



TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. LEVON ZURABIAN: ARMENIAN AUTHORITIES SPARED NO EFFORTS FOR NO HALL IN COUNTRY TO BE PROVIDED FOR HOLDING ANC CONFERENCE [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/22/08]

The main subjects of discussion at the conference of the Armenian National Congress (ANC) held on December 21 at the hall of ANC Erebuni office were issues regarding Nagorno Karabakh settlement, problems of financial-economic crisis and possible ways of coming out of it, as well as home political issues regarding restoration of the constitutional order in Armenia.

Besides first RA President Levon Ter-Petrosian, former political prisoner Vardan Malkhasian, Chairman of ANC youth organizations' Board Karen Karapetian, former political prisoner and a representative of the Union of Armenian Volunteers Zhirayr Sefilian, Board Chairwoman of the Hnchak Social-Democratic Party Lyudmila Sargsian, Chairmen of the Hanrapetutin (Republic) party and the People's Party of Armenia Aram Z. Sargsian and Stepan Demirchian spoke at the conference.

According to ANC central office head Levon Zurabian, the conference was held in such a limited staff as the Armenian authorities not only refused to provide them the government sitting hall for holding the conference, but also spared no efforts for no other hall in the country to be provided for that purpose.

L. Zurabian said that 18 parties, 20 NGOs and 10 youth organizations, as well as dozens of thousands of people are included in ANC. At present ANC offices operate in all Armenian regions and Yerevan communities. It is also supposed to open offices in all former RA regional centers, that is, to increase their number more than three-fold. ANC also has branches in Moscow and Los Angeles.

The representative of ANC central office said that a telethon on raising funds for Armenia's political prisoners will be held on December 21 in Los Angeles by the AMGA Armenian-language TV channel. The telethon is organized by the Eurokanch (Eurocall) center for civil cooperation.

2. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN: BY SIGNING UNDER MOSCOW DECLARATION, SERZH SARGSYAN GAVE OFFICIAL CONSENT TO "MADRID PRINCIPLES" [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/22/08]

Currently one of the most serious challenges for Armenia is the Nagorno Karabakh settlement problem. Opposition leader, first Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosian stated at the December 21 conference of the Armenian National Congress (ANC).

He said that today's situation in the Nagorno Karabakh settlement is characterized by activation of the negotiations process, signing of such documents as Moscow Declaration, Helsinki Statement, many meetings, optimistic statements of many foreign officials on possible quick settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, urgent amendments to the law On Referendum, obvious efforts of the Armenian authorities to prepare society for the solution to the Nagorno Karabakh problem, etc. "All this, on the one hand, confirms international community's resolution to settle the conflict in a very short term and the other hand, Serzh Sargsyan's obvious readiness to go to the problem settlement," L. Ter-Petrosian mentioned.

According to him, the Moscow Declaration signed on November 2 with the consent of Armenian and Azeri Presidents finally strengthened two important principles. In particular, the fact that "Madrid principles" are the basis of conflict settlement and that unfortunately, Nagorno Karabakh will not take part in the settlement process.

L. Ter-Petrosian stated that by signing under the Moscow Declaration, S. Sargsyan gave an official consent to "Madrid principles." And "Madrid principles," according to him, is nothing else but the ten points presented by him as far back as at the October 17 rally.

It should be mentioned that speaking at the October 17 rally, L. Ter-Petrosian presented an approximate plan of the document that will be offered for signing and where 10 points will be the main ones: withdrawal of Armenian armed formations from the territories adjoining Nagorno Karabakh, settlement of these territories with Azeri refugees, return of Azeri refugees to the Nagorno Karabakh territory, provision of a land communication between Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia, dislocation of international peacekeepers by the perimeter of Nagorno Karabakh borders, etc.



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3. OPPOSITION CONSIDERS THAT ARMENIA WILL FEEL CRISIS CONSEQUENCES IN 1-1.5 MONTHS [Aravot, 12/22/08]

The consequences of the economic crisis for Armenia will be very hard, and country's common citizens will feel the economic problems already in 1-1.5 months. Vahagn Khachatryan, the former Yerevan Mayor, stated at the December 21 Armenian National Congress conference. He also said that budget revenues from VAT will be also reduced.

According to him, fund allocation under the Millennium Challenge program has been already suspended. He said that instead of real programs on small and medium-sized business assistance, the authorities act by administrative methods trying to get tax collection by all means, which leads to stopping of economic activity of many small and medium-sized enterprises. Besides, the authorities very much hope for foreign financial support and ask various countries and international organizations for sums of 50m, 200m, and even 1bn USD.

In V. Khachatryan's opinion, for coming out of the formed situation the government should have presented the respective program in consideration of the domestic resources. Economy of resources and optimalization of expenditures should be that program's component.

Analyzing the financial-economic crisis world tendencies, the former Prime Minister and leader of the Freedom party Hrant Bagratian characterized the situation in world economy by the following phrase: "Economy has fallen a prey to bank terror." According to his estimation, this year capital export from Armenia will amount to nearly 1bn USD. Meanwhile transfers reduction from abroad await the country. He also mentioned the high dependence of Armenia's economy on non-ferrous metals export and energy carriers import. H. Bagratian also pointed out to the necessity to stop talks about closing the Armenian NPP until a new ANPP is built. "Armenia should remain a country with atomic energy," H. Bagratian said.

4. ACCORDING TO LEVON TER-PETROSIAN'S AFFIRMATION, OPPOSITION HAS ESTABLISHED IDENTITY OF POLICEMEN FIRING AT PEACEFUL DEMONSTRANTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/22/08]

According to opposition's own investigation of the March 1 events, the opposition has established the identity of policemen firing at peaceful demonstrators. First RA President Levon Ter-Petrosian stated at the December 21 conference of the Armenian National Congress (ANC).

In his words, as a result of the investigation it was also found out that five high-ranking officials and four oligarchs are indeed responsible for those events, who coordinated the actions of a group consisting of 950 people. The latter set cars on fire and robbed shops. The ex-President said that the ANC central office conveyed all these data to Council of Europe High Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg and to some of the Ambassadors accredited in Armenia.

L. Ter-Petrosian said that the greatest achievement was that the national movement managed to prove the groundlessness of the version put forward by the authorities that clashes between policemen and demonstrators were provoked by the opposition. And for the Armenian public primordially not believing that version the March 1 crime was a terrible slaughter organized by country's leaders. The international community also started getting convinced of it under the pressure of the existing facts.

L. Ter-Petrosian drew attention to the fact that so far no opposition representative has been accused of carrying arms, using grenades, setting cars on fire or robbing shops. In his words, those killing the ten persons have not been disclosed yet. While, the very issue should have been primary for law enforcement bodies.

L. Ter-Petrosian assured that the March 1 investigation will be continued, and in case the situation changes everybody really responsible for these crimes will be brought to the court. He also stated that opposition's mass actions of protest can be resumed at any time.

5. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN: NATIONAL MOVEMENT'S GOAL IS DISMANTLING RULING BANDIT SYSTEM AND NOT COLLAPSE OF ARMENIAN STATEHOOD [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/22/08]

The monolithic character of the ruling clique and of Armenia's economic elite, the attitude of the international community closing its eyes on the March 1 events and existence of political prisoners in Armenia, the passive position of Nagorno Karabakh authorities make impossible the fulfillment of the task on organizing mass protest actions in Armenia aimed against the authorities' current position in the issue of conflict settlement. Opposition leader, first RA President Levon Ter-Petrosian stated at the December 21 conference of the Armenian National Congress (ANC).

According to him, the wave of people's discontent can last long, especially as it can be accompanied by economic crisis difficulties, and all that will turn over the situation in the country, and



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Azerbaijan will not miss the chance of taking advantage of that to solve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict by a military way. L. Ter-Petrosian reminded that Armenian side's achievements in Karabakh war coincide with formation of such "disgraceful" situations in Azerbaijan, that is, passage of power from Mutalibov to Elchibey, from Elchibey to Aliyev. According to the first President, coming to power is not an end in itself for the national movement, which has no right to act by adventure methods. National movement's goal is dismantling the ruling bandit system and not collapse of the Armenian statehood.

He specially dwelt on Nagorno Karabakh's position. According to him, the circumstance that Nagorno Karabakh remained out of the negotiations process shows that the Karabakh side proved to be not consistent in the issue of fulfillment of the decision of OSCE Budapest summit of 1994, where Karabakh was recognized a negotiations side. If Nagorno Karabakh preserved that status in the negotiations, today the NKR authorities could renounce and not accept "Madrid principles."

L. Ter-Petrosian said that the Nagorno Karabakh authorities are connected with the bandit regime of Armenia with various promises and in that case it is impossible to imagine that a mass movement against Serzh Sargsyan's program on conflict settlement can start in Karabakh. "And until Nagorno Karabakh becomes strong, in Armenia it will be also impossible to create an atmosphere we had in 1988," L. Ter-Petrosian concluded.

6. ARMENIA PLANNING TO OPEN DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS IN BRAZIL, LITHUANIA, FINLAND AND JAPAN [Azg, 12/23/08]

Next year Armenia is planning to open diplomatic representations in Brazil, Lithuania, Finland and Japan.

Head of the press service department of Armenian Foreign Ministry Tigran Balayan told Armenpress that during this year a consulate point opened in Hague and a consulate general – in Batumi.

T. Balayan also noted that the program work of purchasing of buildings of Armenian embassies abroad will continue in 2009: with the state budget means buildings will be bought for embassies but it is not yet clarified in what towns.

Armenia has diplomatic relations with 153 countries of the world.

7. ARMENIA ALREADY READY TO SUPPLY ELECTRICITY TO TURKEY [ARMENPRESS, 12/23/08]

Already today Armenia is ready to supply electricity to Turkey.

General director of "High Voltage Electric Nets" company Sahak Abrahamian, whose company will deal with the supply of electricity, told Armenpress that for the implementation of the deal a number of technical issues existing in Turkey must be solved.

He reminded that the Belgian side which served as a mediator for the implementation of the agreement on supplying electricity to Turkey signed September 4, 2008 will also deal with the regulation of a number of issues in Turkey. "The Armenian side is already ready to export electricity", S. Abrahamian said.

The general director of the company considered it early to speak about the volume of the exported electricity and noted that it will be clarified when the time of the supply of electricity will be known.

According to the initial agreement, 3.5 billion Kilowatts of electricity must be exported. As of today, the sum is calculated 57 dollars for 1 megawatt of electricity, but it depends on the prices of gas in case of change of which the price of the offered electricity will also be reviewed.

According to S. Abrahamian, in case of demand the Armenian side is always ready to provide electricity to the Georgian side as well, which has not been done this year.

8. SERZH SARGSYAN SAYS 2009 WILL BE THE YEAR OF SUCCESS [ARMENPRESS, 12/23/08]

On the occasion of New Year and Christmas holidays President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan gave a reception today in his residence for the representatives of mass media.

Congratulating the guests, the president wished health and happiness to the families of all and wished mass media a day to day increasing audience.

"Let the year of 2009 be a year of success, let in 2009 we manage with joint efforts to lead the country through the way of development, let more marriages and more joy be in Armenia than last year. There was no lack of events in 2008 either in the republic, region or in the world in general. Neither of you had difficulty in searching for fresh, urgent information but unfortunately not all of them were pleasant and joyful. I wish that the 2009 be also a full year and reporters and mass media will not have any problems in



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informing the public, finding good material, but I frankly wish that positive be more in the news. I wish that in 2009 together with you we manage to support positive processes and those grave forecasts, which often are met not only in mass media, but also in world in general, will not come true," the president said, expressing assurance that the next year will be successful and such events will take place which will consolidate the security of the country, belief of the people towards the coming day. And the biggest guarantee of not becoming bad predictions a reality, the leader of the country considered the already carried out huge work which has been done without noise, without expectations to win political dividends, and this huge work will by all means give its results. "When the result comes forth, you will be the first to know," Serzh Sargsyan said.

9. ARMENIAN FM RECEIVES DEPUTY SECRETARY OF IRANIAN SUPREME SECURITY COUNCIL [ARMENPRESS, 12/23/08]

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian received today the delegation headed by the deputy secretary of Iranian Supreme Security Council Ali Bagheri.

Armenian Foreign Ministry press and information department told Armenpress that greeting the guests, Edward Nalbandian said that he is pleased with the Armenian-Iranian relations based on the mutually beneficial cooperation. Referring to the expansion of economic relations between the two countries he highly assessed the results of the session of inter-governmental cooperation commission held in Tehran December 15.

During the meeting the sides also discussed a number of issues on implementation of joint programs between Armenia and Iran in transport and energy spheres.

10. JAVIER SOLANA GREETES MOSCOW AND HELSINKI DECLARATIONS WHICH CONFIRM STRIVE OF ALL SIDES TOWARDS PEACEFUL REGULATION OF KARABAKH CONFLICT [ARMENPRESS, 12/23/08]

EU High Commissioner on Foreign Policy and Security Affairs Javier Solana stated that the European Union supports all the forms of regional cooperation and constructive dialogue which lead to the consolidation of relations between countries of the region.

"We greet the November 2 Moscow and December 4 Helsinki declarations which confirm the strive of all sides to find a peaceful regulation to the Karabakh conflict", Solana told "Trend".

On behalf of EU he resolutely urged the sides of the conflict to act in that direction and continue the constructive dialogue.

"The existing impetus must not be lost", Solana said and added that "the progress in Karabakh conflict regulation will also contribute to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan".

11. EDWARD NALBANDIAN: NO AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED WITHOUT ARTSAKH PARTY'S FULL PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATIONS [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/23/08]

The latest developments in the Nagorno Karabakh settlement were discussed at the meeting of RA Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian and NKR President Bako Sahakian held on December 19 in Stepanakert. E. Nalbandian presented the Artsakh President with the results of the OSCE Foreign Ministers' Council held in Helsinki and the details of OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs' meeting with Azeri Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadiarov in the capital city of Finland.

The interlocutors highly estimated the statements of OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing countries' Foreign Ministers and OSCE Foreign Ministers' Council on Nagorno Karabakh settlement.

On December 20, E. Nalbandian visited Artsakh State University, where he spoke before students and lecturers. The Minister presented the Nagorno Karabakh settlement negotiations process and prospects.

Touching upon the issue of Artsakh authorities' participation in the Nagorno Karabakh settlement process, E. Nalbandian stressed that no agreement can be reached without Artsakh party's full participation in the negotiations.

According to the report provided to Noyan Tapan by the RA Foreign Ministry Press and Information Department, E. Nalbandian also had meetings with NKR National Assembly Speaker Ashot Ghulian and NKR Foreign Minister Georgy Petrosian.



12. FIGHTING ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION N 106 IN CONGRESS SHOULD BE TURKEY'S PRIMARY TASK NEXT YEAR [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/23/08]

International community's pressure upon Turkey in the issue of recognition of Armenian Genocide becomes stronger and stronger. Turkologist Ruben Safrastian, the Director of the RA NAS Institute of Oriental Studies, said at the December 22 press conference. According to him, if 7-8 years ago someone spoke in the U.S. about the Armenian Genocide committed in Turkey, he would be considered bribed by Armenians. And currently those denying the Genocide are considered bribed by Turks. The probability of adoption of Resolution N 106 on recognition of Armenian Genocide in Congress grows more and more, and next year fighting its adoption should be Turkey's primary task.

According to R. Safrastian, the current Turkish authorities consider themselves Ottoman Turkey's descendants, therefore they fail to get rid of the policy of denying the Armenian Genocide. As to the participants of the signature collection on the website I Apologize, they are Turkish intellectuals making a small part of society.

Expressing readiness to establish relations with Turkey without preconditions, Armenia showed a europeanized approach, which in R. Safrastian's opinion, is a very positive step. Armenia's "football diplomacy" was the continuation of that approach, to which Turkey responded to some extent.

In R. Safrastian's opinion, putting forward the idea of "Caucasian platform" by Turkey was its attempt to oppose to strengthening of Russia's positions in the South Caucasus. After the August events the geopolitical situation in the region changed in favor of Russia, which dislocated its forces in Georgia's formal territories. By putting forward the idea of "Caucasian platform," Turkey tried to show an initiative in the political sphere. And Russia welcomed that initiative after Turkey renounced its initial plan to involve the U.S.

For Turkey, it was very important how the South Caucasian countries will treat its initiative. Georgia abstained because of Russia and increased Armenia's role by doing so. According to the Turkologist, for the first time in history Armenia received a serious diplomatic value for Turkey, and an exclusive situation was formed, from which Armenia should be able to derive benefit.

R. Safrastian said that Turkey's activity in the Nagorno Karabakh issue was also due to Russia's factor, which strengthening its geopolitical positions, decided to show political activity by initiating signing of Mairdorf Declaration. According to the Turkologist, Turkey will hardly believe that Armenia will ever agree to Turkey's being a mediator in the Nagorno Karabakh settlement.

According to R. Safrastian, Russia-Turkey possible rapprochement is much spoken about in the past 2-3 years. However indeed it is of purely economic nature. These two countries' geopolitical visions in the Caucasian region are mutually exclusive: both Turkey and Russia wish to involve the South Caucasus in the sphere of their influence. Therefore these countries' political rapprochement at the state level is improbable, and no real danger threatens Armenia in that respect.

13. EDUARD SHARMAZANOV: IT IS NO USE SPEAKING ABOUT AMNESTY UNTIL TRIAL ON "CASE OF SEVEN" FINISHES [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/23/08]

PACE Monitoring Committee's proposal to deprive Armenia's delegation of the vote, naturally, is not favorable, but such proposals often fail to be fulfilled in PACE. Eduard Sharmazanov, the Spokesperson of the Republican Party of Armenia, expressed such an opinion at the December 22 press conference. According to him, the prospect that Armenia will be finally deprived of the vote is very vague. "If European structures indeed wish to assist us in building democracy, they should not use sanctions," E. Sharmazanov said.

Touching upon the issue of releasing the political prisoners, the RPA Spokesperson said that it is no use speaking about amnesty until the trial on the "case of the seven" finishes. "It is a fact that there are problems regarding human rights and democracy in Armenia, but problems emerge in any state after an attempt of a coup," E. Sharmazanov stated. He reminded President Serzh Sargsyan's words that there should not be people persecuted for their political views in Armenia. Meanwhile E. Sharmazanov stated that if the activists imprisoned on the March 1 case are released at present, the authorities cannot have guarantees that the defeated side will not try to achieve a result by inciting clashes in the next elections. Commenting upon RPA Vice-Chairman Galust Sahakian's statement that if Europe pushes away Armenia, the Armenians will start to cooperate with "Muslim structures," E. Sharmazanov said that it is a private opinion. According to him, RPA's official position is that Armenia should continue its European integration way.



14. ENTRANCE TO COURT PROHIBITED TO MAJORITY OF DEFENDANTS' RELATIVES AT OPEN-DOOR COURT SITTING ON "CASE OF SEVEN" [Haykakan Zhamanak, 12/23/08]

Over thirty policemen and sixty police special forces in red berets some hours before the start of the December 23 court sitting on the "case of the seven" had surrounded the building of Shengavit general jurisdiction court. At the fixed court sitting hour hundreds of opposition activists and defendants' relatives had gathered in the court yard and tried to enter the building. However the policemen prohibited them even to come up to the court stating that the court hall is already crowded. The sister of one of the defendants, former Foreign Minister Alexander Arzumanyan said in her interview to journalists that nearly 90% people sitting in the hall are policemen or national security representatives in civil clothes. While, according to her, defendants' relatives are not permitted to be present at the sitting announced open-door in advance.

After an argument between the policemen and those gathered lasting nearly half an hour RA Ombudsman Armen Haroutiunian left the court building, and with his mediation the policemen permitted some relatives of defendants to enter the court building.

Those gathered waited in the court yard until the sitting finished. They were constantly voicing "Struggle, struggle till the end!," "Freedom to political prisoners!," "Release our heroes." When the defendants were brought out from the court back entrance by cars the demonstrators greeted and saw them off with applause.

15. HOVHANNES HOVHANNISIAN: YEAR 2008 WILL BE WRITTEN IN ARMENIA'S HISTORY AS A BLACK YEAR [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/23/08]

Hard and tragic events happened in 2008, and year 2008 will be written as a black year in Armenia's history. Hovhannes Hovhannisian, the leader of the Liberal Progressive Party of Armenia, stated at the December 23 press conference dedicated to summing up the 2008 political year.

According to him, 2008 started with a great people's awakening, which however finished with the March 1 and 2 terrible slaughter. "It was an unprecedented crime against their own people. As far as I know, no country member of Council of Europe has experienced such events," H. Hovhannisian stated. He said that a new political category, political prisoners, appeared in Armenia after the March 1 events, which make Armenia similar with Chile in the 70-s. Meanwhile, according to him, all efforts of the authorities aimed at exterminating people's struggle were in vain: the Armenian National Congress uniting 16 political parties, dozens of NGOs, thousands of people became really a mighty political institution, which will be a serious guarantee for establishment of democracy.

16. TRIAL ON "CASE OF SEVEN" POSTPONED WITH MOTIVATION OF DEFENDANTS' TREATING COURT WITH DISREGARD [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/23/08]

The trial on the "case of the seven" that was to continue on December 23 at Yerevan Shengavit community court was again postponed without being resumed.

Judge Mnatsakan Martirosian presiding over at the sitting explained the fact that the court sitting started 40 minutes late saying that one of the defendants, Grigor Voskerchian had health problems. As G. Voskerchian's lawyer Stepan Voskanian told journalists afterwards, the defendant had been beaten in the prison cell. According to the lawyer, in the morning the same day 4 employees of the special detachment of the criminal punishments execution department entered the prison cell of Nubarashen penitentiary institution where G. Voskerchian is kept. All prisoners except G. Voskerchian were brought out on the pretext of examining the cell. The special detachment head learning from the latter that he is accused on the "case of the seven" beat him hitting him for several times in the face and ear. The defendant suffering from beating demanded undergoing medical examination.

Before the court sitting started the defendants tried to make a statement on the incident, but the judge, who had publicized provisions of the law on manners during the court sitting before, announced thirty minutes' break for defendants' shouting from their seats and hindering the trial. However the sitting did not take place in thirty minutes, either. For not meeting the court standing up and therefore treating it with disregard judge M. Martirosian sent the defendants away from the hall postponing the court sitting until December 27. He said that these 4 days will not be included in the defendants' imprisonment term, and that decision is not subject to appeal.

Before the sitting the most part of defendants' relatives were sent away from the court hall with the motivation of lack of vacant seats. The men taking those seats in advance behaved aggressively and refused to introduce themselves saying that they are the aggrieved, while special seats were intended for



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the aggrieved at the court. Journalists being at the court recognized employees of Kentron Police station among those "aggrieved."

Mass media representatives were also sent away from the hall. A room had been intended for them on the second floor with the motivation of creating more favorable conditions for their work, where they had a possibility to follow the trial on TV. The journalists were also prohibited to even conduct interviews outside the hall.

After the sitting break the defendants' lawyers stated that the incidents in the court hall are a regular provocation organized by the authorities, the executor of which was judge M. Martirosian.

According to lawyer Hovik Arsenian, the authorities have ordered him to drag out the start of the trial as far as possible, as all accusations on the "case of the seven" will be refuted. Besides, by postponing the sitting the judge did not permit to make a statement on violence against G. Voskerchian. According to the latter's lawyer, a crime has been committed, about which the RA Prosecutor General will be informed the same day.

17. DEFENDANT ON "CASE OF SEVEN," NA DEPUTY HAKOB HAKOBIAN MOVED FROM HOSPITAL TO KENTRON PENITENTIARY INSTITUTION [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/23/08]

On December 23, defendant on the "case of the seven," NA deputy Hakob Hakobian was moved from convicts' hospital, where he stayed due to health problems, to Yerevan's Kentron penitentiary institution. According to Melania Arustamian, H. Hakobian's lawyer, it is not known, on the basis of which the decision to move him to the penitentiary institution was made.

18. ARMENIAN PRESIDENT SERZH SARGSYAN MEETS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ARMEN HARUTYUNIAN [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 12/24/08]

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan met today with the Human Rights Defender Armen Harutyunian. Presidential press service told Armenpress that during the meeting the sides discussed a number of issues on general situation over the human rights and freedoms in the republic.

As a result of the meeting the president of the country assigned the Armenian Justice Minister and aide to the Armenian president on legal issues to conduct service examination over the recent alarms about usage of force in the prisons of the republic.

The human rights defender expressed readiness to participate in the conduction of the service examination.

19. ARMENIAN PRESIDENT CALLS SESSION OF SECURITY COUNCIL [ARMENPRESS, 12/24/08]

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan called today session of the Security Council during which the results and the agreements reached during the non-official summit of the heads of the CSTO countries held December 19 in Kazakhstan were discussed.

Presidential press service told Armenpress that the president assigned the heads of ministries and establishments in the pre-contest of the arrangements reached in Kazakhstan to carefully study and present expertise conclusions, point out the activities stemming from them and priorities. Among the arrangements reached in Kazakhstan is the establishment of a special fund with 10 billion USD capital for joint confrontation of the impact of the world economic crisis on the economies of the member countries.

20. NA SPEAKER GETS ACQUAINTED WITH THE ISSUES OF YEREVAN "ZATIK" CHILDREN'S HOUSE [ARMENPRESS, 12/24/08]

Accompanied with the Armenian Labor and Social Affairs Minister Arsen Hambartsumian the Speaker of Armenian parliament Hovik Abrahamian visited today the Yerevan "Zatik" children's house.

Walking round and getting acquainted with the issues of the children's house H. Abrahamian noted that 10% of the 118 million drams' budget of the children's house will be additionally provided to the establishment.

"Children are our future and we must take care of them and ensure good conditions for them. Seeing the children and talking to them I understood that they are happy and live in reconciliation and peace", the NA speaker said.

Nearly 80 children live in the children's house who are either parentless or their parents are imprisoned, homeless or have psychological problems.



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According to the head of the "Zatik" children's house Ashot Mnatsakanian by the time the number of children reduces. "After the Artsakh war and the earthquake great number of children appeared outside, the wave fades because our country develops, the situation changes and new social programs function", A. Mnatsakanian said.

There are many people who want to adopt children but, according to A. Mnatsakanian, as children in "Zatik" are above 8 years old few people want to adopt them. This year 3 children of "Zatik" children's house have been adopted: the adopting families are not only from Armenia and Karabakh but also from abroad.

According to Armenian Labor and Social Affairs Minister Arsen Hambartsumian, as a result of the policy which is being implemented during the last two years, particularly due to the implementation of the system of careful family, the number of children in children's houses reduced in the republic for the first time.

As to the budgets of the children's houses, according to the minister, each year they try to ensure more financing: in 2009 the salary of workers will be raised by 20%, additional means will also be provided, which will reach 20% of the sum intended for the food.

"We have an issue to ensure the standards which exist in European countries. In this respect we will have a rather serious progress in 2009. We also try to solve the aroused issues through cooperation with different organizations", A. Hambartsumian said

According to him, the works would not be efficient if there was not the army of devoted people which work in the children's houses.

21. OSCE NEW CHAIRMAN EXPECTS PROGRESS IN KARABAKH CONFLICT REGULATION NEXT YEAR [ARMENPRESS, 12/24/08]

OSCE expects progress in Karabakh conflict regulation next year.

"We hope to see progress in that direction in 2009", new OSCE chairman, Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis told "Trend".

Greek chairmanship in OSCE starts from January 1.

Bakoyannis noted that she considers the frequent meetings of representatives of Greece, Azerbaijan and Armenia a positive step in the establishment of mutual confidence, which is necessary for the conflict regulation.

"Greece supports these efforts and urges the two sides to constructive cooperation", she said.

BUSINESS

22. ACCORDING TO YEREVAN MAYOR, 2008 TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITAL CITY [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/23/08]

The year 2008 will have a significant impact on development of Yerevan due to Armenia's economic development and large-scale urban development programs being implemented in the capital city, mayor of Yerevan Yervand Zakharian stated at the December 22 press conference.

According to him, this year the mayor's office has done work of 168.5 bln drams (about 561.6 mln USD), with work of 115 bln drams being done with state budgetary resources and work of 53 bln drams - with community budgets' resources and private investments.

Work done in construction, improvement and munisipal economy of Yerevan amounted to 17 bln 94.7 mln drams this year. In particular, ten 3rd-degree accident-prone apartment buildings were reinforced, and two apartment buildings were built and put into operation for residents of 4th-degree accident-prone buildings. In the words of the mayor, in this way the problem of moving the residents of 4th-degree accident-prone buildings to new buildings was solved. He added that in 2009-2010 the problem of moving residents of 4th-degree accident-prone dormitories to new buildings will also be solved.

The mayor stated that this year the construction of Saralanj highway and the transport node at the intersection of Heratsi, Koryun, Nalbandian and Charents Streets finished. Y. Zakharian announced that the road section from Nork-Marash district to Sari Tagh district will be put into operation soon. Besides, street sections of 340 thousand square meters were covered with asphalt, and work on outdoor lighting of 17 streets was done.

Speaking about the urban development zones, Y. Zakharian announced that urban development work has begun in Kond and 33rd districts. An area of about 3 ha was already demolished in Kond, while construction of the first building for residents will start in January 2009.



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23. ARMENIAN MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTS 2008 PROGRAM [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/23/08]

The RA ministry of energy and natural resources effectively implemented the 2008 program, the minister Armen Movsisian stated at the December 22 press conference to summarize 2008's results. In his words, the energy system of Armenia is well-prepared for 2008-2009 winter and the system will have no problems during its activity in that period.

As regards the programs implemented in 2008, the minister said that they succeeded in connecting Kajaran-Ararat section of Iran-Armenia gas pipeline to the country's distribution system six months earlier than it was planned. Besides, the construction of the platform of Yerevan Thermal Power Plant's steam-and-gas unit with a capacity of 275 megawatts is being done according to the schedule.

The tests of the gas turbine to be installed was started by Alstom company (Germany), and Armenian experts will also take part in the tests. It is envisaged transporting the gas turbine to Armenia in mid 2009, and after assembly work in June-July, it will be connected to the Armenian energy system in 2010.

Speaking about work of the Russian-Armenian company founded in 2008 for geological survey of uranium mines, mining and processing in Armenia, the minister said that the company began conducting geological physical and geological chemical survey, and drilling operations will start in 2009 which will allow to receive full information on uranium resources in Armenia by late 2009. The minister did not rule out that Armenian nuclear fuel will be used in the new power unit of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant. It was mentioned that the feasibility study of the new unit's construction has been completed, and a tender for a company to manage the construction will be held soon, with its results to be announced in late February 2009.

A. Movsisian informed those present that at the recent sitting of the Armenian-Iranian intergovernmental commission held in Tehran, an agreement was reached to build a pipeline 250 mm in diameter for transporting processed oil products in the Tabriz-Yeraskh direction. According to the minister, an Armenian-Iranian joint venture with equal shares will be created for implementing this 200-240 million dollar project in two years. Construction work will begin in the spring of 2009. The current platforms of Iran-Armenia gas pipeline will be used by 60-70% during the construction of the above mentioned pipeline. The minister also announced that an investment program on a capacity growth was launched at the Tabriz processing plant. A project to build an oil refinery in Yeraskh is also on the agenda.

24. ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK TO PROVIDE ONE MILLION DOLLAR GRANT TO ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/23/08]

The RA minister of economy Nerses Yeritsian and the RA minister of transport and communication Gurgen Sargsyan on behalf of the Armenian government signed with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) an agreement on provision of technical assistance for preparation of the North-South Motorway Construction Program, by which the ADB will provide a grant of 1 million USD from the Technical Assistance Special Fund to the Armenian government.

The program on technical assistance included the Armenian side's proposal to take into consideration the opportunity of simultaneous construction of a railway and a motorway in the southern section of the North-South road corridor, while developing a ten-year action plan within the framework of the indicated program.

DIASPORA

25. AN EVENT ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF DECISION ON RECOGNITION OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE BY THE MERCOSUR PARLIAMENT ORGANIZED IN MONTEVIDEO [ARMENPRESS, 12/23/08]

With the initiative of the chairmanship of Mercosur parliament and the Armenian national committee of Uruguay on December 18 in the building of Mercosur parliament in Montevideo an event dedicated to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Mercosur parliament November 19, 2007 took place.

Press service of Armenian Foreign Ministry told Armenpress that member of Armenian Revolutionary Federation Bureau M. Nalbandian (Argentina), head of the Mercosur parliament Dr. Rosinia (Brazil) and the Armenian ambassador V. Karmirshalian delivered speeches in front of the



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participants of the event which included MPs of Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Paraguay who are represented in the parliament, members of Uruguay government, ambassadors of Russia, Greece, Iran, Argentina and Lebanon credentialed in Montevideo, other members of diplomatic corps and representatives of Uruguay-Armenian community.

The speakers stressed the importance of the fact of recognition of the Armenian genocide by this South American organization and urged the governments and parliaments of all those countries which have not condemned the crime against the Armenian nation and the humanity to follow the example of Mercosur.

Armenian ambassador V. Karmirshalian noted that more than 150,000 Armenians live in the Latin America, particularly in the Mercosur member countries the fathers and grandfathers escaped from the Genocide and in 1920s found shelter in these far away coasts.

Reminding the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's address on the 60th anniversary of UN Genocide convention, the Armenian ambassador also urged to do the best so that new generations never be exposed to pursuits because of their belonging to race, national, ethnic or religious groups.

Referring to Armenian-Turkish relations at the end of his speech, the ambassador V. Karmirshalian expressed hope that the process of regulation of bilateral relations initiated by the Armenian President Serzh Sargsian will bring to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and to opening of borders.

After the event a face-to-face talk between the chairman of Mercosur parliament Rosinia and V. Karmirshalian took place, during which the opportunities of exchange of delegations between Mercosur and Armenian parliaments during 2009 have also been discussed.

RELIGION

26. NERKIN GETASHEN'S SAINT STEPHAN TEMPLE CONSECRATED [ARMENPRESS, 12/23/08]

The newly built Saint Stephan temple of Nerkin Getashen village of Gegharkunik province has been consecrated December 21 by the primate of Gegharkunik Diocese bishop Marcos Hovhannisian.

The temple which is in the territory of historical Kotatown, 100 meters to the south of Kotavank has been built on the ruins of the old temple. The sponsors of the construction are sons of a resident of Nerkin Getashen village Usubek Aveyan – Davit and Sasoun.

A cross-stone of 14th century at the entrance of the temple has been preserved, which testifies that the place was considered a holly place from the early times. Cross-stones of ancient times have also been placed on the walls of the temple.

"After the researches we couldn't find out the old and exact name of the temple therefore we decided to name it St. Stephan connected with the upcoming holiday of St. Stephan", bishop Marcos Hovhannisian said.

A ceremony of christening took place after the consecration of the temple.

SOCIAL

27. "ARMENIAN ELECTRIC NETWORK" COMPANY SUMS UP ITS ACTIVITY FOR 2008 [ARMENPRESS, 12/23/08]

The investments reaching 40 million USD made by "Armenia's Electric Network" this year were spent more effectively than in 2007. They also exceeded the number of last year's investments.

General director of the company Yevgeni Gladunchik said today presenting the activity of the company for the 2008 that this year the company adopted new approaches of implementation of expenditures. The invested money was mainly directed towards modernization of power plants and replacing the electric wires with more powerful ones.

This year the company also made staff changes: the specialists of the company passed training classes, the professional staff has been fulfilled with young people. Gladunchik also said that they are cooperating with a French organization for creating an educational center of preparation of electricity bearers in Armenia.

As to the impact of economic crisis on the company, the director said that it was so that the company refused the implementation of several private programs. Gladunchik said that the number of the implemented programs will be reviewed.

As to the increase of electricity tariffs in 2009, Gladunchik avoided to give an answer, but noted that for Armenia's consumers as low tariffs have been established as possible.



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28. 61 BOILING HOUSES EXPLOITED IN YEREVAN SCHOOLS THIS YEAR [ARMENPRESS, 12/23/08]

About 61 heating houses have been exploited in Yerevan schools this year. Mayor of Yerevan Yervand Zakharin told today journalists that 156 of 202 educational establishments affiliated to the municipality have been ensured with local heating system. The heating issues of other schools are intended to be solved in 2009-2010. During the mentioned period the heating works of pre-school establishments are also planned to be finished.

During this year extended school building works have also been conducted. Within the frameworks of programs of the town importance 515 million drams have been provided for renovation of 8 schools. 54 of the Yerevan schools have been reconstructed on the order of Armenian Urban Ministry. 11 schools have been reconstructed by the program of Armenian social investments and means provided by the "Lincy" Foundation. At the same time school furniture of 333 million drams have been provided to all Yerevan schools on the occasion of passing to the 12- year educational system.

29. IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS WINTER HOLIDAYS TO START FROM DECEMBER 25 [ARMENPRESS, 12/23/08]

This year in secondary schools of the country the winter holidays will start from December 25 and last till January 7. First and second grade pupils will enjoy holidays till January 21.

An official from public relations department of Armenian Education and Science Ministry told Armenpress that as compared with 2007, this year the winter holidays are short as the pupils already had autumn holidays from October 27-November 2.

Spring holidays are set from March 23-29, and for first grade pupils it will be prolonged for another week.

30. 71 DRIVING SCHOOLS LICENSED BY THE EDUCATION AND SCIENCE MINISTRY FROM 2007 BY NOW [ARMENPRESS, 12/23/08]

From August 2007 by now 71 driving schools have been licensed by the Armenian Education and Science Ministry of which 23 got licenses this year.

Head of the analytical and information department of "Licensing and Accrediting Service" of Armenian Education and Science Ministry Varuzhan Khachatryan told Armenpress that the Armenian Transport and Communication Ministry conducts technical studies in the driving schools and the Education and Science Ministry checks the teaching methodology.

Based on the conclusions, the Armenian Education and Science Ministry is providing license. As a result of checking there were cases when applications of driving schools were rejected because of absence of necessary conditions (technical base, existence of auditoriums, pedagogues, teaching methodology programs).

"This does not mean they will not be given an opportunity to get license again. These driving schools may again apply after ensuring the necessary conditions", V. Khachatryan noted. According to him, also those driving schools can apply which rent the school buildings.

During this year 5 driving schools which were rejected formerly have been licensed.

31. THIS YEAR 1,309 PEOPLE GOT ARMENIAN CITIZENSHIP [Hayastani Hanrapetutian, 12/24/08]

In 2008, 1,309 people got Armenian citizenship including 60 people who had no citizenship and 1,249 people got dual citizenship after registration of the point in the Armenian law "On the Armenian Citizenship".

Head of the passport and visa department of Armenian police lieutenant colonel Norayr Muradkhanian told today journalists that during the last 11 years only 1,735 people got Armenian citizenship. Since 2001, 4,077 applications for getting Armenian citizenship have been got. During 2008, 312 cases of suspending of Armenian citizenship have been registered.

N. Muradkhanian informed that this year 30 Iranian and 31 Iraqi citizens got Armenian citizenship. According to the head of the department, due to the simplification of the order of getting citizenship and reforms the process of getting citizenship will last 3-6 months instead of intended 1 year.

"People who are in other countries and want to get Armenian citizenship, man apply to Armenian consulates and diplomatic representations abroad, which will pass the data to the Armenian Foreign



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Ministry and the citizens will not have to come to Armenia for that. The examination for the citizenship is taken at the place”, N. Muradkhanian noted.

32. THE 2008-2015 STRATEGIC PROGRAM OF REFORMS IN THE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM BEING IMPLEMENTED [ARMENPRESS, 12/24/08]

There is much to be done in the pre-school education sphere of the country as the system needs reforms. Summing up the year of 2008, the Armenian Education and Science Minister Spartak Seyranian told today journalists that the issue mainly concerns the quality and involvement which demand extended and serious works.

According to him, one of the achievements of the sphere is “The 2008-2015 strategic program of reforms of Armenian pre-school education” of Armenian government which is directed towards providing the availability and quality of pre-school education.

Great attention was paid particularly to the involvement of children of insecure families in the establishments. The minister informed that based on this program an experimental program has kicked off in 22 establishments of Lori and Shirak provinces in which at present 540 children are involved. The three-month program of pre-school education has also been conducted in 8 institutions of Syunik province with involvement of 200 children.

For the implementation of reforms in pre-school institutions the local authorities have also supported to the Education and Science Ministry as, according to the Minister, here there is not only a teaching and education but also a social constitutive.

“Next year we intend to provide means for the reforms of the pre-school education system not only from the state budget but also to involve other interested organizations with an aim to solve the most urgent issues of the sphere with united and collaborative means”, the Education and Science Minister added.

33. ARMENIA PROBABLY TO HAVE A DIRECT AIR CONNECTION WITH CHINA IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2009 [Aravot, 12/24/08]

In the first half of 2009 Armenian probably will have a direct air connection with China.

Armenian ambassador to China Armen Sargsian told Armenpress that a Chinese private organization works in the direction of opening Yerevan-Urumchi flight.

The head of the organization visited Armenia this year and held negotiations with the Armenian Chief Civil Aviation Department as well as the authorities of the national carrier “Armavia” company.

The ambassador informed that the representative of the organization intends to arrive in Armenia at the beginning of the next year to discuss the details of the implementation of the flight.

At present the mutual bilateral visits are conducted through Yerevan-Moscow, Moscow-Beijing transit line while the Yerevan-Urumchi direct flight will significantly shorten the way, make the transportation cheaper and mutually beneficial.

Urumchi is town in the north-western part of China.

34. “SHIRAK EXPO 2008” ANNUAL EXHIBITION-SALE HELD IN GYUMRI [ARMENPRESS, 12/24/08]

With the initiative of “Shirak Competition Center” fund the “Shirak Expo 2008” fifth annual exhibition-sale was organized December 23 in Gyumri “Aragats” sport-culture complex with the participation of more than 30 enterprises and services from the province as well as from the capital.

Enterprises of the sphere of chemistry, food industry, IT, stone industry, honey production as well as arts figures for whom an opportunity was created to sell their works, took part in “Shirak Expo 2008”. The “Shirak Expo 2008” was also an opportunity for the businessmen of the province to once more advertise their product.

A member of Armenian parliament Sukias Avetisian, who was also present at the exhibition told Armenpress that such exhibitions first of all contribute to the establishment of business relations and acquiring of new partners.

“There is also an issue of supply and demand in the Shirak province. Very often the Shirak residents do not know that a product was produced in their province. Unfortunately many businessmen, unconscious of the importance of such events and not having culture of introduction of their programs and product, do not consider it necessary to take part in such events which is against their own interests. Here I see real competitive products”, S. Avetisian noted.



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Head of the Shirak "Competition Center" fund Gayane Avakian informed that not only this but all the passed four exhibitions fulfilled their mission: the businessmen found partners and markets.

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