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ARMENIA HIGHLIGHTS

Weekly Digest of the Government of Armenia

March 1-14, 2011

THEMA



THE PRESIDENTS OF ARMENIA, RUSSIA AND
AZERBAIJAN HELD A TRILATERAL MEETING IN
SOCHI

On March 5 the President of the RA Serzh Sargsyan, the President of RF Dmitry Medvedev and the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev held a trilateral meeting in Sochi (Russian Federation). At the regular round of negotiations on the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, which were held at the invitation of the President of the Russian Federation, the parties exchanged views on the process of implementation of the provisions of the Joint Declaration adopted last year in Astrakhan. After the trilateral meeting, the Presidents continued negotiations during the working dinner. Later, the Presidents visited one of the Sochi ski resorts. At the conclusion of the trilateral meeting, the Presidents of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan adopted a Joint Declaration.

Joint Declaration of the Presidents of the Republic of Armenia, the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan on the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict Upon the invitation of the President of the

Russian Federation, the Presidents of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan met on March 5, 2011 in Sochi and discussed in detail the process and the prospects of the NK conflict resolution. After the discussions on the practical implementation of the trilateral Declaration adopted on October 27, 2010 in Astrakhan, in addition to the steps specified in the above mentioned Declaration, the Presidents agreed to take the following confidence building measures: 1. To conclude in the shortest possible period of time the exchange of the prisoners of war, 2. To strive to solve all contentious issues through peaceful means and to conduct along the cease-fire line an investigation with the participation of the parties under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and with the assistance of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office regarding probable incidents. The Presidents stressed the importance of their regular meetings on the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and agreed to continue them in the present format and further to the activities of the OSCE Minsk Group.

March 5, 2011 www.president.am

“QUOTE OF THE WEEK”

“THE CHIEF OBJECTIVE BEHIND THIS SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH IS TO PROMOTE TOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA WHICH IS A PRIORITY TO THE GOVERNMENT”

TIGRAN SARGSYAN
PRIME MINISTER OF RA

Upcoming Events

MARCH 15-17: PM Tigran Sargsyan to visit Brussels, Belgium

MARCH 17: OSCE CiO Audronius Azubalis to arrive in Armenia

SEPTEMBER 15: International Hrant Dink Award to be granted

USEFUL LINKS

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

IN RIGA PRESIDENT SERZH SARGSYAN MET WITH THE SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF LATVIA MRS. SOLVITA ABOLTINA



On March 9, after a meeting with the President of Latvia Valdis Zatler, President Serzh Sargsyan laid a wreath at the Monument of Freedom. Later, the President of Armenia arrived to the Parliament of Latvia. At the meeting with the Speaker of the Parliament Mrs. Solvita Aboltina, President Serzh Sargsyan spoke about the Armenian-Latvian interparliamentary cooperation. The parties underscored the advanced relations between the legisla-

tures of the two states and noted with satisfaction that friendship groups formed in the two parliaments cooperate successfully and taking into consideration the existing potential are ready to further their interaction. President Sargsyan also noted that Armenia could learn from the Latvian experience of collaboration with the European Union and reconciliation of the national legislation with the European standards. In view of the fact that UNESCO named Yerevan the World Book Capital of 2012, while Riga was declared Europe's Cultural Capital of 2014, President Sargsyan and the Speaker of the Latvian Parliament Mrs. Aboltina assessed it as a new and excellent opportunity to enhance contacts and to develop cultural cooperation between Latvia and Armenia

March 9, 2011 www.hhpress.am

GOVERNMENT'S TOURISM DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTED EFFORTS TAKE EFFECT

Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan attended today the presentation of www.armhotels.am, Armenia's first-ever online hotel booking system. Presented by "RUMEA" Tempting Trips Club, the business program on the launch of www.armhotels.am online booking system was approved in September, 2009 by the Prime Minister-headed Operative



Staff which seeks to support development projects in Armenia. To this end, the company was provided AMD 25mn in loan resources. Addressing the event with congratulatory remarks, Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan stated as follows: "The chief objective behind this successful launch is to promote tourism in the Republic of Armenia which

is a priority to the Government. This will boost the country's service export potential and capacity. Government's tourism development-oriented efforts are taking effect as evidenced by economic indices: despite the unprecedented fall of 2009, we stated a 4% rise in tourism amid globally registered downward trends. The success was built on in 2010 with about 17% increase. We are hopeful that this tendency will be upheld in 2011. Tourism should be diversified in Armenia as we have the needed capacity. We can develop religious, healthcare, sportive and recreational tourism. The www.armhotels.am online booking system is the best example of investment in this field. This state-of-the-art system opens up vast opportunities for advertising Armenia worldwide by means of online services. It has been discussed and approved by the Operative Staff. After which the Government offered guarantees to Arm-Swiss Bank reaffirming the State's trust in and focus on developing tourism in Armenia." The head of government tested the operational capacity of the online booking system in person. Developed by TBS CJSC, the booking system covers some 106 hotels at this point of time. In its capacity of a unique such system in the region and the CIS countries, www.armhotels.am seeks to expand the scope of proposed services toward both the home and international markets. Thanks to the system, any tourist will get access to a broad range of services.

March 4, 2011 www.gov.am

HEADLINES OF THE WEEK

- MARCH 3: Armenia, Iran to cooperate in agriculture
- AH
- MARCH 4: Armenia won 6 medals at Swiss Karate Open
-
- MARCH 5: AHku continues violating ceasefire: over 240 instances reported over week
-
- MARCH 6: AHenian government bombast inflation through social programs and unchangeable gas prices
-
- MARCH 7 AHArmenian MFA: apparently, for Baku constructiveness is saber-rattling
- AH
- MARCH 9: Zvartnots airport unaware of Turkish Airlines flights to Yerevan
- AH
- MARCH 11: Stepanakert airport to be ready for operation in May 2011

AH

MINISTER NALBANDIAN MEETS EU AMBASSADORS



Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian received Ambassadors of EU member states accredited in Armenia and the Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia. The Armenian Foreign Minister and the EU Ambassadors exchanged views on the development of Armenia-EU relations, outlined the future programs. Reference was made to the negotiation on the Association Agreement, facilitation of the visa regime and the creation of a comprehensive free trade zone. At the request of the EU Ambassadors, Minister Nalbandian presented the latest developments in the process of settlement of the Karabakh issue. The interlocutors discussed a wide range of issues on international agenda.

March 11, 2011 www.armradio.am

ARMENIAN ECONOMY MINISTER FORECASTS SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN EXPORT VOLUME IN 2011



Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan congratulated Armenian women on March 8 International Women's Day.

ARMENIAN FINANCE MINISTRY ISSUES 60 LOANS FOR CAR CUSTOMS CLEARANCE

During the March 10 sitting of the Armenian government, Minister of Finance Vache Gabrielyan said that the ministry has already allocated 60 loans at the total amount of AMD 70mln to facilitate customs clearance of imported cars.

Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan noted for his part that already 1,800 applications have been submitted for obtaining a lax credit. He added that their number will continue growing.

The lax loans are provided to citizens for a six-month term. The loans can be obtained by persons importing up to 10 passenger vehicles produced before 2005, with customs value up to AMD 5mln.

March 10, 2011 www.panarmenian.net

BAKU.AM WEBSITE ON BAKU'S ARMENIAN COMMUNITY HISTORY PRESENTED IN YEREVAN



On March 10, President of the Artsakh Republic Bako Sahakyan met in Paris with the director of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund's French affiliate Bedros Terzian and Fund member Robert Haydaririan to discuss the programs implemented by the Funs in Artsakh.

"I congratulate our mothers, wives, sisters and daughters on Women's Day. The role of women in our families, society has always been unique. The first Republic of Armenia was one of the first states in the world, which provided women with the right to elect and be elected. We are glad that women have a special role in all fields of the public life also today," reads the President's statement. "Once again congratulating on March 8 International Women's Day, I wish you all the best. Let love and harmony prevail in your families and hearts," the presidential press service quoted Sargsyan as saying.

March 8, 2011 www.panarmenian.net

GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE STABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN NEAR FUTURE

The problem of poverty reduction is among first priorities on Armenian government's agenda, according to Armenian Economy Minister.

As Tigran Davtyan stated at parliamentary hearing, in near future, the government will introduce a program on stable economic development, also including stipulations on poverty reduction. "AMD 44 billion will be allocated from 2011 budget to resolve social issues. However, resolution of social issues depends on the economic growth, which is the reason the issue is in the focus of the government's attention," the Minister stated.

March 2, 2011 www.panarmenian.net

ARMENIAN MFA: PROTOCOLS RATIFICATION ONLY WAY TO RESUME RAPPROCHEMENT WITH TURKEY



The normalisation of Armenia-Turkey relations could have been beneficial not only for Turkey and Armenia, but for the whole region, Armenian Foreign Minister stated. As Edward Nalbandian noted in an interview with Der Standard Austrian newspaper, all countries in the world supported this process, with the exception of Azerbaijan. When asked if the Turkish government pulled back from rapprochement process for electoral reasons, he noted that Armenia has much more reason to talk about preconditions. Dwelling on the possibility to resume the process with Turkey, Nalbandian named the ratification of Protocols without preconditions, according to pacta sunt servanda principle, to be the only way. "If you look for a reason to postpone the ratification you can always find one," the Foreign Minister said.

March 1 2011, www.panarmenian.net

RUSSIAN TRANSLATION OF A BOOK ABOUT SOGHOMON TEHLIRIAN TO BE PRESENTED IN YEREVAN

On March 15, Armenian National Library will host a presentation of a Russian translation of Vahan Minakhortyan's book, Soghomon Tehlirian: Memoirs, Talat's Terror. The book features Soghomon Tehlirian's memoirs of 1915 Genocide, time span before the assassination of Talat Pasha, a trial in 1921. The preface to the book was contributed by Armenian Writer Silva Kaputikyan. The book was published in 1953 in Cairo and republished in Yerevan in 1993. Russian translation is authored by Egor Sergiev. Soghomon Tehlirian (1897-1960) was a native of Yerzka, and Armenian Genocide survivor. He assassinated the former Grand Vizir Talat Pasha in the Charlottenburg District of Berlin, Germany in broad daylight and in the presence of many witnesses on March 15, 1921 as an act of vengeance for his role in orchestrating the Armenian Genocide. Tehlirian was tried for murder, but was eventually acquitted by the German court.

March 12, 2011 www.panarmenian.net

STILL JUST ABOUT FROZEN

COULD Azerbaijan and Armenia be on the verge of renewed war over Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian-populated enclave inside Azerbaijan conquered and occupied by Armenia in 1994? On the face of it, no. On Saturday the presidents of the two countries met to discuss the issue in the southern Russian resort town of Sochi, with Russia's president, Dmitry Medvedev, acting as honest broker. They made some pleasant noises. Both parties committed to resolve their differences peacefully, and to implement fully an agreement on the exchange of prisoners of war made in October. They also agreed to investigate ceasefire violations, under the aegis of the OSCE. Such measures could restore some confidence. But they will do little more. Of-

ten described as "frozen", the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been warming up. A recent report from the International Crisis Group says that ceasefire violations rose by 53% last year. At least 25 soldiers were killed in skirmishes. Hours before the Sochi talks began, reports emerged of the death of an Armenian soldier from Azerbaijani sniper bullets. In total, 3,000 people have been killed in skirmishes along the boundary line since the May 1994 ceasefire took effect. Both countries have stepped up their bellicose rhetoric. Ilham Aliiev, Azerbaijan's president, warned of war in at least nine separate speeches in 2010, and has shown no sign of letting up this year.

March 7, 2011 www.economist.com

MARTIN MAROOTIAN, PLAINTIFF IN SUIT OVER ARMENIAN GENOCIDE, DIES AT 95



Martin Marootian, a retired pharmacist who stood up for Armenian genocide victims as the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit that resulted in a \$20 million settlement from New York Life Insurance Co. for failing to honor claims on policies sold to thousands of Armenians slain during the last years of the Ottoman Empire, died Feb. 25 at his home in San Diego. He was 95. The cause of death was not reported. In 1999, Mr. Marootian joined a legal battle to force New York Life to honor policies purchased by more than 2,000 Armenians, most of whom perished in what some historians have described as the first genocide of the 20th century. From 1915 to 1923, an estimated 1.5 million Armenians died at the hands of the Turks, who ruled the Ottoman Empire until its dissolution after World War I. Many of the Armenians were executed, and others died on forced marches into the desert. The cause of their deaths has long been disputed by the Turkish government, which has maintained that the Armenians were casualties of war, not targets of persecution. Some Armenians, including Mr. Marootian,

saw the battle with New York Life as an opportunity to win official acknowledgment of the suffering of genocide victims and their heirs. Mr. Marootian "was not interested in . . . money but in the restitution of Armenian history," said Vartkes Yeghiayan, the Glendale, Calif., lawyer who spearheaded the lawsuit. "He was one of my heroes." Born in New York on Oct. 19, 1915, Mr. Marootian grew up in Connecticut and Rhode Island. He worked as a bartender to pay his way through pharmacy school in Connecticut and graduated in 1939. During World War II, he served with an Army medical unit in the South Pacific. After the war, he married Seda Garapedian. In 1955, they settled in Pasadena, Calif. Over the next several decades, he worked at pharmacies in Pasadena and Glendale. He and his wife lived near downtown Los Angeles for more than 35 years. His wife died in 2007. Survivors include two daughters; two sisters; and a grandson. Mr. Marootian was a student of Armenian history who took part in annual commemorations of genocide victims. He treasured a 1905 family portrait of 11 relatives, including his uncle, Setrak Cheytanian, who in 1910 purchased a policy with New York Life. Of the 11, the only two who survived the massacre were his mother, Yegsa, and his older sister, Alice. His mother died in 1982. Part of her legacy was an old shoe box containing the original copy of her brother Setrak's New York Life policy, all the premium payment stubs and correspondence with the insurance company that documented her repeated attempts to collect on the policy.

March 14 2011, www.washingtonpost.com

TURKEY 'COUP PLOT': SEVEN JAILED IN ERGENEKON INQUIRY



A Turkish court has sent to jail a writer and six journalists in the past two days over their roles in an alleged plot to overthrow the government. Prosecutors say a hardline nationalist group tried to bring down PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government in 2003. Four hundred suspects are already on trial in the so-called Ergenekon case. Two leading investigative journalists were put in jail on Sunday. On Monday, government critic Yalcin Kucuk and four more journalists were imprisoned. All seven were picked up in raids on their homes last week which have raised alarm among the EU and media rights groups and prompted demonstrations by thousands of people in Ankara and Istanbul. The Turkish Journalists' Association spoke of a "climate of fear" caused by the arrest of dissident journalists. And critics have complained that the Ergenekon investigation has focused on opponents of Mr Erdogan's Islamist-rooted AK Party government. But prosecutors insist the journalists have not been detained because of their reporting and the government has distanced itself from the arrests. "It is unjust to accuse the government of limiting the press because of a judicial procedure," Turkish Interior Minister Besir Atalay told Anatolia news agency. The two investigative journalists, Nedim Sener and Ahmet Sik, are both well known in Turkey. Mr Sener wrote a book that blamed security forces for the 2007 murder of ethnic Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. Ahmet Sik, who was one of the first journalists to report the existence of a plot, is already facing trial for a book about the Ergenekon group. Their colleagues waited outside the court on Sunday until the men were sent to jail. According to prosecutors, the plot involved plans for a series of bombings and assassinations aimed at destabilising the government and laying the ground for a coup. The four journalists jailed by the court on Monday work for anti-government news website Oda TV, the owner of which was arrested along with two colleagues last month. Parliamentary elections are due to take place in June, which the AK Party is expected to win.

March 7, 2010 www.bbc.co.uk

NKR PRESIDENT MEETS REPRESENTATIVES OF ARMENIAN ORGANIZATIONS OF FRANCE



President of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic Bako Sahakian met in Paris with members of the coordinating board of the Armenian organizations of France. The sides discussed strengthening of the Artsakh-Diaspora relations, the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict settlement, as well

developments in the Artsakh Republic. The President highly assessed active participation of the French Armenian organizations in assisting both the development of Artsakh and solving issues of Pan-Armenian importance. He stressed the republic is interested in continuous deepening and widening relations with the Armenian organizations of France. Primate of the Artsakh Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church Archbishop Pargev Martirosian, Armenian Ambassador to France Vigen Chitechian, NKR minister of culture and youth affairs Narine Aghabalian and other officials participated in the meeting.

February 24 2011, www.massispost.com

ARMENIANS IN JAPAN DISCUSS EARTHQUAKE, AFTERMATH

Varditer Harutyunyan was on the third floor of a building in southern Tokyo, while Nayiri Arzoumanian and her parents, Hrair and Arpi, were on their way to the subway in northern Tokyo, in Asakusa, when the 8.9-magnitude earthquake hit the country's northeastern coast on Fri., March 11. Japan 300x164 Armenians in Japan Discuss Earthquake, Aftermath A scene from the devastation caused by the tsunami following the 8.9-magnitude earthquake in Japan. "It takes a while to register, first that something is off and you're not imagining it, and then that everything—the ground, the air, the buildings—is moving and that it must be an earthquake," said Nayiri Arzoumanian, an Armenian American who works for a research institute in Boston and Tokyo, and also serves as copy-editor of the Armenian Weekly. Arzoumanian and her parents hung on to a nearby tree at a safe distance from the buildings. "And then we just waited, swaying, unstable. Everyone had stopped in their tracks. An internal sort of panic sets in when you realize you have no control over anything anymore. You start thinking: Is it safer inside? Farther away from the buildings? Are these signs on the building going to fall on us? When is this going to be over? God, I hope we're okay," she remembered. The earthquake would last for over two minutes. Harutyunyan, an Armenian citizen vis-

iting Japan on business, was also in shock. "At first I did not understand what was going on, and I stormed out of the building. I was surprised to see the high buildings moving, but not being damaged at all." Surprised, because she couldn't help but remember the 6.9-magnitude earthquake that hit Armenia in 1988, destroying thousands of poorly built apartments and houses and burying thousands under the rubble. Both talked about the calm, resilience, and preparedness of the people in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake—one of the strongest in recorded history. "They stood and waited for it to end. No one panicked," Harutyunian noted. "I understand that they were prepared for such situations. Some were wearing helmets." "And then it was over," Arzoumanian said. "We looked around, trying to gauge how bad this really was from the reaction of the locals, who are supposed to be used to this. You could tell from their faces that what had just taken place wasn't common. But there was no panic. No fallen buildings, no broken glasses, no fallen signage. It's as if everything's the same, except that the people have changed. And those people can do nothing but continue walking, going where they were headed before. And so we took our cues from them, and went to the train station to go home."

March 14, 2011

full story www.armeniaweekly.com

JUSTICE HAS YET TO PREVAIL FOR SUMGAIT



The images coming out of Sumgait 23 years ago were jarring, to say the least. The eyewitness accounts of the pogroms committed by Azeri OMON forces against Armenians living in Sumgait, Azerbaijan, however, had a familiar tone. It was as if I was listening to the countless stories that were seared into my memory throughout my life as recounted by survivors of the Armenian Genocide. It was unimaginable that in the latter days of the 20th century our people were experiencing the same savage attacks against them as my grandparents had witnessed in the early days of the same century. It was a sobering lesson of the proverbial "the more things change, the more they stay the same." 23 years ago today, Armenians living in the industrial town of Sumgait were awakened by special Azeri forces, known as OMON, who were carrying out a systematic campaign of murder, rape and deportation of Armenians, which in the end resulted in almost all Armenians fleeing Azerbaijan. These attacks came as a response to the people of Karabakh's right to self-determination. Days earlier demonstrations, which at the time were sanctioned by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of Glasnost and Perestroika, saw Armenians gather in the hundreds of thousands in the streets of Yerevan and Stepanakert to demand the reunification of Karabakh with Armenia. The sparks of the Karabakh Liberation movement were met with barbaric attacks in Sumgait and later in Kirovabad, Baku and Shahumian.

February 25, 2011 www.asbarez.com

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