



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 30, 2009

## TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

### POLITICS

1. YERVAND AZATIAN: TEKEYAN CULTURAL UNION HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST ACTIVE AND BUSIEST BRIDGES LINKING DIASPORA WITH HOMELAND [Azg, 01/28/09]

The Armenian government values highly all the initiatives of Tekeyan Cultural Union (TCU), the RA prime minister Tigran Sargsyan stated when receiving TCU representatives on January 27. He expressed satisfaction at the 2008 Vahan Tekeyan annual award-giving ceremony held at TCU the day before. In his words, these annual awards are important in terms of preserving Armenian identity and at the same time they are aimed at developing Armenian culture, science and art both in Armenia and the Diaspora.

The vice chairman of TCU in the U.S. and Canada, foreign member of the RA National Academy of Sciences Yervand Azatian underlined that Tekeyan Cultural Union has been one of the most active and busiest bridges linking the Diaspora with homeland since Armenia's independence.

According to the RA Government Information and PR Department, Yervand Azatian, the chairperson of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) in Switzerland Talin Avagian, the chairman of TCY branch in Philadelphia Babken Mkrтчian and the chairman of "Tekeyan Center" Foundation Vardan Uzunian received letters of acknowledgement of Armenian prime minister. During the meeting T. Sargsyan congratulated them and handed the awards to them.

2. SEYRAN OHANIAN: AZERBAIJAN OBSTINATELY DOES NOT WANT TO ADMIT THAT KARABAKH PROBLEM HAS ONLY ONE WAY OF SOLUTION - POLITICAL DIALOG [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/28/09]

In contrast to political speculation and various domestic and external pressures, the consistent efforts of the political leadership of the Republic of Armenia confirm the correctness of the negotiation process within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group and the Tripartite Agreement that Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed on November 2, 2008. The Armenian defence minister Seyran Ohanian stated this at the January 27 ceremony dedicated to the 17th anniversary of the creation of the Armenian army.

Nevertheless, in his words, "the enemy continues making threats to achieve a considerable military advantage over the Armenian army by means of petrodollars and to solve the Artsakh problem in a military way, and these threats sometimes turn into armed incidents that have received a fitting rebuff of the Armenian side". The minister mentioned the Azerbaijani troops' attack on the defence positions in the village of Leonarkh in Martakert region on March 3, 2008, the strained situation near the village of Chinar in June when Azerbaijan shelled both military positions and civilians, and the subversive actions in Hadrut region on November 16. According to the minister, all these actions had a shameful outcome for the Azerbaijani side. He said that Azerbaijan obstinately does not want to admit that the Karabakh problem has only one way of solution - political dialog.

S. Ohanian said that last year special attention was paid to solution of social and housing problems of servicemen, perished and disabled freedom fighters and their families: in 2008, 734 modern apartments were provided to servicemen in various regions of the country, compensation of 3 billion drams for the purchase of apartments was allocated to families of perished military as well as disabled servicemen of 1st and 2nd group, 10 detached houses were built. "Despite the global economic crisis, the leaders of the country say that the socially oriented programs on the army will be of continuous nature," the minister declared.

3. PACE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT STATE OF PERSONS IMPRISONED FOR POLITICAL MOTIVATION IN ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/28/09]

The PACE made a decision not to suspend the voting rights of the Armenian delegation at this stage, considering recent initiatives of Armenian authorities as a sign of their willingness to implement the requirements of PACE Resolutions 1609 and 1620.

In Resolution 1643 passed by it, the PACE expresses discontent and serious concern about the state of those imprisoned in connection with the March 1-2 events in Yerevan. Nevertheless, the PACE believes that the number of pardons granted by Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan (28 to date), the



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latest initiative of the National Assembly of Armenia to amend the RA Criminal Code's Articles 225 and 300 (about mass disorder and usurpation of state power) in line with Council of Europe standards within two months, as well as the positive steps taken for conducting 3 independent, transparent and reliable inquiries show that the Armenian authorities are ready to implement the demands of the PACE.

The PACE also expressed concern about those who were imprisoned for political motivation after events of March 1-2, 2008, and called on Armenian authorities to continue releasing them by using other legal means, including pardon and withdrawal of charges. The PACE also proposed that the PACE Monitoring Committee should examine, prior to the April session, progress made by the Armenian authorities in terms of application of the previous resolutions, and based on the situation, the Monitoring Committee should suggest further steps to be taken by the PACE.

#### 4. ACCORDING TO EDWARD SHARMAZANOV, PACE'S DECISION CONDITIONED BY RECENT REFORMS OF ARMENIAN AUTHORITIES [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 01/28/09]

One of the most important provisions of Resolution 1643 passed by the PACE on January 27 refers to not depriving Armenia of its voting right, spokesman for the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) Edward Sharmazanov said on January 28. According to him, another important peculiarity of this resolution is that the term "political prisoner" is absent in its text, and this circumstance is conditioned by the recent reforms made by Armenian authorities, in particular, president Serzh Sargsyan. However, in the words of E. Sharmazanov, the absence of political prisoners does not mean that there are no problems in the country. "Some problems do exist, we have some work to do not only by April - the end of the period established by PACE, but also within 4 years," (NT: until the end of the president's term of office) - RPA's representative noted.

As regards some oppositionists' claims that Armenian authorities either have made a deal with European structures in return for Armenia's not being deprived of voting rights or have managed to deceive them in some way or another, E. Sharmazanov said that these claims do not correspond to the reality. "It is incomprehensible to me that various opposition figures had different approaches to the use of sanctions against Armenia," he said. However, in his words, even by sending special envoys to the Council of Europe, the opposition has failed to achieve success: the Armenian delegation has not been deprived of voting rights.

Speaking about the trial on "the case of the seven", E. Sharmazanov said that the trial has not finished yet so he cannot make any judgment. According to him, only after the trial it will become clear whether the accused persons are political prisoners or not.

#### 5. FOREIGN MINISTERS OF ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN CONSIDER THE MEETING OF THE TWO PRESIDENTS EFFECTIVE [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan described the meeting of the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Ilham Aliyev effective.

"The two presidents noted that in the process of negotiations there is a certain dynamics in respect that the meetings are of regular nature. There is a certain progress as after the each meeting the sides imagine each other's positions better," Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said after the meeting of the presidents.

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mamedyarov noted that yet it is early to speak about signing of an agreement but on the other hand only three-four issues remained to be agreed. "There is an understanding over a part of basic principles," he said, "though there are issues among them which have not been clarified yet and that is why meetings between the two presidents are being held. Naturally this is a process and not an easy one, but we must go forward as there is no other way".

E. Nalbandian noted that currently the negotiations are being held not over issues but over principles, "I mean the developing and agreeing the principles and only after certain agreement over the main principles of the conflict regulation the sides will start working on the basic document," he said.

OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs who also participated in the extended negotiations considered the meeting constructive.



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## 6. TIGRAN SARGSYAN REBUKES TO DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTERS [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 01/29/09]

Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan announced a strict rebuke to the deputy health ministers Tatoul Hakobyan and Abraham Manukyan for displaying behaviour not relevant to a state official, governmental press service told Armenpress.

## 7. DISCUSSION OF 2008 REPORTS OF THE MINISTRIES TO KICK OFF JANUARY 30 [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan said today at the session of the Armenian government that starting from tomorrow the discussion of the 2008 annual reports of the ministries will kick off. "During the discussions we will concentrate only on flaws and undone work," the prime minister noted.

He pointed out that the reasons of the latter and the works which must be carried out in 2009 for filling the gaps must be revealed. The presented reports must be from 5-10 minutes long.

## 8. OSCE MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS RELEASE JOINT STATEMENT ON THE RESULTS OF ZURICH MEETING OF ARMENIAN AND AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENTS [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

The co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group Bernard Fassier (France), Yuri Merzlyakov (Russia), Matthew Bryza (USA) released a joint statement today on the results of the Zurich meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents.

An official from the OSCE office said that in the statement by chronological order the recent steps directed towards the regulation of Nagorno Karabakh conflict are enumerated.

"The Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group traveled to Baku on January 19, 2009, where they met with President Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammedyarov, and to Yerevan on January 20, 2009, where they met with President Serzh Sargsyan and Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian.

The Co-Chairs met again jointly with Foreign Ministers Mammedyarov and Nalbandian in Zurich on January 27, 2009, and organized a joint meeting with Presidents Aliyev and Sargsyan in Zurich on January 28, 2009, on the margins of the World Economic Forum.

The Co-Chairs explored with the two Presidents their thoughts on how to finalize the Basic Principles on the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, proceeding from the proposal presented to the sides at the OSCE Ministerial Conference in Madrid in November 2007.

The Co-Chairs agreed to work with the Foreign Ministers on elaborating proposals for the consideration of the two Presidents on the most important remaining differences between the sides existing within the framework of the Basic Principles. The Co-Chairs hope the parties will be able to bridge these remaining differences in the nearest future to secure a peace agreement. Their goal is a just and balanced agreement based on the Helsinki Final Act principles of territorial integrity, self-determination, and non-use of force."

## 9. THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP SAYS MADRID PRINCIPLES ARE THE BEST BASIS FOR KARABAKH CONFLICT REGULATION [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

The International Crisis Group (ICG) thinks that the Madrid principles of Karabakh conflict regulation are the best basis for the conflict regulation, the head of ICG European programs Sabina Freizer told "Trend".

"The crisis group finds that the negotiations which continue on the basis of Madrid suggestions are the best means for peaceful regulation of Karabakh conflict", - Freizer said. According to her, it is strictly important that Azerbaijani and Armenian authorities inform the peoples of their countries and consult with them over Minsk group suggestions.

"Increase of civil awareness and the discussions between Azerbaijani and Armenian counterparts are very important for reaching a progress in the peaceful process", - he added.



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## 10. PRESIDENT SERZH SARGSYAN CONDUCTED BILATERAL MEETINGS IN DAVOS [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan participated January 28 in the official opening ceremony of Davos World Economic Summit after which an official dinner was given by the president and founder of the Forum Claus Swab.

Presidential press service told Armenpress that the President of Armenia participated in the reception organized by the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin.

Today in the morning Serzh Sargsyan started his bilateral meetings in Davos.

The president met with the executive director of International Agency of Nuclear Energy Muhammed El Baradei. During the meeting the sides highly underscored the current level of cooperation between the agency and Armenia. During the meeting they also discussed a number of issues referring to the construction of new nuclear energy block. Muhammed El Baradei highly underscored the steps carried out by now by the Armenian authorities towards the construction of new nuclear energy block and expressed readiness to provide technical assistance in different rounds of implementation of the program. The executive director also highly assessed the steps carried out by the Armenian authorities directed towards increasing the level of security of Metsamor nuclear power plant.

The president of the country on his turn expressed gratitude to Muhammed El Baradei for consultation support.

President Serzh Sargsyan also met in Davos with chairman of the Asian Development Bank Haruhiko Kuroda. Serzh Sargsyan expressed gratitude to the chairman of the bank for the implementation of joint programs assessing them as effective.

Haruhiko Kuroda on his part highly assessed the steps undertaken by the Armenian authorities in state governance sphere and noted that the Asian Development Bank is interested in developing long-term partnership agreements with the Republic of Armenia, underscoring the effective combination of all the existing tools directed towards the development in Armenia.

Today the president is also expected to meet with the prime minister of Russia Vladimir Putin, President of Switzerland Hans Rudolph. Late in the evening the Armenian president is expected to meet with the Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

## 11. ARMENIAN AND TURKISH FMs MEET IN DAVOS [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

Within the framework of World Economic Forum in Davos the meeting of the Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandyan and Foreign Minister of Turkey Ali Babacan took place, spokesman for the Armenian minister Tigran Balayan told Armenpress.

Nothing is yet reported about the discussed issues. The meeting was the continuation of the process of improvement of Armenian-Turkish relations.

"Our approach is the same: to regulate the relations, open borders without pre-conditions. Such approach is also expected from Turkey. If such two-sided approach be displayed the relations may be regulated quite soon," Edward Nalbandian said at a press conference January 21.

## 12. SESSION OF THE EXTENDED COUNCIL OF "HERITAGE" PARTY TO BE HELD FEBRUARY 21 [Aravot, 01/29/09]

The session of the extended council of the "Heritage" party will take place on February 21, head of the NA "Heritage" faction Armen Martirosian told today journalists. According to him, the primary issue which will be discussed during the session of the council will concern the suspension of the parliamentary mandates of the faction.

A. Martirosian referred to the 1643 resolution adopted in the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (PACE) and noted that it gives food for thought.

He noted that there are numerous problems in Armenia which must be solved inside it, for that authorities and the representatives of the opposition must make necessary steps.

According to A. Martirosian reforms are necessary in political, economic and social spheres. The head of the faction stressed the importance of amnesty of the March 1 imprisoned.



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## 13. A NUMBER OF TOP OFFICERS AWARDED MEDALS AND LETTERS OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/09]

The speaker of the RA National Assembly Hovik Abrahamian handed medals and letters of acknowledgement of the National Assembly to a group of top officers at the parliament on January 28 on the occasion of Army Day. According to the RA National Assembly PR Department, the ceremony was attended by the defence minister Seyran Ohanian, NA deputies, officers of the RA ministry of defence.

The Minister of Defence Seyran Ohanian, the Head of the General Staff of Armed Forces of the RA, First Deputy Minister of Defence Lieutenant General Yuri Khachaturov, the Deputy Minister of Defence Lieutenant General Alik Mirzabekian, the Deputy Minister of Defence Ara Nazarian, and the Head of the Legal Department of the Ministry of Defence Sedrak Sedrakian were awarded Medals of Honor of the RA National Assembly for their active participation in the process of reforms in the armed forces and increasing the defensive capacity of the country. The Head of the Department for Work with Personnel of the Armed Forces of the RA Major General Vardan Avetisian and the Commander of Peacekeeping Forces of the RA Ministry of Defence Colonel Arthur Simonian received letters of acknowledgement for the conscientious performance of their official duties.

## 14. DEPUTY ARMEN MARTIROSIAN: ALL OF US WERE DEFEATED BY ADOPTION OF COUNCIL OF EUROPE RESOLUTION N 1643 [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/09]

"By adoption of PACE Resolution N 1643 neither Armenia's authorities nor opposition appeared in the status of a winner: all of us have been defeated, as our country's name is repeatedly voiced negatively." Armen Martirosian, the head of the RA NA Zharangutiun (Heritage) faction, stated at the January 29 press conference. According to him, though the above mentioned resolution lacks the word "political prisoner," Armenia has already got a negative reputation in Europe and all over the world. In order to improve the situation, according to A. Martirosian, the authorities as an institution holding in their hands the government levers should be able to be higher than their personal interests even if by one degree and make real reforms. According to the deputy, political sphere's reforms are releasing the political prisoners as soon as possible and starting a dialogue with the opposition.

A. Martirosian added that only an irresponsible politician can assert that there are no political prisoners in Armenia. According to him, even if the European structures do not admit it, the Armenian society is convinced that the activists arrested on the March 1 case, as well as Zhamanak newspaper's editor Arman Babajanian are political prisoners. "Though this time Resolution N 1643 does not contain the word "political prisoner," many PACE deputies in their speeches stressed that that phenomenon exists in Armenia. The Council of Europe just wishes to exert a pressure upon Armenia trying to give us a possibility to change," the Zharangutiun representative said.

## 15. ARMENIAN SIDE ASSESSES RESULTS OF ZURICH MEETING AS CONSTRUCTIVE AND POSITIVE [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/09]

A meeting of the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev took place at the Radisson Hotel in Zurich on January 28.

The Zurich meeting of the negotiation process on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement was the third one between S. Sargsyan and I. Aliyev. It started with the participation of the Foreign Ministers of the two countries Edward Nalbandian and Elmar Mamedyarov, the Co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group Yuri Merzlyakov, Bernard Fassier and Matthew Bryza, and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk.

Then the two presidents continued negotiations in the tete-a-tete format. After a one-hour tete-a-tete talk, the negotiations continued in an enlarged format.

The Armenian side assessed the results of the Zurich meeting as constructive and positive. During the meeting the sides presented their opinions on the current stage of the negotiation process. As a result of the negotiations, the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents instructed the foreign ministers to continue the negotiation process in cooperation with the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. The presidents expressed a desire that the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group will proceed with work on coordination of the approaches of the sides. An agreement on the forthcoming regional visit of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group was reached.

According to the RA presidential press service, after the negotiations Serzh Sargsyan left for Davos to attend the opening ceremony of the World Economic Forum.



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## 16. POLITICAL SCIENTIST LEVON SHIRINIAN: IT IS MORE CONVENIENT THAT DIASPORA ATTEND TO SOLUTION OF GEORGIAN ARMENIANS' PROBLEMS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/09]

Armenia has always tried to have at least bearable relations with Georgia, while Georgia comes up from positions of force. Levon Shirinian, a Doctor of Political Science, the Head of the Law History and Political Science Chair of Yerevan K. Abovian State Pedagogical University, expressed such an opinion at the January 29 press conference. According to him, when Russia's influence in the region weakens, with Turkey's sponsorship Georgia tries to go out to the West at the expense of Armenia.

According to the political scientist, the recent events in Georgia, in particular, the arrests of Grigor Minasian, the Director of Akhaltskha Youth Center, and Sargis Hakobjanian, the Chairman of the Charles Aznavour charity NGO, are purely pretexts for securing their goal. And according to L. Shirinian, the Georgian authorities' goal is to create such conditions, under which the Armenians will leave Javakhk.

According to his observation, the most convenient way to improve the formed situation is to carry out active actions in that direction: the Hay Dat (Armenian Cause) offices working abroad, as well as other organizations should also involve issues of protection of Georgian Armenians' rights in their working agendas.

In the opinion of Sergey Minasian, the Deputy Director of the Caucasian Media Institute, Georgia's policy to Armenia is greatly affected by the opinion formed there, according to which Armenia is Russia's partner.

## 17. ARMEN MARTIROSIAN: RUMORS ON A DEAL BETWEEN ARMENIAN AUTHORITIES AND EUROPEAN STRUCTURES HAVE SOME GROUNDS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/09]

Commenting upon radical opposition's opinion that for not being deprived of the vote the Armenian authorities in secret negotiations with the European structures have agreed to make concessions in the issue of Karabakh, Armen Martirosian, the head of the Zharangutiun (Heritage) parliamentary faction, stated at the January 29 press conference that those apprehensions have some grounds. According to deputy's observation, it is also exact that Armenia that has weakened in the international sphere will be unprotected before any challenge, including in the respect of the Nagorno Karabakh problem.

A. Martirosian also said that Zharangutiun party leader Raffi Hovannisian will not take part in PACE's work until Council of Europe corresponds to the values adopted by it. He said that so far the Armenian authorities have not properly fulfilled the provisions of Council of Europe previous resolutions, therefore R. Hovannisian as a member of the Armenian delegation in the Assembly cannot present any implemented step to Council of Europe.

In response to the question of how Zharangutiun members treat the issue of sending representatives of Armenian National Congress to Council of Europe, A. Martirosian said that he does not see anything blameworthy in it. "ANC is a political force, which has something to say to Council of Europe and has a demand. There is nothing bad that the Congress reported the Assembly about the situation in Armenia," he said.

## 18. SERZH SARGSYAN AND RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN TO MEET IN DAVOS TODAY [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/09]

RA President Serzh Sargsyan and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan will meet on January 29 within the framework of Davos World Economic Forum. According to the Anadolu agency, the Turkish Prime Minister stated this.

"We are hopeful, but how much Armenia is hopeful - I do not know. I am meeting with RA President Serzh Sargsyan tonight... We wish to further advance," Tayyip Erdogan stated.

Answering Turkish journalists' question of whether he estimates that meeting as a positive step, the RA President stated: "I think it is so." And in response to a Turkish journalist's question that "we are aware that you know Turkish, would you like to address a message?" Serzh Sargsyan answered in Armenian: "I know the Azeri language."

According to CnnTurk, in Davos the Turkish Prime Minister met with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and Azeri President Ilham Aliyev.



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## 19. NALBANDIAN-BABACAN MEETING TAKES PLACE IN DAVOS [Hayastani Hanrapetutium, 01/29/09]

Armenian and Turkish Foreign Ministers Edward Nalbandian and Ali Babacan met on January 28 within the framework of Davos World Economic Forum.

According to Turkish media reports, after the meeting Babacan stated that within the coming 24 hours his second meeting with the RA Foreign Minister is envisaged in Davos.

"If concrete results are achieved during the meetings, we will announce it. The process continues. Our contacts continue since the football match," the Turkish Foreign Minister said.

## 20. PRESIDENT SERZH SARGSYAN MEETS WITH PRIME MINISTER OF RUSSIA, TURKEY AND PRESIDENT OF SWISS CONFEDERATION [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/09]

President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan on January 29 met in Davos with Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin.

Presidential press service told Armenpress that the head of the country and head of the Russian government registered the high level of strategic relations and political dialogue between the two countries and noted that frequent meetings and contacts give opportunity to highly preserve the dynamics of development of cooperation.

The sides summed up the positive tendencies registered in 2008 in economic partnership sphere, expressing hope that the annual trade turnover between the two countries which exceeds 1 billion USD gives good basis for further success. During the meeting the sides also referred to a wide range of issues of the agenda of bilateral relations.

On the same day Armenian president met with the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The sides underscored the turning point registered in the process of regulation of relations between the two countries after the September 6, 2008 meeting of the president of Armenia and Turkey which had its continuation with the further meetings of the foreign ministers of the two countries.

President Serzh Sargsyan and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan positively assessed the results of their first meeting and assigned the foreign ministers of the two countries to exert additional efforts for the regulation of relations.

On January 29 Serzh Sargsyan also met with the President of Swiss Confederation Hans Rudolph Merz. The presidents of the two countries pointed out the high level of bilateral relations between the two countries as well as cooperation within the frameworks of international organizations.

Serzh Sargsyan expressed gratitude for the support of the Swiss government to Armenia and pointed out the balanced position of Switzerland in different international organizations over the issues referring to Armenia. During the meeting the two presidents also referred to the world financial-economic crisis and the regulation of issues existing in the region.

## 21. PRESIDENT SERZH SARGSYAN AND TURKISH PM RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN POSTIVELY ASSESS PROCESS OF REGULATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/09]

President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan and Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan during their meeting January 29 in Davos positively assessed the general process of regulation of relations between the two countries. "This was our first meeting, I consider it a useful meeting and I also saw that the prime minister as well has a wish to regulate our relations and this is a good circumstance," President Serzh Sargsyan said at a briefing followed after the meeting.

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian noted that the meeting passed in a quite constructive atmosphere, a practical discussion was held towards the process of regulation of bilateral relations.

The sides underscored the September 6 meeting of the Armenian and Turkish presidents which according to E. Nalbandyan was a turning point in the regulation of relations between the two countries.

"The general process towards the regulation of relations was positively assessed by President Serzh Sargsyan and Turkish prime minister and they assigned the foreign ministers to exert additional efforts in that direction," Edward Nalbandian said.



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## BUSINESS

### 22. WORLD BANK REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR SOUTH CAUCASUS AWARDED MEMORIAL MEDAL OF ARMENIAN PRIME MINISTER [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/28/09]

The World Bank Regional Director for the South Caucasus Donna Dowsett Coirolo was awarded a memorial medal of the Armenian prime minister. As NT was informed by the RA government, by the decision of the Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan, the memorial medal was awarded to D. Dowsett Ciorolo for her significant contribution to implementation of the World Bank-financed programs in Armenia.

### 23. WORLD BANK TO PROVIDE 525 MILLION DOLLARS TO ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/28/09]

The World Bank will provide 525 million dollars for programs to be implemented under the Strategy of Partnership with Armenia in the next 4 years, as well as for technical assistance and advisory services. The WB Vice President Shigeo Katsu said at the January 27 meeting with reporters that the indicated sum exceeds 2.5fold that allocated in 2004-2008. "This large amount of assistance by the bank is conditioned by the definite process of reforms in Armenia, the quality of the Sustainable Development Program of the RA government and the challenges that Armenia faces under conditions of the global economic crisis," S. Katsu said.

According to him, the financing will be done under 5 programs. It is envisaged providing credits for development of rural areas and small and medium business, research on temperature which will be done in Armenia for the first time in cooperation with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). Other organizations of the World Bank will provide up to 800 million dollars in the form of investment guarantees to Armenia.

S. Katsu underlined that the World Bank aims to neutralize or reduce the consequences of the global financial crisis in Armenia within a short period of time. He noted that in fact, the financial sector of Armenian economy was not affected at the first stage of the crisis. However, during the second stage the impact of the crisis on real economy will be greater if there is a fall in demand for goods exported from Armenia.

In the words of the WB's newly-appointed Regional Director for South Caucasus Asad Alam, Armenia has status of a middle-income country so the small and medium business crediting program is the first credit on the conditions of the IBRD, thanks to which the country will have an opportunity to make more reforms.

It was mentioned that Armenia has received 220 million dollars from the World Bank in 2004-2008. During its cooperation with Armenia, the World Bank has provided credits of a total of 1.1 billion dollars under more than 50 programs.

### 24. BORIS BATURA SAYS TRADE TURNOVER BETWEEN ARMENIA AND BELARUS DOES NOT SATISFY THE SIDES [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

The trade turnover between Belarus and Armenia does not satisfy the both parties. This was stated at today's meeting of the Armenian ambassador to Belarus Oleg Yesayan and chairman of the Belarus National Assembly's Republic Council Boris Batura.

"We have a huge space of activity in the sphere of trade economic cooperation between our countries," B. Batura said. According to him, the level of trade turnover between the two countries registered in 2008 is not satisfactory.

"Both by Armenia and Belarus the product supplies may be increased," B. Batura said.

### 25. ARMENIAN GOVERNMENT TO TAKE CONSISTENT MEASURES TO RESOLVE SITUATION IN GOLD MARKET [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/09]

At the January 29 sitting of the Armenian government, the prime minister Tigran Sargsyan stated that they will take consistent measures to resolve the situation in the gold market (in Yerevan's Khorenatsi Street) owned by Vagharsh & Sons Ltd. "We are not going to yield to the pressures that exist today. If that man cannot ensure normal working conditions for thousands of employees, there will be others ready to provide these services," the prime minister underlined.

In his words, he received a letter from employees of the market, in which they complain about the terrible working conditions there. Even elementary working conditions are absent in the market, and there are numerous problems related to health, hygiene and sanitary conditions, heating, air conditioning, fire



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prevention, etc. In addition, they have to pay huge amounts for a square meter of trade space. Jewelry workshops of no smaller areas than a jewelry plant are operated in the market, but the safety rules are not observed there either.

The prime minister said that the organizer of the trade place had told the employees of the market that "if they are dissatisfied with these conditions, they may leave their jobs". However, according to T. Sargsyan, these people have to put up with all this in order not to lose their jobs and small incomes. "At the same time the trade organizer conceals his superprofits from the state and at their expense builds elite houses in Tsakhkadzor," T. Sargsyan noted. Besides, according to him, hundreds of unregistered employees were revealed, which is another manifestation of tax evasion.

## DIASPORA

26. CHAIRMAN OF FORUM OF UNION OF EUROPEAN ARMENIANS ASHOT GRIGORIAN AND EU SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE PETER SEMNEBY DISCUSS IDEA OF CREATING NEW UNIT - CONFEDERATION IN SOUTH CAUCASUS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/28/09]

The Chairman of the Forum of the Union of European Armenians Ashot Grigorian met with the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby. The idea of creating a new unit - confederation in the South Caucasus was discussed at the meeting. A. Grigorian proposed that the European Union develop an investment program for bringing the economies of all the recognized and unrecognized states in the South Caucasus: Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the NKR, Abkhazia and South Ossetia into line with the level of EU member states in order to prepare these state's joining the EU in the next decade. A. Grigorian reported that the problem of granting status of an associated member of the EU to the South Caucasian confederation is likely to be solved within 5 years. According to him, it is possible to establish a strategic center for development of the South Caucasus in Bratislava, the capital of the Slovak Republic. This center will operate as a EU body responsible for development of diplomatic, economic and political links in the South Caucasus. The sides agreed to assist the creation of this center by holding frequent meetings.

27. "ARMENIANS IN THE NETHERLANDS, AN EXPLORING SURVEY" BOOK PUBLISHED [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/28/09]

"Armenians in the Netherlands, An Exploring Survey" is the title of the book, which has just been published as a result of recent investigation on the Armenian community of the Netherlands. The book is published by the Federation of Armenian Organizations in the Netherlands (FAON).

For the research, which was made possible with financial support of the Dutch government, a written sample survey has been conducted of hundreds of Armenians selected from thousands of available addresses of Armenians living in Holland. The results of the research give more insight which countries the Armenians of the Netherlands came from, and the duration of their residence. Additionally, information has been collected on the education level of Armenians in the country of birth and in the Netherlands, as well as their social and economic position, particularly their labour market position.

The social cultural position, like for example language use, social contacts, mixed marriages, religious orientation, participation to Armenian activities etc. are also investigated.

In addition to the outcome of the survey, the book contains an overview of the history of Armenia and information on the Armenian community of the Netherlands since the 17th century.

## ARTS

28. 3 MILLION 400,000 AMD PROVIDED TO THE SHIRAK PROVINCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURAL EVENTS [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

This year 3 million 400,000 AMD have been provided from the state budget to the Shirak province for the implementation of cultural events.

The newly appointed head of the Culture department of the Governor's office Gor Margarian told Armenpress that within the frameworks of the planned events on January 28 the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of formation of the Armenian Armed Forces was celebrated in the dramatic theatre after V. Achemian, and the traditional "Shirak winter" event will be held in February.

Among the jubilees which will be celebrated during the year, Gor Margarian singled out the event dedicated to the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Komitas.



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Annual republican contest-festivals which are conducted by the Armenian Culture Ministry including the "Singing Armenia" ensemble and the contest of pianists dedicated to Arno Babajanian will also be conducted in the province.

"The culture department will try not to limit itself with events which are intended with budget means: the potential of cultural institutions and the arts figures of the province will also be used", - G. Margarian noted.

## SOCIAL

### 29. CONSTRUCTION OF UNFINISHED BUILDINGS KICKS OFF IN GYUMRI MUSH AND ANI DISTRICTS [Azg, 01/29/09]

Construction of the unfinished buildings has kicked off in Gyumri Mush and Ani districts.

Head of the town building department of Shirak Governor's office Albert Margarian told Armenpress that the construction of the districts which have 2003 apartments is conducted by the "Glendale Hills" construction company. The construction works are planned to be finished by December 2010.

The same organization will built 182 houses in the Akhurian community of Shirak province, another 226 houses will be built in 10 communities of the province.

### 30. THIS YEAR THE "SOUTH CAUCASIAN CENTER" TO CONDUCT CIVIL HEARINGS IN YEREVAN, TBILISI AND BAKU [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

This year the "South Caucasian center" intends to conduct civil hearings on human rights, freedom, democratic processes, gender and on other themes. For establishment of the center last year 5 NGOs from Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan signed an agreement. The hearings will take place with the participation of the representatives of these NGOs.

Head of the "Caucasian center of peaceful initiatives" Georgi Vanian told Armenpress that the first discussion will take place in March in Tbilisi. The discussions will be continuative. The center aims at making the society participate in the meetings and discussions which are conducted over issues which will be solved jointly.

According to G. Vanian, during the meetings which will be conducted this year other issues the societies of the three states are concerned with will also be discussed. In the nearest future meetings are intended in Baku and in Yerevan. In the future scientists of the three countries will also be involved in the discussions.

"If we succeed to establish and consolidate the relationship between the scientists and societies of the three countries, it will be a firm base for the further cooperation", G. Vanian added.

From Armenia "The Caucasian center of peaceful initiatives", from Azerbaijan – "The women's union for the sake of civil society", "The Azerbaijani national committee of Helsinki civil assembly", from Georgia – "The international association of Georgian handicapped women", "Former convicted for the sake of human rights" NGO have been involved in the "South Caucasian center".

G. Vanian noted that the 2008 discussions had a great response and the number of NGOs involved in the center will possibly increase.

### 31. PRAGUE-YEREVAN FLIGHT LANDS IN TRABZON AIRPORT BECAUSE OF THE LOW VISIBILITY [Azg, 01/29/09]

As of the afternoon no flights and landings have been implemented in the "Zvartnots" airport because of the low visibility.

Press secretary of "Zvartnots International Airports" company Gevorg Abrahamian told Armenpress that the Prague-Yerevan and Tehran-Yerevan flights have been delayed.

The first one was to land in Yerevan at 4-5 o'clock in the night but reaching Yerevan, because of the invisibility in the Zvartnots airport the plane could not land and left for Turkey landing in the Trabzon airport.

G. Abrahamian could not answer why the plane has left for Trabzon instead of Gyumri or Tbilisi, as, according to him, the decision is made by the representatives of the airline.

It is not yet clear when the plane will arrive in Yerevan from Trabzon.

The Tehran-Yerevan flight was to land at 11:00 o'clock (local time) but it has been delayed by 13:15 o'clock.



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## 32. EVENTS DEDICATED TO 30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF IRAN'S ISLAMIC REVOLUTION TO BE HELD IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

Events on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Iran's Islamic Revolution, which have become traditional will be organized in Armenia. Culture consultant of Iranian embassy in Armenia Muhammad Shakiba told today journalists that Iran has adopted a friendly relative and cooperation policy with its neighboring countries and the holiday of revolution which has a great importance for the Iranian people will also be celebrated in a number of countries.

In Armenia these events will kick off on January 30 with an exhibition of works of three generations of Iranian painters in the Armenian Artists' Union.

The next day there will be a visit to one of the children's houses of Kanaker-Zeytun community where the Iranian embassy will give presents to the children. On the same day an exhibition of books which have been published in Iran during the latest years will be organized in the Armenian national library.

On February 3 a discussion on the Islamic revolution will be organized in the Organization of cultural relations with foreign countries, in which local and Iranian Armenians will take part.

Results of the "Iran in my eyes" contest will be summed up on February 4 in the Yerevan Blue mosque, and an evening of Iranian poetry and a book exhibition entitled "From Rudak to Gheysar" will be held on the next day in the Writers' union.

The ten-day of events will end in the "Aram Khachatrian" concert hall: a popular concert of Iranian women musicians will be held.

"30 years ago the Iranian people, with the revolution conducted with the leadership of imam Khomeyni, overthrew the monarchical power of more than 2500 years and established a people's, Islamic republic which is based on religion, democracy and republican principles", - said M. Shakiba.

He noted that during the latest years the cooperation between Armenia and Iran develops in all the spheres. Armenia exerts great activeness in the international book exhibition in Tehran and the festival of media.

According to the cultural consultant the participation of Armenians in suchlike events in Iran is also intended in 2009.

## 33. 60% OF COMMUNITIES OF ARAGATSOTN PROVINCE GASIFICATED [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

60% of communities of Aragatsotn province is gasificated. Governor of the Aragatsotn province Gabriel Gyozealian told today journalists that total investment of 1 billion 296 million drams were made in the province in 2008 for gasification, which is for 795 million drams more as compared with 2007. As of November, 2008, 61 of 114 communities of the province are connected to natural gas network. The governor assured that in 2009 the process of gasification will continue.

The road network of the province is 787 km, of which 164 km are of inter- state importance, 131 km – of republican, 365 – of province and 128 km of roads are roads of local importance. In 2008 renovation of roads of inter-state, republican and province importance amounting to 2 billion 899.8 million drams were implemented with the state budget means and "Millennium Challenges" program. Last year the telephone line of all the villages of the province have been restored.

After optimalization of the health care system, 21 health care companies and 92 medical centers function in Aragatsotn.

Five of the companies are under the subordination of the province, 16 – of the community. 1128 medical workers work there, 214 of which are doctors, 626 – nurses and 288 of them are other workers.

According to G. Gyozealian previously there was an issue of lack of specialists in some communities, but at present they are ensured with necessary medical workers.

The number of employed people in the province reaches 79,332 which is the 59.7% of the able-to-work population. 22,437 people are pensioners, 6,564 – handicapped, 1,345 people are unemployed. Nearly 4,057 socially insecure families of the province are involved in the "Paros" system and get family allowances, another 462 families each trimester appear in the lists of urgent support. With this aim 1 billion 468 million drams have been released from the state budget. As compared with the last year the sum of the allowance increased by 286 million drams.



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125 refugee families which need apartments have been registered in Aragatsotn. Last year with a request of money support 421 citizens got money assistance of different sums of overall 16 million 404,000 drams.

In 2009 works of 11 billion 388 million 951,000 drams will be implemented in the province with the state budget means and other programs. 1 billion 83 million 500 000 drams will be directed to the gasification, 2 billion 225 million 176 000 – to the construction, 90 million drams will be directed to the health care.

On the order of Armenian Territorial Administration Ministry in 2009-2011 the highway connecting the Bazmaghbyur-Ghazaravan-Parpi communities will be renovated.

Cultural, educational programs of 5 billion 199 million 718.3 drams will be conducted by the Governor's office including the winter and current protection of roads of provincial importance.

## 34. FLIGHTS AND LANDINGS IN "ZVARTNOTS" AIRPORT REGULATED [ARMENPRESS, 01/29/09]

The flights and landings got a regular process in "Zvartnots" airport.

Press secretary of "Zvartnots" international airports company" Gevorg Abrahamian told Armenpress that all the flights which were delayed because of the invisibility have been implemented, besides Prague-Yerevan flight which, because of the invisibility in the Zvartnots airport could not land and left for Turkey landing in the Trabzon airport.

An official from "Czech airlines" company which implements the Prague-Yerevan flight told Armenpress that the plane will arrive in Yerevan at approximately 3:00 o'clock at night.

## 35. STUDENTS ORGANIZE MARCH DEDICATED TO 17TH ANNIVERSARY OF FORMATION OF ARMENIAN ARMY [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/09]

Students of Armenian higher educational institutions organized a march to Yerablur on the occasion of the 17th anniversary of the formation of the Armenian army on January 28. An incense burning ceremony took place at Yerablur. Those present paid a tribute of respect to the memory of the perished freedom fighters. In the words of student of State Engineering University of Armenia Nare Sahakian, the events started on January 27. Yesterday students distributed 35 thousand congratulatory postcards. Besides, 17 groups (each composed of 5 students) visited families of freedom fighters.

## 36. 41,454 BIRTHS REGISTERED IN THE REPUBLIC IN 2008 [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/09]

In 2008 41,454 births have been registered in the republic which is 1135 more as compared with the 2007.

Press service of the Armenian Health Ministry told Armenpress that the events intended with the "National 2003-2015 strategy of protection of the health of mother and the child" and "The 2007-2015 program of improvement of reproductive health" programs by the Armenian government have continuatively been implemented in the sphere of protection of the mother and child's health during the previous year.

The "State certificate of birth support" program which has been implemented in the republic from July 1, 2008, gave an opportunity to provide qualitative and free birth support services to the population.

The "hot line" service with 52-88-72 phone number continues to function in the Health Ministry with a 24-hour schedule, through which 4000 calls have been got in 2008.

755 citizens have last year taken part in the reception at the Health Minister with medical and service issues.

There also exists a [www.moh.am](http://www.moh.am) web site of the Health Ministry.

## 37. 1500 EMPLOYERS OF "NAIRIT" WHICH ARE IN THE OBLIGATORY STOPPAGE TO RETURN TO THEIR JOBS FROM MARCH [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/09]

1500 people from 1744 employers of "Nairit" factory, which are in the obligatory stoppage will return to their jobs from March.

Press secretary of "Nairit" Anush Harutyunian told Armenpress that from February the primary works of restarting of the production will kick off. Usually they last from 40 days – a month, after which the start of the main production is given.

Volumes of production in "Nairit" are not yet clear: they are conditioned by the situation in the market and the existing demand.

A. Harutyunian also informed that during the upcoming 2-3 months the factory intends to fill its staff.



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## 38. PROGRAM OF COMBINING OF ARMENIAN YOUTH LIVING IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES TO BE WORKED OUT [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/09]

“The All Armenian Youth International Center” NGO this year intends to organize a meeting of young people from Armenia, Javakhk, Diaspora and Nagorno Karabakh in Nagorno Karabakh Republic.

Deputy head of the organization Gevorg Mkrtchian told Armenpress that issues which concern the youth will be discussed, one joint program will be worked out which will combine Armenian young people who live in different countries.

A meeting with Nagorno Karabakh high ranking officials and visits to historical-cultural places are also intended. Young people from Russia, France, Iran, Lebanon have already expressed wish to take part in the Nagorno Karabakh meeting.

According to G. Mkrtchian, ties have been established with Armenian communities and youth organizations of different countries which actively respond to the initiatives of “The All Armenian Youth International Center”.

“All the events of the center aim at combining the Armenian youth of the world. We highlight the military-patriotic and cultural events”, - G. Mkrtchian added.

The center signed an agreement with the Armenian Defense Ministry within the frameworks of which this year military trainings are intended to be held with the participation of Armenian and Diaspora youth, who will get acquainted with the methods of providing first medical aid, courses on military themes will be held and films shown.

A council of heads of youth organizations of CIS countries has been established with an initiative of the center. A number of events are intended to be held with the youth organizations of CIS countries including international exhibitions, where the young people will present the culture of their country, contest, concerts as well as seminars and roundtables.

“All Armenian Youth International Center” conducts the events with the support of “Go Armenia” fund.

## 39. 24,200 MONUMENTS ARE INCLUDED IN THE STATE LIST OF PROTECTION OF ARMENIAN MONUMENTS [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/09]

24,200 monuments are included in the state list of protection of Armenian monuments. Their number increases each year conditioned by discovery of new archeological monuments.

Head of the Agency of protection of historical and cultural monuments of Armenian Culture Ministry Artyom Grigorian told Armenpress that with the Armenian 602.5 million drams have been released from the 2009 state budget for restoration and protection of monuments and cultural values, from which 522 million will be directed towards the restoration of 25 monuments.

A. Grigorian informed that restoration works of the Noravank, Kobayravank and Hnevank monastic complexes, Voskevaz St. Johannes church, Halidzor castle, Bjni temple, Irind St. Virgin Mary church have already kicked off and will continue this year.

“The renovation works in the monastic complexes carry a periodic character: during the restoration works of the monuments new facts come forward as a result of which an issue of changing of the project arouses”, he noted.

Referring to the issue of Armenian monuments in the Georgian territory and the claims of this country for a number of monuments in the Armenian territory, A. Grigorian expressed opinion that in this case no issue of property of the monuments exists as monuments which are in the territory of a country are the property of the given state, but there is an issue who built it and the cultural heritage of which nation it is.

“We do not have an issue to find it out because the historical facts are obvious, but in case of necessity we can conduct a joint study and renovation works of the monuments”, - A. Grigorian said.

According to him the Armenian monuments which are on the Armenian and Georgian territories are equally very important for us and for them because the mutual relationship between the two countries enriches the Georgian history and shows the close relationship between the two nations also during the ancient times.

As to the state cooperation between Armenia and Turkey in the issue of protection of the monuments, no such cooperation exists. In this issue the two countries deal with each other only through international institutions: ICOMOS-Armenia and ICOMOS-Turkey are a constitutive part of international ICOMOS NGO.

“There are Armenian monuments on the Turkish territory the protection of which must be properly conducted – involving also the Armenian specialists during the renovation works.



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During different conferences the ideas of cooperation are approved, a number of resolutions are adopted, but no practical moves have been conducted by now.

Only sometimes specialists of Armenian origin living in other countries are involved in the expeditions, as for instance, Ani Totoyan", - A. Grigorian said.

## 40. PRICES OF GOODS OF SOCIAL IMPORTANCE ARE STABLE [ARMENPRESS, 01/30/09]

This year as well the Armenian State Commission of Protection of Economic Competition keeps the competitive situation in the markets of goods of social importance under its limelight and will direct its works towards abolition of limitations and violations of competition in these markets.

Press secretary of the commission told Armenpress that from the first days of January the staff of the commission monitors the dynamics of prices of 10 sorts of goods of social importance (nearly 20 trademarks) with an aim to react operatively in case of a suspect of not based increase of prices.

According to the results of monitoring conducted during January, the prices of butter, bread, oil, cheese, rice, flour, coffee, meat and egg in 16 trade centers of Yerevan are mainly stable, in some cases a reduction of prices have been registered.

## **SPORTS**

## 41. LEVON ARONIAN LEADER IN CORUS INTERNATIONAL SUPERTOURNAMENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/29/09]

January 29 is a rest day in the Corus International Supertournament going on in Wijk ann Zee. Levon Aronian (Armenia) beat Gata Kamski (U.S.), Michael Adams (England) in the 9th and 10th tours, respectively, and personally headed the tournament table with 6.5 points.

Three tours have remained until the end of the tournament.

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