



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, December 5, 2008

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. AGREEMENT ON ARMENIAN-BULGARIAN INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION TO BE SIGNED [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

Issues related to development of inter-parliamentary relations were discussed at the December 2 meeting of the speaker of the RA National Assembly Hovik Abrahamian and the Bulgarian ambassador to Armenia Todor Staykov.

According to the RA National Assembly PR Department, H. Abrahamian expressed a high opinion about the existence of political dialog as a continuation of centuries-old friendly relations with Bulgaria. Attaching importance to development of economic links, he said that an intergovernmental commission on trade, economic and scientific-technical cooperation was created with this aim in February 2008. H. Abrahamian also underlined the importance of cooperation of the delegations of the two countries in international organizations, and of the use of the legislative experience that Bulgaria has gained on its path of joining the EU.

Pointing out the necessity of inter-parliamentary cooperation, T. Staykov said that regardless of which political force will be elected in the upcoming parliamentary elections in Bulgaria in the spring of 2009, the promotion of relations with the Armenian parliament will continue, and prior to the elections, steps can be taken to sign an agreement on cooperation. As for the work of the intergovernmental commission, the ambassador said that the formation of a legal contractual field between two countries is almost completed, and the commission's work will make economic cooperation more active.

2. GALUST SAHAKIAN: DO NOT LINK THE ADDITIONS AND AMENDMENTS IN LAW ON REFERENDUM TO KARABAKH [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

On December 2 the RA National Assembly finished discussing in the first reading the bill on amendments and additions to the Law on Referendum. The bill was considered as urgent by the government. In particular, it proposes stipulating additionally - with the aim of revealing public opinion - that a referendum on most important issues of state life can also be held.

According to the majority of the NA deputies who made speeches, the urgency is conditioned by the Nagorno Karabakh problem, but it is obvious that the provisions of the bill contradict the current Constitution. The former speaker of the NA, currently an independent deputy Tigran Torosian said that under the Constitution, a referendum is a means of exercising power by the people only, while a survey without mandatory consequences is not a form of exercising power by the people. It was also mentioned that if there was a necessity to reveal public opinion, a correct way should have been chosen, so it was proposed that the government withdraw the bill. In the opinion of T. Torosian, the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement process should be absolutely irreproachable from the legal point of view, just as the foundations of the Nagorno Karabakh people's right of self-determination and the process of exercising this right have been irreproachable so far. "To use it with respect to Nagorno Karabakh means to put a stigma on that survey from the very start, which is unacceptable," he said.

The leader of "Heritage" faction Armen Martirosian called the bill "anticonstitutional, illogical and antistate", by which an attempt is being made once again to lower the role of the parliament. He announced that their faction will vote against the bill. The member of the same faction Larisa Alaverdian said that from the viewpoint of international law, any decision to be made by Armenia concerning another subject - Nagorno Karabakh is nothing.

Unlike "Heritage", "Prosperous Armenia" and "RPA" factions announced their decision to vote for the bill. The head of "RPA" faction Galust Sahakian stated that the solution of the Nagorno Karabakh problem is "a complex scenario and will not be decided by the results of a referendum". "Even if you decide to give Karabakh, all the same, we will not give it to anyone. So do not link the law to Karabakh, it is an ordinary democratic law," he told those who oppose the bill.



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3. "HERITAGE" FACTION AGAIN EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT VIOLATIONS OF REGULATIONS [Haykakan Zhamanak, 12/03/08]

Despite numerous warnings and admonitions of the parliamentary "Heritage" faction, deputies of the National Assembly continue violating the regulations, the faction's member Larisa Alaverdian said at the December 2 sitting of the NA. In particular, a violation was recorded during adoption of the bill on salaries of leading employees of bodies of legislative, executive and judicial power of Armenia. According to L. Alaverdian, if new articles or proposals are added in a bill after the first reading, under the regulations, these articles and proposals must be discussed before holding a vote in the second reading, which was not done in the given case.

She once again called on the representatives of the parliamentary majority not to vote instead of others. L. Alaverdian said that in any event the majority will pass the laws it wants, but such violations affect negatively the reputation of the parliament.

4. ACCORDING TO ARF REPRESENTATIVE, A CHANGE OF ARMENIA'S NATIONAL ANTHEM MAY BE MADE ONLY BY REFERENDUM [Yerkir, 12/03/08]

A disrespectful attitude to state symbols is inadmissible from the moral and legal points of view, member of "ARF" faction Ruzan Arakelian stated at the National Assembly on December 2. She indicated a publication in Azg daily where disdainful expressions were used to describe Armenia's anthem and coat of arms.

The deputy said the country has inherited these symbols from the First Republic, and it is incorrect to delete the pages from the history only because they are disliked by some people. As for the anthem, the issue of whose change became a subject of public discussion, in the opinion of R. Arakelian, a referendum should be held in order to make such a change.

5. ARMENIAN MINISTER OF DIASPORA RECEIVES HEAD OF ARMENIAN DIOCESE OF GEORGIA AND DIOCESAN VICAR OF SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHK [Hayastani Hanrapetutian, 12/03/08]

Problems of preserving Armenian historic and cultural monuments in Georgia, repairs of schools in Javakhk, teaching the history of Armenian church at schools, and training of teachers were discussed at the November 2 meeting of the RA Minister of Diaspora Hranush Hakobian with the head of Georgia's Armenian diocese Bishop Vazgen Mirzakhanian and the diocesan vicar of Samtskhe-Javakhk Father Babken Salbayan.

The representatives of Georgia's Armenian diocese presented some facts related to the current state of the Armenian minority in Georgia, laying stress on the churches expropriated in the Soviet time, in particular, an encroachment on St. Norashen Church in Tbilisi.

Expressing her concern about the current situation, H. Hakobian said that she hoped that Georgian authorities would undertake all possible measures to prevent illegalities.

As NT was informed by the Press and PR Department of the Ministry of Diaspora, on the same day H. Hakobian received the Lebanese ambassador to Armenia Jebrail Zhaara. The ambassador spoke about Lebanon's experience in repatriation, attaching importance to creation of the necessary socioeconomic conditions in the country for successful repatriation.

6. PARLIAMENTARY HEARINGS TO BE HELD FOR DISCUSSION OF SEVERAL BILLS RELATED TO ECONOMIC SPHERE [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

Parliamentary hearings will be held on December 12 on the initiative of the RA National Assembly Standing Committee of Economic Issues. The committee chairman Vardan Aivazian said at the December 2 sitting of the National Assembly that at the moment the committee examines several bills of importance for the country's economic development, which should become a subject of wide public discussion. Among these bills are the bill on making amendments and additions to the Law on Fixed Payments and the bill on honorary payments.

According to V. Aivazian, the indicated bills are aimed at developing small and medium entrepreneurship in Armenia. He invited all interested persons to participate in the hearings.



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7. EX-PRIME MINISTER OF UKRAINE VIKTOR YANUKOVICH TO VISIT ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

Ex-Prime Minister of the Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich will visit Armenia on December 5. He will take part in events dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Spitak earthquake.

It should be mentioned that the Spitak authorities have decided to name one of the town streets in honor of the leader of the Ukrainian Party of Regions V. Yanukovich. Thus, the Armenian side will express gratitude to V. Yanukovich for his participation in town's restoration after the earthquake. In 1988 V. Yanukovich headed the Donbasstransremont industrial complex. According to the information of the Party of Regions, a letter had been received from Spitak residents mentioning that V. Yanukovich "from the very start took an active part in providing assistance to those suffered from the earthquake, headed replenishment of rescue detachments and construction subdivisions."

8. ARMENIAN PARLIAMENT RATIFIES PROTOCOLS SIGNED BETWEEN CST STATES [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

The Republic of Armenia National Assembly on December 3 ratified two out of the documents signed on October 6, 2007 in Dushanbe between the Collective Security Treaty participant states, on the order of exercising control over target use of production of military significance supplied within the framework of the May 15, 1992 agreement on the main military-technical cooperation principles between CSTO countries and the protocol on the mechanism of providing military-technical assistance if a threat or action of aggression emerges.

The same day the parliament also discussed another five agreements and protocols signed between CSTO country-members in Dushanbe. According to Armen Rustamian, the Chairman of the NA Standing Committee on Foreign Relations, ARFD faction member, the goal of the signed documents package is to deepen and regulate cooperation between organization's member-countries, which the committee considers as a component of Armenia's national security.

9. GOVERNMENT PROPOSES LIQUIDATING LIMITATIONS TO TIME FOR PROGRAMS BROADCAST IN NATIONAL MINORITIES' LANGUAGES [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

On December 3, the Armenian parliament in the first reading adopted a bill authored by the government envisaging amendments to the law On Television and Radio. According to the bill, the current limitations to broadcasting special programs in the languages of the RA national minorities is liquidated. According to the limitations, the general duration of such programs on television is set to up to one hour a week and on radio up to one hour a day.

According to the main reporter, RA Minister of Justice Gevorg Danielian, the amendments' necessity proceeds from the requirements of RA Constitution's Article 27, expanding national minorities' right to receive and convey information in their language, as well as brings the law in line with Council of Europe experts' proposals, provisions of the frame convention On Protection of National Minorities' Rights.

In the opinion of bill's opponents, including RPA member Armen Ashotian, the Chairman of the NA Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport Affairs, if the limitation is liquidated, the TV air can be flooded with unlimited Russian-language programs, therefore it is expedient instead of liquidating the limitation to double the time permitted at present.

10. RA PRESIDENT DECLINES ZHIRAYR SEFILIAN'S APPLICATION ON GRANTING HIM RA CITIZENSHIP [Aravot, 12/03/08]

On December 2, the Passport and Visa Department of RA Police officially informed Zhirayr Sefilian, the Coordinator of the Consolidation of Armenian Volunteers national-political initiative, on declining his June 6 application on granting him RA citizenship. According to the initiative's report, the notification with the signature of Passport and Visa Department head read that Z. Sefilian's application was declined according to RA President's decree N 311-A of November 18, 2008.



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11. DRAFT AMENDMENTS AND ADDENDA TO LAW ON REFERENDUM ADOPTED IN FIRST READING [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

On December 3, the Armenian parliament in the first reading with 88 votes "for," 7 "against" and 2 "abstained" adopted a bill envisaging amendments and addenda to the law On Referendum. According to the decision publicized the day before, members of the only opposition faction, Zharangutiun (Heritage), as well as independent deputy, former NA Speaker Tigran Torosian criticizing the draft were against the bill.

According to the bill authored by the government, the right of initiative to hold a referendum to reveal the public opinion on the most important issues of state life is reserved for the government. The necessity of holding a referendum to reveal the public opinion on state's foreign policy, military and national security issues and the issues to be put on referendum should be coordinated with the President in advance. The results of the referendum on the above mentioned issues are considered positive if more than the half of the participants vote for. And the draft put on referendum on adopting Constitution or making amendments to it, adopting laws will be considered adopted if more than the half of the voting participants, but no less than a quarter instead of the current one third of citizens included in the electoral lists vote for.

According to another amendment, in addition to the current limitations, it is stipulated that no referendum can be held in the country, either, in case President's post remains vacant, until a newly elected President assumes his post.

12. NEW BILL ON REFERENDUM CONTRADICTS CONSTITUTION, ARMEN MARTIROSIAN AFFIRMS [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

In the recent period the RA National Assembly Zharangutiun (Heritage) faction has voted against almost all bills. Reporting this at the December 3 press conference, faction member Armen Martirosian said that Zharangutiun is also against adoption of a new law on referendum, as it contradicts a number of provisions of the Constitution. Besides, according to him, the members of their faction consider that urgent discussion of the new law and putting it to vote quickly is connected with the Nagorno Karabakh problem: thus the authorities try to get free of further responsibility.

According to A. Martirosian, Zharangutiun also voted against the draft 2009 state budget, as it contains a number of incomplete formulations regarding tax and customs administration. "The most part of the budget will be made up on the basis of common citizens' and not big businessmen's pocket. In general, according to the 2009 state budget, the rich will become richer and the poor will become poorer," the deputy said.

Touching upon country's home political situation, A. Martirosian said that the issues of releasing political prisoners and disclosure of the March 1 events remain unsolved. He added that Zharangutiun is concerned with the infringements upon bishop Achapalian by Gyumri town authorities. A. Martirosian reminded that the church is the greatest spiritual value of the Armenians. The church preserves the national identity and it should be kept away from home political events.

13. OHANIAN IS LEAVING? [Haykakan Zhamanak, 12/04/08]

RA Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian will very soon leave Armenia for abroad for health reasons. There are rumors that Ohanian will not return to his position after that.

The same rumors say that he will be replaced by Head of the RA Armed Forces General Headquarters, First Assistant of the Defense Minister, General-Colonel Yuri Khachaturov.

However, in wider political circles, there are also rumors that the position of the RA Defense Minister will be occupied by former president of the Republic of Armenia Robert Kocharian.

14. KARABAKH PRESIDENT AND ARMENIAN AMBASSADOR TO RUSSIA DISCUSS A NUMBER OF ISSUES [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

President of Nagorno Karabakh Republic Bako Sahakyan met December 3 in Moscow with Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to the Russian Federation Armen Smbatyan.

Central Information Department of the Office of the NKR President told Armenpress that a wide range of issues related to foreign policy and bilateral ties were discussed during the meeting.



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On the same day the Karabakh president met with entrepreneurs and philanthropists Ashot Khachatryan and Genady Stepanyan and discussed with them issues related to the launching of construction activities of a new complex of the republican maternity hospital in capital Stepanakert.

15. E. NALBANDIAN AND E. MAMEDJAROV STRESS IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVATION OF POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN THE TWO PRESIDENTS [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

The working visit of Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian to Helsinki kicked off December 3.

Press service of Armenian Foreign Ministry told Armenpress that the first meeting of the Minister in Helsinki was with OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut. The sides discussed issues concerning different aspects of OSCE activity and exchanged thoughts on the reforms of the organization.

In this context Edward Nalbandian noted that Armenia signifies the OSCE role in the issue of ensuring security and cooperation in Europe and finds that the organization needs reformatations to react the current issues more efficiently.

The Foreign Minister and ambassador Brichambaut also referred to the existing system of security in Europe. E. Nalbandian also pointed out that the system of European security needs improvement and the member states of the organization must exert joint efforts to make it more functioning and efficient.

The Armenian Foreign Minister and OSCE Secretary General also discussed issues connected with the activity of OSCE Yerevan office and increase of its efficiency.

The OSCE Secretary General informed about his intention to visit Armenia.

On the same day E. Nalbandian met with the rapporteur on Karabakh issue of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Goran Lenmarker. During the meeting the latest developments in negotiation process of Karabakh conflict regulation were discussed. The Armenian Foreign Minister stressed the importance of declaration signed in Moscow between Armenian, Azerbaijani and Russian presidents on December 2 and noted that the Azerbaijan's distorted comments on the declaration and the attempts to disregard the points reflected in it harm the efficiency of the negotiation process and registration of the progress.

E. Nalbandian noted that Armenia underscores the parliamentary diplomacy as a functioning format of discussion of the issues.

Goran Lenmarker said that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly always was and remains a supporter to the regulation of the Karabakh issue only through negotiations.

The meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers Edward Nalbandian and Elmar Mamedjarov with OSCE Minsk group co-chairs Yuri Merzlyakov, Bernard Fassier and Matthew Bryza and the personal representative of OSCE acting chairman Andrzej Kasprzyk also took place.

During the negotiations issues concerning Karabakh conflict regulation were discussed.

16. FOREIGN MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTER OF FRANCE, RUSSIA AND USA SIGN JOINT DECLARATION ON NAGORNO KARABAKH [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

Foreign ministers and the deputy minister of the OSCE Minsk Group's co-chairing countries signed today a joint declaration on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

The declaration runs as following,

"We, the Foreign Ministers and Deputy Minister of the OSCE Minsk Group's Co-Chair countries – France, Russia, and the United States – call on the parties to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to build on the positive momentum established during the meeting of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Moscow on November 2, 2008. The Moscow Declaration signed that same day opened a new and promising phase in our shared endeavor to expand peace in the South Caucasus. In that declaration, the Presidents reaffirm their commitment to advancing a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the framework of the Basic Principles developed by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs in collaboration with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of their proposals advanced last year in Madrid.

We call on the parties to work with the Co-Chairs to finalize the Basic Principles in coming months, and then begin drafting a comprehensive peace settlement as outlined by those agreed principles. In keeping with the Moscow Declaration, we call on the parties to work with the Co-Chairs to develop confidence-building measures, beginning with pulling back snipers from the Line of Contact to save lives of innocent civilians and soldiers as our mediators already proposed to the sides at the highest level during the last visit mid November. It is urgent for the parties to work with each other, the Co-



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Chairs, and the Personal Representative of the Chairman in Office to stabilize the ceasefire through this and other measures. We reiterate our firm view that there is no military solution to the conflict and call on the parties to recommit to a peaceful resolution.”

17. ARMENIAN PRESIDENT RECEIVES EBRD DELEGATION [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan received today delegation of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Governmental press service told Armenpress that during the meeting the president highly underscored the activity of EBRD in Armenia, noting that the partnership started immediately from the independence of the country and in the success registered during these years, surely great is the role of the bank.

Among the main issues Armenia is facing, the president pointed out the two – confrontation of the global financial and economic crisis and successive work directed towards the development of economy.

The representatives of the EBRD, assessing cooperation with Armenia as effective, said that it gives an opportunity of expansion of the partnership which is one of the strategic aims of the bank.

The president of the country expressed hope that the EBRD will have more involvement in different sectors of Armenia’s economy, noting that the issue is not only financial means though they are also very important. According to Serzh Sargsyan bank brings with it new culture of management which is very important.

18. “PEACE AND SPORT IMAGE OF THE YEAR 2008” PRIZE AWARDED TO SERZH SARGSYAN TO BE HANDED TODAY [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

Monaco’s “Peace and Sport” organization awarded Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan “Peace and Sport Image of the Year 2008” prize for the best display of friendship through sport.

Prince of Monaco Albert II will pass today the prize to the Armenian Sport and Youth Affairs Minister Armen Grigorian at the “Peace and Sport 2008” international forum.

A. Grigorian told Armenpress that the chairman of the International Olympic Committee and heads of different sport federations will participate in the event.

The chairman and founder of the organization Joel Buzu in the letter addressed to the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan noted that the chief jury has unanimously decided to grant the prize to the President of Armenia for symbolizing hand shaking image with Turkish President Abdullah Gul.

The forum is held under the auspices of Prince of Monaco Albert II.

19. MINISTRY OF DIASPORA TO DEAL WITH ISSUES RELATED TO PRESERVATION OF ARMENIAN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL MONUMENTS ABROAD [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/04/08]

By February 2009, the Armenian government will approve the concept of working with the Diaspora, the RA Minister of Diaspora Hranush Hakobian stated at the December 3 sitting of the National Assembly when responding to a question of the member of "ARF" faction Bagrat Sargsyan. According to her, the preliminary version of the concept was discussed with the prime minister and submitted to all the parties.

As regards the preservation of Armenian historical and cultural monuments abroad, H. Hakobian said that the ministry deals with such issues in case of availability of an application of the Armenian community of the given country. She said that the day before she met with the head of the Georgian diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church and discussed the problems related to Armenian churches in Tbilisi, in particular, Surb Norashen Church. In her words, these problems will be soon discussed in Tbilisi with the participation of the Armenian prime minister.

20. ARMENIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S WORKING VISIT TO HELSINKI STARTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/04/08]

RA Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, who is in Helsinki on a working visit, on December 3 met with OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut. The latter informed him about his intention to visit Armenia soon.

E. Nalbandian said that Armenia attaches importance to OSCE's role in providing security and cooperation in Europe and considers that the organization needs reformation to more efficiently respond to the current problems.



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The current security system in Europe was touched upon at the meeting. The RA Foreign Minister emphasized that the European security system needs perfection, and the organization member countries should exert joint efforts to make it more active and effective. Issues connected with OSCE Yerevan Office's activity and raising its efficiency were also discussed at the meeting.

The same day E. Nalbandian met with Goran Lenmarker, OSCE PA Rapporteur on Nagorno Karabakh issue. The latest developments in the negotiations on Artsakh problem settlement were discussed at the meeting. Attaching importance to the declaration signed by the Presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia on November 2 in Moscow, E. Nalbandian said that the misrepresented commentaries upon the declaration voiced by Azerbaijan and its attempts to disregard the provisions stipulated by the document undermine the efficiency of the process and recording of progress.

G. Lenmarker, in his turn, reaffirmed that OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has always supported Nagorno Karabakh settlement only through peaceful negotiations.

According to the report provided to Noyan Tapan by the RA Foreign Ministry Press and Information Department, the same day E. Nalbandian and Azeri Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadiarov met with OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs Yuri Merzliakov, Bernard Fassier, Matthew Bryza, and Personal Representative of OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Casprzyk. Issues related to Nagorno Karabakh settlement were discussed during the meeting. They attached importance to the preservation of the positive spirit formed as a result of Armenian and Azeri Presidents' meeting held on June 6, 2008 in Saint Petersburg and on November 2 in Moscow, continuation of the negotiations on the basis of Madrid principles, with the assistance of MG Co-chairs for the purpose of bringing close the approaches of the sides, settling the problem peacefully.

21. CEDING LIBERATED TERRITORIES IS UNACCEPTABLE FOR SAMVEL BABAYAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/04/08]

"Today the superpowers of the world carry out a life-and-death fight for an inch of land, and Armenia is going to give land to its enemy," Samvel Babayan, the former Defence Minister of Nagorno Karabakh, stated at the December 4 press conference. He affirmed that today, when Azerbaijan does not speak about a concession to be done by it, Armenia should not raise the issue of concessions. Instead, as S. Babayan emphasized, the Armenian side should resettle the Armenians, who have run away from Soviet Azerbaijan, in the liberated areas. After that, according to him, the world will be faced with the fact, Karabakh residents' life will become normal, and then a referendum can be held.

S. Babayan said that the motivation that the Armenian-Turkish border will be opened if the lands are ceded is unacceptable for him. First, as he predicted, even after ceding the lands the border will not be opened, and then, even if it is opened, Armenia will gain nothing from that. The Armenian authorities, according to S. Babayan, should not think that by ceding the lands they will do good to the country. "If it is so, let us cede both Karabakh and Yerevan and finish by that," he said.

S. Babayan said that even if it comes to returning the liberated territories, only environmentalists and geologists can decide which of them to cede and which not, as there are gold reserves and uranium ores in these territories.

Touching upon the Moscow Declaration, S. Babayan said that it is only a regular document, which he does not treat seriously. He affirmed that the problem will not be solved by any declaration.

22. INDEED LIBERATED TERRITORIES BELONG TO ARMENIANS OF AZERBAIJAN, ARMAN MELIKIAN CONSIDERS [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/04/08]

According to Artsakh war Commander Arkady Ter-Tadevosian ("Komandos"), one of the mistakes committed in the past did a considerable harm to the Armenian side in the Nagorno Karabakh negotiations, and that mistake is Armenian armed forces' entering Kelbajar. Therefore, as he stated at the December 4 press conference, Armenia and Azerbaijan and not Artsakh and Azerbaijan have been recognized as negotiations sides. As to the Moscow Declaration, the provision on solving the problem politically, according to A. Ter-Tadevosian, does not mean at all that Azerbaijan will refrain from military operations. According to him, no document, declaration or agreement can restrain that country's military, aggressive ambitions.

Former NKR Foreign Minister Arman Melikian, in his turn, said that Azeri press and President Ilham Aliyev very skilfully use the circumstance that no Karabakh representative has signed under the Declaration. Touching upon the subject of liberated territories, the former Minister said that as long as the international community "incites Armenia to make concessions the Armenian side will be defeated."



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"Instead of making concessions, as A. Melikian proposed, the sides should adapt themselves to the current situation and establish friendly relations with each other. "Indeed these liberated territories belong to the Armenians of Azerbaijan," the speaker said.

23. RULING COALITION'S REPRESENTATIVE IN FACT-FINDING GROUP WILL HINDER ITS WORK, DAVID SHAHNAZARIAN STATES [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/04/08]

At the December 4 press conference, representative of the Armenian National Congress David Shahnazarian presented the written order of RA Prosecutor General Aghvan Hovsepian to the special investigation group's senior investigator. According to the order, the control over the investigation of the March 1 events is laid on Deputy Head of Prosecutor General's Office Administration Gevorg Tovmasian, who has been lately delegated from the ruling coalition to the fact-finding group on the March 1 events.

According to A. Shahnazarian, in essence, a person from the ruling coalition became a member of the fact-finding group on the March 1 events in Yerevan, who destroyed the whole investigation and should have been himself invited for presenting the proper materials to the group. "No doubt G. Tovmasian has been sent to the group specially, to hinder its work," the ANC representative said.

Mentioning that all coalition parties are responsible for that appointment, D. Shahnazarian said that this circumstance is another proof of the real attitude of authorities to the disclosure of the March 1 events.

24. ARMENIAN FM DELIVERS SPEECH AT THE 16TH MINISTERIAL MEETING IN HELSINKI [ARMENPRESS, 12/05/08]

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian delivered speech at the 16th OSCE Ministerial meeting in Helsinki. The full speech of the Armenian foreign minister is presented below:

"Mr. Chairman

Dear Colleagues

I would like to begin by thanking the Finnish Chairmanship-in-Office and Minister Alexander Stubb for the devoted and effective work throughout the year.

Helsinki is a city whose name will be forever linked to the basic principles governing the relations between the countries of the OSCE area.

It would be highly symbolic if here, in Helsinki, we set the basis for the future deliberations on the improvement of the capabilities of our Organization, which requires truly joint effort and efficient partnership. A discussion around an OSCE Charter and the legal personality of the OSCE could become a good basis to test various ideas and develop common positions through a dialogue. This is a time for united action and I hope that we will leave Helsinki with a clear commitment to strengthen the effectiveness of our organization.

Mr. Chairman,

Armenia is interested in continued cooperation within the OSCE in all three dimensions.

In human dimension we are ready to continue constructive cooperation with the OSCE/ODIHR, yet at the same time we support the re-evaluation of the role of the ODHIR and a higher level of its accountability before the member states. We are ready to work with all interested member states in this direction.

We are prepared to work towards developing a more consolidated approach in economic-environmental dimension in order to ensure its continuity and sustainability.

We note the importance of the dialogue on the OSCE political-military dimension. Conventional arms control is an issue of primary importance. The situation in our region makes the maintenance of the Conventional Arms Control Treaty more imperative. Full implementation of commitments is crucial for the security and stability of the area of application. Regrettably, Azerbaijan's massive military build-up conducted in violation of its international obligations has not received an adequate reaction from the majority of the state parties of the Convention.

An arms race can lead to a resumption of a military conflict. The situation becomes somehow classic – if there is a gun on the stage, it has to fire.

Europe obviously needs a new security architecture, which will take into account all the existing concerns. With this in mind, we think that a debate over a European security treaty can provide a good forum for the development of a commonly acceptable system.

That is why we support the proposal by Presidents of France and Russia regarding the convening of a summit to launch the negotiations on the implementation of the initiative to develop a European Security Treaty.



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Dear Colleagues,

I would now like to inform you on the latest developments of the Nagorno Karabakh peace process for which OSCE has an important mediation role through the dedicated effort of the three Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

The negotiations on Nagorno Karabakh settlement received a new impetus at the Moscow meeting initiated by President of the Russian Federation in his capacity as a Head of Co-Chair state and the signing by Presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia of the Moscow Declaration. The Co-Chairs supported and approved the Declaration, and we believed that it would intensify the peace process.

However, Azerbaijan misinterprets all the provisions of the Declaration going as far as stating, in particular, that the peaceful settlement does not exclude use of force. I wonder if there is any other state here, around this table, which could have such interpretation of the very clear notion of the 'peaceful political settlement.'

The other vivid example of the misinterpretation of the declaration and the whole process of negotiations, was the provocative non-paper distorting the whole sense of the peace talks circulated yesterday by Azerbaijani delegation, which I don't even want to comment.

Despite this, we would want to hope that we will be able to maintain the spirit and the positive momentum of the Moscow declaration and will advance towards the resolution of the conflict. This was also the vision of the declaration made yesterday by the three Co-Chair countries in framework of our Ministerial meeting.

Dear Colleagues,

There is one more long-standing problem which needs wise approach and political courage to be resolved. I would like to briefly touch upon the Armenian-Turkish relations, the normalization of which will highly contribute to the establishment of stability and security in the whole region.

The bold steps taken by the Presidents of Armenia and Turkey demonstrate political will and readiness to move forward. Of course, no one expects miracles and we were pragmatic enough not to think that all problems would be solved overnight. However, the important thing is to achieve a tangible result and not to negotiate for the sake of negotiations. We are looking for establishment of diplomatic relations and opening of borders without any precondition and we expect the same approach from the Turkish side. Parties continue to work and negotiate and I hope that together we will achieve what I believe is our common goal – normalize our relations and bring security and stability to our region.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to wish success to the incoming Chairmanship-in-Office and to ensure my distinguished Greek colleague, Minister Dora Bakoyanis that she can count on the support of Armenia in all her endeavors aimed at reaching security and prosperity in the OSCE area.

Thank you."

25. K. ZATULIN SAYS WITHOUT NAGORNO KARABAKH AND THE EXPRESSION OF THE WILL OF ITS PEOPLE NO ONE CAN DECIDE THE FATE OF NAGORNO KARABAKH [ARMENPRESS, 12/05/08]

"I don't think that the Karabakh conflict will be solved quickly, although the ministers also did not say in Helsinki that it will be so", MP of Russian parliament, politician Konstantin Zatulin told Armenpress referring to the statement on the Karabakh issue regulation which was signed yesterday in Helsinki.

In connection with the Moscow declaration K. Zatulin said that after the events in Caucasus it was important that the sides agree that they will not go through the Georgian path in the Karabakh conflict regulation issue. He expressed surprise over the statement of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev that the Moscow declaration does not exclude the military regulation of the conflict.

"I think the statement is made on the demand of certain sectors of population and does not speak for Azerbaijani president. We are not naive and understand that the peace is a more serious issue than signing under the declaration, but I think Azerbaijan took the obligations to regulate the issue peacefully. And Armenia as well, and this is very important", the Russian MP said.

"What concerns the discussions in Armenia whether Karabakh signed the declaration or not, it is important that Azerbaijan signed the document and adopted that the military regulation of the conflict is not possible. For the sake of that I think in this round it was meaningful to limit the format of participants. I'm sure that in the future without Nagorno Karabakh and without the expression of will of Karabakh people no one can decide the fate of Nagorno Karabakh", K. Zatulin expressed confidence.



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BUSINESS

26. ADOLF BIRKHOFFER: SECURITY LEVEL OF ARMENIAN NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IS QUITE HIGH [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

The work done by the Atomic Energy Security Council (AESC) under the RA president in the sphere of security of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant (ANPP) enables to keep Armenia's energy security at a properly high level, the Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan stated at the opening ceremony of the 10th sitting of AESC.

In his words, the proposals and advice of the Council are subjected to detailed analysis, and many of them were carried out later. In particular, at the Council's suggestion to raise the status of Stateatomcontrol - the regulatory body of Armenia's nuclear security, this body was reorganized into the State Committee for the Regulation of Nuclear Security adjunct to the Armenian government.

The Chairman of AESC, a leading expert in atomic energy Adolf Birkhofer (Germany) told reporters that the security level of Armenia's atomic energy is currently much higher than at the time when AESC started its activities. In his opinion, the security level of ANPP is fully comparable with that of the nuclear plants of this type in other countries. A. Birkhofer said that the currently operating 2nd power unit of ANPP should continue working for 7-8 years, while measures to increase its security should be taken for another 3-4 years.

The Director General of ANPP CJSC Gagik Markosian said that the results of the 2007-2008 measures to raise the security of ANPP will be discussed at the 10th sitting of AESC. These measures were implemented with allocations of a total of more than 10 million USD provided by the EU, the U.S, Great Britain and the Czech Republic.

He announced that during the consultation held at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) a week ago with the participation of local, Armenian and Russian experts, the directions of increasing ANPP's security were chosen, on which 240 million rubles (about 10 million USD) allocated by Russian government for this purpose this year will be spent. All the proposals of the Armenian side on implementation of a 3-year program including 12 projects were taken into account at the consultation, and the Armenian side is now waiting for the program's approval by IAEA.

The director general of ANPP CJSC informed those present that last week the company announced a tender for seismic studies of the building site of ANPP's new power unit. He said that he is in favor of operating the current power unit after the end of its planned operation period of 30 years - in 2016 if no new power unit is built by that time.

According to him, there has been a precedent of operating 4 power units with this type of reactor for 45 years in Russia, there have also been precedents in Europe and the U.S, and the respective experience may be used for raising the security of the operating power unit of ANPP.

The AESC is composed of Russian experts in atomic energy security (3), Armenian experts (2), French (2), U.S. (1), Czech (1) and Austrian (1).

27. SERZH SARGSYAN: WE STILL HAVE HOPES OF MAINTAINING HIGH RATES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND LOW INFLATION [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

"Despite the spreading global economic crisis, we still have hopes of maintaining high rates of economic growth and low inflation. The capitalization of Armenian banks is likely to allow reducing the losses to be caused by the crisis in Armenia," the Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan stated at the December 2 opening ceremony of the 10th sitting of the Atomic Energy Security Council under the RA president.

In his words, it is almost impossible to get out of the crisis without losses, but it is possible and necessary to reduce these losses to a minimum. On the whole, according to the president, the macroeconomic situation in Armenia is assessed as stable and predictable.

Speaking about the programs on energy sector, he said that work is being done to increase the capacities of the Abovian underground gas storage, and construction of a combined steam-and-gas power unit with the capacity of 270 megawatts has begun in the area of Yerevan Thermal Power Plant. It is envisaged completing the building and assembly work of 5th power unit of Hrazdan Thermal Power Plant at the end of the first half of 2010.

Noting that Armenia has one of the world's highest indices of gas network installation, S. Sargsyan reminded that recently the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline was connected to the internal gas supply system of Armenia. It was mentioned that in 2008 Armenia initiated the process of joining the agreement on creation of an international uranium enrichment center in the Russian city of Angarsk, and a joint



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Russian-Armenian venture on geological exploration of uranium mines in Armenia, and uranium mining and processing was set up.

28. CBA REDUCES REFINANCING RATE BY 0.5% TO 7.25% [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

At the December 2 sitting, the Board of the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) reduced the refinancing rate by 0.5% to 7.25%.

According to the CBA PR Service, 0.1% inflation was recorded in November on October 2008, as a result of which 12-month inflation declined by 2% to 6.6%.

The CBA Board stated that in November the developments of the domestic and external environments were mainly in line with the directions forecast for the 4th quarter. The envisaged risks of a decline in economic growth rates became apparent. At the same time, responding to the tendencies of a continuous fall in international prices of foodstuffs and fuel in recent months, the internal inflationary environment considerably weakened, which was reflected in a fall of prices of gasoline and "bread products" commodity group.

The continuous weakening of global inflationary pressures and the response of domestic prices to these tendencies will result in a considerable decline of the overall level of inflation in the next 12 months. Under such conditions the CBA Board considers it expedient to use less strict monetary conditions in order to help maintain high rates of economic growth.

29. IMPACT OF WORLD FINANCIAL CRISIS ON IT SPHERE TO BE DISCUSSED IN DILIJAN [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

The third "without ties" meeting in the current year of heads of IT organizations, representatives of state institutions and banks will be held in Dilijan, December 6-7.

Head of the public relations department of "The Union of IT Enterprises" Mane Manasian told Armenpress that the main theme is the world financial crisis and its impact on the IT sphere. Works conducted in the sphere will also be discussed and issues – pointed out. The issue of competency of Armenian information technologies in the conditions of financial crisis will also be observed.

During the meeting the representatives of tax and customs spheres will also be present, they will also refer to the changes in the tax legislation and the results of monitoring conducted lately in the customs sphere.

The issue of electronic management is one of the problems to be discussed: the delegation of "Ericsson" company will deliver a report. The delegation from Georgian will also take part in the meeting.

According to initial information nearly 60 people will be present at the meeting. It is organized by "The Union of IT Enterprises".

30. ARMENIAN AND RUSSIAN PRIME MINISTERS TO DISCUSS ISSUES OF OVERCOMING NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian will pay a working visit to Russia December 5.

Deputy Armenian Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharian told today journalists that the meeting of Armenian prime minister with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin will take place. The main theme of the discussions will be the world financial crisis and the joint efforts which must be exerted for overcoming the possible negative impacts of the crisis on the two countries.

Sh. Kocharian considered natural that each country has its peculiarities in the issue, and that steps will be discussed which will give an opportunity to solve the issue with joint efforts. The prime ministers of the two countries will also discuss issues of mutual interest.

"Relations with Russia, our strategic partner, have a unique role in the multilateral and balanced policy of Armenia. The relations develop very dynamically especially during the latest period and the frequent high level meetings testify this", Armenian deputy foreign minister noted.

The Armenian prime minister will also meet with businessman in the Armenian Embassy in Russia.



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31. CBA ISSUES COMMEMORATIVE COIN "15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN DRAM" [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/04/08]

The Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) issued a commemorative coin dedicated to the 15th anniversary of putting the national currency - the Armenian dram into circulation on November 22, 1993. According to the CBA PR Service, the coat of arms of the Republic of Armenia is depicted on the obverse of the coin. There is a shield with the coats of arms of Armenia's historic kingdoms and a gilded covering in the center of the coat of arms. The coat of arms of the RA is surrounded by a circle. There is an inscription "Republic of Armenia" between the circle and the edge, and the date "2008" is inscribed below.

The logo of the CBA is depicted in the center of the reverse. The sign of the Armenian dram is placed in the center of the logo, below which the nominal value is inscribed in two lines "5000" and "DRAMS". The logo is surrounded by a circle. "15 YEARS of ARMENIAN DRAM" is inscribed between the circle and the edge.

The coin was designed by the member of the Union of Artists of Armenia Harutyun Samuelian. It was minted at the Mint of Austria. Its nominal value is 5,000 drams, metal - silver (partly gilded), weight - 168.1 +/- 3 grams, diameter - 63+-0.1 mm, the number of issued coins - 500.

32. GOVERNMENT CANNOT ASSESS YET POSSIBLE SCALE OF IMPACT OF GLOBAL CRISIS ON ARMENIAN ECONOMY [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/04/08]

Despite a decline in exports and the withdrawal of Russian capital from the country, the global economic crisis has not yet affected Armenia, the RA minister of finance Tigran Davtian said when responding to a question of deputy Samvel Sargsyan at the December 3 sitting of the RA National Assembly.

In his words, Armenia avoided the impact of the first stage of the crisis - the financial crisis as the country's financial system has not yet integrated into the global system, and besides, it is quite small. As regards the economic crisis, it has just begun and today it is impossible to assess the time and scale of its impact on Armenia.

The finance minister said that the government has taken some steps to soften the impact of the crisis. In particular, it was decided to allocate a sum equivalent to 50 million dollars with the aim of assisting small and medium business. Besides, negotiations are being conducted with the World Bank on doubling the financial assistance to Armenia. According to T. Davtian, the matter concerns a sum of about one billion dollars.

33. ARMENIAN PRIME MINISTER LEAVES FOR MOSCOW FOR ONE-DAY VISIT IN ORDER TO MEET WITH VLADIMIR PUTIN AND RUSSIAN BUSINESSMEN [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/04/08]

The Armenian prime minister Tigran Sargsyan will pay a one-day visit to Russia on December 5. During the visit, he will meet with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, and a meeting of the Armenian prime minister with businessmen will take place in the Armenian embassy in Moscow. Announcing this at the December 4 briefing, the RA deputy foreign minister Shavarsh Kocharian said that the main subject of the discussions will be the international financial crisis and the joint efforts to overcome its possible negative consequences. In response to a reporter's question about whether the Property for Debt program and the issue of opening Upper Lars crossing point will be discussed, S. Kocharian replied: "I think that these problems we are concerned about will be discussed without fail".

In his words, "the relations with our strategic ally Russia have their proper place in Armenia's multivectorial, balanced policy". He expressed satisfaction that Armenian-Russian relations are developing dynamically, especially in recent period, which has been reflected in meetings at the highest level, which have become frequent.

34. ARMENIAN GOVERNMENT EXPECTS SERIOUS CREDIT AND GRANT RESOURCES FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN 2009 [ARMENPRESS, 12/05/08]

The Armenian government expects to get serious credit and grant means from international organizations in 2009 particularly from World, Asian Development, European Investment, European Banks, the International Monetary Fund and EU institutions.

Armenian Finance Minister Tigran Davtian told Armenpress the 14 million dollars provided to Armenia by International Monetary Fund is a good impetus for other donor organizations, in respect that Armenia is a stable developing country. These credit resources will be directed to ensuring the country's



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macroeconomic stability. In case of necessity the IMF will quickly respond to Armenia's requests for additional means.

According to T. Davtian at present negotiations are held with the World Bank for getting financial means. Yet it is not clear how much money will be provided. The assistance intended for upcoming four years will be directed to the implementation of reforms of small and medium-sized business, infrastructures, the development of education sphere.

The Armenian government also cooperates with European and European Investment Banks, which started its activity in our region only recently, as it was mainly financing the EU member countries.

"We are trying to involve more recourses from abroad than we have planned to. If formerly we were cautious in this issue as the economy was developing and there was no need of additional recourses, today the world financial crisis urged to work actively in that direction", the Minister noted.

Before getting first means from international organizations the Armenian government undertakes steps to ensure financial stability in the country during the first months of 2009.

For this aim the Armenian government recently decided to provide additional 50 million dollars of financing to the Armenian-German fund which will be directed to crediting small and medium-sized business in Armenia.

35. T. DAVTIAN SAYS THE RA BUDGET 2009 PROMISES STABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRY [ARMENPRESS, 12/05/08]

The Armenian 2009 state budget is the logical continuation of budgets of previous years and promises to ensure stable development of the country next year.

Armenian Finance Minister Tigran Davtian told Armenpress that the 2009 will be a difficult year for the world economy, therefore the main issue of Armenian government is to ensure stable development of the country.

"It intends a macroeconomic stability and based on that ensuring of stable economic development. During the latest years our economy developed in quite rapidly. Now the most important thing is not only the preservation of these tempos but also ensuring stability of the development. In this respect the next year will be resolute: we will understand whether the development brought to stable development which is very important for each country in a long lasting period", the minister said.

According to him, the Armenian government must by all means be ready and able to stand next year's challenges. Partly they can be foreseen, partly – not.

With the 2009 state budget the sum of money provided to social security, health care and education spheres have notably increased.

The state financing to the education sphere will reach 126.9 billion drams, the health care – 66.1 billion drams and 252.5 billion drams – to social security sphere. These are the target spheres which are recognized primary by 2012 also by the program of Armenian government.

T. Davtian considered the similarity of opinions between executive and legislative bodies during the state budget discussions in the NA an achievement, and no increase of overall budget expenditures was registered.

"In this situation it is considered an achievement as the NA handled the issue with understanding taking into account that the increase of expenditures may be risky for the economy", T. Davtian noted.

T. Davtian noted that the 2009 will be rather a difficult year for the world economy. Armenia will not be restrained from these procedures too but compared with other countries it is prepared better: as of today the implementation of the state budget is in a good condition, the economy continues to grow and the year will end with good indicators.

36. SERZH SARGSYAN SAYS BANKS MUST BECOME FEEDING SOURCE FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESS [ARMENPRESS, 12/05/08]

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan called today a working consultation with the heads of Armenian trade banks.

Presidential press service told Armenpress that during the meeting Serzh Sargsyan stated that the aim of the consultation is to clarify the activities which are necessary to be done in the condition of deepening of the economic crisis, by taking into consideration the viewpoint of the banking system.

Referring to the activity of the sphere, the president of the republic said that "thanks to our banks we managed without serious damages confront the first wave of crisis. I think it is first of all agreed with the smart policy – both with the involvement of means and their distribution."



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“Currently when the financial crisis was followed by the economic one, together with you we must undertake effective means, feed those branches of the economy which may ensure income develop and create new jobs. There are such businesses in Armenia. There are programs, and those programs even in case of small financing and crediting may become reality. At first of course I mean small and medium-sized business. You must be very active in this issue and our banking system must become a feeding source for small and medium-sized business,” the president said.

Serzh Sargsyan said that there are many factors in Armenia which give opportunity to reduce the consequences of the global economic crisis. “We cannot remain isolated, we cannot state that global crisis will not have an impact on Armenia’s economy but there are many factors which give opportunity to bring the consequences of the crisis to minimum,” the president stated.

During the consultation Serzh Sargsyan expressed readiness to listen to the suggestions and advices of the present.

The participants of the consultation agreed that the right usage of the country’s competitive and relative privileges will give an opportunity to smoothen the consequences of the crisis.

During the meeting they also discussed issues connected with the system. President Sargsyan discussed with them all the possible solutions to the existing issues, heard their viewpoints and suggestions.

Summing up the consultation the leader of the country pointed out that “the state has enough opportunities and means to support the banking system with relevant means and the banking system must work with new enthusiasm in the business credit field.”

DIASPORA

37. EUROPEAN UNION-TURKEY FORUM TO BE HELD IN POLAND [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

A European Union-Turkey forum will be held on December 5-6 in the city of Sopot, Poland. RA NA deputy, ARFD Bureau member Vahan Hovhannisian, Chairman of the Forum of Armenian Associations of Europe and Armenian community of Slovakia Ashot Grigorian are also invited to take part in the forum.

Issues regarding Turkey's membership to EU, Black Sea countries' cooperation, South Caucasian countries' cooperation, and other topical issues will be discussed at the forum. Vahan Hovhannisian's and Ashot Grigorian's participation is envisaged on the panel of South Caucasian countries' cooperation, where issues of increasing Turkey's regional influence and mediatory activity will be presented.

An equal number of participants are invited to the forum from EU countries and Turkey, in general 150 people.

As Noyan Tapan correspondent reports from Bratislava, this forum is considered the biggest conference dedicated to EU-Turkey relations organized recently and is aimed at clearing up the future and development process of the relations with Turkey. The Armenian participants of the forum have serious expectations from the results of discussion of Armenian problems (the Armenian Genocide, the Artsakh problem, issue of neighborhood with Turkey, etc).

ARTS

38. COOPERATION AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN CULTURE MINISTRIES OF ARMENIA AND UKRAINE [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/03/08]

Within the framework of the solemn events of opening an Armenian Culture Center in Odessa, on November 30, RA Minister of Culture Hasmik Poghosian and Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Ukraine Vasily Vovkun signed an Agreement On 2008-2012 Cooperation between the RA Ministry of Culture and the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

According to the report provided to Noyan Tapan by the RA Foreign Ministry Press and Information Department, the agreement will ensure proper legal field for further many-sided cultural cooperation between the two countries.



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39. EDUARD TOPCHYAN: DEPRIVED OF THE ART OF OPERA [Azg, 12/03/08]

At the invitation of Japanese Koransha Concert and Planning Agency, Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra was on tour in Japan from November 4-24. The orchestra gave 15 concerts in the famous concert halls of Tokyo, Nigata, Toyama, and Osaka. Four of these concerts took place in Tokyo. The concert program was very rich – Rakhmaninov, Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Rimski-Korsakov and other works of famous composers.

Art Director and General Conductor of APO Eduard Topchian and director of the orchestra Davit Terzian shared their impressions during their yesterday's press conference.

"To understand classical music one must have a corresponding education. It is impossible to understand Wagner's music without necessary preparation. The level of this preparedness in Armenia decreases day by day. Television propagates something that cannot be called art", said Topchian.

Days ago Avet Terterian's "Earthquake" opera premiered in the half-full hall of the Opera and Ballet Theater. That's how Topchian explained the small number of audience in the hall, "It's time we leave aside diplomacy. Being a professional musician I hardly understood Terterian's opera. I don't know if it was an opera at all. It was more like a theatrical-musical performance. I wonder what audience could sit and listen to it for two hours. "Earthquake" could be performed in Metropolitan, or La Scala. These are famous theaters and have more than 200 performances in their repertoire. They can allow themselves some experiments. It's not for our hall. It will be on stage once or twice and that's it. They should have invested that money in Verdi's "Aida" so that the new generations listen to it and fall in love with classical music. And later, when we would already have a mature audience, we could offer a modern opera like the "Earthquake". Today, we are deprived of what is called 'opera'. We only have "Anush" and "Arshak II". Of course, we need that too, but the art of opera is not limited to that. Recently, the world celebrated the 100th anniversary of famous Puccini, but Armenia stayed out of those events. Only the APO performed "Madame Butterfly" and that was it. Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Wagner are not performed anymore on the Armenian stages. Only Verdi and it's a very poor performance".

Maestro Topchian is sure that music schools and conservatories play a major role in loving and understanding classical music. Today, these establishments in Armenia are "destroyed".

"If they give the directorship of one of the music schools in the center of Yerevan to a person whom I respect as a musical leader, I am ready to help him. World-famous musicians like Kashanmoto and Sidkavetski are ready to come to Armenia for two months and give master classes for the Armenian musicians. I promise that in seven years we will have a brilliant generation of musicians. Otherwise we will face a deadlock in 10-15 years", concluded Topchian.

40. DOCUMENTARY FILM ON ARMENIA'S HISTORY, CULTURE AND TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES PREPARED [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

A one-hour long documentary film will be ready next year and will be shown by different leading TV channels of the world.

Head of the Tourism Department of the Armenian Economy Ministry Mekhak Apresian said today at a press conference that the film has been shot to propagate Armenia's tourism and attracting tourists. The film will present history of Armenia, culture and tourism opportunities.

The initiators are "Bas Business" and "Tranceglob" Spanish companies which deal with shooting of such films.

M. Apresian also added that the TV projects advertising Armenian tourism have been carried out from 2006. Such clips are broadcasted by CNN and Euronews.

41. TURKISH VIOLINIST CH. ASHKIN TO GIVE CONCERT IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 12/05/08]

Turkish violinist, professor Chihatan Ashkin's concert will take place December 9 in the Komitas Chamber Music House.

An official from "Eurasian Partnership" Foundation told Armenpress that the concert is a part of the cultural program between Armenia and Turkey which became possible due to the financial support of USAID and through the cooperation of "Eurasian Partnership" Foundation, "Orion productions" and "Komitas" quartet.

As a part of mutual visit the first violin of "Komitas" quartet Eduard Tadevosian gave a concert in Istanbul.

In Yerevan Chihat Ashkin will play works of European, Turkish and Armenian composers. Gulden Testle (piano) will join him in the play.



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Ch. Ashkin graduated from the musical Royal college and the City university(London), is the founder and the first director of the Center of Study of the Leading Music (MIAM), professor of Turkish state conservatory, winner of a number of awards. He plays with violin of the master Jan Baptis Voyom (1946).

The concert is also the continuation of musical mutual visits of "Komitas" quartet and his Turkish partners in 2002.

"We deeply believe that the music will stress the world human values and support to the dialogue between the two nations", head of the Armenian office of the mentioned fund Gevorg Ter-Gabrielian said.

RELIGION

42. CHURCHES OF NAREKAVANK IN VAN, SMALL AND TIGRANAKERT CHURCHES OF KTUTS ISLAND AND CHAPANAK TEMPLE TO BE RECONSTRUCTED IN TURKEY [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

Serious oversight and protection works of Armenian monuments in Turkey started only recently when the Turkish government made a decision to pay great attention not only to the Islamic cultural institutions which exist in the territory of the country but also of those belonging to the other nations as well.

Turkish architect Zakaria Mirtanoghly who is invited to Armenia to take part in the conference entitled "The Protection of Armenian Historical Cultural Heritage in Armenia and Abroad" which is being held in Yerevan told Armenpress that the issue of protection and reconstruction of historical-cultural monuments in Turkey is urgent as the Turks do not take care even of their mosques.

Although Turkey expressed readiness to reconstruct the damaged monuments which are of great cultural value, the Armenian monuments in the country are in an extremely poor condition, only a few churches remained from numerous churches in Western Armenia which are in a very bad condition.

During the last 20 years specialists of monument renovation have been educated in Turkish universities among which there are many Armenian researchers.

From Armenian churches the Narekavank in Van, the Small on Ktuts island and Tigranakert as well as the Chapanak temple are planned to be reconstructed. Turkish-Armenian architects will also take part in these works.

During the conference Z. Mirtanoghly will present a report on the history and reconstruction works of Akhtamar church, in what condition the church is at present and what kind of works are necessary to bring it in order.

The curving on the wall are damaged, there are numerous broken stones from the walls which need an urgent renovation.

SOCIAL

43. TRANSPORT CONJUNCTION OF HERATSI, KORYUN, NALBANDIAN, CHARENTS STREETS OPENS [Azg, 12/04/08]

The transport conjunction of the Heratsi, Koryun, Nalbandian, Charents crossroad opened today officially in Yerevan. The symbolizing red ribbon was cut by the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan and Second President Robert Kocharian. Yerevan mayor Yervand Zakharian, representatives of legislative and executive bodies, officials and residents of the capital were present at the event.

"The construction of this conjunction kicked off in 2007 and today after less than two years the capital gets a very important construction which will completely change the face of the downtown capital and will essentially improve the transport communication," mayor of Yerevan said.

About 8 billion drams have been released from the state budget for the construction.

The mayor said that the new construction is called for traffic relief of Mashtots, Baghramian, Tigran Mets Avenues, Khanjian, A. Manukian, Isahakian, Abovian, Nalbandian, Koryun and Charents streets.

According to the mayor the idea to connect south-eastern and north-western sectors of the capital comes from 1970-80s but it became possible only after independence.

The participants of the ceremony also moved to the underground transport passage connecting Khanjian-Tumanian streets and moved through it to A. Manukian-Getar and Charents-Heratsi sectors.

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan also participated in the opening of a memorial to Convicted situated in the upper part of "Cascade" complex.



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44. AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2008 567,003 SUBSCRIBERS JOINED GAS SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

As of December 1 this year, 567,003 subscribers are joined to the gas system of the republic. Press secretary of "ArmRusgasart" company Shushan Sardarian told Armenpress that in November the number of gas consumers increased by 6,802. According to separate months, the indicator is the best in the year.

During previous 11 months the number of subscribers increased by 50,734.

45. UP TO 33 COURT BUILDINGS TO BE RENOVATED DURING THE UPCOMING YEARS [Hayastani Hanrapetutian, 12/04/08]

The court buildings which are being constructed in Chambarak, Noyemberian, Vardenis, Alaverdi and Eghvard will be put into functioning in 2009.

Referring to the court construction carried out in Armenia the press secretary of Armenian Court of Cassation Alina Yengoyan told Armenpress that in case of sufficient financial means up to 33 court buildings (including Abovian, Hrazdan, Talin, Artik) are intended to be reconstructed and renovated during the upcoming years.

During the latest years within the frameworks of World Bank programs 13 court buildings have been constructed, particularly the complex of Courts of Appeal, Courts of first instance in 11 communities of Yerevan and buildings of central residences of Shirak, Armavir, Lori, Ararat and Aragatsotn Courts of first instances.

46. 110 YOUNG SPECIALISTS TAKE PART IN THE "OPEN CONTEST OF PROGRAMMING-2008" [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

The results of the "Open contest of programming -2008", which is held in the Armenian IT sphere, will be summed up on December 15. The contest is held in collaboration with the "Enterprises Incubator Foundation" of Armenian Economy Ministry, "San Microsystems" corporation, USAID and "The Union of IT Enterprises".

An official from "Enterprises Incubator Foundation" told Armenpress that the date of presenting the applications of participation in the contest has expired, already 110 young specialists under 30 years old have applied who consider their abilities competent in one of the programming languages – "C++" or "Java".

The contest will be held in three main rounds, nearly 60 young people will take part in the selection round 30 of which will be selected to take part in the individual round. The winners of this round will have an opportunity to take part in the "Russian camp" program which will take place in Tsakhkadzor.

From December 9-13, ten teams consisting of three persons will be formed there to take part in the team contest. Participants who will take the first three places in the individual and team competitions will get big money awards – from 200,000 to 450,000 drams.

A number of other encouraging awards are also intended, which will be handed in the ceremony of rewarding on December 15. The aim of the contest is to discover young talented programmers.

The state financing of the "Open contest of programming - 2008" is 5 million drams. Such events are also intended to be conducted in Gyumri.

47. ARMENIAN APPLICANTS TO TAKE PART IN THE UNESCO SCHOLARSHIP TENDER ANNOUNCED BY CZECH GOVERNMENT [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

The December 5 is the deadline for the participation in the 2009-2010 tender of UNESCO scholarship announced by Czech government. The person who wins in the tender for academic degrees of bachelor and master will be given an opportunity to get corresponding education in a number of professions in Czech higher educational establishments. As a result of the tender two persons will be recognized winners from the region.

An official from the International cooperation and Diaspora department of Armenian Education and Science Ministry told Armenpress that the interest towards the tender is quite high but there are certain difficulties connected with the translation of the documents in Czech language and their approval by the Armenian Justice Ministry.



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48. ANNUAL PROGRAM OF URBAN MINISTRY SOON TO BE ENDED IN SYUNIK [ARMENPRESS, 12/05/08]

With the order of the Armenian Urban Ministry it is expected to carry out 11 programs in the Armenian province of Syunik. The head of the town building department of the Syunik Governor's office Arshak Ustabashian told Armenpress that out of intended 665 million drams' annual program, as of November, construction works of 624 million drams have been carried out or the 94 percent of the annual program.

As of now the annual program of construction of new schools in Aravus, Khoznavar villages, reconstruction of Uyts' libraries and Tegh's cultural house and Lori's school has been finished.

The construction of new school building for Yegheg school and reconstruction of Kapan's Al. Shirvanzade Dramatic Theatre and Metallurgy laboratory of the research center of Armenian Academy of Sciences, Kapan N 3 educational complex and Goris N 1 school are in process. Construction works amounting to 11 million drams have been left which will be finished by the end of the year.

During the current year programs with the order of culture and agriculture ministries have also been conducted in Syunik. The annual program of reconstruction of Vahanavank monastery complex ended for which 30 million drams have been released from the stated budget and Sisian regional veterinary laboratory has been reconstructed within the frameworks of 29 million drams.

49. IT EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 10 YEREVAN SCHOOLS [ARMENPRESS, 12/05/08]

The works within the frameworks of "Partners in Education Sphere-Armenia" memorandum of mutual understanding signed between Armenian Education and Science Ministry and "Microsoft" company have already kicked off.

Director of "Microsoft RA" company Grigor Barseghian told Armenpress that visits have already been paid to Yerevan schools to find out which schools have more experience in teaching with information technologies.

After the studies the "Microsoft" will present 10 schools to Armenian Education and Science Ministry where programs on improvement of IT teaching will be conducted.

"New studying approaches, methodology will be applied and opportunities will be created for the conduction of different subjects courses with IT technologies. When the improved programs will be applied in schools, they will serve as a model for other schools of the country", G. Barseghian said. The final list of schools will be clear in January, 2009.

"ArmenTel" company has already provided technical recourses, servers where the progressive teaching and content management system will be installed, which will give an opportunity to get information about the results of works and efficiency of the schools which are joined to the server.

A task group has been set up to follow the works of programs which are intended with the agreement.

Meetings will be organized between representatives of the sides for organizing works efficiently and discussing the results.

SPORTS

50. ARMENIAN PRESIDENT SERZH SARGSIAN RECEIVES WORLD ABSOLUTE LIGHT WEIGHT BOXING CHAMPION VIC DARCHINIAN [ARMENPRESS, 12/04/08]

Armenian President Serzh Sargsian received today world's absolute super light weight boxing champion Vic Darchinian.

Presidential press service told Armenpress that the President congratulated him on winning the exclusive title in the interesting fight and stressed that "each sport, cultural and other victory on the international arena makes our history and nation recognizable and fills each Armenian with a feeling of pride".

In his turn V. Darchinian congratulated the Armenian president for chess successes of our country and said that he had arrived in Armenia to take part in the events of 20th anniversary of the 1988 earthquake.

The world's absolute champion presented his future plans to S. Sargsian and informed that the next fight will probably take place on February 7, 2009.



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51. GAGIK TSARUKIAN REELECTED CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE OF ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/04/08]

Gagik Tsarukian was reelected Chairman of the National Olympic Committee of Armenia in the December 4 election held during Committee's General Assembly.

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