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# ARMENIA HIGHLIGHTS

**Weekly Digest of the Government of Armenia**

**March 22-28, 2011**

## THEMA

### WORKING VISIT OF PRESIDENT SERZH SARGSYAN TO IRAN



**A**t the invitation of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President Serzh Sargsyan arrived today on a working visit to Tehran. In the framework of the visit, the President of Armenia met with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. First, Serzh Sargsyan congratulated the President of IRI and the people of Iran on the occasion of Novruz and on behalf of the people of Armenia and his own behalf conveyed warm wishes. In the course of the meeting, Presidents Sargsyan and Ahmadinejad discussed issues related to the mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation and strengthening of good-neighborly relations. The Presidents highlighted, in particular, importance of cooperation in the energy, transport, culture and some other areas and the program of the construction of the Iran-Armenia railroad. After the meeting with the President of Iran, President Serzh Sargsyan together with other leaders, who have arrived to Tehran, at the Vahdat compound participated at the celebrations of Novruz and made a congratulatory statement.

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President Serzh Sargsyan's statement at the Novruz celebrations

Distinguished President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Excellencies, Eminent participants of the celebrations: I am happy to be here, at this beautiful and truly emblematic event of the second international celebration of Novruz. For thousands of years, every spring Novruz – a beautiful holiday of kind traditions and rituals - is being celebrated in our region, bringing together different nations in a warm and friendly environment. The very word Novruz has a special meaning; it means “a new day” which heralds the advent of spring and awakening of life. These days the nature rouses from sleep and everything starts all over again. This is how the Iranian people, who represent an ancient civilization, picture and appreciate the eternity of life. For many and many nations spring signifies beginning, and the advent of spring opens a new page in life. This is a beautiful holiday – it expresses harmony of human life and nature.

*continuation on the 2nd page*

### “QUOTE OF THE WEEK”

“THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF A NUMBER OF REFORMS, ESPECIALLY ELECTORAL REFORM, IS ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE GENUINELY DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN 2012“

JOHN PRESCOTT  
CO-RAPPORTEURS PACE

### Upcoming Events

**MARCH 31-APRIL 1:** *President of Switzerland Micheline Calmy-Rey will visit to Armenia*

**APRIL 24:** *Armenia marks the day of Armenian Genocide*

**NOVEMBER 28-30:** *Catholicos Karekin II, Grand Mufti Alahshukur Pashazadeh may meet in Etchmiadzin*

### USEFUL LINKS

- [www.president.am](http://www.president.am)
- [www.gov.am](http://www.gov.am)
- [www.parliament.am](http://www.parliament.am)
- [www.mfa.am](http://www.mfa.am)
- [www.armenpress.am](http://www.armenpress.am)
- [www.panarmenian.net](http://www.panarmenian.net)
- [www.matenadaran.am](http://www.matenadaran.am)

## BUSINESS REGISTRATION: HENCEFORTH ONLINE AND THROUGH ONE-STOP-SHOP

Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan called at the newly opened center of State Register's Legal Persons Agency of the Ministry of Justice of

the Republic of Armenia. Cutting off the symbolic ribbon, the Prime Minister took a walk round the premises getting acquainted with the center's possibilities. Following the re-



the program was announced as early as last year while stating justice ministry's priority tasks: "Henceforth the process of enterprise registration will be carried out within 15 minutes. The online mode of registration will allow Armenian citizens to register their business without having to visit an agency," the head of government noticed by thanking the European Union and the Asian Development Bank for assistance. As he said, several organizations have cooperated to give effect to this business-friendly program: "From now on six public agencies' databases will be compatible. The experts in attendance can compare them and make sure that no extra effort will be required from our citizens," the Prime Minister emphasized and added, "It will provide a better environment for doing business in the Republic of Armenia considering that enterprise registration is just what any citizen does to start up a business activity." Chief of Government Staff David Sargsyan provided some background details. Speaking about the system of electronic registration, David Sargsyan advised that besides the introduction of the one-stop-shop principle, the reform permits online registration of businesses via the [www.e-register.am](http://www.e-register.am) website. "Now you can file an application from your home PC. In this way, the process of registration will take you far less time than before covering both the limited liability companies and the self-employed which make up about 97% of the total number of applicants," David Sargsyan emphasized. During the presentation, online processing of application was offered to one LLC and one self-employed businessman.

[March 25, 2011 www.gov.am](http://www.gov.am)

## PACE RAPPORTEURS FOR ARMENIA WELCOME PROGRESS IN REFORM IMPLEMENTATION

At the end of a two-day visit to Yerevan, the monitoring co-rapporteurs for Armenia of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), John Prescott (United Kingdom, SOC) and Axel Fischer (Germany, EPP/CD) have welcomed the significant number of reforms with regard to the police, judiciary and election framework that were initiated by the authorities to address the recommendations made in the wake of the March 2008 events by, among others, PACE and the National Assembly of Armenia. At the same time they stressed that the many concepts developed should now be translated into draft legislation and concrete policies in order to implement the reforms needed for the country. "The successful completion of a number

forms carried out by the government, the one-stop-shop principle has been introduced. As a result, the citizens will no longer have to turn to several agencies in order to collect the required documentation. The new system features a one-stop-shop business registration facility. According to Tigran Sargsyan, the launch of

forms carried out by the government, the one-stop-shop principle has been introduced. As a result, the citizens will no longer have to turn to several agencies in order to collect the required documentation. The new system features a one-stop-shop business registration facility. According to Tigran Sargsyan, the launch of

of reforms, especially electoral reform, is essential to ensure genuinely democratic parliamentary elections in 2012," said the rapporteurs, highlighting the importance of these elections for the democratic development of the country. While welcoming the progress made by the authorities since their last visit, the rapporteurs also noted that there are still a number of outstanding issues related to the March 2008 events that need to be addressed. "The ongoing detention of persons for their role in the March 2008 events, as well as the lack of a proper inquiry into the causes of the 10 casualties that occurred during these events continue to poison the political environment in Armenia," they said.

[March 24, 2011 www.armradio.am](http://www.armradio.am)

## HEADLINES OF THE WEEK

- MARCH 22: "Lost and Found in Armenia" feature film to be shot AH
- MARCH 23: Armenian government to tackle rural areas development problems AH
- MARCH 23: Strategic Defense Review results to be submitted Armenian President AH
- MARCH 24: Yerevan to host "Italy and Armenia: a Project for Cooperation" workshop AH
- MARCH 25: Armenia's leading gold mining company continues its technical upgrading AH
- MARCH 28: Darchniyan gets chance to win his IBO bantamweight world title back AH
- MARCH 28: Armenia, Iran explore ways to boost industrial cooperation AH

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It also plays a unique role for the enhancement of human contacts and ties and, in general, for the strengthening of peace and peaceful coexistence. Great potential of solidarity, friendship and unanimity is also manifested by this gathering at Vahdat – this marvelous hall named Unity. This great holiday with rich traditions was not lost for the international community. Recognition of Novruz by the General Assembly of the United Nations and its inclusion on the list of non-material Human Heritage by UNESCO testify to it. Thanks to the initiative and efforts undertaken by the Iranian government headed by President Ahmadinejad a year ago, today we have an opportunity to meet, converse and wish each other all the best, celebrating all human and universal that unites us. This gathering is yet another nice manifestation of the dialogue of civilizations, intercultural cooperation and understanding. The ritual of spring awakening is close to ours, Armenians hearts. Tyarendaraj – Candlemas Day, which is one of the oldest Armenian holidays, is traditionally celebrated on February 14. Even though it's a winter holiday, on that day the spring is in the air, and according to the ancient beliefs of our forefathers, the holiday mitigates the cold and serves as a precursor of spring. The holiday symbolizes light, warmth, youth, love, fertility and brings blessings to the newly-weds.

[March 27, 2011](http://www.president.am)

[full story www.president.am](http://www.president.am)

## ARMENIA TO CONTINUE CONSTRUCTING ITS NPP'S NEW ENERGY UNIT



Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan said that safety of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) is in the focus of the Armenian government's attention. The earthquake and tsunami in Japan that crippled Fukushima-1 Japanese NPP have again drawn attention to the Armenian NPP's reliability and safety, Sargsyan said during a governmental hour in the Armenian parliament. "Relevant instructions were given to the Armenian Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. I assure you that lessons of the earthquake in Japan will be taken into consideration and safety of all infrastructures will be secured during construction of the Armenian NPP's new energy unit," said Mr. Sargsyan.

According to him, nuclear power plants of new generation have higher level of safety and all risks are minimized at them. Sargsyan stated that construction of the new energy unit will continue with consideration of safety matters. Besides that Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan said that the world community should tell the parties to the Karabakh conflict that if one of them uses force for its resolution, the world community's reaction will be definite and immediate. "The world community should send a clear message to the parties to the conflict that there is no alternative to the conflict's peace resolution, and if one of the parties uses force, the world community's reaction will be definite and immediate. In my opinion, adoption of a similar communiqué by the world community would contribute to peace negotiations on Karabakh," Sargsyan said during a governmental hour in the Armenian parliament. According to Sargsyan, international organizations should also clarify what kind of measures and sanctions these structures will apply towards the state, which violates the principle of non-use of force.

March 23, 2011 [www.panarmenian.net](http://www.panarmenian.net)

## SACRAMENTO TO HOST COMMEMORATION OF 96TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE APRIL 14



Activists from across California will join the Armenian National Committee of America-Western Region and the California State Legislature in commemorating the 96th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide at the State Capitol in Sacramento on Thursday, April 14. The day's events will include an Advocacy Day where activists will visit various legislators' offices to advocate issues of interest to the Armenian

American community in California, as well as the public unveiling of an exhibit in the State Capitol Rotunda about the Near East Relief Foundation. "The annual Armenian Genocide commemoration reaffirms California's commitment to combating genocide and its denial while providing Armenian Americans an opportunity to connect with representatives and engage the political process," said Raffi L. Kassabian, ANCA-WR California State Affairs Committee Chair. The Armenian Genocide will be commemorated in both the California State Senate and Assembly chambers during which the Legislature will vote on resolutions commemorating the Armenian Genocide.

March 23, 2011 [www.panarmenian.net](http://www.panarmenian.net)

## SPAIN GOES CONTRARY TO EP RECOGNITION OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The Spanish parliament overruled a petition regarding the recognition of the Armenian Genocide committed by Turkey between 1915 and 1923. The votes from the PSOE, PP, CiU and UPN paralyzed the motion presented by independentists (ERC) and nationalists (PNV). In relation to this matter, the Armenian National Committee of Spain made the following considerations: - President Rodriguez Zapatero presented the Alliance of Civilizations to United Nations in 2004. We believe asking Turkey to assume their responsibility of the Armenian genocide falls within the context of this proposal, and by overruling the petition of Recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the Spanish parliament has invalidated this Alliance. Also, Turkey who had accepted this Alliance, contradicts it by refusing to recognize the Genocide. - In relation to the statement which declares that there are other priorities on the political agenda with Armenia, we would like to point out that most of the problems which Armenia encounters at the moment are directly related to Turkey not assuming their historical responsibilities toward the Armenian people. The solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh's conflict is connected to this matter, a condition that Turkey imposed on Armenia for the signing of the 2009 protocols. - Turkey and Azerbaijan continue with their anti-Armenian policy with the closing of their borders imposed by Turkey, which prevents the development of Armenia and the systematic destruction of cultural and religious monuments of Nakhichevan (Azerbaijan).

March 26 2011, [www.panarmenian.net](http://www.panarmenian.net)

## SITUATION IN DAMASCUS CALM, ARMENIAN COMMUNITY UNDER NO THREAT

The situation in Damascus is calm, Armenian community is under no threat, representative of Syria's Armenian community, member of Arabian Writers' Union Nora Arisian said. As she told a PanARMENIAN.Net reporter, the community representatives have no intention to leave Syria. "We're aware that governmental reforms are soon to be expected, with a better atmosphere to follow. Nothing will change for Armenians in this case, we live peaceful lives and are supporting President Bashar al-Assad," Arisian said. Armenians in Syria have a school, operating churches, social organization, the privileges being restricted to Armenian community only out of other national minorities in the country. Currently 100 000 Armenians reside in Syria.

March 28, 2011 [www.panarmenian.net](http://www.panarmenian.net)

## IFC HELPS ARMENIA LAUNCH ONE-STOP-SHOP TO EASE BUSINESS ENTRY AND SPUR ECONOMY



**I**FC, a member of the World Bank Group, helped the Armenian government launch the first One Stop Shop for business registration, which will ease business entry, reduce administrative burden on businesses, and boost economic growth. With advice from the IFC, the Armenian government amended the legislation that streamlines procedures for registration of legal entities and individual entrepreneurs. The One Stop Shop, launched within the Ministry of Justice on March 10, will streamline start-up procedures for new businesses, reducing the business registration process by approximately two weeks. "The Government of Armenia highly values IFC's contribution to the process of creating a stronger business entry legislative framework and strengthening investor promotion and protection in the country," said Karine

Minasyan, Deputy Minister of Economy of Armenia. "The Doing Business reform team of the Ministry of Economy, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and IFC's team, put every effort to promote the One Stop Shop system, which is very important to promote economic growth in Armenia." "New simplified business start-up procedures and improved customer service will enable Armenian businesses to save significant time and resources," said Arsen Nazaryan, IFC Armenia Regulatory Simplification – Doing Business Reform Project Manager. The IFC Armenia Regulatory Simplification – Doing Business Reform Project supports small and medium-sized businesses by providing advice to the Armenian Government on improving the investment climate. IFC is implementing the project in partnership with the Austrian Ministry of Finance, Netherlands Ministry for Development Cooperation, Luxembourg Ministry of Finance, and the Consortium of Commercial Promotion of Catalonia. Since Armenia became a member of IFC in 1995, IFC has invested \$110 million in 24 projects across the industry spectrum including financial markets, general manufacturing, energy, mining and chemicals. IFC Advisory Services provide advice through projects focusing on the financial sector, sustainable energy, and regulatory simplification.

*March 25 2011, [www.ifc.org](http://www.ifc.org)*

## ARMENIAN GENOCIDE MUSEUM CASE GRINDS ON AT GREAT COST

**A** legal fight over a proposed Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial has now cost museum backers well more than \$1 million, and the expenses keep rising. This week, attorneys for the retired businessman who won a lawsuit to reclaim the museum site near the White House asked for \$2.8 million in fees, plus additional sanctions. The money would come from the nonprofit organization established to build the museum, which lost the lawsuit. All of which seriously clouds the museum's future.

"Hopefully, the judge will resolve this case quickly," John B. Williams, the winning attorney, who represents retired businessman and philanthropist Gerard Cafesjian, said Friday. "I want this case to be over."

But inevitably, as U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly predicted last year, "this is not going to be simple." Attorney Eric I. Abraham, who represents the museum and the Armenian Assembly of America, charged that Cafesjian is trying to undermine the project by squeezing money from it. "It shows his desire to impover-

ish the museum and make sure it's never built," Abraham said Friday. The proposed 50,000-square-foot facility would commemorate the horrific events of 1915-23, when the Ottoman Empire slaughtered Armenians. The museum site is a four-story National Bank of Washington building, two blocks from the White House.

First mentioned in the 1990s, the proposed museum is described by backers as "the premier institution in the United States dedicated to educating American and international audiences about the Armenian genocide." Museum fundraising has targeted Armenian-Americans, who are heavily concentrated in regions that include Boston, Michigan and California's San Joaquin Valley. This week, attorneys filed under court seal a list of all the museum donors since 2006. In January, after extended litigation, Kollar-Kotelly ruled that the proposed museum site belonged to Cafesjian. He and the Armenian Assembly of America had worked together on the museum before they had a falling out.

*March 25, 2011*

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

## RUSSIA'S SUKHOI SUPERJET 100 TO MAKE FIRST PASSENGER FLIGHT ON APRIL 12



**R**ussia's Sukhoi Superjet 100 passenger airliner will carry out its first passenger flight from Armenia's capital of Yerevan to Moscow on April 12, officials in Russia's Far Eastern Khabarovsk Territory said on Wednesday. The flight will take place on the 50th anniversary of the day that Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space. The first Sukhoi Superjet 100 aircraft was bought by Armenia's Armavia airline, Khabarovsk Territory Governor Vyacheslav Shport said during a meeting with Armenia's ambassador to Russia Oleg Yesayan in Khabarovsk on Tuesday. The Superjet 100 is a family of medium-haul passenger aircraft developed by Sukhoi in cooperation with U.S. and European aviation corporations, including Boeing, Snecma, Thales, Messier Dowty, Liebherr Aerospace and Honeywell. The aircraft is capable of carrying 75-98 passengers up to 4,400 kilometers. Sukhoi plans to manufacture at least 700 Superjet 100s and intends to sell 35 percent of them to North America, 25 percent to Europe, 10 percent to Latin America, and 7 percent to Russia and China. Sukhoi currently has at least 122 firm orders for its Superjet 100 airliners.

*March 23, 2010 [www.rian.ru](http://www.rian.ru)*

## ARMENIAN INFLATION FOR 2011 WITHIN PREDICTION - WORLD BANK

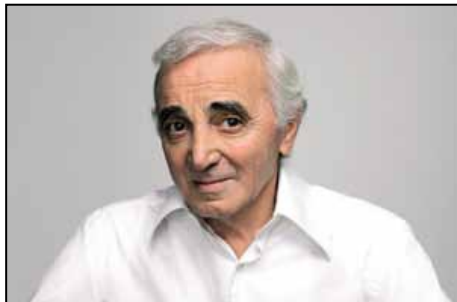
**T**he World Bank on Wednesday said that the annual inflation for Armenia this year would be in the range of the government's prediction.

Jean-Michel Happi, World Bank country manager for Armenia, told a press conference in Yerevan that the annual inflation in Armenia would meet its target range of 4 percent plus a margin of plus 1.5 percent in adjustment with a gross domestic product growth at, between 4 percent and 5 percent.

*March 24, 2011*

*Full story [www.english.peopledaily.com.cn](http://www.english.peopledaily.com.cn)*

## CHARLES AZNAVOUR TO BE HONORED IN NY



**M**ark Friday evening, May 20 on your calendars. It marks an extraordinary event, sponsored by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), celebrating both the 20th anniversary of Armenia's independence, as well as one of the world's greatest singers, showmen, songwriters, and philanthropists, Charles Aznavour. He is also Armenia's ambassador to Switzerland, Armenia's permanent delegate to the United Nations in Geneva, and French ambassador-at large to Armenia. Liza Minnelli to introduce Aznavour. The gala tribute will take place at New York's elegant Cipriani Wall Street venue, located at 55 Wall Street, with a reception starting at 7 p.m. and dinner with a special program at 8 p.m. Introducing Aznavour will be famed singer Liza Minnelli, and master of ceremonies will be well-known actor Eric Bogosian, both of whom are some of the many dignitaries and friends of the honoree on the Honorary Committee of Tribute to Aznavour. Other known personalities on the committee include songwriter Sir Elton John, singer Celine Dion, film producer Atom Egoyan, and the ambassadors of France and Armenia to

the United States and the United Nations. The evening's proceeds will benefit the disadvantaged elderly people of Armenia, including the Vanadzor Old Age Home in Armenia, a loving, nurturing refuge for older Armenians who have no other means of support. The Vanadzor Home was started by Aznavour, who personally requested FAR to assume responsibility for its upkeep and operation. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the unique collaboration between "Aznavour Pour L'Armenie" and FAR. "FAR and Aznavour share the same mission of working to have Armenia become a prosperous, democratic country insuring a comfortable life for its people," said FAR Executive Director Garnik Nanagoulian. "I have the guts to do anything," Charles Aznavour said to me in one of my several exclusive interviews with him. And that has been the motto of his extraordinarily successful life and career. He has sold 100 million albums, composed about 1,000 songs, and acted in 60 films. In addition, his philanthropic work has been prolific in helping the people of Armenia since the 1988 tragic earthquake. He was born Shahnour Vagheng Aznavourian 87 years ago in Paris of Armenian parents who opened their own restaurant the day he was born. When World War II came, Aznavour's father joined the French Army and his parents closed the restaurant. Raised in an atmosphere of "music, love, and poverty," Aznavour was encouraged to entertain.

*March 28, 2011 [www.armeniaweekly.com](http://www.armeniaweekly.com)*

## SDHP AND ACE ORGANIZE CONFERENCE ON "PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE CAUCASUS" AT FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**O**n Friday, the 25th of March, a conference-debate on "Peace and Security in the Caucasus: What is the Future of the Region?" was organized by France's Social Democrat Hunchakian Party and the Armenian Council of Europe. Dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Armenia's independence, the conference was held at France's National Assembly (the lower house of Parliament of France). The conference featured well known intellectuals including; economics professor Gnrard Ashdjian, president of "Deynergies" and former president of "GDF International" Jacques Deyirmendjian, Doctor of Geopolitical Sciences, professor of international relations in the "ESG Paris" Frederick Ansel, Doctor of Political Sciences Talin Papazyan, the former Armenian Deputy Defense Minis-

ter, and current SD Hunchakian Party Central Committee member Vahan Shirkhanyan and a researcher at the French Institute of Geopolitics Julien Zarifyan. The conference attendees and participants were greeted by Mr. Arman Tosun who gave the welcoming address on behalf of the conference's organizing committee. Representative and Mayor of Issy-les-Moulineaux, Hauts-de-Seine, Andr  Santini welcomed the conference and congratulated ACE on taking on such an important subject matter. A message of encouragement and congratulations was read on behalf of the Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the National Assembly; Deputy Fran ois Rochebloine.

*March 25, 2011,*

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

## ARMENIA AND KARABAKH FEATURED AT LA TIMES TRAVEL SHOW



**A**rmenia and Karabakh were featured, for the second consecutive year, at the Los Angeles Times Travel and Adventure Show, which took place over the weekend at the LA Conventions Center. The participation of Armenia and Karabakh was organized by Armenia's Consulate General to Los Angeles. The show, which was attended by tens of thousands of people, brought together representatives from all over the world that featured tourist attractions unique to their countries. Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (Artsakh) were in one pavilion, which featured large photographs of landscapes and touristic destinations. Representatives from Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic were on hand to address visitors' questions, as were Armenian travel and tourism agencies. Los Angeles Times publisher, Eddy Hartenstein, welcomed Armenia's and Karabakh's participation in this definitive tourism expo, adding that just as last year, the Armenian pavilion, with its beautiful displays, is one of the more eye-catching corners of the show. "As a news organization, we are very grateful that all cultures of the diverse city are represented here, among them the Armenians. This is truly a unique opportunity get to know each other and learn about new cultures," Hartenstein said in a conversation with Armenia's Consul General to Los Angeles, Grigor Hovhannesian. The "Vartan and Siranoush Gevorkyan" and the "Zvartnots" dance ensembles performed during the expo's cultural program.

*March 23, 2011 [www.asbarez.com](http://www.asbarez.com)*

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