



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Monday, February 23, 2009

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. EDWARD NALBANDIAN: ARMENIA IS AMONG COUNTRIES EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN STABLE GEORGIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

The joint press conference of the Armenian and Georgian Foreign Ministers Edward Nalbandian and Grigol Vashadze was dedicated to summing up the results of the Georgian Foreign Ministry delegation's visit to Yerevan.

The Ministers said that issues regarding bilateral political, economic, and cultural cooperation were discussed during the meeting. In particular, they had discussed processes of fulfillment of agreements reached as a result of Armenian and Georgian Presidents' meeting last September and as a result of Armenian-Georgian Intergovernmental Commission's December 2008 sitting.

"We attach much importance to economic cooperation with Georgia. Armenia is among the countries extremely interested in a stable Georgia. And not because the most part of our commodity flow goes through Georgia and our diaspora of more than 300 thousand people lives there, but because our two countries are connected by centuries-old brotherhood and traditional cooperation ties," Nalbandian stated.

It was reported that Days of Georgian Culture will be held in Armenia in March, at that, the very Georgian Foreign Minister Vashadze will head the Georgian delegation. And Edward Nalbandian will visit Tbilisi in April at the invitation of his Georgian counterpart.

With regard to the latest developments in the Samtskhe-Javakheti Georgian region populated with Armenians Vashadze stated that two citizens of Georgia were arrested for the crime they committed. According to him, Georgians could be also arrested in their place: national belonging plays no role here. "There is no problem of Javakheti, like in the whole Georgia there are socio-economic problems there. That region is one of the regions of Georgia, and the latter is in an extremely hard situation after the war with Russia. If someone thinks that people live better in Kutaisi, it is not so, on the contrary, they often live worse," the Georgian Foreign Minister stated. According to him, just the process of Armenians' integration in Georgia goes on not so quickly as the Georgian Armenians and the government of Georgia would like it. "Georgian government's goal is to protect the rights of all peoples living in Georgia," Grigol Vashadze stated.

Both Ministers assured that there are no problems the two countries' governments could not solve in cooperation.

2. EDWARD NALBANDIAN AND PETER SEMNEBY DISCUSS EASTERN PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

Eastern Partnership initiative was discussed at the February 19 meeting of Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian and Special Representative of the EU to the South Caucasus Peter Semneby. The interlocutors expressed a hope that cooperation in this format will open new opportunities for extending relations with European structures and EU member states. The results of E. Nalbandian's visits to Warsaw and Prague were discussed as well. Minister Nalbandian and Ambassador Semneby also touched upon the negotiation process of the Artsakh problem, as well as the opportunities for regulation of Armenian-Turkish relations.

3. ARMENIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE: THE SUB-UNITS OF ARMED FORCES DID NOT USE FIRE-ARMS ON MARCH 1 [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

In response to the comments on the subject "The Participation of the Army on March 1st" which were made by Levon Zurabian, coordinator of the Armenian National Congress (ANC), and Vladimir Karapetian, ANC's PR officer, at Urbat Club on February 18, the RA ministry of defence presented its explanations on February 19.

According to the press service of the ministry, the Armenian president's decree of March 1, 2008 on declaration of a state of emergency formed a basis for the use of armed forces. After 10:25 pm when the presidential decree on declaring a state of emergency was published, by order of the defence



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minister, the deployment of sub-units of the armed forces (only sub-units of Yerevan garrison) began with the aim of taking the objects of special importance under protection.

"The sub-units of Yerevan garrison were ordered to refrain from using force. The sub-units of armed forces not only did not use fire-arms but did not take any action aimed at restoring public order.

Such actions were taken by sub-units of Armenian police, including police troops, whose personnel wear the same field uniform as the personnel of the armed forces of Armenia. For that reason some have formed a wrong opinion that armed forces took part in the restoration of public order," the statement of the RA ministry of defence reads.

To recap, at the February 18 press conference the representatives of the Armenian National Congress stated that the public commission on inquiry into the March 1 events has irrefutable evidence that the Armenian authorities illegally used the army to suppress the people protesting against election rigging. The opposition is going to request the RA ombudsman that he apply to the RA Constitutional Court and dispute the constitutionality of the orders to use the army and armed forces on March 1.

4. ELECTIONS OF MEMBERS OF YEREVAN COUNCIL OF ALDERMEN TO BE HELD ON MAY 31 [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 02/21/09]

According to the decision taken at the February 19 sitting of the Armenian government, elections of members of the council of aldermen of the city of Yerevan will be held on May 31, 2009, NT was informed by the press service of the government.

5. OPPOSITION DEMANDS THAT OMBUDSMAN CHALLENGE LEGALITY OF ORDERS OF USING ARMED FORCES ON MARCH 1 AT CONSTITUTIONAL COURT [Aravot, 02/21/09]

The irrefutable proof of the Public Committee on Study of the 2008 March 1 events is evidence that in order to suppress the people complaining against the electoral falsifications the authorities illegally used the army. Levon Zurabian, the Armenian National Congress (ANC) Coordinator, stated at the February 18 press conference. He said that the opposition is going to apply to the RA Ombudsman demanding that the latter challenge at the Constitutional Court (CC) correspondence to the Constitution of the orders to use the army and armed forces on March 1.

Video recordings were shown during the press conference of how on March 1 at about 14:00 the BTR internal troops armored car appeared in the territory near the monument to A. Miasnikian, in the rally place. According to Vladimir Karapetian, a member of the Public Committee, ANC Foreign Contacts Coordinator, bringing that car against the peaceful demonstrators caused the natural and legal response of the latter envisaged by Article 42, RA Criminal Code, necessary defence.

"In consideration of the circumstance that after the midday there were more than 50 units of military materiel with the RA Defence Ministry state registration numbers in Yerevan, one can assert that several dozens of Defence Ministry armed representatives were involved in the law enforcers' actions," V. Karapetian said. He added that there was a BRDM armored car near the government building on that day, which is at the Military Police disposal. It was also mentioned that the BMP car arriving in Yerevan at 20:00 from its dislocation place, Lori or Tavush region, started off at least 8 hours ago, that is, before announcing the state of emergency. V. Karapetian reported that the Committee asks the fact-finding group to study all mentioned materials.

6. PARLIAMENTARY AD HOC COMMITTEE ON INQUIRY INTO MARCH 1 EVENTS SHOULD ADOPT TOUGHER POSITION, GURGEN ARSENIAN BELIEVES [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

"The current situation in Armenia is unprecedented in modern criminology: there were three victims, four carabines, four shots and we are unable to identify which shots caused human death," member of the National Assembly ad hoc committee on inquiry into March 1 events, chairman of the United Labor Party (ULP) Gurchen Arsenian said at the February 20 press conference, when addressing the problem of the citizens killed as a result of the use of special weapons by the police in Yerevan on March 1. In his words, if the appropriate bodies are unable to find out whose shots killed three participants in the rally, two opinions form involuntarily. The first is that the state considers those killed as rebels and does not care about their deaths, and the second opinion is that all the three persons were killed as a result of actions of a fanatic-policeman. In order to refute these opinions, according to G. Arsenian, it is necessary to reveal the truth.

The leader of ULP added that the ad hoc committee's work is like a pyramid, in conquering whose top the committee members "meet with stiff resistance". G. Arsenian, however, did not clarify who offers



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that resistance. He only said that the committee "should adopt a tougher position and invite some high-ranking officials - former head of the police and former defence minister for a talk". In his words, if armed forces were used against demonstrators prior to declaration of the state of emergency, it is a violation of the law.

7. GURGEN ARSENIAN: THERE IS VIOLATION OF RULES IN GOVERNMENT'S ACTIVITIES, AND PRESIDENT DOES NOT RESTRAIN IT [Aravot, 02/21/09]

"It seems to our managers that representatives of our political or economic segment are simple-minded and can swallow anything that is presented as a thin porridge to the people," chairman of the United Labor Party (ULP) Gurgjen Arsenian stated when discussing the Armenian government's anti-crisis measures. According to G. Arsenian, he is surprised at these measures - in the negative sense.

Comparing the years of Robert Kocharian's presidency with one year of Serzh Sargsyan's term of office, G. Arsenian said: "There were definite rules of game under president Kocharian and they were not violated regardless of who was whose friend. Today there is a violation of rules in the government's activities, and the president does not restrain it". In his words, the auction of "Bjni" Plant has also left a negative impression.

8. POLICY OF SMALL STEPS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED FOR IMPROVEMENT OF ARMENIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS, DPA CHAIRMAN SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

Armenian authorities should conduct a policy of small and effective steps in the issue of improvement of Armenian-Turkish relations, chairman of the Democratic Party of Armenia (DPA) Aram Sargsyan said at the February 20 press conference. In his words, some activity in terms of improvement in the relations between two countries has been recently observed, and there are some expectations in this respect.

He said that Armenia's relations with Turkey were at a zero level for a long time so would be wrong to "receive them with open arms at once". Besides, in the opinion of A. Sargsyan, no one can predict the consequences of further steps.

9. RUBEN HAYRAPETIAN: I BOUGHT "BJNI" SO THAT PEOPLE WILL NOT REMAIN UNEMPLOYED [Azg, 02/21/09]

Deputy of the RA National Assembly Ruben Hayrapetian on February 20 met with reporters and answered their questions about his purchase of "Bjni" Plant at an auction recently. He assured the reporters that he has bought the plant so that people will not remain unemployed. In response to the question about why he took a special interest in production of mineral waters, Hayrapetian replied: "If I examine any other business and find it profitable, I will purchase it as well". To recap, "Bjni" was purchased at approximately 14.5 million dollars at the re-auction.

The businessman confessed that his relations with Bjni's former owner Khachatur Sukiasian were "bad for years on end". In his words, he has always been on good terms with Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan's brother, NA deputy Sashik Sargsyan.

Responding to the question about whether it is moral to buy a business which, according to a widespread opinion, the authorities have "snatched" from the Sukiasians because of Khachatur Sukiasian's opposition orientation, Hayrapetian said: "They'd better see what they bought or snatched at the time - was it moral or not? When they admit having behaved immorally, then I also behaved in the same way".

10. IT IS PROPOSED EXTENDING TERM OF POWERS OF NA AD HOC COMMITTEE ON INQUIRY INTO MARCH 1 EVENTS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 15 [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

During the 4-day session of the RA National Assembly to start on February 23, it is envisaged discussing the draft decision on making an amendment to the NA's Decision on Creation of an Ad Hoc Committee of the National Assembly on Inquiry into the Events of March 1-2 in Yerevan and their Reasons. At the February 20 sitting of the NA Standing Committee on State and Legal Issues, a positive conclusion was made about inclusion of the indicated draft decision on the draft agenda of the upcoming 4-day session.

The draft was prepared by the head of "RPA" faction Galust Sahakian, member of the same faction Sukias Avetisian, the head of "Orinats Yerkir" faction Heghine Bisharian and the head of "ARF"



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faction Vahan Hovhannisian. By the draft, it is proposed extending the term of activities of the ad hoc committee until September 15, 2009, which is conditioned by the necessity to make the committee's final conclusion most complete.

To recap, by the above mentioned decision taken on June 16, 2008, the term of powers of the ad hoc committee was until October 25. Later it was extended until February 25, 2009.

11. ARMENIAN-ITALIAN BILATERAL ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED [ARMENPRESS, 02/23/09]

The delegation headed by the Secretary of National Security Council Arthur Baghdasarian will leave today for Italy at the invitation of State Secretary of Italy's Security Council Janni Letta.

The delegation consists of head of National Security staff Artashes Avoyan, deputy defense minister Ara Nazarian, head of president's staff, heads of foreign affairs, national security divisions, Gyumri and Gavar deputy mayors.

Press service of Armenia's National Security Council told Armenpress that Arthur Baghdasarian will meet with the deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers of Italy, State Secretary of Italy's Security Council Janni Letta, Home Affairs Minister Roberto Marroni, European Communities Minister Andrea Ronki and other top officials.

Arthur Baghdasarian will also meet with the representatives of Armenian community of Rome. The visit will last until February 26 during which a wide-range of issues on Armenian-Italian bilateral relations will be discussed as well as memorandums will be signed.

BUSINESS

12. GDP OF ARMENIA DECLINES BY 0.7% IN JANUARY 2009 AS COMPARED WITH JANUARY 2008 [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

Armenia's GDP amounted to 132 bln 7.3 mln drams (about 435 mln USD) in January 2009, declining by 0.7% on January 2008. The index-deflator of GDP made 99.7%, the Head of the RA National Statistical Service Stepan Mnatsakanian announced at the February 20 press conference.

Industrial production made 41 bln 723.9 mln drams, declining by 6.5% on January 2008; gross agricultural output amounted to 13 bln 381.3 mln drams, growing by 0.4%; construction volumes made 11 bln 135 mln drams, growing by 13.4%.

Retail trade made 61 bln 974 mln drams, increasing by 5.9% on January of last year; the services amounted to 49 bln 792 mln drams, growing by 1.4%.

The consumer price index made 104%, the index of prices of manufacturers' production made 91.2% as compared with January 2008.

The number of the officially registered unemployed made 75.7 thousand in late January 2009, growing by 4.7% on the same month of last year. The average monthly nominal salary made 94.246 drams in Armenia in January 2009, exceeding by 14.4% the index of January 2008.

Foreign trade of Armenia amounted to 254.3 million USD in January 2009. Exports made 34.2 mln USD (43.9% fall), imports made 220.1 mln USD (20.2% fall as compared with January 2008).

The average exchange rate of the Armenian dram against the US dollar made 305.5 drams in January 2009.

13. CREDIT GIVEN TO ZANGEZUR COPPER AND MOLYBDENUM ENTERPRISE TO BE USED TO ELIMINATE DAMAGE DONE TO ENTERPRISE BY GLOBAL CRISIS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

The 10 million dollar credit provided to Zangezur Copper and Molybdenum Enterprise by Armenian government will be used to eliminate the damage done to the enterprise by the global crisis, the director of the enterprise Maxim Hakobian said at the February 19 press conference.

According to him, the current jobs will be kept and 200 new jobs will be created thanks to the credit. Although copper and molybdenum prices have considerably fallen in the international market, it is envisaged increasing molybdenum production by 75%, copper production by 35%. The enterprise director said that the wages of employees will not decline, on the contrary, they will rise. "The more they work, the more they will receive," he noted.

In the words of M. Hakobian, the state should implement assistance programs at copper and molybdenum enterprises of Kapan and Agarak as well. "These enterprises have no right to stand idle, they will benefit in case of implementing serious projects," he stated.



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14. ARDSHININVESTBANK RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATE [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

Ardshininvestbank has received an international ISO 9001:2000 certificate of the quality management system. The certificate was granted by AB Certification independent audit company (France) in December 2008 based on the positive conclusion of the audit of the bank's conformity to the quality management standard.

In the process of certification, the bank was cooperating with Integrated Management Solutions organization.

The Chairman of Ardshininvestbank's Board Aram Andreasian said the certificate was received as a result of considerable work done by the bank with the aim of introducing high quality and modern banking services and making this process most manageable and reliable.

15. IN OPINION OF MINISTER OF ECONOMY, PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR SIGNING ARMENIA-EU FREE TRADE AGREEMENT TO LAST 3-5 YEARS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

On February 19 the EU's fact-finding group that arrived in Yerevan to map out a preparatory process for future possible negotiations of signing a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement has summarized the work done during its 3-day visit.

The 23-expert group met with representatives of various Armenian ministries and departments. The obstacles to trade, issues related to customs administration and trade facilitation, origin of goods, etc. were discussed with Armenian experts. The head of the fact-finding group, Director of the European Commission's Directorate General for Trade Eva Synowiec expressed satisfaction with joint work. She proposed that Armenian side present exhaustive written answers to the unclarified issues by March 15.

"I think on the whole, the fact-finding mission has been successful, and we will succeed in forming an agenda because the ambitions we have concerning development programs are in line with European standards, legislation and correspond to their notions in the institutional sense," the RA minister of economy Nerses Yeritsian told reporters. In response to NT correspondent's question, he said that taking into account the scope of reforms necessary for membership, the whole preparatory process for signing an Armenia-EU agreement will last 3-5 years. "During this period we will see serious changes in terms of the business environment, establishment of certain institutions, export promotion, entrance into EU markets," the minister said.

16. ARMENIA EXTENDS ITS OPPORTUNITIES OF LINKING TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION LINES [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

ArmenTel CJSC is at the stage of signing an agreement on laying a new line linking Armenia to the international fiber-optic line passing through Turkey. CNC-Alfa company is building a fiber-optic channel in parallel with the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline. It will connect Armenia with the international fiber-optic line through Iran. Fibernet's and ArmenTel's access lines connected with the international communication lines passing through Georgia currently operate in Armenia. NT correspondent was informed about it by Armen Grigorian, Secretary of the IT Development Support Council (ITDSC), Head of the Armenian Development Agency's (ADA) Secretariate on IT Development Issues.

In terms of developing the communication networks in Armenia, he attached importance to the connection of channels of the companies providing communication services, as well as to the start of the process of signing agreements on conditions of the sale or exchange of traffic. He expressed an opinion that the current situation in this market is like "the previous situation in Armenia's gasoline market when gasoline was sold in cans".

In the words of A. Grigorian, there is no necessity for the state to intervene in the market of the last mile Internet services because the operation of other big companies (in addition to ArmenTel) in this market has led to the fall in prices and the improvement of quality of last mile services. "The providers raise the issue of use of penalties against ArmenTel at ITDSC because the hi-line service provided by ArmenTel makes competition in the "last mile" market impossible".

A. Grigorian conditioned the opportunities of further development of Armenia's Internet market by the fact that the third mobile operator - Orange Armenia will start providing its services in late 2009, while its founder - Orange company which is part of France Telecom group has a great experience in the international market of development of broadband Internet networks.



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"As regards wireless Internet, it was announced that Armenia is among those few countries that have a WiMax national network, but these networks become especially efficient in mountainous areas when they are connected to fiber-optic channels and Wi-Fi stations".

In this connection A. Grigorian underlined the importance of state investments for creation of a powerful network of fiber-optic channels in Armenia. This goal is reflected in the concept of Armenian IT sector's development approved by the government in 2008.

17. ARMENIA'S POPULATION MADE 3 MILLION 238.4 THOUSAND IN 2008, EXCEEDING 2007 INDEX BY 8.3 THOUSAND [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

Armenia's population made 3 million 238.4 thousand in 2008, growing by 8.3 thousand as compared with early 2008, the Head of the RA National Statistical Service Stepan Mnatsakanian said at the February 20 press conference.

According to him, a 2.8% growth in birth rate was recorded in 2008, while the birth rate coefficient made 12.8 ppm per 1,000 residents - against 12.4 ppm in 2007. The mortality coefficient grew by 0.2 ppm to 8.5 ppm. 15 cases of maternal mortality were recorded in 2008 - against 6 cases in 2007.

It was announced that there were 444 cases of infant deaths during the first year of life in 2008 (2.5% growth on 2007), and the infant mortality coefficient made 10.8 ppm - against 10.9 ppm in 2007. S. Mnatsakanian said that in 2008 the number of marriages grew by 1.8% and made 18,465, while the number of divorces grew by 3.4% and made 3,031.

18. "MIKA CEMENT" FACTORY TO RE-START THE PRODUCTION FROM MARCH 5 [ARMENPRESS, 02/23/09]

"Mika Cement" factory does not intend any dismissals of employees this year. From March 5 it will re-start the production of cement.

Chief director of "Mika Cement" Naira Martirosian told Armenpress that at present the factory also works but does not produce cement: works are conducted in the direction of sale of 2008 reserves. During the winter period, each year in December production in the factory is stopped and is restarted in spring. In some years the production was even re-started from May: it depends on the demand of cement in the market.

According to N. Martirosian, it is yet early to say how much the volumes of production will be this year: it will become clear from midst of March and also depends on the existing demand in the market.

Today "Mika Cement" has nearly 800 employees. According to N. Martirosian, the factory fulfilled the 2008 programs according to the plan and concluded the year with success.

The annual demand for cement produced by the factory reaches 250,000-300,000 tons. But this year certain decline of volumes of production is possible which is conditioned by the consequences of world financial crisis. Nearly 30% of the cement produced by the factory is exported mainly to Georgia, Iran and Russia.

N. Martirosian said that the volumes of export to Russia and Georgia will also reduce connected with increase of railway prices. It raised the price of cement in the markets of these countries for 19 dollars and as a result the Armenian product will lose its competence against cement which is imported from other countries. At present there is no increase of price of cement in the Armenian market but, according to N. Martirosian, from April 1, conditioned by increase of prices for electricity, gas and water, it is possible to raise.

The chief director said that this year also investments are intended in "Mika Cement", the factory is intended to be upgraded and renovated within the frameworks of cooperation with the Chinese side as well as to establish new conveyers through which the production of cement will be conducted in a new method.

Referring to talks on the sale of the factory, N. Martirosian said that they are still in process. "Last year there were certain negotiations over it but they were not finished and there are no concrete results", she said.



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19. "BEST FROM INDIA" EXHIBITION SALE TO BE HELD IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 02/23/09]

"Best from India" universal exhibition-sale will kick off in Yerevan "Dinamo" stadium March 14-22 on the initiative of the Armenian Trade-Industrial Chamber and Indian embassy in Armenia.

Press secretary of the Trade Industrial Chamber Vrezh Sarukhian told Armenpress that at the exhibition different Indian products will be presented including clothes and food. The exhibition will function from 10.00 am-08.00 pm.

Exhibition-sale of Indian products was organized in Armenia in 2008 as well.

20. TENDER FOR MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM OF CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW NUCLEAR UNIT IN ARMENIA ANNOUNCED [ARMENPRESS, 02/23/09]

The open tender of management services has been announced for implementation of the program of construction of new Nuclear Unit(s) in the Republic of Armenia. The tender which has been announced by the State Procurement Agency will be held in one round. The bidder which will be recognized the winner in the tender will in a fixed order be suggested to sign a contract of state purchase of "Management services for implementation of the program of construction of new nuclear energy blocks in Armenia".

The time of implementation of the contract will be from the day it (the contract) enters into force till the end of implementation of its commitments.

Everyone irrespective of nationality, organization and citizenship may present applications for participation in the tender.

Applications to the tender must be presented to the State Procurement Agency (54/b, Komitas avenue, Yerevan) 115 room within 60 days after the day following to the publication of the announcement by 14:30 o'clock. They must be formed in Armenian Russian and/or English.

The whole text of the announcement is available in www.armenpress.am/eng/news/press.html website.

DIASPORA

21. SHROVE-TIDE CELEBRATED AT ARMENIAN SCHOOLS IN TURKEY [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

Shrove-tide was celebrated at Armenian schools in Turkey. As Marmara daily reported, an event with lots of funny games was organized for children of the kindergarten and pupils of grade A at the Immaculate Conception School in Samatia. A party for 1st-5th graders was arranged at the Yesayan School. The children wearing masks and festive clothes took part in various games.

22. DIASPORA MINISTRY HOLDS THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COLLEGIATE [Azg, Aravot, 02/21/09]

The instance (collegiate) of the RA Diaspora Ministry was established with the December 25, 2008 decision of the RA Government. Its first session took place yesterday.

In her opening speech RA Diaspora Minister Hranush Hagopian stated that the collegiate has 36 members, 28 from Armenia and 8 from Diaspora, who all have received the 2009 schedule of activities of the Ministry. As the Minister said the involvement of Diasporan compatriots gives them a chance to jointly discuss and find solutions to the problems of all Armenians living even in the furthest corners of the world. All the opinions, inquiries and remarks will be considered. Among the members of the collegiate, according to Mrs. Hagopian, are RA President's assistant Vigen Sargsyan, RA President's brother Levon Sargsyan, RA Constitutional Court Chairman Gagik Harutiunian and others.

Eight issues were included in the agenda of yesterday's session. The schedule of activities of the Ministry was presented by Artak Zakaryan, Ministry's Chief of Staff. Discussions were held about the issues of educational-cultural establishments of the Armenian communities of Latin America, support to the development of activities of the Armenian community of Georgia, etc.

"Our Diasporan colleagues, who have sent their responses about the issues under discussion do not have any offers and remarks", said Hranush Hagopian, "they are Mkrtych Mkrtychian, Harut Sassounian, Vahe Karapetian, Samvel Karapetian, and Ara Abrahamian".

It was decided to hold a session of the collegiate on the last Friday of each month to discuss the current issues.



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In the evening of the same day, Ambassador of France to Armenia Serge Smessow handed an award "For Merit" to Diaspora Minister Hranush Hagopian at the French Embassy.

RELIGION

23. HEALTH CONDITION OF ARCHBISHOP NERSES POZAPALIAN IS EXTREMELY GRAVE [ARMENPRESS, 02/23/09]

Health condition of Archbishop Nerses Pozapalian is assessed as extremely grave.

Deputy head of "Nairi" medical center Siranush Martirosian told Armenpress that the Archbishop is given an artificial breathing. He has an injury of calvarias and a close trauma of cerebrum.

Nerses Pozapalian is in "Nairi" from February 18. He was attacked at night of February 17-18 in his apartment in Mother See of Holly Etchmiadzin.

The criminal who had broken into his house for robbery took the advantage of the trust towards him.

Assistant to the head of public relations department of the Armenian Police Mushegh Kroyan informed that a Husik Hovhannisian has been arrested connected with the case.

The case is being investigated. H. Hovhannisian was arrested in 2008 for robbery.

SOCIAL

24. URARTU UNIVERSITY 4TH AMONG RA UNIVERSITIES BY INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT COEFFICIENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/21/09]

The Urtu University of Practical Psychology and Sociology accredited in Armenia was recognized the 4th among country's 42 state and non-state universities by the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) coefficient. According to the Urtu University, this data was published by the HaykNet/Arcaler organization holding the sociological study. According to the study results, the Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University is in the first place by the same index and is followed by Yerevan State Engineering University and Yerevan State University.

Under the cooperation agreement signed by the Urtu University and American Humanitarian University as far back as in 2007, teaching of four specialities, Psychology, Business Management, International Relations, and Social Work is done from the current year within the framework of Urtu University's educational programs for bachelor's and master's decree. Graduates passing a final attestation in the above mentioned specialities will receive simultaneously two diplomas, American and Armenian.

25. "APARTMENT PURCHASING CERTIFICATE" PROGRAM KICKS OFF IN SHIRAK PROVINCE [ARMENPRESS, 02/23/09]

The 2009 "Apartment Purchasing Certificate" state program kicked off in Shirak province. This year for the first time besides Gyumri the program is implemented in the rural communities of the province.

Head of the town building department of Shirak governor's office Albert Margarian told Armenpress that those homeless people may take part in the program in Gyumri which are registered in the list of apartment needy of Gyumri municipality according to the order set by 1999, June 10, #432 decision of the Armenian government and have not made use "Apartment Purchasing Certificate" program formerly.

In the rural communities of the province those people may take part in the program which have as of December 1, 2008 been registered for getting apartment according to #1337 decision of the government "On setting the order of priorities of registration and providing of apartment to families of rural communities of disaster zone which became homeless as a result of the earthquake".

The program will be implemented in 31 communities of the province. People having a right to take part in the program must present applications by February 28.



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26. RECONSTRUCTION OF BRIDGE ON GAREGIN NZHDEH STREET KICK OFF [ARMENPRESS, 02/23/09]

Reconstruction works of the bridge on Yerevan Garegin Nzhdeh street have kicked off: from February 25 the traffic on the bridge will be stopped. Head of the construction and renovation department of Yerevan municipality Frunz Basentsian told today journalists that extended researches have been conducted before the works kick off, it has been found out that reconstruction of the bridge will cost 1 billion 800 million drams. The bridge will be exploited in late October.

According to F. Basentsian, the works of construction of partition on Arshakunyats avenue are in process. This year extended works will also be implemented on Davit-Bek street: it will be reconstructed and the external lightening net will be restored. Corresponding researches have also been conducted on the Yerevan "Victory" bridge, according to which there is no a need of urgent works here but the bridge will be reconstructed during the upcoming years.

Head of the department said that the restoration works of external lightening of streets of the capital and the irrigation nets will continue this year. During the year an irrigation water pipeline of 7 km length is intended to be constructed in Nork-Marash community which will irrigate the neighboring forests and private territories.

F. Basentsian also informed that this year flags of Armenia will be fixed on all the Yerevan schools, kinder-gardens, universities, buildings of official institutions, as well as on main highways that enter Yerevan. The flags which will be placed on the highways will have more than 30 meter height, the others – 10-20 meters.

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