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ARMENIA HIGHLIGHTS

Weekly Digest of the Government of Armenia

December 1-6 2010

THEMA

PRESIDENT SERZH SARGSYAN PARTICIPATED AT THE 7TH SUMMIT OF THE OSCE



On December 1, in the capital of Kazakhstan Astana President Serzh Sargsyan participated at the 7th Summit of the OSCE. In the framework of the Summit, the President of Armenia met with the President of Slovenia Danilo Turk. Presidents Sargsyan and Turk discussed issues pertaining to the development of the Armenian-Slovenian relations, cooperation of the two countries in the framework of international organizations and issues related to the regional security. The President of Slovenia recalled warmly his official visit to Armenia last October, which according to President Turk, became an important impetus for the enhancement of bilateral relations, for identifying cooperation areas and for signing of a number of documents aimed at the strengthening of cooperation in different areas. Using the meeting as a nice opportunity, President Turk invited President Sargsyan to conduct an official visit to Slovenia next year. The invitation was accepted with gratitude. In Astana, President Sargsyan will hold other bilateral meetings. Presi-

dent Serzh Sargsyan, who has arrived to the capital of Kazakhstan to participate at the OSCE Summit in Astana, held today a number of meetings with the Heads of State and heads of delegations. After meeting in the morning with the President of Slovenia Danilo Trk, in the afternoon President Sargsyan met with the President of European Council Herman Van Rompuy, the Head of the British delegation Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and the President of Serbia Boris Tadic. With the President of European Council Herman Van Rompuy Serzh Sargsyan discussed a wide range of issues pertaining to the development of the Armenia-EU relations. In particular, the parties spoke about visa regime facilitation in the framework of the EU Eastern Partnership program, works aimed at the liberalization of trade, as well as about possible assistance of the EU to the process of reformation currently going on in our country. Serzh Sargsyan and Herman Van Rompuy discussed also issues related to the negotiations over the Armenia-EU Association Agreement which commenced last July.

December 2, 2010

full story www.president.am

“QUOTE OF THE WEEK”

“SPEAKING ABOUT TIGRAN THE GREAT, WE MEAN THE COMMONLY SHARED DREAM OF THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE, THE IDEA OF A MIGHTY AND POWERFUL HOMETLAND WHICH IS FOREVER ASSOCIATED WITH THE NAME OF TIGRAN THE GREAT “

TIGRAN SARGSYAN
PM OF ARMENIA

Upcoming Events

DECEMBER 7: Armenia marks the day of Earthquake in 1988

DECEMBER 9-10: Sitting of the CSTO Collective Security Council

USEFUL LINKS

- www.president.am
- www.gov.am
- www.parliament.am
- www.mfa.am
- www.armenpress.am
- www.panarmenian.net
- www.matenadaran.am

THE PRIME MINISTER ATTENDS AN EXHIBITION DEDICATED TO TIGRAN THE GREAT'S 2150TH ANNIVERSARY

On December 1, Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan attended the inauguration of an exhibition in the National Picture Gallery of Armenia, entitled "One work" and dedicated to the 2150th anniversary of Tigran the Great. Actions on the Armenian monarch's 2150th anniversary are held under the Premier's high patronage. Today's event was attended by Minister of Defense Seiran



Ohanyan, Primate of Ararat Patriarchal Diocese Archbishop Navasard Kchoyan. The head of government toured the stands getting acquainted with the works of 84 authors: both picturesque and sculptural works, as well as excavation findings brought in from Tigranakert of Artsakh. The best exhibit will be awarded Vardges Surenyants-150 silver medal. Following the ceremony of opening, Tigran Sargsyan told the journalists: "Marking today the 2150th anniversary of Tigran the Great, we seek to reassess the importance of his legacy for our people and its history. Speaking about Tigran the Great, we mean the commonly shared dream of the Armenian people, the idea of a mighty and powerful homeland which is forever associated with the name of Tigran the Great." Tigran Sargsyan went on to emphasize that the example set by Tigran the Great used to inspire Armenians in their fight for reinstatement of statehood. "It is such a great potential as has always inspired the people of Armenia to regain sovereignty, and finally succeeded. In general, while looking into Tigran the Great's history, we can see hosts of episodes which seem to be actual today." The Prime Minister emphasized the fact that the site of Artsakh's Tigranakert is excavated by Armenian experts

December 1, 2010, www.gov.am

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA EDWARD NALBANDIAN HAD BILATERAL MEETINGS WITH HIS PARTNERS OF SEVERAL COUNTRIES IN ASTANA

The Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian who is in Astana with the delegation led by the President of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan to attend OSCE Summit had a number of bilateral meetings. On December 1, the Armenian Foreign Minister met with Kevin Rudd, the former prime minister and the current Foreign Affairs Minister of Australia. In the course of the meeting, the sides discussed issues related to the steps undertaken towards the



deepening of bilateral relations and cooperation in the frameworks of international organizations. They mutually stressed the importance of positive role of the Armenian Australian Community in development of cooperation between Armenia and Australia. Upon the request of Kevin Rudd, Edward

Nalbandian presented the recent developments in the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) settlement process. In this context, the former prime minister of Australia expressed his country's support to the peace process held in the frames of the OSCE Minsk Group. The next meeting of Edward Nalbandian was with Micheline Calmy-Rey, the Vice-President of Switzerland and Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The sides had a detailed talk on bilateral relations, as well as regional and international issues. The Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian also took part in the meeting of the Foreign Ministers' Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member-countries. During the meeting the preparatory work and agenda of the Sessions of the CSTO's legislative bodies were discussed. The meeting with the Israel's Deputy Prime Minister Moshe Ya'alon was also on the agenda of the Armenian Foreign Minister. Edward Nalbandian and Moshe Ya'alon discussed issues related to the further development of bilateral relations. Upon the request of Edward Nalbandian, Moshe Ya'alon presented the recent developments in the Middle East settlement process.

December 1, 2010 www.mfa.am

HEADLINES OF THE WEEK

- **DECEMBER 1:** 7.1% unemployment rate reported in January-October 2010 in Armenia **AH**
- **DECEMBER 1:** Aliyev complains about Armenia's "unwillingness" to establish peace **AH**
- **DECEMBER 2:** Catalogue about Tigran the Great to be published in Armenia **AH**
- **DECEMBER 3:** Shavarsh Kocharyan: Artsakh continues building independent state, irrespective of everything **AH**
- **DECEMBER 4:** Weather bureau promises heavy precipitation in winter **AH**
- **DECEMBER 5:** Fishing in Lake Sevan banned since December 5 **AH**
- **DECEMBER 6:** Free economic zones in Armenia can catch interest of Russian entrepreneurs **AH**
- **DECEMBER 6:** Araik Abgaryan: Armenian aviation security high **AH**

WB REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF SOUTH CAUCASUS ASAD ALAM: "OUR PRIMARY TASK IS TO MAKE ARMENIA'S ECONOMY MORE EFFICIENT AND COMPETITIVE"

WB regional director of South Caucasus Asad Alam gave an exclusive interview to "HH". In response to inquiry "Will renewal of money transfers to Armenia help securing rehabilitation of Armenia's economy and the level of incomes of its population?" he said: "Money transfers are very important for Armenia. They were endangered in 2009 because of the global economic crisis. The main part of those transfers comes from Russia. Parallel to current rehabilitation of Russia's economy the number of transfers to Armenia increases though it is still lower compared to 2008. Money transfers promote consumption and investments on the part of householders and assist to increase incomes of the householders. Money transfers also secure valuable foreign currency in favor of balance of payments. But in the post-crisis world Armenia should go too far and try attracting considerable direct foreign investments (DFI) and spurring export to secure and preserve higher rate of growth.

December 4, 2010 www.hhpress.am

RES PUBLICA

PROGRAM ON MEASURES TO IMPROVE INDICES OF DOING BUSINESS DISCUSSED IN RA GOVERNMENT

Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan presided over a sitting in the government dedicated to radical changes in the business environment. Earlier, Mr. Sargsyan instructed all relevant ministries and institutions to submit offers for improvement of the indices of Doing Business, the RA governmental press service reported. According to the Prime Minister, the undertaken measures should yield results until April 2011. Armenian First Deputy Minister of Economy Karine Minasyan submitted an amended program of measures aimed at improving the busi-



ness environment in the country. Besides, simplification of tax and customs administration and stimulation of small and medium business were in the focus of the sitting. Mr. Sargsyan gave instructions to ministries and institutions for implementation of envisaged measures.

December 2, 2010 www.panarmenian.net

RA GOVERNMENT TO ALLOCATE AMD 3.5 MILLION FOR NATIONAL COOPERATION NETWORK CREATION

The Armenian Ministry of Economy hosted a discussion on creation of National Cooperation Network.

According to Economy Minister Nerses Yeritsyan, the government will allocate AMD 3.5 million for the purpose.

“The project is another step towards creation of a national virtual space. 13 working groups have been already formed. The network is scheduled for launch till the end of 2011. SME will be provided with about 10-12 thousands websites to present their production on



the internet,” commented Arshak Sadoyan, chairman of the Public Council’s committee on entrepreneurship and consumer affairs.

December 3, 2010 www.panarmenian.net

WINTER CROPS AREA REDUCED IN GEGHARKUNIK PROVINCE OF ARMENIA

Armenian Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Territorial Administration Armen Gevorgyan took part in a meeting of Gegharkunik province



administration. The Minister was told that the rate of tax collection and real agreement payments has considerably decreased. Due to unfavorable weather conditions, agricultural products were sold at higher prices. Besides, winter crops area reduced. The indices in livestock sector did not change; however, the price for milk went up. Winter crops area reduced in Gegharkunik province of Armenia

December 5, 2010 www.panarmenian.net

ARMENIA WINS WORLD YOUTH U16 CHESS OLYMPIAD

Armenia is the winner of the World Youth U16 Chess Olympiad. Young Armenian chess players won 8 consequent rounds, securing the title prior to the end of the Olympiad. In round 9, Armenia defeated Syria 3:1, to keep the lead with 28,5 points. Russia comes second with 24,5 points.

In the final round, Armenia will play vs Turkey-White. This is the second Olympic victory of Armenia since 1998, when the youth team included Levon Aro-nian, Gabriel Sargissian, Tigran Petrosian and Varuzhan Hakobian.

December 5, 2010 www.panarmenian.net

PLACIDO DOMINGO AWARDED WITH ARMENIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEDAL



World renowned Spanish tenor Placido Domingo, currently in Yerevan within Yerevan Perspectives Festival framework, was awarded with Armenian National Assembly (RA NA) medal. As Armenian parliamentary spokesman stressed, addressing the singer at the award ceremony, “We’re very honored to receive a word famous opera star in Armenian parliament. You’re the first person to be awarded with RA NA medal for significant contribution to the sphere of music. Even though this is your first visit to Armenia, you’ll be pleased to discover having thousands of fans in our country.” On December 3, Sports and Concert Complex in Yerevan will host Placido Domingo’s concert, organized by Yerevan Perspectives Festival. World renowned Spanish tenor Placido Domingo, currently in Yerevan within the framework of Yerevan Perspectives Festival, said that he is familiar with Armenians from his childhood. “The teacher, who gave lessons of music to my mother in Paris, was Armenian,” Domingo told a press conference in Yerevan. The singer added that he has many Armenian friends – Charles Aznavour, Levon Sayan and others. During the December 3 concert, Armenian musicians – opera singer, People’s Artist of Armenia Barsegh Tumanyan and singer Rosy Svazlian (soprano) – will take the stage with Domingo. “I and my group will spare no efforts so that the Armenian audience enjoys tomorrow’s concert,” Domingo said, adding that he will do his utmost for other renowned musicians’ arrival in Armenia to give concerts within the framework of Yerevan Perspectives Festival.

November 25 2010,
www.panarmenian.net

ARMENIAN HISTORY REINTERPRETED

Serge Momjian's 'Memories of the Past' aims to preserve his people's cultural heritage



Protesters have clashed with police. It isn't easy to narrate the story of a people that dates back over 2,000 years. This is what Serge Momjian has attempted to do, in a slim 190 pages, with "Memories of the Past." This mix of history and fiction sets out to inform the reader about Armenian history and culture within the frame of the story of one survivor of the Armenian genocide. The narrator and protagonist of "Memories" is Vartan Apelian, an older man who recounts his life story and that of the Armenians. During the Armenian genocide, young Vartan flees his hometown of Urfa (now Sanliurfa in Southeastern Anatolia) with his uncle Hovsep and lands in Cairo. He eventually finds himself in Michigan. While waiting tables and studying landscape architecture, Vartan begins visiting an Armenian cultural center and meets other members of the local Armenian community. Through an improbable series of coincidences, Vartan meets a man named Latif Odoglu, who turns out to have

been a "military official who was responsible for carrying out the deportations and killings [in Urfa]." Vartan confronts Odoglu with stilted dialogue – "to deport and kill innocent people, that's bullshit" – and, within a few pages, Odoglu commits suicide by jumping out of his hotel window. Vartan is arrested, tried and acquitted of murder. At the book's conclusion, Vartan discovers that his mother is still alive and living in a Kurdish village in Eastern Turkey. After a short reunion, he returns to Michigan, stating with a curious lack of emotion, "You know, my mother is an old woman now, and while she feels she belongs there, I feel I belong here."

December 2, 2010

full story www.dailystar.com.lb

'THE LARK FARM' REVISITS HORRORS OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE



“We will kill all the male members of this deceitful progeny because if only one of them survives, he will take revenge on us tomorrow,” says a Turkish general to his soldiers. The Armenian genocide, or Metz Yeghern as it is referred to by Armenians, is portrayed with brutal reality in "The Lark Farm" (the original title of which is "La Masseria delle Allodole"), a 2007 movie by the Italian Taviani Brothers, inspired by Antonia Arslan's book, "Skylark Farm," published in Italy in 2004. The movie was screened last Sunday at the Italian Cultural Institute in Cairo as part of the institute's Sunday screening program, with "conflict" being the main theme in November. The movie tells the story of the Avakian dynasty, an Armenian family living in Turkey in two houses, one of which is in the countryside and called the "Lark Farm."

It is 1915--World War One has been raging for a year and the Ottoman Empire has entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers. The Young Turks dream of "a Greater Turkey, a Turkey for the Turks, not polluted by internal enemies." The Avakians live peacefully, organizing a family reunion following the death of the patriarch, confident that mounting Turkish hostility does not present a threat. But high-ranking Turkish conspirators, fearful of support among some Armenians for Russia forces, are secretly planning the annihilation of all male members of the Armenian community and the deportation of its women and children to Aleppo, starving them on the way and finally massacring the survivors at the end of the death-march. The systematic deportation and elimination of Armenians would last until 1916, resulting in the death of up to one million people (although the exact number is still the subject of debate). The book, as well as the movie, is based on the history of Arslan's own forebears, relating her family's attempts to escape to Venice, where one of the three brothers has moved to pursue his studies.

December 1, 2010,

full story www.almasyalyoum.com

TURKEY AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Some, but not all, want to improve the lot of Christians in Turkey

IT IS well known that Kurdish tribes took part in the mass slaughter by the Ottomans of around 1m Armenians in 1915. "Collaborating Kurdish clerics pledged that anyone who killed an infidel would be rewarded in heaven with 700 mansions containing 700 rooms, and that in each of these rooms there would be 700 hours to give them pleasure," says Mala Hadi, an Islamic sheikh in Diyarbakir.

The sheikh is among a handful of local leaders seeking reconciliation with the Kurdish region's once thriving Christians. "We are ready to face the past, to make amends," promises Abdullah Demirbas, mayor of Diyarbakir's ancient Sur district. To atone, Mr Demirbas has been providing money and materials to restore Christian monuments in Sur. These include the sprawling Surp Giragos Armenian Orthodox church where, until recently, drug dealers plied their trade amid piles of rubbish. It is now squeaky clean and even boasts a new roof. Yet in the neighbouring province of Mardin, Kurdish tribes continue to harass the handful of Christians who remain. Their main target is the Mor Gabriel Syrian Orthodox monastery. Perched on a remote hilltop, this 1,600-year-old monastery faces five separate lawsuits contesting its right to retain land that church leaders say they have owned for centuries but have been unable to register because of bureaucratic stonewalling. Two cases were brought by Kurdish villages dominated by the Celebi tribe, which some accuse of participating in the bloodletting of 1915 and now provides men for a state-run Kurdish militia fighting separatist PKK rebels. (One tribal leader, Suleyman Celebi, is a member of parliament for the ruling Justice and Development, or AK, party.) The others were begun by the government and rest partly on a law providing that farmland which lies fallow for more than 20 years can be reclaimed by the state as "forest". Otmar Oehring from Missio, a German Catholic charity, calls the cases "baseless" and says "the state's actions suggest it wishes that the monastery no longer existed." He points to systematic persecution of some 2,000 Syrian Orthodox Christians living in and around Midyat. "The Syrian Orthodox community beyond the monastery has suffered repeated attacks, with land around villages often set on fire.

December 2, 2010 www.economist.com

DIASPORA

TURKISH ARMENIAN COMMUNITY FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST GOVERNMENT – CALLS FOR PERMISSION TO ELECT NEW PATRIARCH



The Turkish Armenian community has filed two lawsuits against the Turkish government, including one to get permission to go ahead with a long-delayed election to select their own new patriarch. “A committee composed of lay representatives from the community filed two lawsuits,” the community’s attorney Sebul Aslangil told the *Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review*. “The first one is to make the government allow an election for a patriarch to take place, and the second is for canceling the substitute patriarch’s post.” Aslangil told the *Daily News* that such a post does not exist in the rules of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Lay representatives of the community, who have formed an initiative to lobby for their rights to select their own patriarch, meanwhile held a meeting Wednesday in Istanbul. The initiative

previously organized a petition campaign that gathered 6,000 signatures from Armenians in Istanbul demanding that the election be allowed to take place. Patriarch Mesrop II has been unable to fulfill his duties due to dementia. Because of this, the Armenian community applied to the Interior Ministry; the first was made by the patriarchate’s clerical committee to elect a co-patriarch and the second was made by the lay committee to elect a new patriarch. Speaking to the *Daily News*, initiative spokesman Garo Paylan said the fact that there were two applications posed a problem, but that this should “not get the Interior Ministry off the hook for what they have done.” He said the ministry invented the post of “substitute patriarch” in order to see the person they wanted installed in the patriarch’s place. “The Turkish state needs to give the Armenian community what they are entitled to and should not impede the election process,” Paylan said. “It is our most deserved right to be able to elect our patriarch. In no time in history has the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul been persecuted to this extent.”

December 2, 2010 www.massispost.com

‘AGHET: A GENOCIDE’ PRESENTATIONS AND SCREENINGS ON EAST COAST

The 90-minute documentary first aired on German public television (NDR) in April 2010. It won the 2010 German Prize for Best Documentary. “Aghet: A Genocide,” German filmmaker Eric Friedler’s documentary about the Armenian Genocide, will be shown in key academic venues this month as part of the film’s eastern U.S. tour. Panel discussions featuring Friedler will be hosted by the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) Eastern Region and local affiliates after each presentation. For his documentary, Friedler accessed various archival documents, consulted historical sources, and compiled the testimonies of German, American, Swiss, Danish, Swedish, and other nationals—physicians, social workers, teachers, engineers, missionaries, correspondents, and nurses—who had witnessed the Armenian Genocide. In addition to including never-before-seen footage of the genocide, the film deals with the Turkish government’s interna-

tional campaign of genocide denial and explores the political motivation behind it. The 90-minute documentary first aired on German public television (NDR) in April 2010. It won the 2010 German Prize for Best Documentary. Applauded by Gunter Grass, Nobel Prize winner in literature, the film has sparked debate throughout Europe. It is now being showcased around the world on television and in major film festivals. “Aghet” was shown on Capitol Hill in July, hosted by Congressman Adam Schiff



December 1, 2010

www.armeniaweekly.com

INTERNATIONAL MEDIATORS ONLY INTERESTED IN STATUS QUO, SAYS KARABAKH OFFICIAL



The failure of the latest international push for a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement has demonstrated that international mediators are interested in preserving the status quo, a spokesman for Karabakh President Bako Sahakian claimed on Friday. The official, Davit Babayan, said the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic’s leadership did not expect Armenia’s and Azerbaijan’s presidents to cut any deals on the sidelines of this week’s OSCE summit in Kazakhstan’s capital Astana. Babayan said Presidents Serzh Sarkisian and Ilham Aliyev failed to do that because the parties are still far apart on key issues and because the mediating powers — the United States, Russia and France — lack a “common approach” to the Karabakh conflict. Babayan said that is why Aliyev and Sarkisian did not even meet on the sidelines of the summit. “What should they have talked about, if Aliyev claims that Armenia was created on Azerbaijani lands?” he told RFE/RL’s Armenian service. “All this proves one thing: everyone is interested is maintaining the status quo, something which vividly manifested itself at Astana,” claimed the Karabakh official. “Given that there could be unpredictable consequences as a result of any attempt to change the balance of forces, everyone is interested in maintaining what exists now. It is predictable, it is working. Why should we look for some other mechanisms?” he added. Asked whether the no-war-no-peace situation is good for Karabakh, Babayan said, “We have no issues with Azerbaijan, but they do. If they want to settle those issues, they must first negotiate with us.” Baku has long been refusing to directly negotiate with Karabakh’s leadership. Azerbaijani leaders say the historic Armenian territory is ruled by an “illegitimate regime” controlled by Armenia.

December 3, 2010 www.asbarez.com

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