



TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. CONTROL SERVICE OF RA PRESIDENT SENDS 630 APPLICATIONS TO PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

The RA President's Control Service sent 630 applications on initiation of proceedings to the Prosecutor's Office in the second half of 2008, the head of the service Hovhannes Hovsepien said at the December 25 press conference.

According to him, during that period the RA Nature Protection Ministry's study of the activities related to the operation of 19 nonmetal mines near Yerevan revealed violations in 15 mines. First of all, these mines were passed from the state to the private sector without acceptance, which makes the registration of mining volumes impossible. Basalt, clay and gypsum mines are illegally operated near Yerevan. H. Hovsepien said that those operating 15 out of the 19 mines indicated only 30% of extracted volumes in their reports submitted to tax bodies. The 40 ha occupied by 19 mines were leased by the state without a lease agreement. The damage done to the state because of violations committed by the indicated 15 economic entities amounted to 242 million drams (about 785 thousand USD).

H. Hovsepien added that following the October 8 consultation on issues of mines' operation with the participation of Armenian president, an interdepartmental commission was set up to examine this sector. Damage of a total of 626 million drams was revealed as a result of checks of 36 entities operating mines.

The Control Service examined the correspondence of the leasing of land plots in Sevan National Park to the legislation. It came to light that out of the lease agreements signed with 983 natural and juridical persons, the agreements with 472 persons did not have state registration, as a result of which the unpaid lease payments amounted to 30 million drams. Besides, construction work by "false permission" was done in the park.

In the words of H. Hovsepien, checks in the system of the State Committee of Cadastre revealed that the damage to the state due to privatization of lands at a lower value than it was envisaged amounted to 300 million drams. Damage due to registration of lands in a lower zone during the settlements' zoning process made one billion drams.

Numerous cases of illegal construction were prevented, and over 10 structures were dismantled as a result of examination of activities of Yerevan mayor's office. H. Hovsepien announced that "some heads of the cadastre, top executives of the mayor's office, head masters of schools were dismissed", and the dismissal process "reached the level of a deputy minister". The work of some departments was also checked.

H. Hovsepien said that the number of application-complaints that the Control Service received from citizens in the second half of 2008 exceeded the respective index of last year by 250%. In the past seven months about 10,000 applications were received, 25% of which were related to work of Yerevan mayor's office, 17% to the court and legal system, and 16% to the social system. 37.1% of applications got a positive solution. Besides, in the second half of 2008 the Control Service organized reception of 4,800 citizens. Its studies are based on mass media publications and programs.

2. SERZH SARGSYAN: WE ARE APPROACHING THE END OF REFORMS IN DEFENCE SPHERE [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

The December 25 sitting of the RA government was conducted until the break by Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan. The sitting started with discussion of the draft decision on approval of the regulations and structures of the RA Defence Ministry, the General Staff of Armed Forces, the Ministry's Logistical Support Department and Investigation Service, and on creation of the Staff of Defence Ministry state administrative institution, the Logistical Support Department and the Investigation Service of the Defence Ministry. The draft decision was presented by the defence minister. The decision was adopted, with all proposals being taken into account.

In connection with the indicated decision, S. Sargsyan stated that "thus, in fact, we are approaching the end of reforms in the defence sphere".

During the break, the president wished the government members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



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Following the break, the sitting was conducted by prime minister Tigran Sargsyan.

According to the RA Government Information and PR Department, the government approved the bill on construction of a new nuclear power unit(s) in Armenia, which will be submitted to the National Assembly in envisaged order. The bill was developed based on provisions of the RA Law on Safe Use of Atomic Energy for Peaceful Purposes and the RA government's Decision No 1296 of November 1, 2007, on Approval of the Activity Program of the RA Ministry of Energy Envisaged by Provisions of the RA National Security Strategy.

By another decision, the government approved the tender package for selection of a company to manage the implementation of the program on construction of the new power unit of the nuclear plant. The composition of the interdepartmental tender commission was also approved.

The minister of energy and natural resources was instructed to make an official statement on holding an international tender within 15 days after publishing the announcement about the tender in the official gazette on procurement. The minister of finance received instructions to allocate the necessary financial resources from reserve funds of the 2009 state budget.

3. CHARLES AZNAVOUR GRANTED CITIZENSHIP OF REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

On December 25, RA President Serzh Sargsyan signed a decree on granting citizenship of Republic of Armenia to great singer, public figure, Republic of Armenia National Hero Charles Aznavour and his impresario, Movses Khorenatsi medal-winner Levon Sayan. Noyan Tapan was informed about it by the RA President's Press Office.

4. ACCORDING TO GALUST SAHAKIAN, COUNCIL OF EUROPE SHOULD NOT BE SO NOT SERIOUS TO TRY TO PUSH BACK ARMENIA FROM EUROPEAN VALUES [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

"As fate has willed it, the sword of Damocles constantly hangs above Armenia. However no one can stop the course we have adopted," Galust Sahakian, the Vice-Chairman of the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA), stated at the December 26 press conference touching upon the prospect of depriving the Armenian delegation of the vote in PACE. According to the RPA figure, the Armenian people being slaughtered by Muslim world representatives has renounced their values and chosen the European development way. Now, according to G. Sahakian, the Council of Europe should not be so not serious to push Armenia back from the European world and to impel it to the Muslim one.

G. Sahakian added that some forces in the home political sphere, which many years ago were for brotherly relations with Azerbaijan, now "exert pressure" on European structures and do their best for sanctions to be used towards Armenia. G. Sahakian did not render it more clear which those forces are, but said that he does not consider them a normal opposition. According to his observation, today in the political sphere there is no proper opposition to conduct a dialogue and to cooperate with.

"Certainly, it would be pleasant if only good words were said for us at all international structures, but it should not damage our national security," G. Sahakian said. He added that he considers those imprisoned on the March 1 case his friends and would like "a message on releasing them to be issued just tomorrow." However, according to RPA Vice-Chairman's observation, that issue should be solved on the legal plane, otherwise their release can endanger the country.

5. MATTHEW BRYZA: CITIZENS NEED TO BE PREPARED FOR DIFFICULT COMPROMISES [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

Matthew Bryza, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State has answered to the questions of Noyan Tapan.

NT - What was the reaction of Armenia and Azerbaijan to the call of the Minsk group Co-Chairs (in Helsinki in early December) about an early agreement on the settlement principles? Can a timeline for that purpose (at least an approximate one) be determined for reaching that goal?

MB - Armenia's and Azerbaijan's leaders have expressed their desire to finalize the Basic Principles, but have also recognized they still have much work ahead of them. The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs have suggested mid-2009 as our target date for finalizing the Basic Principles and then launching intensified negotiations on a formal peace agreement.

NT - What was the reaction of the two countries to the call of the Co-Chairs to remove the snipers from the front lines? Will the co-chairs make further efforts to that end?



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MB - The leaders of the two countries expressed their understanding of the importance of ending sniper incidents, which needlessly take the lives of soldiers and civilians and raise tension to potentially dangerous levels. The Co-Chairs will keep pressing for a pullback of the snipers, as well as other important confidence-building measures.

NT - What was the reaction of the two countries to the call on applying other confidence-building measures? Have the co-chairs suggested any specific measures and any time schedule for their implementation?

MB - Presidents Aliyev and Sargsian called for additional confidence-building measures in the declaration they signed on November 22 in Moscow. The Co-Chairs have been discussing possible measures with the Presidents and Foreign Ministers, including visits to both countries by intellectuals and other civil society leaders. Personally speaking, I believe there might be a possibility to build confidence through architectural and cultural preservation projects.

NT - During the last years, the co-chairs of the Minsk group have shown a good example of cooperation between the three "superpowers." Do you believe (or, maybe, you have some information) that the U.S. policy regarding the Nagorno Karabakh issue will be continued under the new administration?

MB - I cannot guarantee US policy on Nagorno-Karabakh, or any other issue, will remain exactly the same in the new US Administration. But, my best guess is that the strong interest of the US in a just and lasting settlement to preserve peace and strengthen regional stability will endure.

NT - Also, we will be happy to publish any commentary you will see appropriate about the comments and interpretations concerning the Nagorno Karabakh mediation process and its goals. As misquotes and misinterpretations concerning these issues have been frequent in recent months, the public opinion is very sensitive to any event of this type.

MB - I would like to add an appeal to journalists and other civil society leaders to demonstrate the same commitment to a peaceful settlement as guides the work of the countries' leaders and the Minsk Group Co-Chairs. Instead, many people in both countries seem more concerned with creating scandal. Too often, these scandals are artificially manufactured in response to poor translations of statements those who are involved with the actual negotiations. It is time for all leaders of the parties, whether in government or civil society, to commit themselves to helping their fellow citizens prepare for difficult compromises that are required for a just and lasting settlement.

In this context, it is important to understand clearly how the various principles of a settlement relate to each other. Today, the United States, France, and Russia, and all Minsk Group countries all recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. They all also recognize that a peaceful settlement must also incorporate the principles of self-determination and non-use of force.

I appeal to journalists in both countries to pay careful attention to this statement. If any journalist believes one of the Co-Chairs have made a statement that contradicts what is written above, that journalist should check the translation or citation of that Co-Chair, as it is likely incorrect. Please do not mistake a poor translation or a quote that is twisted out of context for a scandalous departure from the Co-Chairs actual positions.

6. FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER: IF ARMENIA IS DEPRIVED OF VOTE IN PACE, CRISIS IN COUNTRY WILL DEEPEN FOR EVEN MORE [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

We have rather a deep crisis and tension after March 1 in Armenia, which not only fails to decrease, but deepens for even more. Vardan Oskanian, the former RA Foreign Minister, the Chairman of the Civiltas Foundation, said at the December 26 presentation of Foundation's first annual report under the title Armenia-2008: Crisis and Possibility. Applying to Armen Rustamian, a representative of the ARFD Armenian Supreme Body, the Chairman of the RA National Assembly Committee on Foreign Relations, he asked whether the ruling coalition realizes the formed situation and undertakes steps. In response A. Rustamian said that, certainly, there are elements of crisis and it was noticeable as early as before March 1, in the process of the RA presidential elections.

V. Oskanian gave assurance that ARFD should have been in the opposition sphere, as today our country lacks ideological opposition. "You would have provided a bigger service by doing so. We should strive for political sphere's rehabilitation, and unless that sphere rehabilitates, we cannot solve any problem," he said.

Touching upon the PACE Monitoring Committee's report, the former Foreign Minister said that if under conditions of economic and home political tension Armenia is deprived of the vote in PACE, the crisis in the country will deepen for even more. "It is unprecedented, as no phenomenon of the kind has taken place in the whole history of Council of Europe so far," V. Oskanian said.



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In the words of Hovhannes Igition, the Executive Director of the EU Chamber of Commerce in Armenia, the Council of Europe demands domestic consolidation from Armenia, as well as disclosure of the March 1 events, political prisoners' release, and A1+ TV company's return on air. According to H. Igition, only 3 days are needed to fulfill the last three conditions.

V. Oskanian, in his turn, said that information sphere's normalization and unbiased character is not only conditioned by A1+ TV company's return on air. "Our TV companies should be told from above to act according to the public demand," he said. Armen Darbinian, the Rector of the Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University, the former Prime Minister, expressed an opinion that by Georgia's example one TV company should be provided to the opposition.

7. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PASSES IN SECOND READING DRAFT LAW ON LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN CITY OF YEREVAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

The RA National Assembly on December 26 passed in second reading the draft law on local self-government in the city of Yerevan and, based on it, the legislative package envisaging amendments to 22 current laws and codes. The draft and the package were adopted with 95 votes in favor and 6 against. The members of "Heritage" faction voted against the package due to the government's rejection of the principled proposals made by the faction, including the proposal on order of mayor's election.

The parliament passed in first reading the government-submitted package of amendments to the Law on Licensing and the Law on State Duty. The package envisages including the technical control of construction quality and the technical examination of buildings and structures in the list of activities subject to licensing. It is proposed that the annual state duty for licensing of the two above-mentioned activities should be fixed at 50 thousand drams (about 160 dollars).

The main speaker, RA minister of urban development Vardan Vardanian said that the government's proposal on these amendments is based on the results of studies done by the State Urban Development Inspection in recent years. In particular, construction work at 1,865 out of 6,084 facilities examined in 2004-2008 was done without technical control of the quality of construction. It was mentioned that technical examination of buildings and structures is a complex engineering process that requires well-qualified personnel and modern equipment, whereas now any organization implementing scientific research and engineering research functions in seismic construction sector is allowed to make such an examination. As a result, in many cases the conclusions of two different organizations about the same building contradict each other.

8. COMMISSION ON COORDINATION OF ARMENIA'S COOPERATION WITH EU HOLDS REGULAR SITTING [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

The regular sitting of the Commission on Coordination of Armenia's Cooperation with the European Union on December 26 was conducted by the commission chairman, prime minister of the RA Tigran Sargsyan. The commission took notice of the presented information about the implementation of Armenia-EU Action Plan under the European Neighborhood Policy and the proposals and measures for 2009, the programs implemented under the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), and the process of reforms in the vocational and specialized secondary education, as well as legal sectors.

The ministries and departments were instructed to submit the list of measures to be taken by them for ensuring the implementation of Armenia-EU Action Plan under the European Neighborhood Policy and their financial assessment by January 15, 2009. They also received instructions to submit the cooperation-related priority measures to be taken by the ministries and departments within the framework of the programs under ENPI by February 1, 2009. These priorities will be presented at the next sitting of the commission on January 17, 2009.

9. COURT SITTING ON "CASE OF SEVEN" POSTPONED AGAIN [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

Having lasted only a few minutes, the court sitting on "the case of the seven" presided over by the judge Mnatsakan Martirosian in the court of general jurisdiction of Yerevan's Shengavit community on December 27 was postponed until January 9, 2009. Based on the fact the 7 accused persons did not rise and thus showed a disrespectful attitude to the judge, the latter made a decision to remove them from the courtroom, postpone the trial for 13 days and "not to include these days in the term of punishment of the accused persons".



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The former foreign minister of Armenia, defendant A. Arzumanyan demanded that he should be addressed as "Mr. Arzumanyan" or "the political prisoner Arzumanyan" because he is not an accused person. The National Assembly deputy, defendant Myasnik Malkhasian demanded that the authorities should make a decision on "the case of the seven" immediately, without delay so as to save the nerves of the trial participants, journalists and the relatives of the defendants.

It is noteworthy that the Armenian National Congress called on the activists and the relatives of the defendants not to enter the courtroom, as a result of which the courtroom was almost empty when the trial began. The journalists were forbidden to enter the courtroom, and they were working in a separate room, following the trial by means of three monitors. Based on the circumstance that the courtroom was half-empty, the journalists tried to persuade the court instructors to allow them to enter there. After an argument, the journalists applied to the RA ombudsman Armen Harutyunian, saying that the monitors' sound and images are of low quality, and they can work properly only in the courtroom. The ombudsman promised to speak immediately with the judge regarding the issues of journalists and the trial's delay.

A few minutes later A. Harutyunian came out of the judge's room, saying that he officially declares that it is inadmissible not to let the journalists in under conditions of a half-empty courtroom. He promised to apply to the court department on this issue. As regards the trial's delay due to the fact that the defendants did not stand up, in the words of A. Harutyunian, "the judge considers himself a procedural person, and he cannot start a sitting in case of a disrespectful attitude to him". During a talk with journalists, the lawyer Hovik Arsenian in his turn said that not to stand up is the right of an accused, and it may not be a reason for delaying a court sitting.

Representatives of the ARF party Artsvik Minasian and Artyusha Shahbazian attended the court sitting. As during the previous sittings, a crowd gathered outside the court, chanting "Freedom to the Heroes!" all the time.

10. THE BILL "ON THE LOCAL SELF GOVERNANCE IN YEREVAN TOWN" ADOPTED [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

With votes 95 for, 6 against, and no restrained the Armenian parliament during its third reading adopted today the bill "On the Local Self Governance Yerevan Town" and the legislative package affiliated to it. The MPs of "Heritage" party voted against the bill. The other bills which were formerly discussed were also adopted.

During the extraordinary session, the MPs discussed the bill on making changes and supplements in the law "On Referendum", which registers that referendum may be held to find out the public opinion on the most important issues concerning the state.

According to the bill, the initiative of such referendum belongs to the Armenian government and the importance of the referendum and the questions of the referendum, which will be held to discover the public opinion on the foreign policy of the country and the issues concerning the military and national security must be formerly discussed with the Armenian president.

The bill which is put under the referendum will be considered adopted if more than the half of the participants of the referendum but not less than the ¼ of the citizens included in the voting lists will vote for it.

The main reporter, Armenian Justice Minister Gevorg Danielian noted that the main suggestions of the MPs were on giving the right of holding referendum to the parliament or the issues of the referendum be agreed with the parliament. But the suggestions were not adopted.

The voting of the bill is planned later.

11. TRIBUTE PAID TO THE VICTIMS OF ARTSAKH WAR [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Armenian high-ranking officials, headed by the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, visited today "Yerablur" pantheon to pay tribute to those who died during the Artsakh war. They put flowers on the tombs of founders of Armenian Republican Party Ashot Navasardian, Commander Vazgen Sargsyan, Commander Andranik Ozanian.

Armenian Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian said that today on the eve of New Year, headed by the leader of the country, they visited Yerablur to express their gratitude to "all those fellows who were killed during the Artsakh war". "Thanks to their devotion and courage we live in peaceful conditions, ensure the development of Armenia. We must remember them. This place -"Yerablur" has become a holy place. Visiting it on the eve of New Year we congratulate the New Year and Christmas of our killed heroes and their families and we remember them as it is our duty," the defense minister said.



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According to him, today soldier of the Armenian army serves in secure conditions. "Our soldiers, divisions, and troops are able to return to battle-worthy condition in short period of time, pass from shift to real defense and in case of necessity confront any encroachments," Ohanian assured.

NA Speaker Hovik Abrahamian, Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan, Chairman of the Armenian Constitutional Court Gagik Harutyunian, Secretary of National Security Council Arthur Baghdasarian, director of National Security Service Gorik Hakobian, Chief of the Police Alik Sargsyan and other officials also paid tribute in Yerablur.

12. KARABAKH PRESIDENT MEETS WITH FACTIONS OF NA [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

President of Nagorno Karabakh Bako Sahakyan conducted December 26 meetings with the factions of the National Assembly.

Central information department of the Karabakh president's office told Armenpress that during the meeting they discussed a wide range of issues on the inner life of the country, social-economic development.

The Karabakh president said he is pleased with the work carried out by the parliament and particularly with the cooperation of executive power and other institutions, as well as with the hearings and international conferences organized by the National Assembly.

B. Sahakyan also noted that process of bringing the parliament on professional bases must gradually start.

13. BAKO SAHAKYAN: "EVERYBODY MUST REALIZE THAT INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY OF NAGORNO KARABAKH ARE NOT MATTER OF SPECULATIONS" [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

"Aggressive and anti-Armenian policy waged by the authorities of Azerbaijani, sharp drastic increases in military spending, frequent violations of the cease-fire regime require us to be more vigilant and purposeful in strengthening defense potential of the country. The issues related to state security, army building, combat readiness of the servicemen represent call of the times for us.

As a supreme commander-in-chief today I can declare with great satisfaction and pride that the Nagorno Karabakh Republic Defense Army is strong and battle-worthy, it is ready to rebuff any encroachment of the enemy," President of Nagorno Karabakh Bako Sahakyan said today at a meeting of the NKR Defense Army's Military Council convoked to sum-up the activities of the army in 2008.

As the best evidence of it the Karabakh president considered the neutralization of the enemy's subversive actions in this March and November by soldiers whose bravery and heroism was valued by the state.

The Karabakh president also considered it symbolic that servicemen representing different generations fought together against the enemy. "This is the embodiment of smooth alternation of generations and a strong commitment to keep good traditions. The very fact that every year the army is remained by servicemen with higher military education, their number, by the way, has already surpassed 1000 people, indicates that special attention is paid to the cadre issue. I have given appropriate instructions to the government for employment assistance to officers demobilized from the armed forces," the Karabakh president said.

According to him, the results of current and general inspections, as well as military maneuvers also show high level of combat readiness and fighting strength. "It is worth mentioning that successful completion of the recent offensive war games has demonstrated that the Defense Army not only effectively protects our borders but if necessary it is able to transfer military operations deep into the territory of an aggressor state and enforce it to accept peace. However, we must keep being watchful not to allow the enemy event think about taking the initiative and dictate his will to us. Everybody must realize that the independence and security of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic are not matter of speculations once and for all," Bako Sahakyan pointed out noting that activities directed to strengthening the borders make efficient patrolling carried out in the positions.

He also informed that he gave instructions and orders concerning army building, the situation along the line of contact, amelioration of social conditions of the servicemen and other related issues during consultations with the supreme command staff of the army. The last such consultation took place December 15. "I was reported that the discussed issues have been brought to the notice of appropriate chains, so I will not touch upon those questions. However, I would like to underline once again the importance of issues related to armaments, logistics, intelligence, aid defense, military discipline. Elaborating effective ways to find solutions to these issues will have a palpable impact on strengthening the country's defense capacity and combat readiness," the Karabakh president noted.



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He considered positive a notable reduction of the enemy's activities along the line of contact, which were the results of proper exercise of intelligence activities and control of the situation. The maintaining proper discipline in military units was also considered important.

"Of course, in military units exercising combat duties along the line of contact in a situation of constant tensions extraordinary cases cannot be excluded. However, necessary steps should be taken to minimize cases of deaths and injuries of servicemen that take place under other circumstances. Special attention should be paid to the issue of carrying out daily duties of the commanders and officers on the basis of utmost responsibility, high discipline and self-conscience, maximal attentiveness towards the subordinate. Any inappropriate causality casts negative impact on the morale and fighting efficiency of the army, on its image and on further strengthening the society-army ties," Bako Sahakyan said.

The Karabakh president stated that the fighting efficiency of the army is directly connected with social conditions of the servicemen and their families. For this very reason the state keeps in the spotlight the progress of work related to these issues. The defender of the Homeland should be as free of everyday necessities of life as possible, so that to carry out his duties adequately. Within this context he considered positive the fact that in 2008 around 130 servicemen were provided with comfortable apartments. This practice will be of a continuing nature.

It was noted that the authorities pay special attention to the needs of the families of the perished, missing-in-action and wounded freedom fighters. Serious work has been carried out to solve their social problems, including those related to housing, life conditions, health and education. "Parallel with this I consider important assistance of the state in full integration of the disable into the society. The program of providing hand operation cars to the first disability group freedom fighters pursues this very purpose. I am confident that this policy will have a positive impact on further strengthening healthy moral and psychological atmosphere both in the armed forces and in the society," Bako Sahakyan said.

14. NA SPEAKER HOVIK ABRAHAMIAN MAKES NEW YEAR CONGRATULATORY ADDRESS [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Speaker of Armenian parliament Hovik Abrahamian addressed a New Year congratulatory message. Press service of the Armenian parliament told Armenpress that the message particularly says:

"Dear compatriots,

at the end of the year usually the activity of the passing year is being summed up and the future work planned. Surely the passing year was a year of trials and achievements.

Throwing a glance back to 2008 we must note that after 2007-2008 elections a time for post-electoral reforms started in Armenia at the end of which we may register that our country made a step forward towards the establishment of democracy and improvement of social-economic situation.

As a speaker of Armenian parliament I wish harmony, tolerance and successes to all our compatriots living in Armenia and outside of it. We live in difficult but interesting times and have all the prerequisites to inherit our generations a more welfare country with more stable and developed economy.

I wish you merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, peace, health and happiness".

15. ISSUES ON REGIONAL SECURITY, KARABAKH CONFLICT REGULATION AND RECOGNITION OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE DISCUSSED WITH LEADERS OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Members of "Prosperous Armenia" party, head of permanent parliamentary commission on Euro integration issues Avet Adonts and the deputy head of the parliamentary commission on Science, education, culture, youth and sport affairs Naira Zohrabian met today with the participants of the first meeting of leaders of Youth organizations – leaders of Armenian, Georgian, Russian and Moldavian Youth organizations.

Public relations department of the Armenian National Assembly told Armenpress that Avet Adonts and Naira Zohrabian stressed the importance of development of relationship and meetings in such a format which will also promote the regional cooperation.

During the meeting issues connected with the regional security and peace, Euro integration of Armenia, Armenian-Turkish relations, regulation of Karabakh issue and recognition of Armenian Genocide have been discussed.



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16. ARMENIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY EXPRESSES ITS CONCERN ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IN THE SECTOR OF GAZA [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Armenian Foreign Ministry expressed its concern about what happens in the sector of Gaza. The statement of the Armenian Foreign Ministry says, "With deep concern we are following what happens in the sector of Gaza as a result of which hundreds of people lost their lives. We express hope that the violence will stop and negotiations will immediately start for peaceful regulation of all the disputable issues."

BUSINESS

17. ARMENIA'S GDP GROWS BY 7.2% IN JANUARY-NOVEMBER 2008 ON SAME PERIOD OF 2007 [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

Armenia's GDP grew by 7.2% in January-November 2008 on the same period of 2007 and made 3 trillion 290 billion 972.1 million drams (over 10 bln 761.8 mln USD). The GDP index-deflator made 110.8%.

According to the RA National Statistical Service, industrial production grew by 2.9% to 693 bln 389.9 mln drams in Armenia in January-November 2008 on the same months of 2007.

Gross agricultural output increased by 0.1% to 585 bln 573.2 mln drams, construction - by 1.6% to 757 bln 806 mln drams, retail trade - by 6.2% to 883 bln 628.7 mln drams, and services grew by 13.3% to 656 bln 714.9 mln drams.

Foreign trade of Armenia grew by 27.6% in January-November 2008 and amounted to 4 bln 992.6 mln USD, with exports growing by 4.5% to 1 bln 7.6 mln USD and imports growing by 39.5% to 3 bln 985 mln USD.

Consumer prices rose by 9.3%, industrial production prices - by 3.5% as compared with January-November 2007.

The number of officially registered unemployed declined by 0.3% in the country in late November 2008 on the same month of last year and made 74.3 thousand.

The average monthly nominal salary made 89,029 drams in the first eleven months of 2008 (18.8% growth on the same period of 2007), including the salary of the budgetary system's employees - 63,197 drams (19.1% growth) and that of employees of the nonbudgetary system - 110,991 drams (18.3% growth). The average exchange rate of a US dollar made 305.8 drams in January-November 2008 (in 2007 this index made 342.08 drams).

18. IN OPINION OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER, ARMENIAN ECONOMY IS ILL TODAY, BUT NOT BEYOND HOPE [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

The Armenian economy is ill today, but not beyond hope as it is not big and can be cured by taking bold and serious steps. Armen Darbinian, former prime minister of Armenia, rector of the Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University, expressed this opinion during the presentation of the Civilitas Foundation's report "Armenia 2008. Crisis and Opportunity" on December 26.

He said that various models of developing the Armenian economy have been worked out since the country's independence. In 1991-1997 it became possible to overcome the "collapse" of the Soviet Union and to replace the inflow of low-quality Iranian goods by domestic products. However, according to A. Darbinian, attempts to enter the foreign market from the domestic one and expand the external economic field have failed. "Unfortunately, we have not done so, as a result of which we will again return to the policy of cheap import in 2009," the former prime minister noted.

In his opinion, in order to take the country's economy out of the crisis, it is necessary to replace the declining imports with domestic production. However, this requires resources, a competition field, as well as justice in the taxation field which is absent in Armenia. "We can stabilize the situation only by ensuring an equal taxation field, otherwise 1993's situation is awaiting us in the domestic production market in 2009," A. Darbinian said.

The chairman of the Civilitas Foundation, former Armenian foreign minister Vartan Oskanian said that although a two-digit economic growth was recorded in Armenia over the past 7 years, today "we are receding", which is conditioned not only by the global financial crisis but also by the incorrect policy of the authorities.



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19. RUSSIA TO CONTINUE SUPPLYING GAS TO ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

Armenia has no problem with receiving gas from Russia, and the gas supply from Russia to Armenia will continue, the director-general and chairman of the Board of ArmRusgazprom CJSC Karen Karapetian stated on December 26.

To recap, the gas pipeline from Russia to Armenia passes through the territory of Georgia, and the gas supply of Armenia will continue, despite the fact that, according to K. Karapetian, Russia now does not supply gas to Georgia.

20. CONVERSE BANK PLANS TO INCREASE CREDITING OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

2008 was a successful year for Converse Bank that has increased the number of its branches in Armenian marzes (provinces) to 25, that of cash machines - to 41 against 29 in early 2008, while its pre-tax profit will amount to about 2.5 billion drams (8.1 mln USD) at the end of 2008, thus exceeding the programmed index, the CEO of Converse Bank Ararat Ghukasian stated at the December 26 press conference.

According to him, the amount of deposits with the bank made nearly 23 bln drams as of November 30 - against 16 bln drams in early 2008. As of the indicated date, the bank's credit investments grew by 36% from early 2008 and made 42 bln drams, with the crediting of small and medium enterprises growing by 17% to 5.4 bln drams, consumer crediting growing by 22% to 7.4 bln drams, mortgage crediting - by more than 80% to 4.5 bln drams, and agricultural crediting growing by 130% to over a billion drams. The credit repayment index is high. Converse Bank has a long-term goal of increasing the crediting of SMEs not only with EBRD's 10 million dollars but also with its own funds. The bank has raised interest rates of its credits by 1-1.5%, but their repayment period has also been increased up to 4 years. Responding to NT correspondent's question, he did not exclude the possibility of crediting Armenian high-tech enterprises by Converse Bank based on evaluation of their nonmaterial assets, in particular, intellectual property. In his opinion, the problem is in the availability of assets-evaluating organizations.

Presenting the results of the first placement of Converse Bank's nominal, medium-term, coupon bonds of 300 million drams, the Deputy CEO Tigran Davtian said that the placement of these bonds with a 3-year redemption period and a 10.64% annual yield was done in 10 days instead of the envisaged period of 30 days. Bonds were acquired by 29 natural and juridical persons. It is envisaged placing the remaining bonds of 1.2 billion drams in 2009.

21. CONVERSE BANK TO OVERCOME DIFFICULTIES EXPECTED IN 2009 [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

The forecasts of experts that the Armenian banks will have difficulties with repayment of credits in the spring of 2009 are conditioned by the possible impact of the global economic crisis on Armenia in the first quarter of next year, the CEO of Converse Bank Ararat Ghukasian said at the December 26 press conference.

In his words, Converse Bank has enough resources so as not to call its operation into question in case of any problems related to repayment of credits.

A. Ghukasian said that so far he sees "no serious precondition for some deterioration in March". He linked the bank's development in 2009 to an increase in the range and volume of its services and an expansion of the network of its branches. "In my opinion, next year will be a difficult one but at the same time, it will be possible to expand, there is much to be done in 2009. We are well disposed," he noted, explaining that the possible difficulties will be related to the impact of the global economic crisis on Armenia but these difficulties will be surmountable.

In response to the question about whether there is an outflow of deposits at Converse Bank, he replied that the amount of deposits with the bank has grown, there has also been an increase of money on the accounts of legal entities, the only change is a decline in the terms of deposits. According to A. Ghukasian, mortgage crediting has not decreased at the bank either. He explained the decline in consumer crediting, in particular, mortgage crediting in the past two-three months by the expectations related to a fall in real estate and commodity prices.



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22. WINNERS OF 3RD ALL-ARMENIAN E-CONTENT COMPETITION ANNOUNCED [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

337 works were submitted for the 3rd All-Armenian e-Content Competition, which was by 30% more than at the previous competition, the Chairman of the Armenian e-Content Association, Executive Director of the IT Foundation of Armenia Garegin Chigasdzian announced at the December 26 press conference. This year's competition was dedicated to the 500th anniversary of Armenian printing.

According to G. Chugasdzian, the top prize winners by 8 categories are: "e-culture" category - the group to have created the website of the NGO studying Armenian architecture; "e-business" category - the group to have created the website of GPS control and security system of mobile objects; "e-inclusion" category - "tert.am" electronic periodical; "e-entertainment" category - "35mm" virtual photoclub; "e-government" category - the group to have created "Tundardz Hayastan" website; "e-learning" - the group to have created the Armenian educational portal; "e-health" category - the group to have created "Law and Health" website; and "e-science" category - the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute. Special awards were given: "e-Armenian language" category - to the group to have created a website with an automatic translator from English to Armenian, and "e-Armenology" category - to "Humanitarian Virtual Community" website.

The Director of IT Park company Gagik Karapetian said that e-content competitions are conducive to the correct use of participants' works in the virtual environment. The Chairman of Bi Line company Hayk Khanjian in his turn stated that thanks to development of e-content, Armenia is better presented to the world via the Internet.

The top prize winners in each category will receive 300 thousand drams (about \$1,000), those in second place will receive 150 thousand drams. The competition fund makes \$12,000.

23. THE BILL "ON THE PAN ARMENIAN BANK" ADOPTED [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Yesterday the parliament adopted the bill "On the All Armenian bank" during its third reading. The all Armenian bank will function as an open stock company the founders of which may be the Armenian Central Bank or Republic of Armenia. Other subjects of civil right may also be founders or shareholder of the bank. The bank will function based on private or state cooperation and will not compete with other banks functioning in the territory of Armenia.

It has been registered that the All Armenian Bank aims at contributing to the formation of powerful, competent and knowledge-based potential of Armenians and direct it to the increase of competitiveness of the whole Armenians in the world market.

The All Armenian Bank will function according to the principles of corporative management which was adopted by the Organization of European Cooperation and Development (OECD).

It has been decided that the bank will get a license of banking activity and implement functions of all types.

The activity of the bank will be coordinated and controlled by the Central Bank, the amount of the bank's capital must be not less than the overall capital of the trade banks functioning in Armenia at present, in its future business programs the bank will present the overall size of the bank's capital – 30 billion drams.

The bank will also have certain tax privileges – particularly must be free of paying income tax and must not pay a state tax for registration and licensing.

Head of the Central Bank Arthur Javadian clarified that the programs which are prior for the Armenian government (health care, tourism, science and education, financial sphere and development of infrastructures) will be under the limelight of the Bank's activity.

The law will enter into force after ten days of its publication. Within ten days after the law comes into force the Armenian government appoints an authorized body for obtainment of the rights of Bank founder and conduction of responsibilities if Armenia becomes a founder of the Bank.



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ARTS

24. NOVELTIES AND SURPRISES EXPECTED IN SPHERE OF ARMENIAN JAZZ IN 2009 [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

The interesting and various jazz events and concert programs continuing for a year were concluded on December 26 by a brief press conference on the results of the Armenian Jazz-70 jubilee events. Armenian Jazz-70 jubilee steering committee's members are convinced that though the jubilee year finishes, interesting novelties and surprises are expected in the sphere of Armenian jazz next year as well.

According to Ruben Jaghinian, the General Producer of Armenian Jazz-70, DVDs of jubilee concerts will be released at the very start of 2009, the work History of Armenian Jazz by Armen Tutunjian will be published, where the birth and history of Armenian jazz will be presented in detail. Besides, two jubilee films dedicated to the 70th anniversary of jazz will be shot, one of which will present jubilee year's events and the other the history of Armenian jazz.

According to R. Jaghinian, next year also Armenian Jazz-70 steering committee will organize interesting concert programs with many surprises. The General Producer is convinced that this jubilee year was interesting not only for Armenians, but also for foreigners, as people, who had never heard about the Armenian people, arrived in Armenia within the framework of the concerts.

Pianist Levon Malkhasian added that though the jubilee year of Armenian jazz finished, "nevertheless the things to be done in the jazz sphere are not finished by that. It should continue developing and achieve new heights with new names and works."

25. WITH "THE GOLDEN ICE OF STRADIVARIUS" COMBINED SHOW Y. PLUSHENKO AND VIOLINIST ED. MARTON TO PERFORM IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Skiing Olympic champion, world's thrice and European fivefold champion Yevgeni Plushenko and Hungarian well known composer, violinist Edwin Marton will today and tomorrow perform "The golden ice of Stradivarius" show in the Sport-concert complex after K. Demirchian.

The musician will play on A. Stradivarius violin, which is made in 1698 in Italy. Under his tunes together with Y. Plushenko Suria Bonali, Naomi Lang and Peter Chernov pair, Ruslan Goncharov and other artists will ski.

During today's press conference violinist Ed. Marton said that he is glad to play in Armenian with such a wonderful performance as he has multiple times heard about this country of an ancient culture and history.

Though this is the first time he is in Armenia he has many Armenian friends all over the world. It is already six years Ed. Marton cooperates with Y. Plushenko as a result of which they have numerous wonderful plays.

Their collaborative activity started after Plushenko became an Olympic champion when they decided to create a performance which will combine the live music and skiing.

"Under my music Plushenko has numerous performances, even when becoming a champion of Olympic games. Here the Yerevan audience will have an opportunity to see a wonderful skiing under live violin music which is a good present for New Year", he said.

After the press conference the musician played a part of "Godfather" film with Stradivarius violin. Presenting the violin he noted that 300 years ago Paganini played on the instrument which is called "Golden fish".

The violin which is famous for its sound was given to him after winning the "Emmy" musical prize when his "Stradivarius" album was recognized the best. By the way the musician is the first Hungarian to be awarded with "Emmy" prize. A person may play on the violin for only five years.

"Stradivarius" album is a collection of compositions and plays with a bright individual style where classic as well as Ed. Marton's compositions found their place.

"Playing and the stage are not a work for me but a great pleasure. For me the life is entirely a pleasure and what I am doing gives pleasure to me and my audience", he said.



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RELIGION

26. CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS KAREKIN II RECEIVES MEMBERS OF COLLEGIUMS OF THE POLICE [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

In the Holy See of St. Etchmiadzin Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II received today the staff of the collegiums of the Armenian police headed by the chief of the Police Alik Sargsian, who came to St. Etchmiadzin to get the blessing of the Catholicos of All Armenians in these pre-holiday days.

Press service of the Holy See told Armenpress that Karekin II greeted those who were present and passed his fatherly blessings and good wishes to them pointing out the importance of the mission of a policeman in the life of the people.

"On this occasion we wish power and enthusiasm to you so that you will be able to keep the law and legacy and be consistent that our children live in peace and security", the Holy Father noted.

In his turn the head of the Police wished the Holy Father Happy New Year and Merry Christmas then referred to service of the policemen and the existing challenges. During the meeting the mission of the Armenian Church and necessity of spreading spiritual-moral values in the society was also spoken about.

SOCIAL

27. ACTIVITIES OF YEREVAN STATE UNIVERSITY IN 2007-2008 ACADEMIC YEAR ASSESSED AS SATISFACTORY [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

The December 25 sitting of the Council of Yerevan State University (YSU) was conducted by Armenian President, Chairman of the YSU Council Serzh Sargsyan. The YSU Rector Aram Simonian gave a report on the university's activities in 2007-2008 academic year.

The rector said that YSU activities have been aimed at its development and enhancing its role and reputation in the republican and interstate scientific and educational field. In accordance with international requirements on higher education, in the reporting period YSU continued work on improving the educational process, making system changes, developing and updating the technological basis of education and expanding the scientific and research activities. Progress was made in the organization of education, the introduction of new methods and the improvement of the quality of instruction. A. Simonian underlined the importance of creation of the Chair for Studies of the Diaspora.

As NT was informed by the RA presidential service, the members of the Council approved the report on YSU's activities in 2007-2008 academic year and assessed these activities as satisfactory.

The council members discussed and approved the provisions of the strategic program on YSU's development from 2009-2010 to 2013-2014 academic years.

28. HRANUSH HAKOBIAN: FAVORABLE CONDITIONS SHOULD BE CREATED FOR DIASPORAN ARMENIANS TO PROMOTE REPATRIATION [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

"We cannot but speak of repatriation under the circumstance of having such a large Diaspora," RA Minister of Diaspora Hranush Hakobian stated at the December 26 press conference. In her words, the most of Diasporan Armenians living in Armenia at present returned to the homeland in the difficult years, in 1991-92. According to H. Hakobian, for the purpose of promoting repatriation today favorable conditions should be created for Diasporan Armenians in the country.

In response to the observation that many Diasporan Armenian businessmen come across some obstacles connected with the legislation when founding their own business in Armenia, the Minister said: "Soon we will publish a collection of laws that will help Diasporan Armenians to found business in Armenia." As she affirmed, that collection will keep the Diasporan Armenians away from their Armenian partners, who "not resisting the temptation try to deceive those arriving from the Diaspora by all means."

29. PROFESSIONAL ALL-ARMENIAN NETWORK TO BE CREATED IN 2009 [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

The RA Ministry of Diaspora among 2009 programs attaches most importance to holding of all-Armenian conferences. Minister Hranush Hakobian reported at the December 26 brief press conference adding that in 2009 April it is envisaged holding conferences of Armenian architects, in September Armenian lawyers, then of Diasporan Armenians graduating from a higher educational institution in



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Armenia. Besides, according to H. Hakobian, events should be organized dedicated to Armenian National Hero Charles Aznavour, Kirk Kerkorian, and Alex Manoogian for "presenting them properly" both in the country and in the Diaspora.

The most important program to be implemented in 2009, according to H. Hakobian, will be creation of an all-Armenian professional network within the framework of the Diaspora-Armenia cooperation. As she affirmed, thanks to that network it will be possible to efficiently use nation's mental potential.

The Minister said that within the three months of its activity the Ministry has worked out and presented to various departments and Armenian and Diasporan organizations a draft conception of Armenia-Diaspora Partnership Development. According to H. Hakobian, positive responses have been received on it from different corners of the world. The draft will be submitted to RA government's approval in 2009 February.

H. Hakobian also said that the experience of work organization with diasporas of various countries, in particular, Greece, Serbia, India, Israel has been studied. For instance, as the Minister emphasized it, Armenia will need the experience of Greece when adopting laws on Diasporan Armenians. Among the work done H. Hakobian also mentioned the launching of the movement Armenians without Smoking in the Diaspora and Armenia, preparation of all-Armenian Olympic Games.

30. ARMENIAN OMBUDSMAN ASKS HIS GEORGIAN COUNTERPART TO IMPLEMENT MONITORING OF TRIAL OF MEMBERS OF UNITED JAVAKHK ORGANIZATION [NOYAN TAPAN, 12/27/08]

The RA Ombudsman Armen Harutyunian sent a letter to his Georgian counterpart, in which he expressed concern in connection with the statements that the trial of members of United Javakhk organization Vahagn Chakhalian, Gurgen Shirinian and their family members is being held with violations of the law. In his letter to Sozar Subari, A. Harutyunian reminded about mutual agreements and asked to implement monitoring of the trial and find out whether the human rights of Javakhk's Armenians are protected.

31. NATURAL GAS ENTERS THE ARAZAP VILLAGE OF ARMAVIR PROVINCE [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

The entrance of natural gas to Arazap village of Armavir province was ceremonially announced today and the lantern of blue fuel was lit.

There are already 12 consumers in the village where about 450 families are living. Each family will spend 90-100,000 drams to bring the gas to their houses. Head of Arazap community Manvel Harutyunian noted that as a result of these works one of the main issues of the village has been settled, but yet there are unsettled issues as well.

Particularly it is first of all necessary to reconstruct the secondary school of the village and to solve the issues of drinking and irrigation waters.

Assistant to the chief director of "ArmRusgasprom" company Khachatur Baghdasarian informed that with the work conducted in this community the company finishes this year's investment program. Gasification of the community was entirely implemented with the means of the company. This year 12 communities have been ensured with gas in Armavir province.

On behalf of the residents of the province Governor of Armavir Ashot Ghahramanian thanked the president of the country and the authorities of "ArmRusgasprom" company for their gift to the residents of the village on the New Year's eve.

"More than 90% of the communities of the province is ensured with gas. I'm sure that during the upcoming two years the works will be entirely completed", A. Ghahramanian said.

At the same time the Governor did not deny that yet there are many unsettled issues in the province. Already next year quite serious investment programs are intended to be implemented in the sphere of irrigation water of the province.

32. "SOUTH CAUCASIAN RAILWAYS" COMPANY ANNOUNCES CHRISTMAS DISCOUNTS FOR PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION IN THE TERRITORY OF ARMENIA [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

"South Caucasian Railways" company announces New Year discounts for passenger transportation in the territory of Armenia through trains. An official from the company told Armenpress that from December 28 – January 7, 2009 a 22% discount system will be applied. At the same time from



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January 10 the company will apply a 50% discount system for the students which will function by May 31, 2009.

Head of the passenger transportation department of the company Samvel Ghalechian noted that from January, 2009 also 50% discounts are intended for transportation of veterans who use railway transport means.

"This is an original New Year gift of "South Caucasian Railways" company which aims at having certain contribution to the development of the social system of the country", he said.

33. DURING HOLIDAYS THE DURATION OF THE WORK OF YEREVAN METROPOLITAN AND OTHER PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION MEANS TO BE EXTENDED [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

To organize the transport service of the population in Yerevan during the New Year holiday properly, mayor of Yerevan assigned that the duration of the work of Yerevan metropolitan and other passenger transportation means for December 31 has been extended and they will work until 01:00 am January 1.

An official from the municipality told Armenpress that from January 1-7, 2009 the town public transport will work until 00:00 o'clock.

From January 8, 2009 the work of town public transport will be organized according to the previous daily schedule.

34. 38 NEW COMMUNITIES OF THE REPUBLIC GASIFICATED THIS YEAR [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Within the frameworks of this year's "Restoration of gas supply and gasification" program of the "ArmRusgasprom" company works have been conducted in 109 establishments.

150 km of gas pipeline has been restored and constructed, and an investment of 3.2 billion drams has been made. Assistant to the general director of "ArmRusgasprom" company Khachatur Baghdasarian told today journalists that 38 new communities of the country have been ensured with gas this year from which 11 communities have been connected to natural gas network by "ArmRusgasprom" company and 27 communities – through social programs worked out by the government with the Armenian state budget means.

As a result, the number of communities connected to natural gas network reached 510 including 465 – rural.

The number of possible consumers increased by 21,000 reaching 675,000 and the number of real consumers – by 58,000 reaching 574,000.

At present in case of wish 101,000 economies of the country may become gas consumers.

According to Kh. Baghdasarian, the works intended with this year's investment program have entirely been completed.

The company has prolonged the 'No Deposit' action by February 2009.

35. SHIRAK GOVERNOR SAYS THIS YEAR'S GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PROVINCE IS THE 2009-2013 PROGRAM OF SOLUTION OF THE ISSUE OF HOMELESSNESS [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Within the frameworks of "Apartment Purchasing Certificate" state program, 190 families got houses, nearly 1 billion drams have been spent within the frameworks of the program and 21 apartments have been exploited through the program of construction of unfinished buildings.

Summing up the year of 2008 Shirak governor Lida Nanian told journalists that the year was also efficient for the road construction: Kaps-Amasia, Gyumri-Armavir sectors, the road of "Shirak" cemetery and the Dzorakap sector of Gyumri-Yerevan highway have been reconstructed for which 1 billion 500 million drams have been spent.

A partial reconstruction and asphaltting works have also been conducted on roads of inter-province importance as well as in Gyumri: the end of P. Sevak street has been renovated with state budget means.

These works will continue next year. The program of reconstruction of the 6 km-long sector of Kaps-Amasia road has already been approved.

According to the governor, this year significant works have also been conducted in school building sphere: 18 schools have been renovated and construction of a new secondary school kicked off



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in Musayelian community of Ashotsk region. Renovation works of four high schools of the region are finished.

Project and calculation works of gasification of rural communities of Ashotsk and Amasia regions are finished and the tender for implementation of the works will already be announced in January.

The Governor informed that the year was also efficient in health and agriculture spheres. The heating issue of Gyumri two polyclinics has been solved with state budget means and due to the program of subsidization of agricultural lands the residents of all rural communities of Ashotsk, Amasia and Ani regions and Jrarat community of Akhurian region could reduce their cares.

With the placement of anti-hail stations it became possible to reduce the indicator of damage of the harvest in hail danger territories.

2008 was also a year of elections for the province. Elections of local self governmental bodies have been held in 86 communities of the province. Lida Nanian said that from now on the new heads of communities will try solve the issues of their communities with their own programs and the state will certainly support them in this case.

According to L. Nanian, the year was also active with cultural events which were summed up with the December 7 events on the 20th anniversary of the earthquake.

"I cannot assess our work but there is much of it though there are such phenomena and issues that must be abolished. The greatest achievement of the year is the 2009-2013 program of the government to solve the issue of homelessness", - the Governor said informing that 5 billion 400 million drams will be provided to the program from the 2009 state budget.

Congratulating everyone on the New Year, Lida Nanian wished that issues of homelessness, unemployment and economy be solved in 2009 and that 2009 be a year of health and prosperity.

36. 1666 APPLICANTS ENTER THE YEREVAN EDUCATION COMPLEX OF THE ARMENIAN STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Instead of last year's 1366 applicants, 1666 people entered the Education complex of Armenian State Polytechnic University (ASPU). During the first session of the newly formed council rector Vostanik Marukhian noted that the number of students in educational programs of bachelor and master has increased (correspondingly 12.4% and 10.7%).

He stressed the importance of establishment of an inter-department chair of "Internet technology" which is already successfully functioning and within the frameworks of events preceding the 75th anniversary of the university a technological laboratory opened there.

With the financial support of "Polytechnic scientific-educational charity fund" anthem of ASPU has been created, a print paper of notable quantity has been provided to the university, the laboratory of Analytic chemistry has been refurbished and an automatic equipment of projecting and production of print stones has been imported from Germany.

According to V. Marukhian, the university has also been filled up with new computers and their overall number exceeds 1445.

According to the assessment of the vice rector of the university Laert Hovhannisian, the year was efficient, the 75th anniversary of the university has been celebrated and the best traditions have practically been restored.

"We had graduates of newest specializations especially in IT and energy sphere. They find their place in the sphere of social-economic development of the country", L. Hovhannisian said.

For the first time the university conducts self analysis, according to L. Hovhannisian it will clearly show the positive and negative sides of the university.

Among the flaws the vice rector pointed out that the laboratory of the university does not have a technical base of 21st century. Professor staff is not rejuvenated. Although on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of ASPU from October 1, 2008 the salary of workers of the university has been increased by 16%, the salaries are still low.

The workers of the university successfully continued the research works within frameworks of international IPP, INTAS, ANSEF, SCOPES and BRAU programs.

The year was also considered fruitful with a dozen of new cooperation agreements signed with leading foreign educational establishments.



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37. FIRST EDITION OF “DOCUMENTARIES ON 1913-1923 ARMENIAN ISSUE OF THE HISTORICAL-DIPLOMATIC ARCHIVES OF ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY” BOOK PUBLISHED [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Within the frameworks of “Armenian genocide: diplomatic documentaries” of the Museum-institute of Armenian genocide of the National Academy of Science the first volume of “Documentaries on 1913-1923 Armenian Issue of Historical-Diplomatic Archives of Italian Foreign Ministry” book has been published.

Head of the Genocide Museum-institute Hayk Demoyan told Armenpress that 225 diplomatic documents connected with 1913-1917 events found their place in this first volume. They are signified with the fact that they chronologically concern the Genocide and with documentary proofs highlight the purposeful preparation for the Genocide as well as the fact of its commitment.

According to H. Demoyan, the materials concerning 1918-1923 events will be depicted in the second volume of the book. The presented documents are for the first time being published completely.

In Italy the studying, collecting and preparation works have been conducted by Aramays Baloyan, afterwards the scientific workers of the museum-institute continued them.

The book involves 1913-1923 documents, and nearly 20 documents on the 1908-1909 Armenian massacres in Cilicia.

H. Demoyan said that the studies showed that the documents of Italian diplomatic archives, which are connected with the Armenian nation, are kept under “Armenia” title. He said that the circumstance is extremely interesting especially when even in case of absence of the Armenian state the Armenian inhabited regions of the Ottoman Empire were perceived as Armenia.

H. Demoyan noted that Italy is the only super power of those times in the archives of which documents connected with the Armenian issue and Armenian genocide were almost unknown to the Armenian reader and specialists.

SPORTS

38. A SKATING SCHOOL AFTER Y. PLYUSHENKO OPENS IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

The opening ceremony of a skating school after Olympic, worlds and European multiple champion, Russian figure skater Yevgeni Plushenko, took place December 27 in the Sport-concert complex after Karen Demirchian.

Armenian Sport and Youth Affairs Minister Armen Grigorian and Armenian Education and Science Minister Spartak Seyranian were present at the opening ceremony of the sport school.

S. Seyranian congratulated everyone on the opening ceremony of the sport school and noted that it will not only greatly promote the Armenian athletes to achieve results but also to their aesthetic education.

According to A. Grigorian, the opening of the sport school will contribute to the development of figure skating in Armenia, discovering of new talented athletes and the victories of Armenian figure skaters.

S. Seyranian and A. Grigorian expressed hope that the sport school will become a home for future skating victories and thanked the “BAMO” company which heads the Sport-concert complex after K. Demirchian.

A shareholder of the company Hovik Muradian assured that in future “BAMO” will also do its best to contribute to the development of Armenian sport and culture.

Yevgeni Plyushenko, who has several times visited Armenia in December and on the New Year’s eve performed “The golden ice of Stradivarius” show on December 27-28, noted that there is no sport school after him either in Moscow, or in St. Petersburg.

He invited all those who wish to go in for skating in the new established sport school and noted that the best specialists will work here. The well known figure skater will also visit Yerevan and follow the activity of the sport school.

39. L. ARONIAN TAKES PART IN THE ON-LINE CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY HEAD OF FIDE K. ILYUMZHINOV [ARMENPRESS, 12/29/08]

Head of the International Chess Federation (FIDE) Kirsan Ilyumzhinov held an on-line conference with worlds leading grand masters – Indian Vishvanatan Anand, Bulgarian Veselin Topalov, Armenian



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Levon Aronian and Norwegian Magnus Karlsen who were discussing issues and prospects of modern chess.

Deputy FIDE heads Zurab Azmaparayshvili from Georgia, Georgis Makropulis from Greece and other officials were also present at the conference.

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