



**NATURAL GAS TO GET CHEAPER
FOR VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS
PAGE 2**



**ARGENTINE COURT
ADOPTS UNPRECEDENTED
RULING ON ARME-
NIAN GENOCIDE PAGE 5**

ARMENIA HIGHLIGHTS

Weekly Digest of the Government of Armenia

March 28-April 4, 2011

THEMA



THE PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION MICHELINE CALMY-REY ARRIVED ON A TWO-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO ARMENIA

At the invitation of President Serzh Sargsyan, the President of the Swiss Confederation Micheline Calmy-Rey arrived last night on a two-day official visit to Armenia. Today, at the Presidential Palace there took place the official welcoming ceremony which was followed by the tete-a-tete meeting of Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Micheline Calmy-Rey and the meeting of the delegations in the extended format. Noting, that he has had numerous occasions to meet and discuss issues of mutual interest with the President of Switzerland, President Serzh Sargsyan underlined that yet this is the first visit of the Swiss President to Armenia which provides an excellent opportunity to thoroughly discuss all issues pertinent to the development of the Armenian-Swiss relations. "We hail the decision of the Swiss authorities to open embassy in Armenia. We believe it manifests the intent of Switzerland to deepen our bilateral relations, and we are pleased by the fact. Switzerland achieved impressive results in every area and it's a great honor for us to be friends with the one

of the world's leading states and to deepen our bilateral relations. We are thankful to the people and government of Switzerland for the assistance provided to Armenia and grateful for discussing the issue of the Armenian Genocide at the Swiss Parliament and for the adoption of the resolution," President Serzh Sargsyan said at the meeting with the President of Switzerland. The President of the Swiss Confederation expressed gratitude for the warm welcome and noted that her visit would be marked by a very important and emblematic event -- opening of the Swiss Embassy in Yerevan which is a striking illustration of the deepening Armenian-Swiss relations. On behalf of her government, Mrs. Calmy-Rey thanked President Serzh Sargsyan for his assistance in establishing embassy and underscored that there is indeed strong resolve on both sides to strengthen relations and to develop cooperation between Armenia and Switzerland. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Presidents of Armenia and Switzerland gave a joint press conference.

March 31, 2011

full story www.president.am

"QUOTE OF THE WEEK"

"GOVERNMENT WILL HENCEFORTH PRIORITIZE THE WELFARE PROGRAMS RATHER THAN THE SEED-BREEDING ONES IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROPOSALS RECEIVED FROM THE PROVINCES."

TIGRAN SARGSYAN
PRIME MINISTER OF RA

Upcoming Events

APRIL 4-6: *President Serzh Sargsyan will leave for the Republic of Serbia on an official visit.*

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

NATURAL GAS TO GET CHEAPER FOR VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS

An outgoing cabinet sitting was held today in the schoolhouse after Mesrop Mashtots of Oshakan village, chaired by Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan. To begin with, the sitting heard and took note of the 2010 annual report on the social-economic status of Aragatsotni marz, delivered by marz governor Sargis Sahakyan. The government next



April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2012. According to Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan, some 60,000 households will benefit from this decision in line with the President Serzh Sargsyan's directive which is an important measure. The government approved the order of conducting mandatory overhauls for individual means of conveyance under which different terms will be applied for the overhaul, ticketing and registration of public and individual means of conveyance. A series of decisions have been passed in support of the agricultural sector. In particular, the Executive has approved this year's quotas for State support to water user associations. The government will earmark AMD 4,200bn to offset the cost of irrigation water preventing the rise in tariffs. Thus, the State covers about 60% of the annual spending on irrigation water. The 2011-2012 spring barley seed reproduction program was backed with another decree passed at the meeting. In this connection, the Prime Minister noted that the government will henceforth prioritize the welfare programs rather than the seed-breeding ones in compliance with the proposals received from the provinces. The meeting decided to allocate AMD 200,000.0 to the Ministry of Agriculture to subsidize by 4 percentage points interest rate on agricultural lending available through the finance ministry's "Rural Funding Entity-PIU" State institution. The meeting amended a previous decision to continue subsidizing the loans already extended and due to be extended under the "Affordable Housing for Young Households" program in the second quarter of 2011. Under another decision, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs was reserved the right to distribution of Armenia's first-ever social housing estate. The government amended a previous decree on the procedure to follow in drawing lots and providing bonuses for tax administration improvement purposes. The amended decree stipulates that from now on no pecuniary incentives will be available for winning cash-register tickets, instead 15 motor-cars will be drawn instead of 10.

March 31, 2011, www.gov.am

DAYS OF ARMENIA IN PARIS

What was Armenia for them twenty years ago and now? What feelings had Armenians of Diaspora since their motherland gained independence? This became a turning point in their lives. "It was a kind of dream for all of us, to be able visiting our motherland, get in touch with people in Armenia, get acquainted at last with the only country which may be called ours. I often remember my grandmother and grandfather, if they knew that one day Armenia would be independent they would live with greater hope for future," Seda Jololian, member of the Council of Friends of Embassy of Armenia in France, told the reporter of "HH". Days of Armenia are being held at the Mu-

nicipality of the 17th District of Paris by joint efforts of Embassy of Armenia in France and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) European office. Days of Armenia are marked March 23-April 6 through a series of events - different exhibitions, concerts, meetings, including groups of interest for children. In the framework of this event Armenian dance fest was organized March 24 by "Navasard" ensemble. Performance of this ensemble functioning in France was met with storm of applause by French Armenians and French audience. Vigen Chitechyan, RA Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to France, as well as a number of representatives of the Embassy were present at the event.

April 4, 2011 www.hhpress.am

HEADLINES OF THE WEEK

- **MARCH 30:** *Singapore's Foreign Minister expresses willingness to cooperate with Armenia*
AH
- **MARCH 30:** *Turkey tries to prevent flights of Stepanakert-bound civil aircrafts*
AH
- **MARCH 30:** *World-famous tenor Gegham Grigoryan awarded with 1st degree medal*
AH
- **MARCH 31:** *Armenian students participating in Arctic Research program*
AH
- **APRIL 1:** *Kuwaiti specialists may study Arabic manuscripts in Matenadaran*
AH
- **APRIL 1:** *Construction at church – adjacent territory in Yerevan suspended because of archaeological finds*
AH
- **APRIL 2:** *April 2 marks birth anniversary of Soghomon Tehlirian*
AH

ARMENIAN NATIONAL YOUTH REPORT WILL BE COMPLIED THIS YEAR

The Armenian National Youth Report will be complied this year. It will represent a voluminous document that covers all youth-related issues – education, culture, social affairs, healthcare, sport, migration and religious life, Armenian Deputy Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs Arsen Karamyan told a press conference today. "The report aims to provide information on problems facing all our citizens aged 18-30," the Minister said. "It will serve as an additional tool for drawing the attention of corresponding agencies to the existing problems," Arsen Karamyan said, adding that even if half of the problems presented in the report are solved, it will be true progress. Torching upon the "Affordable Housing for Young Families" program, the Deputy Minister said 315 loans were financed from April 2010 to March 18, 2011. 2.5 out of 3 billion AMD envisaged has already been provided to the program. The Government is currently thinking of attracting additional resources.

April 4, 2011 www.armradio.am

\$24MLN CREDIT PROGRAM FOR IT FIELD DEVELOPMENT TO BE SUBMITTED TO RA PARLIAMENT



Armenian Minister of Economy Tigran Davtyan said the Armenian government will submit to the Armenian parliament a new credit program at the amount of USD 24mln for the development of IT field. On April 2, Davtyan told journalists that problems of structural nature

NUMBER OF MOBILE COMMUNICATION AND INTERNET USERS DOUBLED IN ARTSAKH IN 2010

Head of the NKR National Statistical Service Manush Minasyan said that the number of mobile communication and internet users increased by 55% in Artsakh in 2010. Profits in the communication field totaled AMD 7.1mln in 2010 that is 12.3% higher compared to 2009, Minasyan told a press conference on March 29. According to him, the number of fixed-line telephony subscribers dropped by 748, but the number of mobile communication users grew by 10,500, amounting to 51,557. Around 50% growth was recorded in the number of Internet users, bringing it to 8,743.

March 29, 2011 www.panarmenian.net

HRANT DINK SAID ONCE THAT TURKEY HAS ALWAYS VIEWED ARMENIANS AS THREAT TO ITS SAFETY

On January 30, 2007, Deborah K. Jones, U.S. Consul General Istanbul, sent details of the November 14, 2006, meeting with Editor-in-Chief of Agos paper Hrant Dink to the U.S. Department of State. The message read that "Dink's tragic death is a great loss for Turkey. Employees of the U.S. embassy and consulate had regular meetings with Dink. The last one was on November 14, 2006, when Dink met with representatives of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.

March 29, 2011 full story www.panarmenian.net

and the field development were raised during a working lunch of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and representatives of the Union of Information Technology Enterprises (UITE). According to the Minister, problems of the development of IT field have been in the focus of Sargsyan's attention, as the field is a relative advantage of Armenia's development. "The field, which is declared to be priority, naturally, demands also a special approach from the perspective of its development," Davtyan said, adding that the government has been applying a similar approach to the field for the past years, providing organizational, managerial and financial assistance. The World Bank also provided assistance to the field.

April 2, 2011 www.panarmenian.net

STEPANAKERT, YEREVAN STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF MATERIAL LOGISTICS OF THE ARMY

On March 31, the President of the Artsakh Republic Bako Sahakyan met with the deputy defense minister of the Republic of Armenia Alik Mirzabekyan. Issues related to cooperation between the two Armenian states in the defense sphere were discussed during the meeting, with special attention given to the issues of material logistics of the army. Prime Minister Ara Harutyunyan and defense minister Movses Hakobyan partook in the meeting, the Central Information Department at Artsakh President's Office reported.

March 31, 2011 www.panarmenian.net

SERJ TANKIAN TO PRESENT HIS NEW POETRY COLLECTION IN GLENDALE

System of a Down frontman Serj Tankian will discuss and sign his newest poetry collection, *Glaring Through Oblivion*, at 7 pm at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, Glendale, on March 29. Wristbands are required for attendees and will be distributed the day of the event, according to Glendale News-Press. *Glaring Through Oblivion* is a book of Tankian's original poetry, strikingly illustrated by Roger Kupelian. Unique illustrations punctuate nearly 70 poems - almost none of which have ever been published before.

March 29, 2011 full story www.panarmenian.net

SEYRAN OHANYAN: DEFENCE MINISTRY MUST BE KEPT ABREAST OF LATEST IT TRENDS



Armenian Ministry of Defence hosted discussions on cooperation perspectives with the Union of Information Technology Enterprises (UITE). As the Defence Minister Seyran Ohanyan noted, with information technologies having penetrated all spheres of life, the ministry must be kept abreast of the latest trends, including the development of military technologies, military data management, advanced training for military experts. UITE CEO Karen Vardanyan cited Israel as an example of successful combination of IT and military technologies, urging to benefit from the example set. The parties resolved to create a working group to develop cooperation strategies in specific sectors.

April 1 2011, www.panarmenian.net

KARAVACHAR LIBERATION 18 YEARS AGO AMONG NKR DEFENSE ARMY VICTORIES

April 2 marks the 18th anniversary of Karavachar liberation. Operations on liquidation of military bases of Karavachar (Kelbajar) region started on March 27-April 5, as they had posed a serious threat to western borders of NKR. Defensive posts in the regional center of Kelbajar were neutralized on April 2. After gaining the intersection connecting Kelbajar with Gyanja (Gandzak), the Karabakh forces reached Omar pass on April 5. The liberation of Karavachar was another serious victory of the NKR Defense Army. The region, which hangs over the entire Nagorno Karabakh plateau, has a great military and strategic importance. Almost all rivers of Nagorno Karabakh head in Karavachar region, and the water supply problem was solved with its liberation. Dadivank monastery, a diamond of the Armenian architecture of Karabakh, is located in Karavachar. The monastery was founded by St. Dadi who was the disciple of Thaddeus the Apostle who spread Christianity in Eastern Armenia. Currently, the monastery is being reconstructed.

April 2, 2011 www.panarmenian.net

IDA KAR, NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, REVIEW



Everyone knows that the battle over whether photography should be considered one of the fine arts was won long ago. But occasionally an exhibition makes you ponder the question afresh. The National Portrait Gallery's new exhibition, *Ida Kar: Bohemian Photographer*, devoted to the London-based Armenian photographer who died in 1974, is one such show. Kar is not well known today, but the NPG considered her sufficiently talented to buy her entire archive, including 800 photographic prints and 10,000 negatives, just over a decade ago. It's debatable, though, whether her appeal derives from the artistry of her images or from the fact that she persuaded so many famous people to sit for her. I suspect it's the latter, and that Kar was hitching a ride on the coat-tails of stronger artistic personalities. Born to Armenian parents in Russia in 1908, Kar lived in Paris during the late Twenties, a period of heady possibility for strong-willed female photographers (think of Dora Maar and Claude Cahun). In 1933, she returned to Egypt, where she had been educated, and married a government official. Her life changed irrevocably during the war,

when she met the British art dealer Victor Musgrave, who had been stationed in Cairo with the RAF. Kar divorced her first husband, married Musgrave, and followed him to London in 1945. She forged her reputation in Britain with a series of portraits of artists that were shown at Gallery One, which Musgrave set up in the early Fifties. Her work began to appear in magazines such as *Tatler*. In 1960, she was honoured with an exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. This was the first one-person photographic show ever held in an important London space, and it helped the public to accept that photography could be fine art. Its polemical title was *Ida Kar: Artist with a Camera*. Looking at pictures of her Whitechapel retrospective, it's clear that Kar was meticulous about the presentation of her photographs, which she blew up at great cost, and left unframed. The National Portrait Gallery adopts a more conventional approach. All of the nearly 100 prints on show are both framed and relatively small, minimising and containing Kar's vision, such as it was. For instance, a portrait of Jacob Epstein taken in 1953, in which the sculptor's hands hold a seemingly impossible position, as though his own body was subject to his titanic ability to mould material, is shown alongside two conventional studio portraits of film actors that date from the same period. With their dramatic artificial lighting, the pictures of actors staring soulfully into the middle distance are hackwork, evidence of Kar's commissions as a self-styled "theatrical photographer" for the casting directory *Spotlight*.

March 29, 2011 full story www.telegraph.co.uk

IRAN URGES STRONGER TIES WITH ARMENIA

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for the expansion of bilateral relations and promotion of regional cooperation with Armenia.

In a meeting with his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan on the sidelines of the International Nowruz Celebrations in the Iranian capital, Tehran, on Sunday, President Ahmadinejad said Iran has placed no limits on the development of cooperation with Yerevan and that the two states need to cultivate their relations as two friendly neighbors.

The Iranian chief executive also attached importance on the implementation of previous agreements and execution of projects in energy and transportation sectors, and called for preparing the grounds for further cooperation. The Armenian presi-

dent, for his part, expressed delight over his presence at the International Nowruz Celebrations, saying the event can have a significant role in bringing the two nations closer.

In a separate meeting with the vice president of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Nechirvan Barzani, the Iranian president described the bonds between Iran and Iraq as historical and cultural, stressing the importance of boosting two-way relations with the aim of developing cooperation between the two countries.

President Ahmadinejad went on to say that the "enemies" are seeking to weaken "independent" countries and that unity and solidarity of the Iraqi nation would defeat the enemies.

March 28, 2011 full story www.presstv.ir

EBRD COMPLETES ITS SUPPORT TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES REGULATORY COMMISSION



Over the last six months, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has provided comprehensive support to the Public Services Regulatory Commission (PSRC) in Yerevan, Armenia. This is part of a long-term programme of co-operation aimed at developing the electronic communications sector in Armenia, according to EBRD. Electronic Communications is one of the market sectors regulated by PSRC. Its overall objective is to provide businesses and consumers in Armenia with a good range and choice of high quality mobile and fixed telecommunications, internet and broadcast services. Since September 2010, a team of 10 international experts with experience in Europe and North America have given trainings at PSRC's offices in Yerevan. They have also used case studies from other countries, to demonstrate the best regulatory tools for fast development of the market. As well as the PSRC participants, local staff from mobile, fixed and internet service providers have attended. Summing up his experience after attending the training course offered within the EBRD-funded programme, one of the participants praised "a team of renowned international experts who shared their knowledge and expertise on the recent developments and best-practice trends in the electronic communications field". "All of the trainers were excellent, and the experience gained from this eight-week training initiative was indeed invaluable for my deeper understanding of the telecom sector. And I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to the EBRD for this opportunity," he added. The international experts have assisted PSRC outside the classroom too. In separate meetings, the experts have proposed new solutions and ideas to PSRC that will further improve the competitive conditions in the market for investors and for consumers. "The electronic communications market in Armenia is now set to develop in line with international best practices, in particular, to satisfy the demand for high speed broadband services to businesses and consumers.

March 29, 2010 full story www.finchannel.com

ARGENTINE COURT ADOPTS UNPRECEDENTED RULING ON ARMENIAN GENOCIDE



An Argentine federal judge declared “the Turkish state committed the crime of genocide against the Armenian people between 1915 and 1923”. Judge Norberto Oyarbide sustained a claim by Argentine-Armenian, Gregorio Hairabedian, who had filed a lawsuit against Turkey demanding to learn fate of his 50 relatives who disappeared during the Armenian Genocide. In the claim submitted 11 years ago, Hairabedian had asked the country’s justice system to prove that the Turkish state was responsible for annihilating and torturing numerous Armenians in Svaz and Kharberd around the time of World War I. The ruling by Judge Norberto Oyarbide

holds Turkey responsible for perpetrating and committing the Armenian Genocide. The judge also stated Turkey should help Hairabedian get information about his relatives. Though the court’s decision does not set accountability criteria for Turkey, it serves as grounds for Armenian organizations to raise the issue in international tribunals and courts. In 2002, Justice Oyarbide officially requested the Turkish authorities to transfer archive documents on Hayrapetyan family to the Argentine court. He also requested the English, German, US and Vatican authorities to provide documents on the 1915-1923 Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire. After studies that lasted 11 years the Argentine court passed the ruling. Secret cables by consuls and ambassadors who served in Germany at the time greatly contributed to Oyarbide’s decision. “All this were not just crimes against Armenians. The Turkish state was implementing a systematic program aimed at the extermination of the Armenian nation,” one of the cables read.

April 2, 2011 www.massispost.com

EXHIBITION ON ‘LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS OF THE WEST’ TO FEATURE TASHJIAN



From May 6-31, New Mexico’s Marigold Arts will present a group exhibition of landscape paintings of the southwest by gallery artists, including Richard Tashjian, Don Mundt, and Robert Highsmith. Tashjian is an American-born Armenian, Mundt hails from Montana, and Highsmith was born in Alaska but has spent most of his life in Las Cruces, N.M. All three are at the peak of mature painting careers and have fallen in love with the big sky and open spaces of the western landscape, which each interprets in his own way. Tashjian has been an accomplished plein-air painter and intrepid world traveler for decades. He served in World War II as an aerial

photographer for the U.S. Navy. That perspective is sometimes still evident in his landscape paintings in oil, acrylic, and watercolor. Tashjian is a master colorist whose work shows the influence of cubism and of Arshile Gorky. Don H. Mundt’s watercolors are small, dreamy, wide-angle studies in color. His paintings have been exhibited throughout the west. His work is well represented in private collections throughout the United States and in Canada, Japan, and Germany. Robert Highsmith’s watercolors make strong, simple statements that capture the light and landscapes of the southwest, evincing equal parts technical virtuosity and heart. His work exhibits a softness of light, shadow, and brush that can only be accomplished with the immediacy of watercolor, complemented by the stark contrasts that lend the work its photorealism. Highsmith’s work has been widely shown across the United States and has won more than one hundred awards.

March 18, 2011


Full story www.armenianweekly.com

IS BAKU RETREATING FROM THREATS TO SHOOT DOWN PLANES?

Azerbaijan appeared to have backed away on Friday from its threats shoot down planes using a new airport in Nagorno-Karabakh, which have been condemned by Armenia and mediating powers. “Azerbaijan did not and will not use force against civil facilities, unlike Armenia, which has earned notoriety for terror and war against the civilian population,” Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry spokesman Elkhon Polukhov told local news agencies. Polukhov was responding to Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian’s Thursday comments on the threats voiced by senior Azerbaijani officials recently. One of them warned of “the physical destruction of airplanes landing in that territory” without Baku’s permission. Sarkisian said he will defy the threats by boarding the first commercial flight from Yerevan to Stepanakert in two decades, which is scheduled for May 9. The flight will be timed to coincide with the official reopening of Karabakh’s sole airport closed in 1991. Sarkisian’s statement was condemned by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s chief foreign policy aide. “This may be a provocation on the part of Armenia,” the official, Novruz Mammadov, told news.az. “Some foreign diplomats in Baku are of the same opinion.” “At the same time, Azerbaijan is also not sitting idly by and is closely monitoring Armenia’s actions,” he said. Baku “will never come to terms with this state of affairs,” he added without elaborating. Mammadov also criticized the international community for its reaction to the matter, saying that it amounts to “application of double standards.” He accused “international organizations and countries forming the world order” of disregarding Azerbaijan’s internationally recognized sovereignty over Karabakh. The United States, Russia and France have denounced the threats to shoot down Karabakh plane as “unacceptable” through their diplomats co-chairing the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

March 18, 2011

Full story www.asbarez.com

"Armenia Highlights" is compiled in association with 

DISCLAIMER: Views expressed in "Armenia Highlights" do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Armenia.