



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

POLITICS

1. REPUBLICAN PARTY OF ARMENIA TO ANNOUNCE SOON ITS POSITION ON RUNNING IN ELECTION OF YEREVAN COUNCIL OF ALDERMEN [Hayastani Hanrapetutian, 02/25/09]

The Armenian president, chairman of the Board of the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) Serzh Sargsyan stated that within a week, the RPA will inform the public about its position on running in the May 31 election of the Yerevan council of aldermen. Yerevan mayor Yervand Zakharian announced this at the February 24 press conference given at the conclusion of Serzh Sargsyan's visit to Yerevan municipality.

2. ANC REPRESENTATIVES MEET WITH U.S. AMBASSADOR [Aravot, 02/25/09]

On February 24, representatives of Armenian National Congress Central Office Levon Zurabian, David Shahnazarian, and Avetis Avagian met with U.S. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to RA Marie Yovanovitch. According to the ANC report, issues regarding Armenia's home political situation, as well as political prisoners and socio-economic crisis were discussed during the meeting.

3. JUBILEE COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION OF CELEBRATION OF VAZGEN SARGSIAN'S 50TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY ESTABLISHED [Azg, 02/25/09]

Under RA Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian's decision the staff of the jubilee committee on preparation of marking of the 50th anniversary of state, political figure Vazgen Sargsian was established. The committee is presided over by the RA Prime Minister. According to the report of the RA government Information and Public Relations Department, the committee was instructed in a ten-day term to work out the jubilee events' program and to submit it for endorsement.

4. CSTO SECRETARY GENERAL TO ARRIVE IN YEREVAN ON A ONE-DAY VISIT ON MARCH 2 [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

CSTO Secretary General Nikolay Bordyuzha will arrive in Yerevan on a one-day visit on March 2. According to the International Public Center for CSTO Information Support in Yerevan, at present the schedule of N. Bordyuzha's meetings in Yerevan is clarified. N. Bordyuzha's and RA National Security Council Secretary Artur Baghdasarian's joint press conference is planned.

5. JORDAN READY TO DEVELOP ALL-ROUND RELATIONS WITH ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

RA Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian arrived in Amman on February 24 where he met with Naser Jaude, the newly appointed Foreign Minister of Jordan (the government was formed on February 23). The RA Foreign Minister said that he came to Amman to give a new spirit to cooperation between Armenia and Jordan by bilateral and many-sided formats. Mentioning the current great potential in the sphere of the two countries' cooperation he attached importance to carrying out a political dialogue between the two countries, establishment of a legal-contractual sphere, and promotion of trade and economic cooperation development.

N. Jaude, in his turn, expressed Jordan's readiness to develop all-round relations with Armenia. During the meeting, the interlocutors exchanged thoughts over steps to be undertaken in the direction of possibilities for making active tourism and trade and economic cooperation. The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Jordan agreed to hold periodic consultations between the two countries' Foreign Ministries.

E. Nalbandian and N. Jaude also discussed issues related to peaceful settlement of problems in the Near East and South Caucasus, strengthening of security and stability.

According to the report of the RA Foreign Ministry Press and Information Department, E. Nalbandian also met with representatives of the Armenian community of Jordan in Amman.

The RA Foreign Minister left for Lebanon in the morning of February 25.



6. SHIRAK TOROSIAN: GEORGIAN AUTHORITIES DISREGARD PROBLEMS GEORGIAN ARMENIANS ARE CONCERNED WITH [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

An action of protest was held on February 25 near the building of Embassy of Georgia in Armenia on the initiative of the Javakhk compatriotic union and other organizations. The action participants carried placards with inscriptions "Javakhk is my homeland," "Freedom to Javakhk activists," and others. Union Chairman, RA NA deputy Shirak Torosian said that in spite of the permanent complaints of Armenians of Javakhk and Armenians of Georgia in general, the Georgian authorities continue disregarding and neglecting the problems the Armenian minority is concerned with.

According to him, in addition to traditional problems including problems of language, Armenian Apostolic Church's illegal status, new troubles have also emerged lately. According to the deputy, the Georgian authorities with a number of steps further aggravated the tension and discontent atmosphere among the Armenians of Javakhk. Thus, the Georgian police groundlessly bring to police dozens of Javakhk Armenian public activists, who are released only after being threatened and intimidated. As a result, according to S. Torosian, the atmosphere of fear and distrust increases day by day among the Armenians of Javakhk, which results in increase of migration rates of Armenians from the region.

The action participants demanded ensuring fulfillment of the powers reserved by the law On Local Self-government, liquidating the artificial obstacles at the state frontier Bavra check-point, stopping the police persecutions in Samtskhe-Javakhk-Tsalka, etc. They called the Armenian authorities for including these issues in the Armenian-Georgian interstate relations' agenda and getting down to their solution.

7. LEVON TER-PETROSIAN AND EU REPRESENTATIVES DISCUSS WAYS OF OVERCOMING ARMENIA'S HOME POLITICAL CRISIS [Haykakan Zhamanak, 02/25/09]

On February 25, first RA President Levon Ter-Petrosian and Armenian National Congress Central Office Coordinator Levon Zurabian met with EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Poland to RA Tomasz Knothe, head of the EU delegation in RA Raul de Luzenberger, and EU Yerevan Office Adviser for Political Affairs Andrey Didenko.

According to the ANC report, ways of overcoming Armenia's home political crisis were discussed during the meeting. ANC reaffirmed its readiness to launch a dialogue with the authorities in case all political prisoners are released and oppositionists' persecutions are stopped.

8. THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS BETWEEN ARMENIA AND GEORGIA THAT CANNOT BE SOLVED THROUGH A DIALOGUE [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

RA President Serzh Sargsyan and Georgian parliament Speaker David Bakradze, who is in Yerevan on an official visit, during the February 25 meeting emphasized the current high level of interstate relations between the two countries, Armenian and Georgian peoples' close historic contacts and strong friendship. Attaching importance to intensive contacts at various levels, S. Sargsyan mentioned interparliamentary cooperation's exclusive significance and said that such visits greatly contribute to further deepening of friendship.

The interlocutors touched upon the fulfillment process of the agreements reached within the framework of S. Sargsyan's visit to Georgia. The sides emphasized that programs of transport communication, facilitation of crossing the interstate frontier, those in customs and other directions will contribute to further development of Armenian-Georgian economic partnership.

Emphasizing that there are no problems between Armenia and Georgia that cannot be solved through joint discussions and dialogue, the interlocutors stressed the necessity of keeping mutual reserve and balanced approach on issues of vital importance for the two peoples.

According to the report of the RA President's Press Office, S. Sargsyan and D. Bakradze also exchanged thoughts about the possible ways of cooperation within the framework of the EU Eastern Partnership initiative, anti-crisis events undertaken by the two countries in conditions of the global financial-economic crisis.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

9. GULNARA SHAHINIAN ELECTED GRETA VICE-PRESIDENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

On February 25, Hanne Sophie Greve was elected first President of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and Gulnara Shahinian and Nicolas Le Coz were elected Vice-Presidents.

GRETA is currently holding its first meeting since its creation as the body in charge of monitoring implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The meeting was opened by a speech by Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

10. PRIME-MINISTER TASKS ALL THE DEPARTMENTS AND COMMUNITIES PRESENT WRITTEN ANSWERS TO THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE OVERSIGHT CHAMBER [ARMENPRESS, 02/26/09]

Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian tasked all the departments and communities to present within a week written answers to the conclusions of Oversight Chamber.

During today's session of Armenian government the prime minister noted that these answers have yet been received not from all the departments and communities but the demands of the law must by all means be fulfilled.

"It's a pity there is a great number of those who do not fulfill it. If within a week the Oversight chamber gets no written answers, we will have to apply to other means", T. Sargsian stressed.

He also referred to another issue: the 2008 works of the Oversight chamber showed that there are serious issues in respect of efficiency of the budget expenditures.

"I asked the head of the Oversight chamber to help us to conduct oversight over the efficient implementation of expenditures which is based on the risk. From this viewpoint the works conducted by us can notably support the implementation of a right expenditure policy in 2009. From this point of view we have a serious potential and our expenditures can be much more efficient", - the Armenian prime minister said.

The head of the Oversight chamber must present spheres where risks are rather high to the government, and if the riskiness remains on the high level, we must not do such expenditures "especially when the departments picked no lessons from the results of the studies of Oversight chamber". The prime minister pointed out that in such cases these expenditures simply must not be conducted and it will be possible to have serious savings in 2009 budget.

11. PETER SEMNEBY EXPRESSES HOPE THAT ARMENIA TO SUCCEED IN OVERCOMING INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN SHORT PERIOD [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

The European Union's attention to Armenia is conditioned not only by the necessity to establish more active relations with EU and take the necessary measures under the Eastern Partnership program, but also by the need to resolve the internal political crisis in Armenia, the Special Representative of the EU to the South Caucasus Peter Semneby said during an interview with Radio Liberty.

Responding to the question about why he pays frequent visits to Armenia, P. Semneby said that in addition to the fact that now is an active period in EU-Armenia relations, Armenia's internal political problems are of importance. Almost a year has passed since the March 1 events, and how this anniversary will be held in Armenia will show how the political life will develop in the country in the near future.

P. Semnaby expressed a hope that Armenia will succeed in overcoming the internal political problems in a short period so that some conditions for dialog between the authorities and opposition could be created. In his words, now Armenia is facing serious challenges, and more favorable conditions for such dialog have formed, so the European Union as an important partner of Armenia will continue doing everything possible regarding this issue.

12. IF AUTHORITIES DO NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF THE PEOPLE, THE PEOPLE SOLVES THE PROBLEMS OF AUTHORITIES, VICTOR DALLAKIAN WARNS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

The expected growth of prices in Armenia is fraught with an increase of tension which may result in social unrest, independent deputy of the National Assembly Victor Dallakian stated at the February 25 sitting.

In his words, the upcoming rise in gas, power and water tariffs will become a heavy burden, especially on the vulnerable section of Armenian population, which in its turn will lead to a growth in prices of living essentials. The same is expected to occur in case of adoption of the government-proposed



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

amendment to customs legislation, by which it is envisaged raising customs payments for imported eggs, meat products, vegetable oil with the aim of encouraging domestic producers. V. Dallakian said that there are 530 thousand pensioners, more than 200 thousand people who receive benefits, about 110 thousand disabled persons in Armenia, that is, over a million people are in vulnerable condition.

In response to the deputy's question about what steps the government has taken to avoid social unrest, the minister of labor and social issues Arsen Hambartsumian replied that having forecast a rise in prices, the government envisaged a growth of pensions, benefits and other financial allocations in the 2009 budget. The increased allocations should cover the vulnerable groups' expenses to grow due to the rise in tariffs. In the words of A. Hambartsumian, today there is no cause for serious concern, and the time will show what will happen in the future.

Not being satisfied with this answer, V. Dallakian proposed that the government keep the pre-election promises of the authorities and "bring the oligarchs to the taxation field". He warned of the possible consequences, noting that "if the authorities do not solve the problems of the people, then the people solves the problems of the authorities".

13. ZHIRAYR SEFILIAN FORECASTS EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IN ARMENIA IN LATE SPRING OR EARLY SUMMER [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

Coordinator of the Union of Armenian Volunteers (UAV) national political initiative Zhirayr Sefilian believes that an early parliamentary election will be held in Armenia in the late spring or early summer.

He expressed an opinion during the February 25 press conference that Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan will have to hold an early election to the National Assembly under external pressure: "An early election is not to Serzh Sargsyan's liking who usurped the presidential chair because, not having a majority in the parliament, he will turn into a "queen", Z. Sefilian said, expressing confidence that "he will prefer to become a "queen" rather than wander around the world or be in prison". However, what worries Z. Sefilian is not the possibility of S. Sargsyan's becoming a "queen" but pulverization of the opposition ranks. In order to prevent that, the UAV coordinator called on the opposition leaders "not to swallow the bait" and refuse to run in early parliamentary election.

He linked the inefficiency of the opposition's struggle to the person of Levon Ter-Petrosian who, according to Z. Sefilian, is rejected by all the geopolitical centers interested in Armenia. This is the reason why L. Ter-Petrosian is an Armenia-centered figure.

Z. Sefilian said that the Armenian statehood is in danger, taking into account the fact that the indicated centers take serious interest in the region, particularly in Armenia, and they are pursuing the goal of creating an unstable and bad social situation in the country.

14. RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN FIRST READING ADOPTS BILL ON MAKING AMENDMENTS AND ADDENDA TO CRIMINAL CODE [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

On February 26, the RA National Assembly with 92 votes "for," 3 "against" and 1 "abstained" in the first reading adopted a bill on making amendments and addenda to the Criminal Code. The Zharangutiun (Heritage) faction voted against.

The main goal of the amendments is to clarify the formulations of Articles 225 (mass disorders) and 300 (seizing the power) in consideration of the criteria established by the precedent practice of the European Court of Human Rights and the necessity to correspond to Code's legal definiteness principle. The current measures of punishment have been kept unchanged.

The main amendment to Article 225, RA Criminal Code, proposes considering invalid the latter's second part, according to which a punishment of 6-12 years is envisaged for organizing mass disorders accompanied by a murder or directly committing them.

A necessity to stipulate new articles has emerged as a result of the amendments made to Article 300: 300.1 (overthrowing the constitutional order), 300.2 (breaking the territorial integrity). Liability for the last two kinds of crimes is currently envisaged by Article 300.

Besides, amendments were also made to a number of other articles, in particular, Article 225.1, Criminal Code (organizing and holding a public event with violation of the order established by the law) and 301 (appeals of seizing the power, overthrowing the constitutional order or breaking territorial integrity). After the latter a new article, 301.1 (obliging country's President, National Assembly, government, Constitutional Court) was added.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

15. TATUL MANASERIAN: THERE IS NO DIALOGUE EITHER WITHIN POWER OR WITHIN OPPOSITION [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

The Armenian political sphere lacks the force that can be a serious alternative for the current authorities. Economist Tatul Manaserian expressed such an opinion at the February 26 press conference. According to him, it is easy for everybody to be constantly engaged in criticism, but it is more difficult to propose solutions for coming out of the formed situation. According to T. Manaserian, Armenia is faced by serious challenges, and everybody should think of introducing salvation programs. "Otherwise a fruitless, only politicized conflict will give no results," he said.

The economist has no expectations from the March 1 rally to be organized by the Armenian National Congress. As to the issue of coming out of the formed situation through a dialogue, according to T. Manaserian, today there is no dialogue even within the power and within the opposition.

16. OPPOSITION CAN DO A BLITZ-REVENGE IN YEREVAN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS, DAVID HAKOBIAN PREDICTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

"Everything will be decided in Yerevan Mayor's elections scheduled for May 31: the opposition can do a blitz-revenge and change everything," David Hakobian, the Chairman of the Marxist Party of Armenia, stated at the February 26 press conference. According to him, the opposition, in particular, the Armenian National Congress, should pay much attention and treat seriously those elections. "The opposition cannot miss the mark for the third time, let the authorities know it well," D. Hakobian added. He also warned the authorities that the elections can be turned into state elections, as the home political situation remains strained.

As to the tasks of the Marxist Party of Armenia, as D. Hakobian stressed it, the political force headed by him will continue cooperating with ANC more efficiently if ANC accepts his three preconditions. The first precondition is that ANC leader Levon Ter-Petrosian should periodically hold a consultation with him, D. Hakobian, the second precondition is that two Marxist Party representatives should be on the preelection roll of Yerevan councilor members, and the third, ANC should provide a financial assistance to the Marxist Party of Armenia. The speaker also stated that if the names of the first three heading the list are marked in the ballot-paper, he should be among them.

Speaking about the one year of President Serzh Sargsyan's holding his office, D. Hakobian said that participating in CSTO rapid reaction force establishment was his only positive step. And the omission, according to D. Hakobian, is economic and is the lack of clear-cut programs in Nagorno Karabakh negotiations issues. "To cede the seven territories and to leave only a donkey path, as Serzh Sargsyan says, is a political idiocy," D. Hakobian said.

17. SERZH SARGSYAN: IN PAST YEARS ARMENIAN-GERMAN RELATIONS DEVELOP AT NEW PACES [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

On February 26, RA President Serzh Sargsyan received Markus Meckel, a member of German Bundestag Foreign Relations Committee, deputy head of Bundestag delegation at NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and Melanie Moltmann, Charge d'Affaires of Germany to RA.

S. Sargsyan said that in the past years the Armenian-German relations develop at new paces: in the sphere of cooperation of development Germany is Armenia's second donor country, as well as one of the biggest trade and economic partners. According to S. Sargsyan, German business has formed certain confidence to Armenia's business environment, and it is not accidental that at present 94 enterprises with German capital function in Armenia. According to the results of 2008, commodity circulation between the two countries amounted to nearly 350m USD and German investments 250m USD.

According to M. Meckel, he is one of the Bundestag deputies, who think that the European Union should carry out more active policy in the South Caucasian region.

18. RA PRIME MINISTER TO LEAVE FOR MOSCOW ON ONE-DAY WORKING VISIT ON FEBRUARY 27 [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

On February 27, RA Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian will leave for the capital city of RF Moscow on a working visit. During the visit, he will have meetings with RF Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, RF Minister of Transport, Co-chairman of the Armenian-Russian Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation Igor Levitin, RF Central Bank President Sergey Ignatyev, business circle representatives.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

According to the report of the RA government Information and Public Relations Department, issues regarding the decisions made at the Intergovernmental Commission's 10th, jubilee sitting last October, the fulfillment process of the agreements reached, issues related to further strengthening the bilateral trade and economic contacts and expanding cooperation in a number of mutually beneficial spheres and those having prospects, and other issues will be discussed during the meetings.

The following high-ranking officials are members of the delegation led by the RA Prime Minister: Minister of Finance Tigran Davtian, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Armen Movsisian, Minister of Transport and Communication Gurgen Sargsian, Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharian, head of the RA government staff David Sargsian, Vice-Chairman of the Central Bank of Armenia Vache Gabrielian.

19. SERZH SARGSYAN RECEIVES MEMBER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMISSION OF GERMAN BUNDESTAG [ARMENPRESS, 02/27/09]

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan received today member of the foreign relations commission of the German Bundestag, deputy head of the Bundestag delegation to the NATO PA Markus Mekel and German charge d'affaires in Armenia Melani Moltman.

Presidential press service told Armenpress that Serzh Sargsyan noted about the dynamic development of Armenian-German relations during the recent years. The president of the country considered the meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel within the frameworks of Security conference in Munich constructive.

The president of the country also expressed gratitude saying that Germany is Armenia's second donor country and one of the biggest trade-economic partners.

According to Serzh Sargsyan, German business has trust towards Armenian business environment and it is not accidental that in our country 94 enterprises are functioning with German capital. According to the 2008 results, the trade turnover between the two countries reached 350 million USD, German investments amounted to 250 million USD.

Markus Mekel said that he is among those members of Bundestag who think that EU must carry out more active policy in the South Caucasian region. He noted that in Munich he had an opportunity to hear the speech of the Armenian president and direct questions over Armenian-Turkish dialogue. Today as well the Armenian president presented the developments over Armenian-Turkish relations and the approaches of the official Yerevan.

The sides also spoke about Armenia's inner-political developments.

20. GREECE DEFENDS POLICY OF PEACEFUL REGULATION OF KARABAKH CONFLICT [ARMENPRESS, 02/27/09]

During the press conference which took place on Wednesday, Greek ambassador to Azerbaijan Ioanis Metaksas stated that Greece hopes the Karabakh conflict will be regulated peacefully and according to the international legal norms.

The diplomat stressed that Greece has specific relations with South Caucasian countries and very attentively follows the processes taking place in this region.

The ambassador said that as an OSCE chairing country Greece supports peaceful efforts of OSCE group co-chairs in the issue of Karabakh conflict regulation.

"Greece hopes that during its chairmanship in OSCE the issue of Karabakh conflict regulation can find its solution", Metaksas pointed out.

21. MONITORING OF OSCE MISSION IN THE FRONT LINE INTERRUPTED [ARMENPRESS, 02/27/09]

The regular monitoring of the line of contact of Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijani Armed Forces near Horadiz settlement of Fizouli region by the OSCE mission was interrupted today.

Press service of the Nagorno Karabakh Foreign Ministry told Armenpress that from the very beginning of the monitoring a single-round firing was opened in the direction of coordinator of the OSCE office Imre Palatinus (Hungary), Field Assistant of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Irji Aberle (Czech Republic), who conducted the monitoring from the positions of the NKR Defense Army, and the representatives of the NKR Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, accompanying them. Then, burst of machine-gun fire was opened from the Azerbaijani positions that



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

passed to the left from the monitoring group. Afterwards, another single shot was made in the direction of the mission.

Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk, who headed the monitoring group from the Azerbaijani territory ordered to stop the monitoring.

Besides, the Azerbaijani party did not lead the OSCE mission to the arranged point of its front-lines once again.

22. THE CREDIT OF STABILIZATION PROVIDED TO ARMENIA BY RUSSIA TO BE RECEIVED WITHIN SEVERAL WEEKS [ARMENPRESS, 02/27/09]

The credit of stabilization which is given to Armenia by Russia will be received within several weeks. During today's briefing with journalists Armenian Finance Minister Tigran Davtian noted that the project is now passing through corresponding procedures in Russia. Avoiding speaking about other details the Minister advised to wait for final receiving of the credit.

The stabilization credit must be directed towards smoothing the consequences of world economic crises on the Armenian economy.

23. YURI MERZLYAKOV SAYS THERE ARE OBJECTIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE REGULATION OF KARABAKH CONFLICT [ARMENPRESS, 02/27/09]

OSCE Minsk group Russian co-chairman Yuri Merzlyakov stated on Thursday in Baku that there are objective opportunities for the regulation of Karabakh conflict.

"Only subjective factors impede the regulation of the conflict, the solution of which depends on the political will of the sides. But for it very difficult decisions are necessary to be made. When it happens, the time for the "golden opportunity" will also be created", - stressed Merzlyakov commenting on the OSCE special reporter on the Karabakh issue Goran Lenmarker's statement on the "golden opportunity" created in the issue of Karabakh conflict regulation.

Merzlyakov added that yet he cannot say about the existence of such an opportunity.

24. MEETING OF ARMENIAN AND TURKISH YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE HELD IN ARMENIA IN APRIL [ARMENPRESS, 02/27/09]

"The Association of Youth Organizations" of World Armenian Congress intends to organize "Armenian-Turkish Inter-Cultural Youth Tram: Ankara-Yerevan" program in Armenia in April.

Head of the association Atom Mkhitarian told Armenpress that within the frameworks of the program a meeting of heads of Armenian and Turkish youth organizations will be held. The Turkish youth have already been invited and, according to A. Mkhitarian, the suggestion to arrive in Armenia found a great resonance among them.

During the meeting the Turkish youth will get acquainted with the activity of Armenian youth organizations. There will also be meetings with the representatives of state institutions. A. Mkhitarian signified the circumstance that the young people will present concrete programs. According to the organizers, the initiative will contribute to the further cooperation between the youth of the two countries.

Fifteen young people will arrive from Turkey, as much there will be from Armenia. The meeting will last four days, visits are intended to historical-cultural places. The program has been financed by the Council of Europe.

On April 24 "The Association of Youth Organizations" intends to conduct actions with the participation of the youth, bucklets have been published on the history of Armenian genocide which will be spread in different countries of the world through different organizations of the association.

The association has 20 members in Lebanon, Syria, Belarus, Ukraine, Iran, Bulgaria, Holland and Germany.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

BUSINESS

25. EUROPEAN COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE 7.2 MILLION EURO GRANT FOR ARMENIA'S NUCLEAR SAFETY [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

The National Assembly of Armenia on February 24 ratified three international agreements discussed the day before:

- the agreement on the avoidance of double taxation of incomes and property and the prevention of tax evasion between the Republic of Armenia and the Czech Republic signed in Yerevan on July 6, 2008;

- the protocol on the joining of Bulgaria and Romania to the agreement on partnership and cooperation signed by the Republic of Armenia on one side and the European communities and their member states on the other side in Brussels on June 27, 2007;

- the agreement on financing the 2007 action plan of nuclear safety (part 2) signed by the Armenian government and the Commission of European Communities in Brussels on February 7, 2008 and in Yerevan on July 7, 2008;

Under the last of the indicated agreements, Armenia will receive a grant of 7.2 million euros. According to the main speaker, deputy minister of finance Vardan Aramian, most of this grant - 6.4 million euros will be spent on prevention of accidents at the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant, improvement of its aging equipment and control systems, and 0.8 million euros will be allocated for improving the institutional capacities of the State Nuclear Safety Regulatory Committee adjunct to the Armenian government.

26. IT IS ENVISAGED REDUCING HIGH RATES OF EXCISE TAX TO BE LEVIED ON IMPORTED ALCOHOLIC DRINKS STARTING FROM MARCH 1 [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

The National Assembly of Armenia on February 24 passed in first reading the bill on amendments to the RA Law on Excise Tax. The bill was submitted by members of "RPA" parliamentary faction Galust Sahakian and Armen Ashotian. It proposes reviewing the amendments made to this law in late 2008, according to which in particular the rates of VAT on imported alcoholic drinks will considerably rise starting from March 1. The bill proposes reducing the difference in the VAT rates of domestic goods and imported ones.

"ARF" faction did not participate in the vote, while "Heritage" faction voted against.

It is noteworthy that the bill's authors substantiated the proposed amendment by the circumstance that such differentiation with respect to the indicated goods may result in a decline of imports, which will not be conducive to higher quality of the same goods made in Armenia - due to unequal conditions of competition.

The parliament also passed in first reading the government's bill on amendments and additions to the RA Law on Value Added Tax. The government considers it an anticrisis measure and proposes that in case of the import of certain goods by companies selected in the order established by the government, the period of collection of VAT calculated by customs bodies should be deferred for up to 3 years, if the customs value of the imported commodity or the investment package make 300 million drams (about 1 million USD) and over.

27. TENDER FOR CONSTRUCTION OF NEW NUCLEAR POWER UNIT IN ARMENIA ANNOUNCED [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

The winner of the open one-stage tender announced by the State Procurement Agency of Armenia will be offered to sign an agreement on state purchase of "management services with the aim of implementing the program of construction of a new nuclear power unit in the Republic of Armenia", the website of the RA Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources informs.

28. THANKS TO ARMENIAN GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMS, DOMESTIC PRODUCERS TO OVERCOME CRISIS WITH MINIMAL LOSSES [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

The anti-crisis measures taken by the Armenian government will allow domestic producers to overcome the global financial crisis with minimal losses. The chairman of the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia Arsen Ghazarian stated at the February 24 discussion with the participation of businessmen that the government measures, in particular the legislative amendments, are aimed at



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

developing agricultural produce processing, mechanical engineering and mining industry, as well as at export promotion and replacement of imported goods.

In his words, local producers have always anticipated the state to create favorable conditions for domestic production. Although the steps taken by the government are belated, according to A. Ghazarian, today the economic policy is radically changing thanks to these steps: in particular, all companies to submit serious business plans will receive state assistance.

The director of Yerevan Jewelry Plant Emil Grigorian expressed an opinion that only cooperation of the state and private sector will reduce the impact of the crisis. He informed those present that the ministry of economy has developed a package of actions related to the gem and jewelry sector and will soon submit it to the government for discussion. E. Grigorian said that the proposed measures are aimed at developing the sector.

Electric Appliance company is facing serious problems, particularly problems in the Russian market due to the depreciation of the ruble, the company's director Zaven Harutyunian said. "If we fail to keep these markets, our 10-15-year work will come to nothing," he noted. In his opinion, the state should give loans to companies operating in this sector in order to help them withstand the crisis.

The discussion participants said that the state should support first of all those sectors that are not developed but have great potential.

29. MORE LIVELY ACTIVITY EXPECTED IN HOUSING MARKET OF ARMENIA IN COMING MONTHS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

There is a "relative peace" in Armenia's housing market after the March 1 events, and as a result of the global financial crisis. However, as director of Aktsern agency Hakob Baghdasarian said during the February 24 discussion at the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia, more lively activity is expected in this market in the coming months.

Speaking about the construction sector's problems caused by the global crisis, director of Elite Group company Armen Mkoyan reminded that construction ensured 35% of Armenian GDP in recent years. However, according to him, this sector also suffered a decline in the past years. "Developers make considerable investments and create many jobs in the country so we expect the state to assist us in getting out of the current situation," A. Mkoyan said. In his words, they expect the state to provide mortgage credits which will help create jobs and develop the sector.

30. IF ANTI-CRISIS PROGRAMS CONTINUE AT SAME RATE, ARMENIA TO HAVE STRONGER ECONOMY AFTER GETTING OUT OF CRISIS [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

The anti-crisis programs being implemented by Armenian government and the latest legislative initiatives are bold, revolutionary and optimistic, the chairman of the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia Arsen Ghazarian stated during a talk with reporters on February 24. In his words, if these programs continue at the same rate and if businessmen improve their management, Armenia will have a stronger economy after getting out of the crisis.

As regards the 15% customs duty established for some imported goods, A. Ghazarian said that it will not be used with respect to all finished commodities: the decision concerns such imported commodities, the production of which can be organized in Armenia in order to meet the demand of the domestic market. A. Ghazarian pointed out that the decision was made for domestic producers' benefit. "However, they should understand that a 15% duty is not a salvation, it is just an opportunity to make progress, and local producers should pay more attention to quality, cost price, and the culture of services," he noted. In his opinion, there is potential for efficient organization of production in such sectors as food processing, mechanical engineering, plastic production and several other branches whose products may be competitive with imported goods.

A. Ghazarian said that new legislative amendments are being developed, particularly for the high-tech sector. According to him, the sector's companies are likely to be exempt from paying VAT at the border when importing equipment.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

31. ARMENIAN HAND-MADE CARPETS SOLD BY DIRECT MAKERS TO BE EXEMPT FROM VAT AND PROFIT TAX [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

The National Assembly on February 25 passed in first reading the legislative package of amendments to the RA Law on Profit Tax and the RA Law on Value Added Tax. By the bill, the tax payers engaged in hand-made carpet making in Armenia will be exempt from profit tax on the incomes received from the sale of carpets, as well as from VAT.

According to the main speaker, minister of economy Nerses Yeritsian, relieving the tax burden will contribute to further development of traditional Armenian art, preservation of the cultural heritage, international recognition of this branch of Armenian culture, also to economic growth and the creation of non-agricultural jobs and an increase in the number of self-employed persons in rural areas.

It was mentioned that about 800 persons are currently engaged in hand-made carpet making in Armenia. The minister said that the productivity of the sector's companies has declined due to current processes in the domestic and foreign markets, which may result in the closure of companies and a rise in the level of unemployment.

32. TWO-DAY ARMENIAN-GERMAN INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONSULTATIONS START IN YEREVAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/25/09]

Two-day Armenian-German intergovernmental consultations started in Yerevan on February 25. The participants will discuss the current and future programs.

The Armenian-German financial cooperation is focused on three main spheres: the financial and private sectors, energy, water and wastewater. Smaller grant projects are being implemented in healthcare and environmental protection.

According to the Information and PR Unit of the RA Ministry of Finance, under the agreement on the 2007-2008 financial cooperation between the governments of Germany and Armenia, it is envisaged implementing the following programs:

2nd stage of "Apartment Financing Market (Mortgage Market)" program - 6 million euros;

"Vorotan Cascade of Hydropower Plants" program - 29 million euros;

"Repairs of Gyumri-2 High-Voltage Power Plant" program - up to 14.6 million euros;

"Construction of Armenia-Georgia High-Voltage Transmission Line" program - up to 20.4 million euros;

"Repairs of Community Infrastructures. Stage 2: Adjacent Measures" program - 3 million euros;

"Fight against Tuberculosis" program Stage 2 - a 1 million dollar grant.

The German government has provided financial resources at 0.75% interest rate, for a period of 40 years, with a 10-year grace period.

Until now Armenia has received 235 million euros (195 mln euros as credits and 40 mln euros as grants) within the framework of Armenian-German financial cooperation.

33. WORLD BANK TO PROVIDE A CREDIT OF 85 MILLION USD TO ARMENIA TO SMOOTHEN THE IMPACT OF WORLD FINANCIAL CRISIS [ARMENPRESS, 02/26/09]

During 2009-2012 the World Bank will provide 525 million USD to Armenia as a credit which exceeds the 220 million USD provided previous quarter for more than twice.

During today's press conference in the WB Armenian office, head of the office Aristomene Varudakis told journalists that February 24 the WB approved 4 credit program packages of overall 85 million USD which aims at supporting Armenia in smoothing the impact of world financial crisis and improvement of welfare of the population.

First of the programs is directed towards the improvement of vital roads (nearly 25 million USD), the other two programs will ensure an additional financing to the Social Investment Fund (nearly 8 million USD) and the program of development of small-size trade agriculture (2 million USD).

The fourth program of crediting of nearly 50 million USD will be directed towards the small and medium-sized enterprises to ensure their financial availability. The sums of crediting will be sent to the Armenian Central Bank which, on its turn, will credit the Armenian trade banks. These business banks in their turn will provide these sums to the beneficiaries as credits.

According to A. Varudakis, providing of this support by the WB was possible due to the determination of Armenia in implementation of joint programs and the successful process of policy of reforms.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

He also clarified that the Program of improvement of vital roads will promote the renovation and restoration of 100 km of roads in 7 provinces of Armenia – Shirak, Gegharkunik, Aragatsotn, Lori, Tavush, Armavir and Vayots Dzor. The road building program is intended to be finished by the end of this year. A. Varudakis said that with this 800 working places will be created annually.

Within the frameworks of additional financing intended for Social Investment Fund, 55 Armenian poorest communities will be supported in renovation of schools, establishment and reconstruction of community centers and improvement of drinking water systems. With this program nearly 350 additional working places are intended to be established.

A. Varudakis informed that through the additional financing provided to the Program of development of rural enterprises and small-size trade agriculture, 35 community economic development programs will be brought to an end.

Through these three programs the credit means are provided for 20 years period, 10 years of which are with privileged conditions.

According to the head of WB Armenian office, through the implementation of the Program of providing financial availability to small and medium-sized enterprises the vulnerability of mentioned enterprises in the conditions of crisis is intended to be smoothened, especially in cases when they face difficulties in obtaining finances through the banking system or transfers. Through this program the representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises will be provided credits by 150 000 USD.

For crediting of small and medium-sized enterprises the WB provides money for 26.5 years' period five of which are with privileged conditions.

The WB will also provide grants of 1.5 million USD to Armenia for studying and assessing resources of earth thermo-energy in Gegharkunik and Syunik.

After becoming a member of WB in 1992 and International Development Association in 1993 Armenia has been provided nearly 1.162 billion USD. At present 16 programs are in different stages of implementation and additional 94 million USD will be provided to them to bring these programs to the end.

A. Varudakis informed that with the support of the WB an educational program is also intended to be implemented in Armenia by June this year, and programs of development policy will be approved by September-October with which support will be provided to the Armenian government.

34. WORLD BANK OFFICIAL FORECASTS ZERO GROWTH OF ARMENIAN GDP THIS YEAR [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

Armenia may have a zero GDP growth rate this year. Expressing this opinion at the February 25 meeting with reporters, the head of the World Bank Yerevan Office Aristomene Varudakis conditioned his forecast by the poor state of the global economy, and even worse economic state of Russia which is the major trade partner of Armenia.

It became known on the same day that the World Bank will provide a 85 million dollar credit to Armenia for a period of 20 years. The credit will be spent on reconstruction of road infrastructures, additional financing of the Social Investment Fund, development of agricultural sector and private farms as well as small and medium enterprises.

35. ARMENIAN AND RUSSIAN GOVERNMENTS GIVE POSITIVE SOLUTION TO ISSUE OF IRAN-ARMENIA RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

The issue of Iran-Armenia railway construction received a positive solution at the level of the governments of Armenia and Russia, the head of South Caucasus Railways company Shevket Shaydullin stated at the February 25 press conference. In his words, Armenia needs additional transit opportunities (in addition to motor roads), which will contribute to the economic development of the country.

As regards the possible re-opening of the railway between Armenia and Turkey, S. Shaydullin said that repair work of Armenian section of Gyumri-Kars railway is being done within the framework of restoration of all infrastructures in Armenia. According to him, in case of the appropriate political decision, their company is ready to ensure the technical aspect of launching Gyumri-Kars railway.

S. Shaydullin said that construction of Kars-Akhalkalak railway currently has no financing, and "in principle, today the railway is not being built".



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

36. SHEVKET SHAYDULLIN CONSIDERS STATE OF ARMENIAN RAILWAY AS SATISFACTORY [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

At the present time the state of the Armenian railway is satisfactory, the head of South Caucasus Railways Shevket Shaydullin declared at the February 25 press conference. According to him, South Caucasus Railways is considered one of the biggest companies. The company operates under conditions of competition and provides 29% of transportation services in Armenia. It is taking steps to improve the quality and conditions of its services and aims to repair old railway lines.

S. Shaydullin announced that no rise in tariffs is envisaged in 2009. In his words, in 2008 the company operated at a loss, and the same is forecast for 2009 - because of investments. It was mentioned that the passenger traffic made 21 thousand in January 2009 as compared with 10 thousand in the same month of 2008.

37. HIGH LINE INTERNET SERVICE ALREADY AVAILABLE IN 18 ARMENIAN CITIES [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

ArmenTel company ("Beeline" brand) has extended the list of cities where its "High Line" high-speed Internet service is available. In addition to 6 Armenian cities: Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Gavar, Ijevan and Abovian, 12 more cities: Spitak, Stepanavan, Tashir, Talin, Yeghegnadzor, Kapan, Goris, Meghri, Sevan, Noyemberian, Etchmiadzin and Ashtarak have been added to this list.

High Line service is envisaged for natural persons and based on ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) technology providing high-speed Internet access by a phone line, leaving it disengaged for phone calls.

ArmenTel CJSC began providing an ADSL-based Internet service called "High Line" service in 2007. More than 12 thousand subscribers currently use this service. A customer may purchase an ADSL modem on credit, which makes the Internet more accessible to the public.

"We have made considerable investments in Armenia's communication infrastructure. Now it is time to show that they are aimed at long-term economic and social development of the country. We view the extension of the "geography" of Internet services as a crucial factor of Armenia's integration into global information environment", Director General of ArmenTel Neycho Velichkov said.

38. ARMENIAN PRIME MINISTER DISCUSSES ISSUES OF ENSURING FINANCIAL STABILITY WITH THE HEAD OF RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK [ARMENPRESS, 02/27/09]

Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian, who is in Moscow on a working visit, early in the morning met with the head of Russian Central Bank Sergey Ignatev. During the meeting the sides discussed anti-crisis events which have been and will be implemented.

S. Ignatev presented to T. Sargsian the experience of Russian financiers in this as well as steps which are implemented by Russia in the direction of ensuring financial stability.

Issues of crediting the Armenian enterprises and the real sector by Russian inter-state bank have also been discussed.

An agreement has been reached over the implementation of necessary documentary clarifications on providing credit as soon as possible.

DIASPORA

39. THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY OF TURKEY – AN IMPORTANT BRIDGE [Azg, 02/26/09]

Turkish State Minister Egemen Bagis met with the representatives of the Armenian community of Turkey at the Armenian School in Shishli.

According to Turkish Jihan news agency, the Turkish State Minister thanked for the kind hospitality saying, "For centuries we have shared bread and water on these lands living in good and bad circumstances".

Touching upon the Armenian-Turkish relations, Egemen Bagis underlined that they attach great importance to the development of relations with Armenia. "In this sense, I consider the Armenian community of Turkey as an important bridge", he said.

Egemen Bagis visited also "Agos" weekly editorial office and met with the Editor-in-chief of the newspaper Ethien Mahchupian.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

ARTS

40. CULTURAL PROGRAMS OF BLACK SEA COUNTRIES TO BE HELD IN YEREVAN [ARMENPRESS, 02/26/09]

Within the frameworks of Armenian chairmanship in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) the Armenian Culture Ministry will implement a complex cultural program in March.

Head of the public relations department of the ministry Gayane Durgarian told Armenpress that within the frameworks of the program a roundtable is intended on "Cooperation in the sphere of protection and restoration of historical-cultural monuments of Black Sea region".

From March 4-11 an exhibition entitled "Cultural Mosaic of Black Sea Countries" will be held in the Armenian national gallery and in parallel films will be shown on protection and restoration of historical-cultural monuments.

Within the frameworks of the program a children's exhibition will open March 5 in the Armenian national center of aesthetics entitled "Sunny Sky of the Black Sea" which will last by March 10.

From BSEC member states Armenia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Romaine, Russia, Serbia and Georgia will take part in the complex program.

41. ONLINE SHOWING OF FIRST FEATURE FILM ON ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ORGANIZED [Azg, 02/26/09]

The 90th anniversary of publication of the "Ravished Armenia" memoirs and the "Auction of Souls" silent film shot by its scenario at the Metro Goldwin Mayer studio is marked this year. On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the "Ravished Armenia", the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute has issued a memorial postcard and has created an online exhibition at Armenian Genocide Museum & Institute's official website www.genocide-museum.am.

"Ravished Armenia", one of the first documentary memoirs of an eyewitness of Armenian Genocide was published in 1918, in New York. In this book Arshaluys (Aurora) Mardiganian, a girl from Chmshkatsag, Armenian populated town in the Ottoman Empire, gave a detailed account of the terrible experiences she endured during the deportations. At the age of fourteen Arshaluys was beaten and tortured in harems of Turkish officials and Kurdish tribesmen.

The book "Ravished Armenia" was completed when American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief offered to create a film based on the scenario of the book and all the profit, which later on reached \$30 million, would be given to 60.000 Armenian orphans in the Near East for relief purposes. In 1918, at Metro Goldwin Mayer studio, director Oscar Apfel made "Auction of Souls" silent film, which actually became not only the first movie on the Armenian genocide, but also the first genocide movie ever made. More than 10.000 Armenian residents of Southern California, including 200 deported children, participated in the scenes.

The premiere of the "Auction of Souls" was held on February 16, 1919, in Plaza Hotel, New York under the auspices of Oliver Harriman and George Vanderbilt, members of American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief. The film was shown in large cities of 23 U.S. states, in several countries of Latin America, including Mexico and Cuba. It was a success everywhere and was estimated as "epoch-making film."

The "Auction of Souls" was taken to Great Britain in December, 1919, and censored. After long lasting negotiations the film was shown in Royal Albert Hall, by the permission of Scotland Yard and played for three weeks. At the beginning of 1920s Mardiganian's "Ravished Armenia" was censored and taken off the British and American libraries.

For over eighty years film historians have been searching the world for the nine reels of Ravished Armenia but failed to find any trace. The remaining reels of the rare nitrate based film were lost. Some say the reels presumably sunk with a ship on their way to the port of Batoum, Georgia, or stolen by thieves. The full-length version of the film, which lasting 85 minutes, unfortunately, hasn't been saved. With the efforts of Eduard Gozanlian, an Armenian from Argentina, a 20 minute segment of the reel was found in 1994. One copy of that segment is kept in the funds of Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute. The film included English, French and Armenian subtitles for every scene. The list of the original subtitles for Ravished Armenia is preserved in The Selig Collection at the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. They are also reproduced in Anthony Slide's book "Ravished Armenia and the Story of Aurora Mardiganian". This book was published by Scarecrow Press in 1997. It tells the story of the making of the film and reveals the young girl's survival story.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

SOCIAL

42. MEDICAL EQUIPMENTS OF 150.7 MILLION AMD PROVIDED TO SYUNIK PROVINCE IN 2008 [ARMENPRESS, 02/26/09]

Instead of 2007's 218 million AMD, the medical institutions subordinated to Syunik province have in 2008 been filled up with new medical equipments, instruments and other accessories amounting 150.7 million drams.

An official from Health and Social security department of the Governor's office told Armenpress that the Armenian Health Ministry has provided medical equipments of 130.6 million drams, international charity organizations and the Office of implementation of programs of Armenian Health Ministry – medical equipments of 13.6 million drams. There were also grants from private means.

43. 416 PEOPLE IN SYUNIK AND SHIRAK UNDERGO LABORATORY EXAMINATION FOR BRUCELLOSIS [ARMENPRESS, 02/26/09]

From February 16-26, workers of the State hygienic and anti-epidemic inspection of Armenian Health Ministry conducted laboratory examination of 416 people of Syunik and Shirak provinces for brucellosis.

Head of the epidemiological department of infectious and non-infectious diseases of the inspection Lilit Avetisian told Armenpress that besides the 15 people who had been infected with brucellosis in Tsghuk village of Syunik province no other cases of infection have been registered.

According to L. Avetisian the preventive events in the above mentioned provinces continue – yard visits are conducted, informative templates are distributed to the population and disinfections are conducted. Workers of the inspection cooperate with veterinaries of the provinces.

Brucellosis is an infectious disease which is transferred to people by using the meat and milk of infected animals without corresponding procession and in case of re-procession of their leather. A person who is infected with brucellosis is not a source of infection and does not infect other people.

44. VACCINATIONS AGAINST FLU CONTINUE IN THE REPUBLIC [ARMENPRESS, 02/26/09]

Vaccinations against the flu intended for this year continue in the republic.

Head of the epidemiological department of infectious and non-infectious diseases of State hygienic and anti-epidemic inspection of Armenian Health Ministry Lilit Avetisian told Armenpress that 13 940 people have been involved in this year's program of vaccination. The vaccinations are conducted within the risk group which includes the pupils of secondary schools, residents of children's houses, hostels for old people, the serving staff, medical workers of the first circles, etc.

According to the specialist the epidemic condition in the republic is stable: compared with the same period last year, during the two months of this year no increase of diseases of respiratory track has been noted.

45. SOCHI STAR INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF CHILDREN'S' WORKS OPENS IN SOCHI [ARMENPRESS, 02/26/09]

Sochi Star international festival of children's works opened in Sochi with the participation of young representatives of 8 countries, the head of the festival Narine Abrahamian told RIA "Novosti". She noted that now the young participants of the contest pass a qualification round.

From 9 to 12 year-old children from Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Armenia, Ukraine, Belarus as well as from two brother towns of Sochi – Italian Rimini and Estonian Pyarnu will take part in the festival.

Professional musicians and heads of collectives are involved in the jury.

Narine Abrahamian informed that no one of the participants in the festival will remain without gifts. Last year all the participants of the final got notebook computers.

The festival which has been organized with the support of Sochi authorities, will be held on the stage of Winter theatre.



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

46. CONSTRUCTION WORKS OF 175 MILLION DRAMS TO BE CONDUCTED IN THE YEREVAN ZOO [ARMENPRESS, 02/26/09]

Construction works of 175 million drams will be conducted this year in the Yerevan zoo. Tenders for the construction have already been announced.

Head of the Culture, youth and sport affairs department of Yerevan municipality Kamo Movsisian told Armenpress that during the year summer and winter cages of big cats are intended to be renovated, the deterrent works continued, a sewage constructed, etc.

Last year works of 58 million drams were conducted in the Yerevan zoo. Nearly 700 million drams have been released from the Armenian state budget for conduction of extended construction works in the zoo during 2008-2012.

47. FARTHEST AND NORTH RURAL COMMUNITIES OF SHIRAK PROVINCE TO BE GASIFICATED THROUGH THE "PROGRAM OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TERRITORIES" [ARMENPRESS, 02/27/09]

The "Program of Economic Development of Rural Territories" will kick off in the nearest future in Shirak province.

An official from the department of Trade and Socio-Economic development programs told Armenpress that it will be implemented within the frameworks "Marketing Opportunities for Farmers" of fifth investment program of the International Fund of Development of Agriculture. Within the frameworks of the same program restoration works of irrigation systems were conducted last year.

The "Program of Economic Development of Rural Territories" has kicked off in 2005 and is intended to be finished in July, 2009. The program will be implemented in the whole republic: the chief aim of the program of 37 million USD is to improve the socio-economic status of Armenian rural population.

Head of the department of Trade and Socio-Economic development programs of Shirak governor's office Martin Tonoyan informed that with this program the gasification issue of some communities of the province is intended to be solved. In Shirak governor's office already a tender of organizations of construction of medium pressure gas pipelines which will feed 20 communities and inter community medium and low pressure gas pipelines has been held.

According to the primary results, organizations which will conduct the construction works on a lowest price are already known but their names will be announced after the final correction of the package in the nearest future.

According to the program, an obligatory investment of 10% by the communities is intended. Communities which are included in the program and will not do their agreement obligations, will stay out of the further implementation of the program.

Ashotsk, Amasia, Voghji, Megrashat, Small and Big Sepasars, Krasar, Anipemza, Ani station, Lanjik, Karaberd, Sarakap, Jrap, Haykadzor, Shirakavan, Dzithankov, Aghin, Isahakian and Sarnaghbyur farthest and north region communities of the province are included in the program.

48. RENOVATION AND CLEANING OF YEREVAN BUS-STOPS KICK OFF [ARMENPRESS, 02/27/09]

Renovation and cleaning works of Yerevan bus-stops have kicked off and are intended to be finished by the end of March.

Head of the transport department of Yerevan municipality Henrik Navasardian told Armenpress that from 290 bus-stops the renovation works in 240 will be conducted by "New renovation" company with the means of advertisements in them, renovation of the others – by Kentron municipality. By now already 20 bus-stops have been renovated in Arabkir community.

H. Navasardian said that no bus-stop establishment works will this year be conducted.

49. ARMENIAN CULTURE MINISTRY TO APPLY TO "ICOMOS" IN CONNECTION WITH VANDALISM IN EDIRNEGBU ARMENIAN CEMETERY [ARMENPRESS, 02/27/09]

Armenian Culture Ministry is going to send a message to the international "ICOMOS" organization of protection of the cultural heritage in connection with the act of vandalism in Armenian Edirnegbu cemetery in Turkey.

Armenian Culture Minister Hasmik Poghosian told Armenpress they are expecting operative reaction by the organization as a branch of it functions in Turkey. On February 22, unknown people



AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, February 27, 2009

crashed and broke several gravestones. Authorities of the cemetery applied to the Eybu police on the incident, which examined the place and formed a protocol.

Officials from the department of town cemeteries promised to restore the ruined gravestones, surround the cemetery with high walls and employ night guards.

Last time when a violation was registered against Armenian monuments in October 2008 the Ministry alarmed "ICOMOS" which reacted operatively insisting that it is able to prevent such deeds.

H. Poghosian appreciated that the organization does not leave the Ministry's applications without reaction.

The Minister informed that an official note to prevent violations against Armenian monuments will also be sent to the Turkish Culture Ministry.

SPORTS

50. LEVON ARONIAN TO PLAY AGAINST ALEXANDER GRISCHUK IN 6TH ROUND OF LINARES CHESS TOURNAMENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 02/26/09]

5th round games of the 2009 Linares Chess Tournament were held on February 24, with all the games ending in draws.

After the 5th round Levon Aronian of Armenia and Alexander Grischuk of Russia with 3.5 points each are in lead in the points table. They will play with each other in the 6th round.

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