 3,981 pieces, making the number of the objects of the collections 1 million 724,433.

27. RESOURCE CENTERS ON MIGRATION AFFAIRS ESTABLISHED IN VANADZOR AND MARTUNI [ARMENPRESS, 09/29/08]

Resource centers on migration affairs have been established in Vanadzor (Lori province) and Martuni (Gegharkunik province) with the support of the “Eurasia Partnership” Foundation for providing services to working migrants and those who return from abroad.

The head of the migration program of the Foundation Marina Ayvazian told Armenpress that each of the centers will provide legal consultations and information about the job opportunities in Armenia and will ensure process of registration of working migrants.

According to Ayvazian, it is necessary to study the labor market, organize meetings with businessmen to find out the existing vacancies.



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It is expected to conduct classes with migrants and those who arrive back from abroad to teach them how to write resumes, participate in interviews, sign an agreement being initially acquainted with own rights.

The centers will cooperate with Russian non-governmental organizations. "Eurasia Partnership" Foundation is also working towards decrease of the illegal working migration helping to defend the rights of those who leave Armenia temporary for finding job and support those who arrive back to integrate into their societies.

Such resource centers have already been created in Lori, Armavir, Kotayk, Syunik, Tavush and Gegharkunik provinces with the support the Foundation. The process of creating such centers will be continuative.

28. PHILANTHROPIST JULIAN HOVSEPIAN AWARDED MEDAL OF ARMENIAN PRIME MINISTER [ARMENPRESS, 09/29/08]

Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan decreed to award philanthropist Julian Hovsepian with memorial medal of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia for his contribution to the charity sector and for his patriotic activity.

Governmental press service told Armenpress that the prime minister handed to the philanthropist the medal at the meeting in the Armenian government.

Tigran Sargsyan thanked Julian Hovsepian for his efforts directed towards development of culture in Armenia and his valuable donation to the Armenian National Gallery. The prime minister pointed out that such attitude witnesses also about the qualitative features of our people.

Julian Hovsepian thanked for the award and warm words, noting that he is also going to donate some valuable canvases from his collection to the Armenian National Gallery.

SPORTS

29. R. VAHANYAN TO TAKE PART IN WORLD BLITZ-CHESS TOURNAMENT [ARMENPRESS, 09/29/08]

Armenian grand master Rafael Vahanyan will take part in the World Blitz-Chess Tournament which will be held in Kazakhstan's city of Alma Ata on November 7-8.

Sixteen chess players, including Vasili Ivanchuk from Ukraine and Peter Swidler from Russia, will participate in the tournament.

The honorable guests of the tournament will be former world chess champions Anatoli Karpov and Boris Spaski.

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