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ARMENIA HIGHLIGHTS

Weekly Digest of the Government of Armenia

January 25-31, 2011

THEMA



**WORKING VISIT OF PRESIDENT
SERZH SARGSYAN
TO GERMANY**

On February 4, the delegation headed by President Serzh Sargsyan arrived to the Federal Republic of Germany on a working visit to participate at the Security Policy Conference which commenced in Munich. The Conference brought together leaders of states and governments from a dozen states and many international organizations, heads of foreign affairs and defense agencies, other high ranking officials. The agenda of the Munich Conference contains a number of important issues which relate to the challenges of global policies. Discussions will be held in the framework of the official segment of the Conference and also during numerous informal meetings of the participants. Today, among other topics the participants of the Conference will discuss issues pertinent to the impact of the financial crisis on the global stability and security. President Serzh Sargsyan, who

is in Germany on a working visit, at the conclusion of the first day of the Munich Security Policy Conference met today with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia Kevin Rudd. The President of Armenia discussed with the Head of the Australian Foreign Office the Armenian-Australian bilateral relations and prospects for their development as well as issues pertinent to the cooperation of the two states in international organizations. The parties highlighted the bridging role of the Armenian community in the development of bilateral relations, which in their opinion could also considerably promote the trade and economic cooperation. They also spoke about the possibilities of attracting Australian investments into the Armenian economy. On February 5, President Serzh Sargsyan will continue to participate at the works of the Security Policy Conference and will also hold bilateral meetings.

February 4, 2011 www.president.am

“QUOTE OF THE WEEK”

“NO INCIDENCES OF VAT REFUND DELAYS OR NON-PAYMENTS HAVE BEEN RECORDED OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS AND THEY WILL BE RULED OUT AHEAD.”

TIGRAN SARGSYAN
PRIME MINISTER OF RA

Upcoming Events

FEBRUARY 16: Working visit of PM of Georgia to Armenia

FEBRUARY 25-28: “Bridge 2011” economic forum to be hosted in Tsaghkadzor

USEFUL LINKS

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

PENSION-LINES TO BE RULED OUT

Reminding his previous directive concerning the streamlining of the process of pension payment, Prime Minister asked the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs what had been done to that end. Based on the com-

ments of the Minister, the Prime Minister concluded that as from this March the pensioners will no longer have to stand in line while getting their pensions. The government decided to defer until February 1, 2014 the pay-the temporary import regime for such goods as will be imported by VKS Armenia Ltd under specific declarations. The company currently employs 335 persons most of which are women. A new clothing factory will be set up in Amasia community of Shirak marz. In this connection, the Prime Minister stressed the need for giving wide public coverage to the foregoing decisions and charged the Minister of Economy to inform the public on a regular basis. The government allocated AMD 10012000.0 thousand from its reserve fund to address the problems faced in the provinces. Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan said the decision had been passed based on a presidential directive aimed at raising rural population's living standards. The Executive approved a package of amendments to several previous decrees in order to streamline household vulnerability assessment and certification processes or establish alternative procedures to that effect. At the same time, it was decided that the household evaluation (registration) operations scheduled for the months of January and February, 2011 will be carried out on February 11 and March 11, 2011 respectively. According to the Prime Minister, these measures seek to define the targets of the government's social programs. The findings of the Control Chamber and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs evidence several irregularities available in the lists of beneficiaries. The government's initiative will help save up additional funds to boost the level of welfare benefits.

February 3, 2011 full story www.gov.am



ment of VAT for over AMD 300mn worth of goods imported by SPAYKA Ltd in the period between February 1, 2011 and December 31, 2013. Under the investment program, a 24ha wide greenhouse complex and a fruit

and vegetable processing plant will be built in Armenia owing to which imports will be taken up to 70 thousand tons a year with 500 new jobs available at the plant. Another decision was passed to extend until April 30, 2012

THE NEWLY APPOINTED AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND PRESENTS THE COPIES OF HIS CREDENTIALS TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ARMENIA EDWARD NALBANDIAN



On December 7, the Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian received John Ruan, the newly appointed Ambassador of Ireland to Armenia (residence in Sofia) on the occasion of presenting the copies of his credentials. Minister Nalbandian congratulated Ambassador Ruan on the occasion of his appointment and ex-

pressed confidence that the newly appointed Ambassador of Ireland will have his important contribution to the development of bilateral relations between Armenia and Ireland. The sides stressed the importance of the necessity of intensification of political dialogue and trade-economic ties through the expansion of high-level reciprocal visits, regular consultations and legal-contractual field. In the course of the meeting possibilities of interaction in international organizations, as well as in the frameworks of the Eastern Partnership Program were discussed. The sides also touched upon a number of regional issues and the ways of their solutions.

February 7, 2011 www.mfa.am

HEADLINES OF THE WEEK

- **FEBRUARY 1:** Armenia may lease Ukraine-manufactured buses **AH**
- **FEBRUARY 2:** Armenian Ombudsman submits resignation letter to parliament **AH**
- **FEBRUARY 3:** Armenia, Italy to expand interparliamentary cooperation
- **FEBRUARY AH:** iPhone App dedicated to Armenian Genocide recognition to be developed
- **FEBRUARY 5:** Synopsis Armenia educational program to be introduced in JNTU **AH**
- **FEBRUARY 6:** Armenian Genocide: Sweden ready to sacrifice historic truth to please Turkey **AH**
- **FEBRUARY 7:** Expert: organization of "Twitter revolution" in Armenia not easy **AH**

CONSTITUTION - A NORM OF LIFE AND BEHAVIOR



February 6 is the 15th Anniversary of RA Constitutional Court (RA CC). In 1996-2010 RA CC made 931 rulings as a result of final hearings. Only during the last 4 years RA CC received 208 applications by abstract order, and 1327 applications by specific order, legal advices were delivered to 2265 citizens. 7.6% of applications presented to RA CC by specific order in the period from July 1, 2006 till the beginning of the current year were admitted for investigation. By the way, the average European index is 3-5%. During the same period on 37 cases investigated on the basis of 88 individual applications, the provisions which litigated the laws were recognized not conforming to the Constitution and were invalidated. Within the framework of the events, dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the Constitutional Court, an exhibition, titled "Constitution and Art", was also opened yesterday at the RA CC.

*February 5 2011,
full story www.hhpress.am*

THE ARMENIAN CHESS FEDERATION HELD ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE



On February 1, at the Tigran Petrosian Chess Palace, the Armenian Chess Federation held its annual conference to hear reports and elect new officials. The conference was chaired by the President of Armenia, President of the Armenian Chess Federation Serzh Sargsyan. At the conference presented were the report on the Federation's activities in 2009-2010, the report of the control

board and set were the main directions for the Federation's activities in 2011-2012. Later, there took place the elections for the President and members of the Board. The activities of the Federation for 2009-2010 were assessed as satisfactory. President Serzh Sargsyan was reelected the President of the Armenian Chess Federation. Elected were also 64 members of the Board. Later, there took place the award giving ceremony for the winners of the premier group of the Armenian Championship. President Serzh Sargsyan handed awards to the Champion of Armenia for 2011 Robert Hovannissian, silver and bronze winners Samvel Ter-Sahakian and Zaven Andriassian. It was noted that for the first time in the history of the national championships, all participants of this tournament were grand masters.

February 1, 2011 full story www.president.am

2 COMPANIES WIN TENDER FOR PRODUCTION OF BIOMETRIC PASSPORTS IN ARMENIA

Public Relations Manager of the Agency for Government Purchases Vasak Tarposhyan said that Polish Security Printing Works company and French Oberthur organization won the tender for production of biometric passports in Armenia.

The companies were selected by two formats. The Polish company estimated the project at 4,300,000 euros, which should be paid as a lump sum. Oberthur estimated the project cost to make \$22.5mln, which can be paid within five years.

Tarposhyan told a PanARMENIAN.Net reporter that the Armenian govern-

ment will adopt the final decision after consideration of the projects.

The tender for production of biometric passports was held from October 27 to December 10, 2010, with participation of eight foreign companies.

Armenian citizens can receive biometric passports and electronic ID cards from Sept. 2011. Biometric passports will contain the citizen's name and last name, date and place of birth, photograph and two fingerprints (EU requirement). Electronic ID cards will contain the same data, but with an electronic signature instead of fingerprints.

01 February 2011, www.panarmenian.net

BAKO SAHAKYAN: LIVING CONDITIONS IN ARTSAKH STATE UNIVERSITY'S DORMITORY SHOULD BE IMPROVED

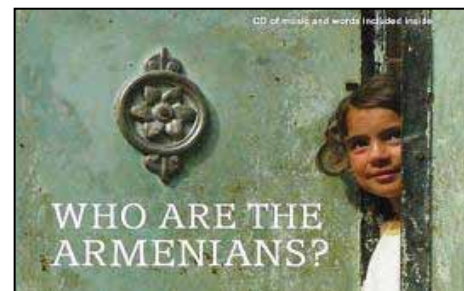


On February 1, President of the Republic of Artsakh Bako Sahakyan held a working consultation on improving living conditions in Artsakh State University's dormitory. Rector of the university Stepan Dadayan delivered a report

on the current state of affairs. The President noted that the existence of dormitories corresponding to modern standards is among pivotal components of the educational process. Mr. Sahakyan gave relevant instructions to heads of appropriate structures to elaborate comprehensive programs for improving conditions in the university dormitory. NKR Prime Minister Ara Harutyunyan and other officials participated in the consultation, the Central Information Department of Artsakh President's Office reported. The sides also touched upon a number of regional issues and the ways of their solutions.

January 31, 2011, www.panarmenian.net

"WHO ARE THE ARMENIANS?" BOOK BY SUSAN PATTIE PUBLISHED IN LONDON



"Who Are the Armenians?" book by Susan Pattie with Gagik Stepan-Sarkissian and Maral Kerovpyan was published in London. This is a guide for both children and adults to learn about the Armenian people., a source in London told PanARMENIAN.Net

Aimed at children aged 5 – 12, the book brings the 3000-year-old Armenian history and culture to life through folktales, language, food, religion, music, dance, art, poetry, sports and games. The book includes information about the Republic of Armenia and also explains how Armenians have made homes all over the world. Who are the Armenians? presents the lives of children in Armenia and Diaspora countries showing how they live today. A CD is included with songs, poems, dancing music and spoken words.

February 5, 2011 www.panarmenian.net

HENRIK MKHITARYAN: TEAM VICTORY MOST IMPORTANT FOR ME

Shakhtar midfielder Henrik Mkhitaryan who scored the third goal in the match against Rosenborg in the semifinal of Copa del Sol said it was a hard fight.

"Scandinavians are well trained and got the added evidence of it as we watched Rosenborg's match v Spartak," Mkhitarayan said. "I am happy to have scored a goal. Team victory is the most important for me. Now, we are training for the match against Roma due on February 16."

January 5, 2011 www.panarmenian.net

ARMENIAN BUSINESS IN GEORGIA

In 2010, 103 Armenian companies registered their business in Georgia. In the public registry agency in 2010, there were registered 25 individual entrepreneurs, 2 non commercial legal entities, one affiliation for foreign enterprise and 75 organizations of limited liability. As the agency Regnum informs, based on non official data for the last two years, around 4 000 entrepreneurs have moved their businesses from Armenia to Georgia. More and more businesses are slowly transferring their activities from Armenia into Georgia. The Armenian media actively discuss this trend regularly. For several years, Georgia has become a very at-

tractive location for Armenian investors. Former head of the Armenian Central Bank, Bagrat Asatrian, stated that Georgia has distinct rules which are followed stably. He also mentioned that money goes into directions where there are better conditions. He thinks that there is significantly less corruption in Georgia. Armenian capital has been moving to Georgia for several years, however this process currently receive high scrutiny, thinks Asatrian. According to him, taxation procedures are transparent in Georgia and business is secured from different types of surprises whereas the situation in Armenia is not similar.

February 7, 2011 www.messenger.com.ge

ARMENIAN PATRIOTISM, REVISITED

When writer Garin Hovannisian goes home to Armenia in a few days, he will feel weirdly homesick. "It's so strange. I always miss the place where I'm not," he says, sitting in a cafe in Glendale, the one place in Los Angeles where there are so many Armenians it can seem like you already are in the old country. To understand his very contemporary kind of longing, you have to go back a bit, to the Ottoman Empire. Specifically, to a guy named Kaspar. Kaspar was Garin's great-grandfather, one of the tens of thousands of people fleeing the Armenian genocide. When the Ottoman Turks butchered the men of his village, Kaspar escaped to the San Joaquin Valley, where he started a grape farm. He gave his kids American names and taught them to embrace their adoptive country. One of these kids was Richard. Richard did not love the vines and the farm. He fled his home, too, but to Los Angeles and a professorship at UCLA, where he founded the department of Armenian studies. Richard, in turn, begat a son named Raffi, who grew up in Brentwood, played football at Palisades High, became a lawyer and married. Raffi set up practice and made lots of money. He became, in short, the epitome of the American dream. You'd think this is where the story ends, everybody fat, fulfilled and happy. And it could have ended there. But if you read the book Garin — Raffi's son — has written on the subject, you'd see it's actually only the beginning. Because then, the fatherland called. Or rather, faxed. "My dad sat in his office in Century City and realized history was waking up miles away," he says. "It was

waking up after decades of silence." Garin was 3 years old when his father announced they were moving to Soviet Armenia. It was 1989. It was kind of a shock. "My poor mother!" Garin says. "She was actually a refugee from Soviet Armenia. She had just become a successful lawyer herself." Nevertheless, they traded the house in Brentwood for an apartment in Yerevan. Garin's dad didn't have a job lined up in Armenia, but his revolutionary and democratic hopes were high. You can live on patriotism, it turns out. Raffi joined up with the people who would become the country's new leaders and made himself indispensable: visiting the Karabakh conflict's front lines one day, arranging interviews between the new democratic party's members and the world's press the next. In 1991, following mass demonstrations throughout the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's empire crumbled and Armenia declared independence from the Soviet Union. The fledgling government needed just such a natural connector, a person who knew law and the outside world, who had contacts in the United States, who could speak English, French and Russian. Soon Raffi was appointed the new Republic of Armenia's first minister of foreign affairs. He negotiated diplomatic relations with every foreign country. He raised the new flag at the United Nations. He installed the ministry's first fax machine. "We recognize," came the return transmissions, communiqués from Britain and Japan and Mexico, acknowledging the new country's independence.

February 3, 2010,

[full story www.lawweekly.com](http://www.lawweekly.com)

ARMENIA: SONGS REVEALED ON FEBRUARY 10TH



*National final might be delayed
Armenia:*

Songs revealed on February 10th Armenian Head of Delegation, Ms Gohar Gasparyan, told OGAE Armenia that the information concerning the four entries to be performed by Emmy at the country's national final will be disclosed on February 10th. She went on to say that the show, originally scheduled for February 19th, might be postponed. On February 10th, Armenian broadcaster ARMTV will also confirm the exact date when the song selection for Emmy will be held. A total of four entries will be presented. The winning song will be decided through a mixture of jury and televoting at a 50/50 split. Emmy was selected to represent Armenia back in December 2010. She tried to represent the Caucasian country at the Eurovision Song Contest last year when she competed at the Armenian national final with Mihran. Eva Rivas won the ticket to Oslo and thus got the chance to represent Armenia at the 2010 Eurovision Song Contest with Apricot stone. Armenia will compete in the first half of the first semifinal of the 2011 Eurovision Song Contest, to be held on May 10th.

www.eurovisionfamily.tv

DIASPORA

SEVEN ARMENIANS TO RUN FOR ELECTION TO THE PARLIAMENT OF TURKEY



Seven members of Istanbul's Armenian community are seeking parliamentary deputy posts, holding out the promise that the June general elections may see the group represented in Parliament for the first time in five decades, Hurriyet Daily News reports. Six of the candidates have been offered nominations by political parties, while one is running as an independent. "I am an Armenian, but I am also a part of the whole. If I join Parliament, of course I will bring my community's problems to the fore. But I would like to represent the whole [country] as well," Arev Cebe-ci, from the main opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP told the daily. In one of the three Istanbul constituencies, where many Armenians reside, independent Armenian candidates will run for Parliament. The Armenian community in Turkey has not had a representative in Turkey's law-making body since the 1960s.

February 7 2011, www.massispost.com

SARGISIAN THREATENS TO SCRAP TURKISH-ARMENIAN ACCORDS

President Serge Sargisian has threatened to formally annul Armenia's normalization agreements with Turkey if Ankara continues to link their parliamentary ratification with the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. In an interview with the Ekho Moskvy radio station aired late last Wednesday, he also said that Armenia is prepared for another war with Azerbaijan and insisted that Karabagh's final status be determined by the disputed territory's predominantly Armenian population. Sargisian made clear that the stalled process of Turkish-Armenian normalization could resume only if Turkey's parliament ratifies "without preconditions" the protocols signed by the two governments in October 2009. "I therefore see no point in starting new negotiations," he said. "The only continuation can be the ratification of those protocols by Turkey's parliament." "If all continues like this, it is possible that the only way out for us will be the withdrawal of our signature from those protocols, and in that case, those protocols will have no legal force anymore, even after being ratified by Turkey," he warned. Shortly after the signing of the protocols in Zurich attended by top diplomats from the United States, Europe and Russia, Ankara made clear that the Turkish parliament will not ratify them without decisive progress in the Karabagh peace process.

February 3, 2011 www.mirrorspectator.com

KARABAKH MEDIATORS DISCUSS KARABAKH IN ARMENIA



The U.S., Russian and French diplomats co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group met with Armenia's leaders on Wednesday at the start of a fresh round of regional shuttle diplomacy aimed at brokering a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh. The mediators refused to talk to media as they proceeded to the presidential palace in Yerevan after talks with Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian. "We won't be answering any questions," the group's French co-chair, Bernard Fassier, told RFE/RL's Armenian service. President Serzh Sargsyan's office gave no details of his meeting with the co-chairs. A separate statement by the Armenian Foreign Ministry said Nalbandian discussed with them the results of his January 24 meeting in Moscow with the Azerbaijani and Russian foreign ministers. None of the three ministers issued any statements after the Moscow meeting. They already met in the Russian capital on December 9, just over a week after the failure by Armenia's and Azerbaijan's presidents to reach any agreements on the margins of an OSCE summit held in Astana, Kazakhstan. Meanwhile, Armenia's Defense Ministry announced on Wednesday that it has ordered its forces to take "large-scale measures" against what it called increased Azerbaijani sniper activity along the Karabakh line of contact. "Worrisome developments are taking place in Azerbaijan, and we are taking appropriate steps to strengthen our defense," ministry spokesman Davit Karapetian told RFE/RL's Armenian service. "We will mainly be taking defensive measures that will hurt those on the Azerbaijani side who will dare to take offensive actions," Karapetian said. He refused to go into details.

February 4, 2011 www.asbarez.com

ETHNIC ARMENIANS IN TURKEY FEAR TO SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO ARMENIAN SCHOOLS - ECRI



Ethnic Armenians in Turkey avoid sending their children to Armenian schools fearing that they may be treat-

ed unfairly, says a report issued by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

This is the commission's fourth report on Turkey, criticizing the country for its policies against ethnic minorities.

The authors of the document call on the Turkish authorities to review article 42 of the constitution to remove the existing bans on ethnic minorities' right to receive education in their native language, as well as take appropriate measures to prevent anti-Semitism in the country.

February 9, 2011

www.armeniadisapora.com

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