



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, February 18, 2009

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

AGBU NEWS

1. ON THE OCCASION OF PUBLICATION OF LEVON-ZAVEN SURMELIAN'S "TECHNIQUES OF FICTION WRITING: MEASURE AND MADNESS" BOOK IN ARMENIAN [Azg, 02/18/09]

"...Nobody loves Armenian language more than I do. Being an American writer I can bring greater service to my people and even though I write in English I do not stop being an Armenian writer". These words belong to Levon-Zaven Surmelian and he has proved these words through his writings.

The first and only Armenian book of Surmelian - "Joyful Lights", a compilation of his poets - was published in 1924 thanks to Vahan Tekeyan. In 1945 Surmelian wrote his "I ask you, ladies and gentlemen" book in English with an introduction by William Saroyan. It was translated and published in Armenian in 1980. It is a unique biographical piece of work on the Armenian realities of the beginning of the century about which the author himself said, "If there was nothing left from Western Armenia, my book would have given chance to the historians and ethnographers to revive that vanished life".

Surmelian translated into English "Daredevils of Sassoun" ("Sasna Tsrer") the Armenian national epic, published "Apples of Immortality" folk tales of Armenia in USA and England.

Surmelian's "Techniques of Fiction Writing: Measure and Madness" is used as a textbook in many American colleges and universities.

Through the financial assistance of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) "Levon-Zaven Surmelian" fund M. Abeghian Institute of Literature of the RA National Academy of Sciences published the Armenian translation of Surmelian's "Techniques of Fiction Writing: Measure and Madness" by Aram Arsenian. Yesterday, the presentation of this book took place at the AGBU Armenian Representation.

Deputy Director of AGBU Armenian Representation Hovig Eordekian asked those present to honor the memory of Grikor Shahinian, famous Diasporan-Armenian cultural figure and literary critic, who passed away lately in Beirut.

Director of AGBU Armenian Representation Ashot Ghazarian mentioned that presentation of the works of the Armenian writers, who create in foreign languages, in Armenia is an important part of the cultural mission of the Union. Peter Ballakian's "Black Dog of Fate" is another example.

Speeches were made by Azat Yeghiazarian, editor of the book and the initiator of the "Literature of the XX Century" series, Director of "Spyurk" scientific-educational center Suren Danielian, PhD. in Philology, who spoke about the high-quality translation of the book, Levon Ananian, Chairman of the Writers' Union of Armenia, Surmelian's nephew, who was also present at the presentation, expressed his pride and spoke about the publication of the letters between Surmelian and Tekeyan.

The impression of famous painter Hagop Hagopian's sincere and unprepared speech was a beautiful finale for the evening. He spoke about his impression of "Joyful Lights" which he had read while studying at Melkonian Educational Institution.

"Joyful Lights" is a masterpiece of Armenian literature. Every pick of Armenian individual's spiritual world is there, the whole genocide is there", said H. Hagopian. He remembered his phone conversation with Surmelian, which he described as one of the brightest memories of his life. He highly estimated the publication of the book in Armenian. "There is continuation of Armenian soul there...", he concluded.

2. HONOURING DR. ARSHAVIR GUNDJIAN FOR A LIFETIME OF ACHIEVEMENTS [Azg, 02/17/09]

Organizing Committee

With the Blessing of His Holiness Karekin II Catholicos of All Armenians

Under the auspices of Bishop Bagrat Galstianian, Primate of the Armenian Church of Canada

Honorary President Mr. Berge Setrakian, President of AGBU

A tribute function to honour Dr. Arshavir Gundjian will be held at 8:00 p.m. on Saturday 14 March 2009 at the AGBU Alex Manoogian Centre in Saint-Laurent, Quebec. The event is jointly organized by the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Canada, St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral of Montreal, Armen-Quebec AGBU Alex Manoogian School of Montreal, the AGBU Montreal Chapter, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Montreal Chapter and the Tekeyan Cultural Association Montreal Chapter, as well as with the participation of the Congress of Canadian Armenians.



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The program will include addresses by dignitaries and by keynote speaker Mr. Edmond Azadian of Detroit, Michigan. There will be musical interludes, recitations, and an audiovisual presentation. A reception of light food and wine will follow the program.

Dr. Gundjian is a leader who has inspired numerous people to enthusiastically work with him for the benefit of Armenians and Armenian interests. He has served the Armenian nation in general and the Canadian and Montreal Armenian communities in particular for over 40 years in his multiple capacities. His most important achievement has been the Armen-Quebec AGBU Alex Manoogian School, the first Armenian day school in Canada, which he founded and which he continues to lead.

Attendance is by invitation, which can be obtained through the organizing associations. Donations are requested to be made to the Armen-Quebec AGBU Alex Manoogian School, and they will be allocated to the establishment of the "Dr. Arshavir Gundjian Scholarship Fund".

POLITICS

3. A NUMBER OF AFGHAN AND ARTSAKH WARS PARTICIPANTS AWARDED COMBAT SERVICE MEDAL [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/16/09]

Under RA President Serzh Sargsyan's decree, for taking part in the Afghan war in the staff of Soviet troops, as well as for courage and selflessness shown in Artsakh war Ashot Bezhanian, Gevorg Grigorian, Artur Khachikian, Gevorg Haroutiunian (posthumously), Armen Hovhannisian, and Stepan Sargsian were awarded Combat Service medal.

According to the report of the RA President's Press Office, under Serzh Sargsyan's another decree, merited officer of state security bodies, Soviet Union hero Gevorg Vardanian was awarded Order of Honor.

4. SERZH SARGSYAN: "THIS YEAR WE ARE OBLIGED TO INCREASE TENFOLD ATTENTION TO VILLAGE" [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/16/09]

On February 14, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan convened a working consultation to discuss issues regarding RA regions' 2008 socio-economic development and summing up the implemented programs, revelation of current problems, and coordination of the work to be done in the coming months and raising their efficiency. According to the report of the RA President's Press Office, RA NA Speaker, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers of Energy and Natural Resources, Agriculture, Urban Development, Governors took part in the consultation.

Opening the conversation, S. Sargsyan made a number of observations, drawing attention of government and regional government bodies heads to doing the planned work in the proper term. He considered inadmissible decelerations connected with snow cleaning work both in the capital and in regional centers and country's other communities. "There is a policy in some state government links I do not like at all, and we should stop that policy once and for all. It is when we attend to problems after they are revealed, we go behind the problems," S. Sargsyan mentioned.

He also touched upon the delays of salary payment in some comprehensive schools lately. S. Sargsyan gave an instruction to exclude such manifestations.

Touching upon preparation for spring agricultural works, S. Sargsyan said: "We are obliged this year to increase tenfold our attention to the villages, our villagers, those creating production and raw materials. In that issue both my attention and the attention of the government will be great, and we should be able, including here, to mitigate the world economic crisis consequences on our economy."

S. Sargsyan gave an instruction to work in the direction of introduction of concrete criteria of estimating efficiency of territorial government bodies' and their heads' work. Governors were instructed to be more active and to become mediators between, on the one hand, programs of small and medium-sized business development financed by the government and local business initiatives and programs, on the other hand, at that considering creation of new jobs as a priority goal.

Touching upon large-scale construction work in Shirak and Lori this year, the President instructed to study correspondence of possibilities of manpower in those regions to the volume of construction work and to involve other regions' residents in that work if necessary.



5. ANALYST ARMEN AGHAYAN: TIMES OF OPPOSITIONISTS LACKING IDEOLOGICAL CONTENT HAVE ALREADY PASSED [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/16/09]

There are preconditions for national-political ideological change of generations in Armenia. Political analyst Armen Aghayan reported at the February 16 press conference presenting an expert report under the title Armenia: First Post-electoral Year: Developments and Changes in Public Consciousness. According to the analyst, in the 2008 elections and post-electoral developments the "12-year opposition lacking ideological content finally passed away." "Lacking ideological content, as it refused to formulate any ideological alternative to the foreign, domestic or economic policy of the authorities, it only accused the latters of various crimes, mainly, of seizing the power, and declared restoration of legal power in the country its only goal," A. Aghayan said.

In his opinion, already in the past parliamentary elections it became clear that the times of oppositionists lacking ideological content have already passed: "One thing is clear: the opposition of the new kind that cannot become fully-fledged without a serious ideological and organization basis, will have a greater possibility of carrying out a power shift," he said.

As A. Aghayan predicted it, from 2009 political fermentations will proceed not so much over the problem of power shift as the problem of "opposition shift." And the analyst expects nothing from the Armenian National Congress March 1 rally. According to him, if the opposition failed to carry out a power shift in 2008 February-March, it will especially fail to do it in 2009 March. In A. Aghayan's opinion, the current opposition has a problem of keeping its positions in the political sphere and succeeding in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

6. ANALYST ARMEN AGHAYAN: NAGORNO KARABAKH CONFLICT SETTLEMENT HAS NO NEGOTIATIONS SOLUTION [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/16/09]

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement has no negotiations, diplomatic solution. Analyst Armen Aghayan expressed such an opinion at the March 16 press conference. According to him, indeed not the negotiations format has been exhausted, but they were useless from the very start. "They could not but be a failure, as in 1994 the Artsakh war was interrupted and not finished," A. Aghayan said adding that the view is spread in Armenia that the Karabakh war has been finished, at that, with Armenians' victory. However, according to him, Azerbaijan has not been defeated finally and is not going to conciliate with the losses the Armenian people considers its victorious achievement. "For Azerbaijan, the sense of the negotiations is the continuation of the war," A. Aghayan said.

According to him, analyses show that RA President Serzh Sargsyan is ready to solve the Nagorno Karabakh problem through concessions. However, in A. Aghayan's opinion, to achieve his goals S. Sargsyan should overcome two great obstacles, Azerbaijan's bellicose disposition and Armenian people's national-historic self-consciousness. And they, according to him, are insuperable.

7. A MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION IN THE SPHERE OF MERGING WITH EUROPE SIGNED BETWEEN ARMENIAN AND POLISH FOREIGN MINISTRIES [ARMENPRESS, 02/17/09]

The visit of Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian to Poland kicked off February 16 with the meeting with Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski.

Media relations division of Armenian Foreign Ministry told Armenpress that after the face to face talk of the Foreign Ministers of the two states extended negotiations were held during which a wide circle of issues on Armenian-Polish relations, regional and international problems were discussed.

Ministers E. Nalbandian and R. Sikorski stressed the importance of conduction of regular consultations between the Foreign Ministries of the two states as another format of efficient cooperation.

They have discussed steps which will be undertaken in the direction of expansion of the cooperation in economic, educational and cultural spheres.

Particularly ideas have been exchanged on the ways of development of trade economic relations and implementation of cultural exchanges.

Armenian and Polish Foreign Ministers also had a saturated conversation on the process of cooperation between Armenia and EU and the steps to be undertaken in that sphere.

Greeting the EU Eastern cooperation proposal Minister E. Nalbandian stressed the importance of the steps of signing an agreement of free trade with EU as well as making the visa regime with EU countries easier as well as the possible support of Poland in that issue.



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E. Nalbandian presented the latest developments over Karabakh conflict regulation and the opportunities of regulation of Armenian-Turkish relations. The sides noted that the peaceful political regulation of Karabakh issue has no alternative.

Accepting Edward Nalbandian's invitation to visit Armenia, Radoslav Sikorski noted that he intends to visit Armenia during 2009.

After the meeting the Ministers signed a memorandum on cooperation between Armenian and Polish Foreign Ministries in the sphere of merging with Europe.

The meeting of the Foreign Ministers was followed by a joint press conference. In the evening R. Sikorski served an official supper in honor of E. Nalbandian.

On the same day Armenian Foreign Minister visited the Warsaw university where he delivered an extended speech on Armenia's foreign policy.

Today Edward Nalbandian is expected to meet with Polish President Lech Kachinski, Speaker of the parliament Bronislav Komorovski and the head of Senate Bogdan Borusevich.

8. GREECE AIMING TO PRESERVE "THE POSITIVE IMPETUS TO KARABAKH CONFLICT REGULATION" [ARMENPRESS, 02/17/09]

Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis told "Trend" that as OSCE chairing country Greece intends to continue its activity in preservation of the positive impetus given to the Karabakh conflict regulation process in 2008 and fully defends the OSCE Minsk group format.

"The format of activity of OSCE Minsk group is necessary", - Karamanlis said. According to the Prime Minister, Greece fully supports the efforts of the co-chairmen directed towards reaching a peaceful regulation of the conflict based on the Madrid principles.

"During the present chairmanship Greece will exert all possible efforts to prevent the conflicts and to reach their peaceful regulation", - Karamanlis said.

Greece is chairing the OSCE from January 1, 2009.

Greek prime minister stated that the country "takes the obligation to be a fair mediator for all conflicting sides and to be guided with the wish of dialogue for reaching practical results".

9. B. FASSIER SAYS CO-CHAIRS WISH TO ORGANIZE THE NEXT MEETING OF ARMENIAN AND AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENTS IN THE NEAREST FUTURE [ARMENPRESS, 02/17/09]

Visit of OSCE Minsk group co-chairs to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict region is expected for late February. The agreement on the visit of co-chairs was reached during the meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents in Zurich January 28, when the presidents expressed wish that the OSCE Minsk group co-chairs continue the works in the direction of agreeing of the positions of the sides.

As a result of the negotiations the presidents of the two states tasked their Foreign Ministers to continue the negotiation process through the cooperation with Minsk group co-chairs.

"The visit aims at making use of the favorable condition which was created after the Zurich meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents", - according to the Baku "ANS" TV channel Minsk group French co-chairman Bernard Fassier said noting that "the presidents presented their opinions on the ways of Karabakh conflict regulation to the mediators".

"The chief task of the mediators is to discuss them and present their suggestions to Foreign Ministers and Presidents", - he noted, adding that the co-chairs wish to organize the next meeting of the Presidents already in the nearest future.

Minsk group French co-chairman said he is against possible re-starting of military actions. He sees the only way of Karabakh conflict regulation "in reaching such a holistic agreement which will force the sides to make a brave decision".

10. DAMAGE AS A RESULT OF MARCH 1 EVENTS AMOUNTS TO 561.5 MILLION DRAMS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/17/09]

In 2008, the Special Investigation Service (SIS) of Armenia revealed damage of a total of 973,615,270 drams done to the state, institutions, organizations and citizens, including damage to the state - 403,184,300 drams, damage to legal entities - 402,041,870 drams, and damage to natural persons - 168,389,100 drams, the head of SIS Andranik Mirzoyan stated at the February 16 consultation dedicated to the first year of activities of the Service.

According to him, damage of 179,149,770 drams was indemnified, accused persons' property of a total of 853 million drams was seized. In this amount, 561,428,370 drams was damage as a result of



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the mass disorder in Yerevan on March 1, 2008, including damage to the state - 134,631,400 drams, damage to legal entities - 402,041,870 drams, and damage to natural persons - 24,755,100 drams (about 79.8 thousand USD).

11. PURPOSE OF UPCOMING MEETING OF OPPOSITION IS TO PAY HOMAGE TO VICTIMS OF MARCH 1 EVENTS IN YEREVAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/17/09]

Within the period envisaged by the law, there has been no response to the notification of the meeting scheduled for March 1, therefore, in accordance with the current law, a mass public event will be held in the area adjacent to the Matenadaran at 2-8 pm on March 1. The event will start with a meeting and be concluded with a march, is said in the official note sent to the head of the RA police by the member of "Republic" party's political board Artak Zeynalian.

According to him, the purpose of the event is to pay homage to the victims of the March 1 events in Yerevan. After the meeting, the participants will lay a wreath at Monument to Myasnikian - in memory of the victims. The march participants will proceed along the following route: the area adjacent to the Matenadaran - Mashtots Avenue - Grigor Lusavorich Street - Italy Street - Republic Square - Nalbandian Street - Tumanian Street - Terian Street - Northern Avenue.

12. PACE CO-RAPPORTEURS: ARMENIAN AUTHORITIES SHOULD RESPECT PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM OF GATHERINGS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/17/09]

PACE Co-rapporteurs on Armenia John Prescott and George Colombier expressed concern with the authorities' decision not to permit the Armenian National Congress to hold a peaceful rally in Yerevan center on March 1. PACE Yerevan Office reported this.

J. Prescott and G. Colombier said that on various occasions the Assembly called the authorities for completely respecting the principle of freedom of gatherings in Armenia and not making inappropriate limitations to opposition's peaceful rallies, especially in requested places. According to the Co-rapporteurs, the possibility of all political forces to organize peaceful rallies is one of the essential components of democracy. They call the Armenian authorities for permitting such rallies to take place without obstacles, in the requested places.

13. RA FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO POLAND STARTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/17/09]

Azerbaijan's disregarding the provisions stipulated by documents signed by Azerbaijan's leaders, its permanent bellicose statements, arms race, obvious violations of the limitations envisaged by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, attempts to justify possible use of force and its grounding, agitation sowing hatred between nations not only put obstacles for the negotiations process, but also are a serious threat for regional stability and security, which demands an adequate response by the international community. RA Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian stated in his speech on Armenia's foreign policy on February 16 at University of Warsaw.

As Noyan Tapan was informed by the RA Foreign Ministry Press and Information Department, before that E. Nalbandian had a meeting with Foreign Minister of Poland Radoslaw Sikorski.

The RA and Polish Foreign Ministers had a meaningful conversation on the cooperation process between Armenia and European Union and steps to be taken in that sphere. Welcoming the EU Eastern Partnership proposal, E. Nalbandian attached importance to the steps to be taken to sign a free trade agreement with EU, as well as to facilitate the entrance visa regime to EU countries and Poland's possible assistance in that issue.

E. Nalbandian presented the Polish Foreign Minister with the latest developments in the Nagorno Karabakh settlement negotiations and possibilities of normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations. It was mutually mentioned that the Nagorno Karabakh peaceful political settlement has no alternative.

E. Nalbandian and R. Sikorski attached importance to holding of regular consultations between the two countries' Foreign Ministries as one more format of efficient cooperation.

Steps to be taken to deepen cooperation in the spheres of economy, education, and culture were also discussed at the meeting. In particular, thoughts on development ways of trade and economic relations and on doing cultural exchanges were exchanged.

Negotiations in an enlarged staff took place after the two countries' Foreign Ministers' tete-a-tete talk. A wide range of issues regarding Armenian-Polish relations, regional and international issues were discussed during the negotiations.



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After the meeting E. Nalbandian and R. Sikorski signed a memorandum on cooperation between RA and Polish Foreign Ministries in the sphere of rapprochement with Europe.

Edward Nalbandian's meetings with Polish President Lech Kaczynski, Polish Sejm Speaker Bronislaw Komorowski, and Senate Chairman Bogdan Borusewicz are scheduled for February 17.

14. ARMENIAN DELEGATION TO TAKE PART IN OSCE PA WINTER SESSION TO BE CONVENED ON FEBRUARY 19-20 IN VIENNA [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/17/09]

The proposal on new European Security Architecture is the main subject of discussion at the OSCE PA 8th winter session to be convened on February 19-20 in Vienna. The latter's initiators are Russian and French Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Nicolas Sarkozy. The preparation process of Kazakhstan's assuming chairmanship in OSCE in 2010 will be also presented to the parliamentarians.

In addition to the parliamentary delegations of organization's 56 member-states, a delegation led by RA NA Bargavach Hayastan faction Secretary Aram Safarian will also take part in the sitting. As Noyan Tapan correspondent was informed by the delegation, sittings of Assembly's standing and three general commissions will be held during the session.

It is expected that at the Standing Committee sitting Assembly's Honorary Chairman, Assembly's Special Representative on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and Special Envoy on the situation in Georgia Goran Lennmarker will present a report on his visit to the South Caucasian states, including Armenia, in February.

15. ARMENIAN PRESIDENT RECEIVES IMF DELEGATION [ARMENPRESS, 02/18/09]

President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan received today the delegation of International Monetary Fund which consisted of the executive director of IMF Ah Backer, deputy director of Middle East and Central Asian department Lorenzo Peres, head of the Armenian mission Mark Luis and permanent representative in Armenia Ninke Omes.

Presidential press service told Armenpress that during the meeting the head of the country highly assessed the cooperation of IMF with Armenia and expressed gratitude for the support to Armenia. The president reconfirmed the readiness of the Armenian authorities to act actively for smoothing the consequences of financial-economic crisis.

During the conversation the sides also discussed issues on partnership programs of IMF and Armenia in conditions of crisis.

16. OSCE CHAIRMAN TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION IN CAUCASUS WITH THE USA SECRETARY OF STATE [ARMENPRESS, 02/18/09]

OSCE acting chairman, Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyanis will among other issues discuss the situation in Caucasus with the USA Secretary of State February 25, official representative of Greek Foreign Ministry Yorgos Kumutsakos told journalists on Tuesday in Athens.

"Topics of mutual interest will be discussed during the meetings of the Ministers in the USA including international and regional issues such as the Middle East and Caucasus as well as a number of themes which are primary for Greece such as the situation on the Balkans, relations with Turkey and the Cyprian issue", - said Kumutsakos.

As the 2009 OSCE chairman Bakoyanis announced the normalization of the South Caucasian situation as one of the priorities of her activity.

17. NA SPEAKER LEAVES FOR NAGORNO KARABAKH FEBRUARY 19 [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 02/18/09]

Delegation headed by the Armenian NA speaker Hovik Abrahamyan will leave February 19 for Nagorno Karabakh on a two-day official visit. Armenian NA press service told Armenpress that the delegation headed by the NA speaker consists of Armenian Vice Prime Minister, Territorial Governance Minister Armen Gevorgyan, head of the NA's staff Gegham Gharibjanian, the chairman of the NA's European Integration Affairs permanent commission Avet Adonts, chairman of the NA's foreign relations permanent commission Armen Rustamian, and others.

On February 19 the NA speaker will have a face-to-face conversation with President of Nagorno Karabakh Bako Sahakyan afterwards the talks will continue in an extended format. On the same day with



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the participation of Hovik Abrahamyan and his Karabakh counterpart Ashot Ghulian the 6th session of Armenian-Karabakh inter-parliamentary cooperation commission will take place.

On February 20 the NA speaker and members of the delegation will put a wreath in the Stepanakert town memorial. On the same day the delegation will leave for Shoushi.

The delegation headed by the NA speaker will arrive back February 20.

BUSINESS

18. ARMENIA NEGOTIATES WITH EU FOR SIGNING FREE TRADE AGREEMENT [ARMENPRESS, 02/17/09]

Armenia is conducting negotiations with EU for signing an agreement on the implementation of free trade.

Press service of the Armenian Economy Ministry told Armenpress that the agreement supposes a higher level of implementation of trade and good conditions. An EU fact-finding group has already arrived in Armenia and will meet February 18-19 with different experts, heads of ministries and departments to discuss Armenia's legislative acts referring to trade.

As a result of discussions it will be clear what issues exist in Armenia's legislative field and what changes must be made. The process of signing of the agreement demands long time and as a result of 2-year work it will be possible to sign an agreement which will give an opportunity to the Armenian producers export their products without preconditions and duty free.

Armenia has signed free trade agreements with Russia, USA, Canada and Japan.

19. EVEN WITHOUT GLOBAL CRISIS, ARMENIAN ECONOMY HAD SERIOUS PROBLEMS, ARMEN AGHAYAN SAYS [Aravot, 02/17/09]

Even without the global crisis, Armenian economy had serious problems related to the end of the so-called rehabilitation growth of the economy. Analyst Armen Aghayan expressed this opinion at the February 16 press conference. In his words, as a result of the earthquake, the break-up of the intereconomic links of the USSR, the war and blockade, a mass outflow of labor force, the energy crisis, an inefficient privatization, and other mistakes of the government, the production capacities of the country suffered a deep decline in the early 1990s. In the opinion of A. Aghayan, in the postwar years, especially when the Metsamor nuclear power plant was restarted and the gas consumption volumes grew, the Armenian economy's "spring compressed under the weight of circumstances" was to re-open quickly to its previous state. "As a result, a high and even two-digit economic growth was registered for several years. The springy period finished so the rapid economic growth rates were to decline sharply," he said.

According to the analyst, among the domestic problems of Armenian economy are the accumulation of a considerable budget deficit, and a great polarization in income distribution.

20. ALL-ARMENIAN ASSOCIATION OF POWER SPECIALISTS NGO PLANS TO CONSOLIDATE POTENTIAL OF ARMENIAN POWER SPECIALISTS AROUND WORLD [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/17/09]

The main purpose of All-Armenian Association of Power Specialists NGO registered in 2009 is to invite those power specialists who work in the Diaspora and want to return to Armenia, as well as to solve some problems, including the development of Armenia's energy sector and the export of its services by consolidating the potential of power specialists of Armenia and the Diaspora, the chairman of NGO Slavik Sargsyan said during an interview with NT correspondent.

According to him, in the Soviet time, Armenia had experts (famous throughout the USSR) specialized in repairs and assemblage of energy facilities and the energy sector's innovation. Power engineering specialists of Armenia were sent on mission to Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Vietnam, and Cuba. A lot of power specialists from Armenia now work in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, many have changed their speciality. About 300 experts of the Hrazdan Thermal Power Plant together with their families have gone to Russia in recent years.

In his opinion, the return of power specialists will contribute to the fact that they will bring the advanced experience of energy technologies to Armenia. It is envisaged that an organization specialized in repairs of energy facilities will form in Armenia and it will carry out repair and assembling work both in Armenia and abroad. It is also planned to create a database of Armenian power specialists and an all-Armenian network, and the Association is likely to have offices in other countries.



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It was mentioned that concentrating the potential of Armenian power experts will enable to keep the technical equipment of Armenia's energy system at a high level. Besides, the Association envisages creating an educational center with the aim of training young employees to do repair, assembling and scientific work.

As regards the activities of the Association in other countries, the successful export of energy sector's services may ensure an inflow of hundreds of millions of dollars to Armenia and creation of 1.5-2 thousand high-paid jobs. He said: "If we succeed in penetrating some part of Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian markets of the indicated services, we can consider our task as mostly accomplished. For example, Russia has some capacities for repairs of energy facilities, but the number of its experts is insufficient. Many of my friends work in Russia's energy system; they hold high posts or are well-qualified experts. They can be of great use to the Association. The correct management of an expert's work is important here so that he will be appreciated and can get satisfaction from his job and pay and use his knowledge and experience to the full".

In order to describe the field of the power specialists' opportunities, the chairman of the NGO noted that before the war in Iraq, his friend who is the head of a big energy company signed an 800 million dollar agreement on repairs of energy facilities in that country, but later it became impossible to implement that agreement.

"On the other hand, one should not forget that Armenia has unused energy resources, and if we succeed in supplying power to border settlements at differentiated, lower tariffs, these regions will develop through formation of new production," S. Sargsyan underlined.

Speaking about assistance they expect from the government he said that first of all, they are going to apply to the RA Ministry of Diaspora with the aim of receiving support to organize an all-Armenian conference of power specialists in Armenia to help establish links between Armenian and Diasporan experts and ensure their involvement in the Association's work in some way or another. In his words, the ministry plans to hold all-Armenian conferences of architects, lawyers and bankers this year, and he expressed a hope that a conference of power engineering experts will be organized as well. "Prior to that, it is necessary to increase the number of the organization's members in order to enhance its influence and help it establish links," S. Sargsyan noted. As regards the governmental assistance in other directions, he expressed an opinion that one way of efficiently using the amortized deductions of energy enterprises is allocating some part of these deductions for the creation of training and laboratory centers at the Association. Their organization also aims to promote the agricultural development by providing an opportunity to use machinery serviced at low prices. The matter also concerns the use of alternative energy resources, in particular solar energy.

The Association also envisages implementing social programs. Being a participant in the Artsakh freedom war, S. Sargsyan said: "We intend to establish a fund with revenues of the enterprises to be set up by the Association and to allocate its money to support families of perished azatamartiks (freedom fighters) and to keep the azatamartiks who survived the war in the center of our attention".

Persons and organizations interested in cooperation with the All-Armenian Association of Power Specialists can contact it at the following address: #1a, 3/2 Arabkir 37th Street, Yerevan; phone: 3741 25-92-86, 3741 094-055-600; e-mail: paaesarm@gmail.com

21. AUCTION OF BJNI PLANT ENDS, ONE BID RECEIVED [Azg, 02/17/09]

The compulsory electronic re-auction of the property and property rights of "Bjni" Mineral Water Plant company finished on February 16, at 1 pm.

According to the press service of the National Service for Compulsory Enforcement of Court Acts, a bid was filed during 10 days of the auction. Based on it, the sale price of the lot made 4 billion 441.5 million drams. Under Article 35.2 Point 6 of the RA Law on Public Bargaining, the participant who won at the auction shall transfer the lot's purchase price to the deposit account or the cashbox of the Service or pay the lot's purchase price (minus the prepayment) within 3 bank days after the end of the auction.

To recap, the prepayment for participation in the auction made 222 million 68 thousand drams. Under Article 35.1 Point 8 of the indicated law, no data on auction participants is subject to publication. The reserve price was established at 4 million 441 million 358 thousand drams at the re-auction. The auction began on February 5.



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22. BJNI'S AUCTION WAS ORGANIZED IN VIOLATION OF LAW, DIRECTOR OF PLANT CLAIMS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/17/09]

In connection with the end of the compulsory electronic re-auction of the property and property rights of "Bjni" Mineral Water Plant CJSC on February 16, the director general of the company L. Harutyunian made a statement on the same day, reminding that the company has repeatedly said that the auction process has been organized in violation of the law. Besides, several cases related to the company are now in the RA Administrative Court.

The directorship of "Bjni" warns the possible buyer of the company's property to refrain from paying within 3 days as "otherwise this buyer will have to return the company's property to the company judicially in the future and indemnify the company for its losses".

"We deem it necessary to warn the person purchasing the company's property about the legal consequences:

1. The auction may be declared invalid if it was organized and held in violation of the law (we remind that the enforcement procedure was to be suspended as the lot's price was lower than the demand, the compulsory enforcer did not take into account VAT to be paid (which made 20%, and 16.67% of the total amount).

2. The events related to the company are well-known, and every potential buyer was informed about the violations cited by the company.

3. Under Article 275 of the RA Civil Code, a property can be demanded back even from a good faith purchaser (we have all reasons to claim that the given purchaser is not a good faith one), if the owner left the possession of property against his (her) will. We have always been against the alienation of the company's property.

4. The purchaser will have a problem with use of trade marks," is said in L. Harutyunian's statement.

23. AGREEMENT ON CONTROL OF INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION SIGNED WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE SUBPROGRAM [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/17/09]

The Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) - Armenia SNCO and the Consortium of Consulting Engineers Salzgitter GmbH, AHT Group AG (Germany) and Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction on February 16 signed an agreement, by which the Consortium will control the construction of infrastructures within the framework of the Irrigated Agriculture subprogram. The agreement was signed by CEO of MCA-Armenia Ara Hovsepian and the head of the Consortium's working group Valdemar Palmtag.

The agreement envisages control of the restoration of 6 main canals and 7 gravity systems, the repairs of 17 pumping stations, as well as the restoration of a drainage system and several inter-farm canals in Ararat Valley. The Consortium will also organize working seminars on quality control and the use of international construction technologies, standards and requirements.

The cost of the agreement makes 2.9 million dollars. It will be in effect during the implementation of the MCA-Armenia Compact.

24. HRANT VARDANIAN: GRAND HOLDING CONTINUES TO OPERATE NORMALLY [Azg, 02/17/09]

"The forecasts that all economic entities will suffer a decline or be in difficulties because of the global financial and economic crisis are ambiguous," the chairman of Grand Holding Hrant Vardanian said at the February 17 press conference. According to him, the companies of Grand Holding continue to operate normally. Besides, new programs are being developed, in particular it is envisaged bringing new conveyers for tobacco processing and cigarette production to Armenia as well as launching production of napkins and toilet paper. "Until now we imported toilet paper from other countries, but now we will organize its production," the businessman said, adding that the company has collected about 4 thousand tons of scrap paper.

H. Vardanian announced that on the initiative of Grand Holding, an apartment building for poor families is being constructed in Yerevan's Shengavit community. The company is also building a sports complex in the same community and a church in the city of Masis.

Speaking about the sale of "Bjni" Plant, H. Vardanian noted that it is important not to lose "Bjni" mineral water as a national value, and it does not matter who will purchase the plant. He refuted the information published in Pakagits newspaper that he allegedly tries to become the prime minister. "I will gradually retire," the businessman said.



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25. ACCORDING TO GURGEN SARGSYAN, ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK ALSO SHOWS INTEREST IN IRAN-ARMENIA RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION PROJECT [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/17/09]

Receiving the Head of the Transport and Communication Unit of the Central Asia and Western Department of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Hong Vang on February 16, the Armenian Minister of Transport and Communication Gurgen Sargsyan underlined the importance of constructing a North-South road-transport corridor which will ensure transit transportation of goods, in addition to Armenia-Georgia road-transport communication.

According to spokeswoman for the minister Susanna Tonoyan, speaking about the opportunities of constructing an Iran-Armenia railway, G. Sargsyan said that the Asian Development Bank also shows interest in this project.

H. Vang said that the technical studies on construction of the North-South corridor have been included in 2009 programs of ADB, and the bank has already announced its decision to allocate a one million dollar grant with this aim. In his words, the results of the tender for the project advisor are currently being summarized. The advisor will start its work from mid April. As regards financing the construction of the corridor, the ADB's representative proposed using a multi-stage version.

DIASPORA

26. THE ONLY ARMENIAN IN DHAKA WORRIED ABOUT FURTHER FATE OF OLD ARMENIAN CHURCH [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/17/09]

The large Armenian church in the old quarter of Dhaka, the Bangladeshi capital, may become neglected. According to Jakarta Globe (Indonesia), this worry was expressed by the only Armenian living in the city - Michael Joseph Martin who now lives alone in an enormous mansion on the church grounds. Martin, whose full name is Mikel Housep Martirosian, looks after the church and its graveyard where 400 of his compatriots are buried, including his wife, who died three years ago.

Michael Joseph Martin is guarded about his exact age and is reluctant to accept he will be the last in a long line of Armenians to make a major contribution to the history of Bangladesh.

Dhaka was once home to thousands of migrants from the former Soviet republic who grew to dominate the city's trade and business life. But Martin, in his 70s, is now the only one left. "When I die, maybe one of my three daughters will fly in from Canada to keep our presence here alive," Martin said hopefully, speaking broken Bengali with a thick accent. "Or perhaps other Armenians will come from somewhere else".

Martin came to Dhaka in 1942 during World War II, following in the footsteps of his father, who had settled in the region decades earlier. They joined an Armenian community in Bangladesh dating back to the 16th century.

ARTS

27. MONUMENT TO WORLD FAMOUS DUDUK-PLAYER JIVAN GASPARIAN TO BE PLACED ON KH. ABOVIAN STREET OF THE CAPITAL [Azg, 02/17/09]

With the decision of mayor of Yerevan, monument to the world famous duduk-player Jivan Gasparian will be placed on Kh. Abovian street of the capital.

Mayor of Yerevan Yervand Zakharian told Armenpress that the tender will be soon announced, and after summing up its results the best variant of the architectural project of the monument will be selected.

28. FEBRUARY 19 TO BE MARKED AS BOOK PRESENTING DAY IN ARMENIA [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 02/17/09]

Hence, February 19 will be marked as a day of book presenting in Armenia.

Head of the Armenian Writers' Union Levon Ananian told Armenpress that the day is symbolic as it is the day of 140th anniversary of Armenian great poet H. Tumanian. On the initiative of the union a task group has been set up which will in collaboration with Armenian Education and Science and Culture Ministries and the "Book" fund hold events dedicated to that day.



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“We want to reanimate the reading which suffers a crisis nowadays and to draw the attention of people on the books and all these we try to encourage and restore by presenting book”, - head of the Writers' Union said.

According to L. Ananian the initiative which is being organized for the first time will find a wide response. Enough number of literature has already been gathered in the schools, universities and libraries of Armenian provinces and capital for implementation of the mentioned event.

Corresponding books have been provided by the Writers' Union, “Zangak”, “Arevik” publications, “Bookinist” shop, the National library and other organizations.

During the same event in February next year “The best reader pupil” award-giving will be held.

Within the frameworks of events dedicated to the 140th anniversary of H. Tumanian open lectures, school events and creative contests will be organized in the Armenian secondary educational establishments.

Already officially adopted “Day of the Native Language” will this time be marked within the frameworks of “Tumanian week” on February 21.

This is also an occasion to stress the importance of preservation the purity of the native language for the pupils.

SOCIAL

29. ARMENIA TO TAKE PART IN INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON MIGRATION AND ANTI-TRAFFICKING ISSUES [ARMENPRESS, 02/17/09]

Armenia will take part in an international conference dedicated to the migration and anti-trafficking issues organized by the International Labor Organization. The conference will be held February 18-20 in Tbilisi.

Head of the program of Armenian office of the organization Nver Sargsian told Armenpress that issues on migration and trafficking will be discussed, representatives of the participant countries of the conference will get acquainted with each other's experience, achievements and flows of the mentioned sphere will be presented.

During the meeting mechanisms will be worked out to regulate the issues, to find their possible solutions and to fight against illegal actions efficiently.

Representatives from Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Germany, Austria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Italy, Poland and Czech Republic will take part in the conference.

The Armenian delegation will consist of representatives of Armenian Labor and Social Affairs, Foreign Ministries, the Migration Agency of Armenian Territorial Governance Ministry, OSCE, UNDP, Armenian force institutions, NGOs and the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen.

30. “NAIRIT” FACTORY INTENDS TO SIGN CONTRACT AGREEMENT OF 82 MILLION EURO [ARMENPRESS, 02/17/09]

“Nairit” factory intends to sign a contract agreement of 82 million euros. Head of the “Nairit factory” company Vahan Melkonian told Armenpress that the agreement is possible to be signed already in March. Negotiations over it were held earlier but the process was postponed and the primary sums of the money have been reduced 2-3 times.

“There are 2 main aspects in the process of getting of the credit – stabilization and modernization”, - he said, considering presentation of the identity of the creditor and a range of conditions of crediting early.

Speaking about the workers of the factory who are in the obligatory stoppage V. Melkonian noted that the main part of them will return to their works from March 1, and according to the working schedule the others will also be called during March. As of today the factory has nearly 3000 workers.

31. ARMENIAN-GERMAN UNIVERSITY AND THE ARMENIAN OFFICE OF EUROPEAN MOVEMENT TO FUNCTION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORKS OF EUROPEAN HOUSE [ARMENPRESS, 02/17/09]

The newly established Armenian-German University in Armenia as well as the office of European movement will function within the frameworks of European house which has been newly established in Yerevan.



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Head of the European movement in Armenia Viktor Yengibarian told Armenpress that through the cooperation of the mentioned institutions open lectures, discussions and roundtables on European realities, developments and political life are intended to be regularly conducted in the European house.

According to him, before the official opening for already two months succeeded discussions were held with the participation of French ambassador to Armenia Serzh Smessow and Polish ambassador to Armenia Tomas Knothe within the frameworks of the institution.

V. Yengibarian informed that the founder of the German university in Armenia and honorable president professor Paul Imhof has arrived in the country to take part in the opening ceremony of the European house on February 18.

Head of the council of directors of the German university in Armenia Edward Saroyan and others will take part in the event. The European house is located in 47 Aygedzor, Yerevan address.

32. "RESOURCE-CENTER OF SUPPORT TO FIGHTING AGAINST TRAFFICKING" TO OPEN OFFICIALLY IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 02/18/09]

"Resource-center of support to the fighting against trafficking" will officially open February 26 in Yerevan.

It was founded in November 2008 and by now organizational works have been conducted. The works of establishment of the center are conducted within the frameworks of "Program of fighting against trafficking" of OSCE Yerevan office.

Consultant of the center on social issues Eleonora Virabian told Armenpress that the upcoming programs of the center will be presented February 26 and the issues existing in the legal sphere will be discussed. Representatives from Armenian Police, Labor and Social Affairs and Foreign Ministries, NGOs and other interested bodies will be present at the event.

E. Virabian said that the establishment of the center aims at coordinated activity of the victim in the fighting against trafficking and taking into consideration its priorities.

The center must collect information on fighting against trafficking, analyze and point out the flaws and repetitions refreshing the information by the time.

A "typical character" of victim of trafficking will be worked out for those who leave Armenia and arrive; it will help to adopt the necessary approaches. The center will also organize training and thematic discussions and meetings. It is provided with technology for anti-trafficking events and for getting necessary information.

Armenian Labor and Social Affairs Ministry is the main partner of the "Program of fighting against trafficking": the center functions affiliated to it as it is the main institution which deals with the issues of support and re-integration of the victims. The program will last for 22 months.

33. FROM 92 COMMUNITIES OF GEGHARKUNIK KINDER GARDENS FUNCTION IN 28 [ARMENPRESS, 02/18/09]

From 92 communities of Gegharkunik province kinder gardens function in 28. An official from the education, culture, sport and youth department of the governor's office told Armenpress that overall 48 kinder gardens function in the province 23 of which are in the rural communities, and 25 kinder gardens are in 5 town communities. In other communities either there are no buildings of kinder garden or the existing ones do not function as a result of years of under fulfillment of the local budget and for other reasons.

Big communities such as Vardenik and Nerkin Getashen which have population of 8 000-9 000 do not have buildings of kinder garden by now.

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Established in 1906, AGBU (www.agbu.org) is the world's largest non-profit Armenian organization. Headquartered in New York City with an annual budget of \$36 million, AGBU preserves and promotes the Armenian identity and heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs, annually touching the lives of some 400,000 Armenians on six continents.