



## TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

### POLITICS

#### 1. ON OCCASION OF 90TH ANNIVERSARY NIKOLAY NIKOGHOSIAN AWARDED SURB MESROP MASHTOTS ORDER [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/23/09]

For his contribution to development of sculpture and painting, deepening and strengthening of Armenian-Russian cultural contacts, as well as on the occasion of his 90th birth anniversary USSR People's Artist, a real member of Russian Academy of Art Nikolay Nikoghosian was awarded Surb Mesrop Mashtots order by RA President Serzh Sargsyan's February 20 decree. Noyan Tapan was informed about it by the RA President's Press Office.

#### 2. ZHARANGUTIUN FACTION MEMBERS' RENOUNCING THEIR MANDATES NOT EXPEDIENT AT CURRENT POLITICAL STAGE [Aravot, 02/23/09]

To consider Zharangutiun (Heritage) faction members' renouncing their mandates not expedient at the current political stage and to call faction deputies for carrying out more diligent activity." Zharangutiun party's Board made such a decision at the February 21 sitting discussing the issue of expediency of Zharangutiun parliamentary faction's further participation in the RA National Assembly's work. Meanwhile the Board reserved for itself the right to return to that issue if "renouncing mandates is the last opportunity to achieve establishment of legality and implementation of real reforms in the Republic of Armenia."

As NT was informed by the Zharangutiun party Press Service, by party Board's another decision of the same day, the decision on expediency of Zharangutiun's participation in the May 31 election of councilor members in Yerevan, its format and preelection roll will be made as a result of negotiations with opposition forces, as well as wide circles of public figures.

#### 3. PROPERTY AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF ANM'S HAYK OFFICIAL EDITION'S EDITORIAL OFFICE SEIZED [Aravot, 02/23/09]

On February 19, employees of Kentron and Nork-Marash department of Service on Obligatory Execution of Judicial Acts seized the property and financial resources of Armenian National Movement party's Hayk official edition's editorial office.

According to the report of the Service on Obligatory Execution of Judicial Acts, bailiffs' actions completely proceeded from execution examination requirements filed on the basis of the court order received from Yerevan Civil Court. The latter's demands are the following: as ensuring of the claim to seize the property and financial resources of the Hayk Edition OJSC to the amount of 2m 677 thousand drams and to oblige private entrepreneur A. Markosian not to publish the Hayk newspaper belonging to the above mentioned company. It was mentioned that the lawsuit was introduced by the Gind publishing-house LTD and the execution examination's demands were fulfilled completely and in line with the laws and other legal acts.

#### 4. VOTING OF BILL ON AMENDMENTS AND ADDENDA TO LAW ON FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS POSTPONED [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/23/09]

The RA National Assembly regular four-day plenary session opened on February 23. 50 issues are on the agenda, including 6 international agreements submitted for ratification by the RA President.

At the morning sitting the parliament in the first reading adopted the bill On State Courier Communication discussed at the previous four-day session. The 2009 annual plan of the RA Economic Competition State Commission was taken into consideration.

The voting of the package of bills on making amendments and addenda to the law On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations and to the RA Criminal Code discussed in the first reading was postponed until the next four-day session at its authors' proposal. The delay is due to the necessity of revising the bills on the basis of proposals acceptable for the authors.

As NT correspondent was informed by Armen Ashotian, the Chairman of the NA Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, and Sport, many proposals were received at



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the NA plenary sitting, as well as during extra-parliamentary discussions. Among them the proposals on clarification of the notion "soul chasing" and on lowering the proposed minimum quantitative limit necessary for registration of religious organizations are mainly acceptable. In connection with the latter it was, in particular, mentioned that the amount 500 will be stipulated in the bill to be put to the vote in the first reading instead of the 1000 envisaged in the initial variant and current 200 stipulated by the law.

According to A. Ashotian, the co-authors, in all probability, will decide to apply to the NA Speaker to send the bill for Venice Commission's expertise.

## 5. SERZH SARGSYAN: "A CAPABLE, INTELLECTUAL PERSON SHOULD BE ALWAYS IN DEMAND" [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/23/09]

RA President Serzh Sargsyan taking part in the February 21 event dedicated to the first anniversary of establishment of the MIASIN (Together) youth movement, expressed readiness to henceforth assist the youth and in general all unions and people having a kind purpose, whose goal is to lay a brick for our country's becoming powerful and building a strong, prosperous Armenia.

S. Sargsyan expressed a willingness to jointly build a country and society, where talent is respected, person's intellectual abilities are appreciated. "A capable, intellectual person should always be in demand," the country head emphasized and added: "I class myself among the people, who think that today's youth has more opportunities and will make much greater progress. They will always have their deserved place in our society, will be active and initiating."

According to the report provided to Noyan Tapan by the RA President's Press Office, speaking about national problems, S. Sargsyan said that the biggest youth structure in Armenia is the Armenian army, as first of all our soldiers aged from 18 to 20 defend the borders of our Homeland.

## 6. GEORGIAN PARLIAMENT SPEAKER DAVID BAKRADZE TO ARRIVE IN ARMENIA ON OFFICIAL VISIT ON FEBRUARY 24 [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/23/09]

A delegation led by Georgian parliament Speaker David Bakradze during the two-day official visit to Armenia, between February 24 to 25, will have meetings with RA President Serzh Sargsyan, NA Speaker Hovik Abrahamian, Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian, and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

According to the report of the RA NA Public Relations Department, on February 24, the delegation led by D. Bakradze will take part in the RA National Assembly sitting. The same day the delegation members will lay a wreath to the memory of Armenian Genocide victims at the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex, will visit the Armenian Genocide Museum.

On February 25, the official delegation led by D. Bakradze will return to Tbilisi.

## 7. ARTHUR BAGHDASARYAN AND JANNI LETTA DISCUSS A WIDE-RANGE OF ISSUES ON ARMENIAN-ITALIAN RELATIONS [ARMENPRESS, 02/24/09]

Delegation headed by the Secretary of the Armenian National Security Council Arthur Baghdasaryan arrived yesterday in Italy at the invitation of the deputy head of the Italy's Ministers' Council, State Secretary of National Security Council Janni Letta.

Press service of the Armenian National Security Council told Armenpress that on the same day Arthur Baghdasarian met with Janni Letta and discussed a wide range of issues on Armenian-Italian bilateral relations and underscored cooperation in security, defense, economic, information security spheres. The sides also discussed issues on creating concrete mechanisms of cooperation between two security councils. A. Baghdasarian invited his Italian counterpart to visit Armenia.

During the meeting with the Italian State Defense Secretary Juzzepe Kosigia, Arthur Baghdasarian suggested that a cooperation agreement be signed between the defense establishments of the two countries. J. Kosigia highlighted the necessity of signing of an agreement and on the place assigned to develop points of the agreement in short period of time. The interlocutors also exchanged thoughts over opportunities of cooperation in different spheres.

Arthur Baghdasarian invited the Italian State Defense Secretary to Armenia to discuss issues connected with cooperation with the Armenian defense minister as well as participate in the "Security in Caucasus" international conference in Armenia.

J. Kosigia said that after signing of the agreement special relations will be established between Italy and Armenia.

Arthur Baghdasarian also met with the minister of European Community Andrea Ronki.



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At the end of the day a memorandum on sister-towns was signed between Armenia's Gyumri and Italy's Narto towns afterwards A. Baghdasarian met with the representatives of the Armenian community.

## 8. TERMS OF ACTIVITY OF PARLIAMENTARY AD HOC COMMISSION SUGGESTED TO BE PROLONGED BY SEPTEMBER 15 [ARMENPRESS, 02/24/09]

A bill to make changes in the NA decision "on establishment of a parliamentary ad hoc commission for the inquiry into March 1-2, 2008 events in Yerevan and their causes" has today been presented to the parliament by the MPs representing the coalition with which the terms of activity of the commission is suggested to be prolonged by September 15, 2009.

The authors substantiated the postponing of the time by continuation of the activity of the fact finding group which will pass its conclusion to the ad hoc commission.

Besides, it has been mentioned that solution of a part of the tasks of the commission is also conditioned by actions being undertaken by other state bodies, particularly clarification of circumstances of death is notably dependant upon the process of primary trial of evoked criminal cases.

Head of the ad hoc commission Samvel Nikoyan in his speech noted that even if the commission had answers to all the questions it would be right to wait for the conclusion of the fact finding group. He informed that the head of the group also found difficulties to mention a concrete time of bringing the works to the end.

Referring to finishing the works by September 15, S. Nikoyan said that he cannot say anything definitely "as the issue which remained to be settled – study of circumstances of death, is greatly conditioned by the activity of investigating bodies". But head of the commission said that the fact finding group as well as themselves have much to do here.

According to S. Nikoyan, the commission will take all the opportunities and try to put new tasks for the primary investigating bodies and demand solutions in appointment of tests and conduction of investigative actions.

He also stressed the importance of study of pointed out facts by different public task groups.

Voting of the issues is planned for February 24 session.

## 9. ARMENIAN GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT JAVAKHK EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS [ARMENPRESS, 02/24/09]

The Armenian government will support to Javakhq educational and cultural institutions.

Deputy Armenian Diaspora Minister Stepan Petrosian told Armenpress that this year nearly 200 million drams have been released from the state budget for the reconstruction works of Armenian schools in Javakhq. Besides that the Diaspora Ministry has this year worked out and intends to implement a program of organization of educational events in Javakhq.

The Diaspora Ministry will support the Javakhq musical ensembles, involve children in cultural programs and also will send representatives of Armenian culture to Javakhq. Cultural programs will also be prepared and broadcasted through Armenian TV channels in Javakhq.

In collaboration with Armenian General Benevolent Union and Yerevan State University the Armenian Diaspora Ministry intends to establish an electronic college in Armenia and the Diaspora Armenian young people will be the students of this institution.

S. Petrosian said the works on the establishment of the college were initiated yet two years ago when the Diaspora Ministry did not exist.

The college is intended to function by the end of the year.

## 10. D. BAKRADZE PUTS FLOWERS ON THE MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF GREAT GENOCIDE [ARMENPRESS, 02/24/09]

Accompanied by the head of the staff of Armenian parliament Gegham Gharibjanian Speaker of Georgian parliament Davit Bakradze visited today Tsitsernakaberd, put flowers on the memorial to the victims of the Great Genocide and watered the fir-tree in the park of relationship which was planted by Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili.

The Speaker of Georgian parliament also visited the museum-institute of Armenian Genocide where he got acquainted with the history of Armenian Genocide presented by the head of the institute Hayk Demoyan.



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Speaker of Georgian parliament wrote in the writing-pad of the museum-institute. "Right to live is the holiest of all the rights, we must remember the history and do everything to prevent repetition of genocides and ethnic filtrations in our times".

In response to the question of a journalist D. Bakradze noted that the parliament of his country will not discuss the issue of Armenian genocide in the near future.

"I think that the visit of the delegation of Georgian parliament to the museum of Genocide and the impression we got here makes our attitude towards this fact clear from ethical viewpoint. First of all it is the responsibility of political figures that the history never repeats, so that no ethnic filtrations and genocides take place especially in our times and on our eyes. It is a very painful theme for Georgian people as well",- he said.

According to D. Bakradze, the bilateral parliamentary relations on the whole reflect the partnership relations which exist between Armenia and Georgia.

"No doubt there are still opportunities for further improvement and one of the aims of my visit is to discuss in what directions our parliaments can cooperate through different commissions and task-groups. We are ready to develop the relations not only on the levels of visits", - speaker of Georgian parliament noted.

## 11. ARMENIANS ARE BETTER INFORMED ABOUT THEIR NEIGHBORS THAN TURKS, SOCIOLOGIST GEVORG POGHOSIAN SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/24/09]

The Armenians are better informed about their direct neighbors than the Turks, sociologist Gevorg Poghosian said, citing the results of surveys conducted by sociologists in Armenia and Turkey in 2005. In response to the question about famous Turks and Armenians, Armenians named more than 70 Turks, from Abdul Hamid to Tarkan, whereas Turkish respondents only mentioned Aznavour. According to the majority of Turks surveyed, Armenia has a population of 7 million and land coasts of three seas.

An attempt was made to reveal through surveys how the two peoples treat each other. In the words of G. Poghosian, the survey results show that the majority of Armenians and Turks (about 70%) believe that there will be no rapprochement between the two countries. "But now we see some progress, and there are hopes that diplomatic relations will be established, maybe the border will open, there are many maybes but we see that there has been some progress," G. Poghosian noted, adding that for that reason the sides show mutual interest in conducting new studies, in particular a survey will be done in October with the aim of finding out whether the change in Armenian-Turkish political relations has brought about changes in social moods.

The director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the RA National Academy of Sciences, Turkologist Ruben Safrastian expressed an opinion that US-Turkish relations, which acquire a new quality against the background of mutual interests, may play a great role in Armenian-Turkish relations. In his opinion, the political platform of safety and stability will not become a real organization in the region, taking into account the current problems between Russia and Georgia, and those between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

## 12. ARMENIA READY TO ASSIST WITH SOLUTION OF MKHITARIAN CONGREGATION'S PROBLEMS [Hayastani Hanrapetutian, 02/24/09]

The Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan on February 23 received the Supreme Archimandrite of Mkhitarian Congregation, Father Yeghia Kilaghpiian and the director of the Mkhitarian Educational Complex of Armenia, Father Serob Chamurlian. He spoke highly about Mkhitarian Congregation's historical role, noting that Armenia as a state must show interest in the affairs of Mkhitarian Congregation and provide all possible assistance for solution of its problems.

The interlocutors discussed the problems and future plans of the Congregation. The activities of the Murad Rafaelian College and the Mkhitarian Educational Complex of Armenia, some joint educational and cultural undertakings were also addressed.

According to the RA presidential press service, S. Sargsyan said that the state is ready to assist with the solution of Mkhitarian Congregation's problems.

## 13. VAHRAM BAGHDASARIAN AND STEPAN ZAKARIAN APPOINTED MEMBERS OF COUNCIL OF PUBLIC TELEVISION AND RADIO COMPANY [Hayastani Hanrapetutian, 02/24/09]

Pursuant to Articles 29 and 31 of the RA Law on Television and Radio and taking into consideration the decision of the commission set up by the presidential order of January 26, 2009,



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Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan on February 21 signed a decree on appointment of members of the Council of the Public Television and Radio Company.

NT was informed by the RA presidential press service that Vahram Baghdasarian and Stepan Zakarian have been appointed members of the Council of the Public Television and Radio Company for a period of six years.

#### 14. KARINE GHAZINIAN APPOINTED DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER OF ARMENIA [Azg, 02/24/09]

By a February 20 presidential decree, Karine Ghazinian was relieved of her post as Armenia's ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Germany.

NT was informed by the RA presidential press service that by Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan's another decree of the same day, K. Ghazinian was appointed deputy foreign minister of Armenia.

#### 15. DAVID BAKRADZE IS SURE THAT ARMENIA AND GEORGIA WILL BE ABLE TO EASILY SOLVE ALL PROBLEMATIC ISSUES [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/24/09]

"No matter on what terms we are with our neighboring and not neighboring countries, state and regional interests require that Georgia and Armenia take into consideration mutual interests and preserve the partner and good-neighborly relations between each other," David Bakradze, the Georgian parliament Speaker, said on February 24 speaking at the Armenian National Assembly. He expressed the hope that the high-level bilateral meetings having become active recently and friendly disposition between the two countries' Presidents, parliaments, and executive powers will become an additional stimulus in Armenian-Georgian relations.

Meanwhile D. Bakradze said that nevertheless there are some unsettled issues between the two countries up to the present, which is a usual phenomenon in two neighboring countries' relations. "I am sure that in spite of some forces' attempts to use those difficulties to make a mess in our relations, we will be able to easily solve all problematic issues through a constructive dialogue and consistent approach," he said.

It was also mentioned that Georgia and Armenia have passed a difficult way of state building and economic development, and at present the two countries' most important task is to create such security guarantees that will permit to protect their independence. "I think the events happening in Georgia recently, aggression to our country, once more evidently proved the importance of regional cooperation," the Georgian parliament Speaker said.

#### 16. ACTIVITY TERM OF AD-HOC COMMITTEE ON EVENTS OCCURRED ON 1 MARCH EXTENDED UP TO SEPTEMBER 15 [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/24/09]

By RA National Assembly's February 24 decision, an amendment was made to the decision On Establishing NA Ad-hoc Committee on the Events Occurred on 2008 1-2 March in Yerevan and Their Reasons. Thus, Committee's activity term was extended up to September 15.

According to the motivation of the political coalition representatives authoring the draft decision, the term extension is due to the necessity to make Committee's conclusion more complete. The Zharangutiun (Heritage) faction did not take part in decision's voting with the motivation that the proposal to extend Committee's activity term is not grounded.

#### 17. ACCORDING TO ARFD REPRESENTATIVE, GEORGIAN AUTHORITIES WISH ARMENIANS TO LEAVE JAVAKHK [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/24/09]

An ARFD delegation during its recent meeting with representatives of Council of Europe Parliament socialist forces in Brussels discussed issues regarding Armenia-European Union relations, Javakhk problems, Armenian-Turkish relations, Nagorno Karabakh problem, recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Giro Manoyan, the Responsible Person of ARFD Hay Dat and Political Affairs Office, reported at the February 24 press conference.

The ARFD figures told their European partners that in order to conceal the problems the Armenians of Javakhk are concerned with the Georgian authorities "to all appearance, with forged accusations" imprisoned two young Armenian people. The ARFD members also stated that having a sovereignty of a higher level is Javakhk's right. Touching upon the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, according



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to G. Manoyan, the ARFD members once more explained that the seven regions adjoining Nagorno Karabakh were not occupied, but liberated by Armenia.

Touching upon the subject of Javakhk, G. Manoyan said that though in that respect many problems are Georgia's domestic problems, nevertheless Armenia has certain right to voice them. As to the Georgian Foreign Minister's statement that Javakhk has only socio-economic problems like, for instance, Kutaisi, according to G. Manoyan, even socio-economic problems in Javakhk finally turn into a manifestation of ethnic discrimination. Reminding that the building of Akhaltskha-Akhalkalak and many other important roads is constantly delayed by the local authorities, G. Manoyan said that the latter's goal is to create conditions for "the Armenians of Javakhk to leave Javakhk."

## 18. POLITICAL SCIENTIST ARMEN AYVAZIAN: ARMENIAN-TURKISH CONFLICT WILL NOT BE SOLVED BY WATCHING FOOTBALL [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/24/09]

Since Armenia's independence up to the present Turkey has been carrying out aggressive, harmful actions to the Armenian state, which permit to conclude that Turkey is in a conflict with Armenia. Political scientist Armen Ayvazian, the Director of the Ararat strategical center, stated at the February 24 press conference. According to him, Turkey carries out the above mentioned actions simultaneously at ten levels - conceptional-terminological, political, historic-political, legal-political, information-psychological, economic, cultural, military, protection of rights of the Armenian minority living in Turkey, and splits emerging between various parts of Armenians.

According to A. Ayvazian, Armenia's 15-year blockade, complete assistance to Azerbaijan, consistent efforts to settle Meskhetian Turks in Javakhk, and others are among Turkey's anti-Armenian actions.

"The RA foreign policy disregards many of Turkey's above mentioned actions," A. Ayvazian said. According to him, instead of counteracting to Turkey's anti-Armenian projects or working out opposite projects Armenia's state figures use the expression "our brave colleagues" when speaking about the Turkish figures. "If we continue like this, it will result in a national disaster," the political scientist said adding that the Armenian-Turkish conflict will not be solved through individual meetings, especially by watching football.

## 19. EDWARD NALBANDIAN'S VISIT TO NEAR EAST COUNTRIES STARTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/24/09]

RA Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian arrived in Egypt on February 23 at the invitation of Foreign Minister of Egypt Ahmed Abu Al Gheid. The same day the RA Foreign Minister was received by Prime Minister of Egypt Ahmed Nazif. The latter mentioned that the people of Egypt and he personally have the warmest feelings and sympathy for Armenia and the Armenian people. According to A. Nazif, Armenian-Egyptian friendship's bright evidence is Egyptian Armenian community's active role and participation in country's various spheres.

Thanking for the reception, A. Nalbandian said that Armenian-Egyptian relations have history of ages, and our peoples are connected with traditional friendship and sympathy proved by history. He said that Armenia is interested in further deepening cooperation with Egypt. According to the RA Foreign Minister, the current high level of political dialogue between the two countries should be strengthened by bilateral economic projects and efficient use of current possibilities for development of trade and economic relations.

A wide range of issues related to development of bilateral relations in various spheres, cooperation at international organizations were discussed during E. Nalbandian's meeting with Abu Al Gheid. The interlocutors stressed that there is a high level of political relations and a serious potential for expanding economic and cultural partnership between the states.

E. Nalbandian stated that Armenia is going to continue its steps to deepen all-round relations with its important partner Egypt in the region.

E. Nalbandian and Al Gheid also exchanged thoughts over issues of providing and strengthening security in the South Caucasus and Near East.

The Armenian and Egyptian Foreign Ministers signed an agreement between the RA government and Egyptian government on bilateral release from the requirement of receiving an entrance visa by people having a diplomatic, official or special passport.

According to the RA Foreign Ministry Press and Information Department, the same day E. Nalbandian and Egyptian International Cooperation Minister Fayza Abulnagha discussed issues



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regarding the sitting of the Armenian-Egyptian Intergovernmental Commission to be held this year in Yerevan.

In the evening of February 23 E. Nalbandian had a meeting with representatives of the Armenian community of Egypt.

E. Nalbandian left for Jordan on February 24.

## 20. ARMENIAN-GERMAN INTER-GOVERNMENTAL TWO-DAY CONSULTATIONS KICK OFF IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

Armenian-German inter-governmental two-day consultations have today kicked off in Yerevan chaired by Armenian Finance Minister Tigran Davtian and the representative of German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development doctor Marion Urban.

Public relations department of Armenian Finance Ministry told Armenpress that the Armenian-German financial cooperation is centralized in three main spheres – financial and private sector, energy, water supply and water removal. Comparatively small grant programs are implemented in health and nature protection spheres.

Within the frameworks of two-day consultation on-going and future programs will be discussed. The German government has provided the means with privileged conditions – for 40 year period.

In general, 235 million euros have by now been provided to Armenia within the frameworks of Armenian-German financial cooperation, from which 195 million euros were credit and 40 million euros - grant.

## 21. OSCE MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS TO ARRIVE IN YEREVAN FEBRUARY 27 [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs Bernard Fassier (France), Matthew Bryza (USA) and Yuri Merzlyakov (Russia) will arrive in Yerevan February 27 in the evening.

An official from the press department of the French embassy in Armenia told Armenpress that on week-end the co-chairs will have meetings in Stepanakert and March 2 will again arrive in Yerevan to meet with the leadership of the country.

The agreement over the visit of the co-chairs was reached in Zurich during the January 28 meeting of the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents when the latter expressed wish that the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs continue the efforts directed towards bringing the approaches of the parties closer to each other. During the negotiations the two presidents assigned the two foreign ministers to continue negotiations.

## 22. PRESIDENT SERZH SARGSYAN RECEIVES DELEGATION HEADED BY GEORGIAN PARLIAMENT SPEAKER [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan received today delegation headed by Georgian parliament speaker David Bakradze.

Presidential press service told Armenpress that during the meeting President Sargsyan and Georgian parliament speaker pointed out the current high level of inter-state relations between the two countries, close ties of Armenian and Georgian peoples dating back to history.

The president of the country, underscoring the intensive contacts, pointed out the exclusive importance of inter-parliamentary cooperation and noted that such visits greatly promote boosting of relations.

The interlocutors referred to the pace of implementation of agreements reached during the visit of the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan to Georgia. The sides pointed out that the implementation of programs on transport communication, facilitation of passing the inter-state border, saying they will promote the further development of Armenian-Georgian economic partnership.

Pointing out that there are no issues between Armenia and Georgia which cannot be solved through dialogue and joint discussions, the two sides pointed out the necessity of balanced approach towards issues of vital importance towards the two peoples.

The interlocutors also referred to other issues of mutual interest.



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23. OSCE MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS TO ARRIVE IN BAKU ON THURSDAY [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

Within the frameworks of regional visit the OSCE Minsk group co-chairs Bernard Fassier, Yuri Merzlyakov and Matthew Bryza will arrive in Azerbaijan on Thursday evening, press service of Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry reported.

The official part of the meetings will start February 27. Meetings of the co-chairs with Foreign Minister Elmar Mamedyarov and President Ilham Aliyev are planned.

During the meetings situation around Karabakh conflict and possible ways of its peaceful regulation will be discussed.

## **BUSINESS**

24. ACCORDING TO PRIME MINISTER, NEW IDEAS NECESSARY TO REGULATE ECONOMY [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/23/09]

"Kamurj 2009" ("Bridge 2009") international economic forum took place in Tsakhkadzor on February 21-23. The 6th forum was entitled "The Prospects of International Economic Cooperation. Problems and Solutions". The RA prime minister Tigran Sargsyan, the minister of economy Nerses Yeritsian, the minister of finance Tigran Davtian, ambassadors accredited to Armenia, as well as about 300 businessmen from Russia, Iran, Bulgaria and other countries took part in the event.

T. Sargsyan said that what is going on today in the world is considered as a chaos so new ideas are necessary to regulate the economy. The job cuts, freezing of construction, worsening of the social conditions of citizens are worrying. In his opinion, remittances sent to Armenia will also show a tendency to decline as a result of the crisis.

The prime minister underlined that the first positive fact for Armenia is stabilization of macroeconomy. "We can state once again that our banks have no problems with capitalization and liquidity which means that this year we should also use this advantage and allocate additional financial resources to this system," he said. In his words, the banking system should be used to reduce the negative impact of the global crisis.

He pointed out the necessity to use the opportunities created by the crisis and eliminate the shortcomings. He announced that they applied to Russia, international organizations with the request to provide new credits to Armenia. New big regional projects will be implemented soon, including the project of the new nuclear power plant's construction, which is of both economic and political significance. "Both our strategic partners and neighbors who want to take part in this project are interested in it. We are interested in Russia's and Turkey's participation in it. We are open to negotiations," T. Sargsyan stated.

As regards the Diaspora, the prime minister noted that everything possible should be done to use its great potential. "We have a task of creating institutions to unite Armenia and the Diaspora," he noted, stressing the necessity to identify those advantages which will make Armenia attractive.

In his words, the global crisis has had a negative impact on the economy of any country, even any remote village, and the problem is how much each country will be able to overcome the negative consequences of the crisis. "Our aim is that these temporary difficulties will allow us to correct the mistakes of the previous years, identify our strengths and take measures so that the society and business will be able to benefit from the crisis," T. Sargsyan said.

According to him, the monetary policy and the tax and budgetary one should be balanced, and the major goal should be ensuring macroeconomic stability, which is a favorable condition for sustainable macroeconomic growth. The prime minister said that an agreement on allocation of a 525 million dollar credit was reached with the World Bank. Efficient cooperation has been established with the Asian Development Bank as well. Special attention will be paid to the crediting of small and medium business, and money provided by the EBRD will be mainly spent on the private sector's assistance. "We should also receive credit resources from Russia and use them to promote economic growth," the prime minister stated.

T. Sargsyan informed those present that the All-Armenian Bank will start operating this year. State investments will make 20 billion drams (about 65.5 mln USD) in the bank's capital. Besides, the bank can attract financial resources from other sources, including the private sector.



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## 25. THERE WILL BE SOME DECLINE IN ECONOMIC GROWTH OF ARMENIA THIS YEAR, NERSES YERITSIAN SAYS [Azg, 02/23/09]

There will be some decline in Armenia's economic growth this year which will have its impact on the employment and revenues, the Armenian minister of economy Nerses Yeritsian said at "Kamurj 2009" international economic forum held in Tsakhkadzor on February 21-23. At the same time he expressed a hope that as a result of the envisaged reforms, Armenia will be able to get out of the crisis and become a country with a higher-quality economy, capable of attracting investments most easily. The minister considered the investment factor as the major guarantee of development.

## 26. B. YENGIBARIAN SAYS THE IT SPHERE CAN DEVELOP IN THE CONDITIONS OF WORLD FINANCIAL CRISIS [ARMENPRESS, 02/24/09]

In the conditions of world financial crisis the IT sphere can ensure development.

Executive director of "Enterprises Incubator Foundation" Bagrat Yengibarian told today journalists that the IT sphere has a serious impact on other branches of the economy and as a result of the crisis non IT sphere companies will try to increase the efficient management and start to pay a serious attention to the product of IT sphere. He noted that the time for Indian and Chinese IT product in the world has passed away and they will not win as a result of this crisis.

B. Yengibarian said that a notable reduction of amount of organizations conducting plain programming is intended.

"The Armenian model of IT product is constructed based on scientific elements, we are not plain programmers and our product contains a research activity. We present a cheap product in the sector of international market where there are very few countries. If the Armenian model is correctly presented we may appear in a serious advantage-ground", - B. Yengibarian said.

In the conditions of world economic crisis B. Yengibarian considers the support of Armenian government to the companies praiseworthy.

According to him, the anti-crisis program of the government is constructive and intends concrete steps. B. Yengibarian noted that governments of many countries of the world also support their companies by helping them to find new clients as well as by becoming a client themselves. In this respect attempts are also made in Armenia.

Executive director of "Synopsis Armenia" company Hovik Musayelian said that the product of IT sphere must be used as instruments by non IT companies to increase their productivity. And to invite the attention of companies on IT product, investments are necessary to be made in new technologies and to present new product with interesting solutions. According to H. Musayelian, these procedures are characteristic of developed countries. "Synopsis Armenia" company expressed readiness to take part in the programs suggested by the government to develop the IT infrastructures in the country.

B. Yengibarian noted that an advantage-ground is necessary to be created for IT companies in Armenia particularly by implementing tax-legal reforms. B. Yengibarian said that the tax legislation does not create favorable conditions for IT sphere.

"Such conditions must be created so that Armenian IT companies be able to compete with companies of neighboring countries. Today there are companies in Russia and Turkey which function not only in privileged but also in absolutely privileged conditions", - B. Yengibarian added.

## 27. "STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE" AGENCY INTENDS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON THE MARKET OF EMPLOYERS OF THE COUNTRY [ARMENPRESS, 02/24/09]

"The State Employment Service" agency of Armenian Labor and Social Affairs Ministry will conduct study of the market of employers of the country during March-April and September-October months of the current year.

Head of the department of analyses and forecasts of the labor market Anahit Parsadonian told Armenpress that the research will give an opportunity to get information on changes in the economy and labor market.

Particularly the agency will expand the circle of its information on the staff of the labor force, its structure, movement, lack, expected demand, as well as peculiarities of business, mechanisms of development and opportunities of promotion.

Results of the researches will give an opportunity to assess the short term tendencies of the economy and labor market, to discover the expected job places, demands of the employers towards the labor force, to clarify the prospects of expansion of employer-"State Service Employment" cooperation



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and to point out the directions of implementation of joint programs. As soon as the results of the research are ready they will be presented to the public.

## 28. ARMENIA SHOULD COOPERATE MORE ACTIVELY WITH THOSE MARKETS, WITH WHICH IT HAD TRADITIONAL LINKS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/24/09]

"The time for regional cooperation has come, and it is necessary to cooperate more actively with those markets, with which Armenia had traditional links," the chairman of the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia Arsen Ghazarian stated during the "Kamurj 2009" international economic forum held in Tsakhkadzor on February 21-23.

Besides, according to him, more active cooperation should be established with the countries with large and influential Armenian communities. "The government's economic assistance program attaches special importance to support for export-oriented enterprises. These steps and the financial problems of big "players" in the international market may enable us to make our export-related potential more flexible if we organize the export process more correctly and manufacture more competitive production, if we do not become desperate and manage to enter foreign markets confidently," he said.

A. Ghazarian pointed out agricultural produce processing, production of mineral waters, cans, brandy and wines as the traditional exporting branches. He expressed a hope that after a decline because of the global economic crisis, the mining industry will recover in a few months if international prices normalize a bit.

## 29. IT IS PROPOSED DEFERRING TERM OF VAT COLLECTION FOR UP TO 3 YEARS IN CASE OF SOME GOODS' IMPORT [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/24/09]

The National Assembly on February 23 discussed in first reading the government-submitted draft law envisaging amendments and additions to the RA Law on Value Added Tax. By the draft, it is proposed deferring the term of collection of VAT calculated by customs bodies for up to 3 years, if the customs value of the imported commodity or the investment package amounts to or exceeds 300 million drams (about a million dollars) - in case of import of some goods (in particular equipment and conveyers) by companies selected in the order established by the Armenian government.

The main speaker, minister of economy Nerses Yeritsian said that the draft whose value makes about 5 billion drams by preliminary calculations is considered to be an anticrisis measure. It is aimed at ensuring technological transformation of Armenia, updating its economy and increasing capital investments. It is envisaged that the proposed privilege will be in effect until 2011. "I think these expenses will bring much more benefit in the medium and long term," the minister noted.

Under the current law, in case of import of goods on certain codes, if the customs value is less than 70 million drams, the period of payment of VAT calculated by customs bodies is deferred for one year, if the customs value is 70 million drams or over, the payment is deferred for 2 years.

The objections voiced by a number of National Assembly deputies, including the chairman of the Standing Committee on Economic Issues Vardan Aivazian, were conditioned by the necessity to rule out the possible subjective approach in the selection of companies. Some of them were in favor of establishing definite criteria, while the others proposed creating an equal field for all economic entities making investments for the development of production.

## 30. ARMENIAN-GERMAN BUSINESS-FORUM TO BE HELD IN JULY IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

Armenian-German business-forum will be held in July in Yerevan.

Executive director of the Armenian Trade-Industrial chamber Araik Vardanian told Armenpress that representatives of enterprises of Germany's Baden-Wurtemberg province who recently have been interested in Armenia, will arrive in Armenia to take part in the forum.

During the meeting with their Armenian partners they will get acquainted with Armenian investment opportunities for the implementation of further cooperation programs.

A. Vardanian said that before the event the German side will present the spheres it is interested in so that corresponding Armenian specialists and representatives of enterprises be invited to the forum.

Last year an Armenian-German business forum was held in Germany during which the Armenian economic situation was presented.

Nearly 100 representatives from Armenia took part in the forum.



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## SOCIAL

### 31. ISSUES OF DEVELOPMENT OF ARMENIAN-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS AND COOPERATION IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DISCUSSED [ARMENPRESS, 02/24/09]

At the invitation of Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu Al Gheydi Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian paid an official visit to Egypt February 23.

Media relations department of Armenian Foreign Ministry told Armenpress that on the same day Edward Nalbandian was received by the Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmad Nazif. Greeting the Armenian Foreign Minister the Egyptian prime minister said that the Egyptian people and personally he have the warmest feelings and sympathy towards Armenia and Armenian people.

Ahmad Nazif stressed that the active role of Egyptian-Armenian community and its participation in different spheres of the country's life is a bright evidence of Armenian-Egyptian relationship.

According to Prime Minister Ahmad Nazif, the friendly relations which have been established between the two peoples are a firm basis for further development of cooperation between Armenia and Egypt.

Armenian Foreign Minister thanked for the invitation and noted that the Armenian-Egyptian relations have an aged-long history and that the two peoples are interconnected through traditional relationship and sympathy which has been tested by the history. Minister E. Nalbandian characterized all this as a basis for enhancement of efficient cooperation between the two states.

Armenia is interested in boosting and expanding bilateral relations with Egypt. Armenian Foreign Minister noted that the existing high level political dialogue between the two states must be consolidated by bilateral economic projects and efficient usage of existing opportunities of development of trade-economic relations.

During the meeting of Edward Nalbandian with Egyptian Foreign Minister Abu Al Gheydi a wide range of issues connected with development of bilateral relations in different spheres and cooperation in international organizations have been discussed. It has been mutually stressed that a high level political dialogue and a serious potential of enhancement of economic and cultural cooperation exists between the two states.

Edward Nalbandian pointed out that Armenia intends to continue steps in the direction of enhancement of multilateral relations with Egypt, its important partner in the region.

Armenian Foreign Minister said that Armenia, being geo-politically close the Middle East region, is greatly interested in establishment of peace and stability there. In this context Edward Nalbandian highly assessed the role of Egypt in the process of peaceful regulation of Middle East issues.

Ministers Nalbandian and Al Gheyd exchanged thoughts on the issues of ensuring security and its consolidation in South Caucasus and Middle East.

Armenian and Egyptian Foreign Ministers expressed gratification on the active cooperation between the two ministries and efficiency of consultations which are regularly held.

Edward Nalbandian invited Ahmad Abu Al Gheyd to visit Armenia.

The two foreign ministers signed an agreement on the bilateral abolition of the demand for visa for diplomatic, service or people having special passport of Armenian and Egyptian governments.

After the meeting of the ministers, Edward Nalbandian had a briefing with Egyptian journalists.

Egyptian Foreign Minister served an official dinner in honor of his Armenian counterpart.

With the Egyptian Minister of International Cooperation Fayza Abdulnagha Edward Nalbandian discussed issues relating to the session of Armenian-Egyptian inter-governmental commission which will take place in Yerevan during this year.

At the evening of February 23, Edward Nalbandian met with representatives Armenian community in Egypt.

During his visit the Armenian Foreign Minister gave an extended interview to one of the most authoritative Arabian journals – "Al Ahrami" which is being published in Cairo.

Today on February 24, Edward Nalbandian left for Jordan.

### 32. NUMBER OF TOURISTS VISITING NAGORNO KARABAKH INCREASE BY 15% COMPARED WITH 2007 [Hayastani Hanrapetutiun, 02/25/09]

Tourists from dozens of countries visited Nagorno Karabakh in 2008.

Consulate service of Nagorno Karabakh Foreign Ministry told Armenpress that they are mainly citizens of USA, France, Canada, Russia, Iran and Great Britain. As compared with 2007 the number of tourists in 2008 increased by 15%. A tendency of geographical expansion of visitors to Nagorno



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Karabakh has also been noticed: in 2008 tourists from Pakistan, Singapore and Somali have for the first time visited Artsakh.

Besides Armenians representatives of different nationalities who are mainly young people also visit Nagorno Karabakh. Historical-architectural monuments and monastic complexes, particularly Amaras (4-19 centuries), Dadivank (4-13 centuries) and Gandzasar (13 century) are the most visited places by the tourists.

During 2008 nearly 70 journalists from 25 countries of the world have also visited Artsakh as well as dozens of photographing groups which prepared materials about the activity of different spheres of Nagorno Karabakh everyday life.

### 33. EXTENDED APARTMENT BUILDING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTED IN GYUMRI MUSH 2 AND ANI DISTRICTS [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

With the decision of Armenian government extended apartment construction program is being conducted in Gyumri Mush 2 and Ani districts.

Head of the town building department of Shirak governor's office Albert Margarian told Armenpress that the preparatory works for the construction have without pauses been conducted in winter. All the semi-constructions of the area have already been demounted, the garages will be displaced closer to the blocks of flats.

According to the program nearly 1200 apartments will be constructed by the end of the year and during the whole program which is planned by 2010, nearly 2003 homeless families will be ensured with flats.

The program is being implemented by "Glendale hills" organization.

### 34. A PERMANENT EXHIBITION-SALE OF ARMENIAN PRODUCTS TO FUNCTION IN ALEPPO [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

A permanent exhibition-sale of Armenian products will function in the town of Aleppo, Syria. Executive director of Armenian Trade-Industrial Chamber Araik Vardanian told Armenpress that currently the Armenian side discusses the issue of providing the exhibition territory with governor of Aleppo.

According to A. Vardanian, it will give the local Armenian community an opportunity to permanently use Armenian products. After the exhibition of Armenian products, which was held in December last year in Aleppo in which nearly 100 Armenian producers took part, an interest is noted in Aleppo especially towards Armenian food. Therefore a permanent sale of Armenian sweets, cool drinks, brandy, drained fruit and dairy product is intended to be organized in Aleppo.

A. Vardanian also informed that last week an agreement was signed with the executive director of Aleppo Trade Chamber, according to which an exhibition-sale of Syrian products will be held in June in Yerevan.

70 Syrian companies have already presented applications for participation in it.

### 35. NEGOTIATIONS HELD WITH INTERNATIONAL DONOR ORGANIZATIONS TO BRING TO LIFE "PROGRAM OF RE-SETTLEMENT OF POPULATION IN ARMENIAN BORDERING TERRITORIES" [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

Negotiations are held with international donor organizations to bring to life the "Program of Re-settlement of Population to the Armenian Bordering Territories".

Head of the migration agency of Armenian Territorial Governance Ministry Gagik Yeganian told Armenpress that the studies showed that 1005 families, which were replaced to more secure places of Armenian territory during 1990-94 bombings, must be replaced to their former place of living – Tavush, Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Ararat and Gegharkunik provinces.

The program consists of two parts – support must be ensured to the people for re-settlement and those who have been replaced with their own means and have ruined houses – be supported in the issue of restoring them.

As a result of 1990-1994 bombings more than 16 000 houses and apartments have suffered, 1500 of which have completely been ruined. The program is intended for three years for the implementation of which 38.5 million USD are needed.

"The program is completely worked out, all the mechanisms have been clarified and an international research has been conducted. It was positively assessed by the special representative of UN Secretary General", - G. Yeganian said.



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He expressed hope that discussions with donor organizations will have a positive result.

## 36. A 28-STORE HOTEL INTENDED TO BE BUILT ON THE PLACE OF FORMER YEREVAN YOUTH PALACE [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

A 28-store hotel is intended to be built on the area of former Yerevan Youth palace. Chief architect of Yerevan Samvel Danielian told Armenpress that it will have a triangle shape and will be the highest hotel in Yerevan. Yet only the project of the hotel has been discussed. Referring to the construction of a general complex of the area, S. Danielian noted that yet there are certain unclear issues. The area has previously been studied, a necessary research has been made and existence of grounds – checked.

S. Danielian assured that projects of the hotel and the complex will yet several times be discussed to clarify all the issues finally.

Construction works of the hotel will probably kick off during the upcoming months.

## 37. 888 CHILDREN IN DIFFICULT CONDITION REGISTERED IN TAVUSH PROVINCE IN 2008 [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

Mapping of primary institutions of protection of children of Tavush province has been finished.

Head of the department of protection of children of the governor's office Avtandil Markosian told Armenpress that it will give an opportunity for the first time to have a holistic idea on the real number of children who are in difficult condition and handicapped women who are registered in the province.

According to 2008 summed up information, there are 888 children in Tavush province who are in a difficult condition including 17 teenagers who committed crimes, 572 handicapped, 38 children who are without care, 3 abandoned and 35 children handed for care.

Studies showed that there are no beggar and vagrant children as well as those who stayed out of secondary education. There are 2958 handicapped women registered in the province.

A. Markosian said that there are Children's Care and Development and Family Support community centers in four regions of the province where nearly 800 beneficiaries are registered. These centers were formerly functioning under the subordination of "Bridge of Hope" NGO but now they are subsidized from the Armenian state budget.

Besides this a boarding-school center functions in the Dilijan town of Tavush province where 132, 1-18 year-old children of socially insecure families are registered.

## 38. "SOUTH CAUCASIAN RAILWAYS" COMPANY STUDIES RESTORATION OF KARS-GYUMRI RAILROAD [ARMENPRESS, 02/25/09]

"South Caucasian Railways" company studies the restoration of Kars-Gyumri railroad. During today's press conference chief director of "South Caucasian Railways" company Shevket Shaydulín informed that nearly 90 million rubles are invested in restoration and development of the infrastructures.

"We have a task to restore all the Armenian railway directions",- he said.

Sh. Shaydulín considered construction of Iran-Armenia railroad a very important and right program, stating that today only Iran-Armenia highway functions.

"It is important for Armenian and Russian economies. Construction of Iran-Armenia railroad is being discussed on the levels of governments. The program was positively assessed by Armenian and Russian governments. There is a problem in the issue of participants of construction of the railroad. I think the issue will be settled in the nearest future",- he noted.

Sh. Shaydulín informed that as of now Kars-Akhalkalak-Tbilisi-Baku railway is not being constructed.

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