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Government Officials Told To Work Longer Hours



Armenian government agencies must work in “emergency” mode to live up to voters’ expectations after the ruling Republican Party’s victory in the April 2 parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Karen Karapetian said on Thursday.

“Our team received a mandate to effect changes in our country,” Karapetian said at the first cabinet meeting held after the vote. “I am telling all of my teammates that we are declaring a state of emergency in terms of our work regime, efforts, responsibility and all actions.”

“Emergency mode means that we should now work not for 8 hours but 10-12 hours a day, including Saturdays,” Finance Minister Vartan Aramian explained to reporters after the session.

“We have to work to ensure that people feel the difference,”

Transport and Communications Minister Vahan Martirosian said for his part.

Karapetian personally conducted the ruling HHK party’s election campaign, pledging to implement “serious reforms” and attract large-scale investments in the Armenian economy. He said on Tuesday that his government will do its best to build “a new Armenia.”

President Serzh Sarkisian, who is the HHK’s chairman, also promised major reforms when he took office in April 2008. “We are again announcing a new beginning for changes,” he declared at the time.

Karapetian described the economic situation in Armenia as “very grave” just days after he was appointed as prime minister in September. He said the country is in urgent need of “systemic changes.”

His cabinet subsequently pledged to combat corruption and improve the investment climate. Opposition leaders dismissed that as a publicity stunt aimed at facilitating the HHK’s victory in the upcoming elections.

Vahagn Khachatryan, a senior member of the opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK), said on Thursday that the reshuffled government has so far failed to deliver on its promises. It particular, Khachatryan said, it has not broken up de facto economic monopolies. “They avoid talking of monopolies, using instead the phrase ‘companies having dominant positions,’” he told RFE/RL’s Armenian service (Azatutyun.am).

Russia condemns US missile strike on ‘chemical weapons’ base in Syria

Russia has reacted angrily after the US launched a missile strike on a Syrian government air base, the BBC reports.

US officials said the base had been used to launch a chemical weapons attack in north-western Syria that left dozens of civilians dead on Tuesday.

But Russia, which backs President Bashar al-Assad, condemned the US strike and suspended a deal designed to avoid mid-air collisions over Syria.

It is the first direct US military action against Syria’s government. At least six people are reported to have been killed.

It comes just days after some 80 civilians, including many children, died in the suspected nerve gas attack in the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib province.

The Syrian opposition and Western powers say the Syrian government launched the attack but Syria denies this.



Syria airstrikes not to affect Armenia?

In comments to the paper, Vigen Cheteryan, an international expert specializing in Oriental studies (Geneva-based CIMERA center), commented on the recent US strikes against Syria.

“[President Donald] Trump’s airstrikes were a political message, a ‘letter’ which certainly has its role in the Middle East politics and the Russia-US relations. But I find domestic policies the main platform behind this step. My belief is that Trump wishes to demonstrate that he is a strong leader and a decision-making actor,” he is quoted as saying.

Cheteryan said he treats the airstrike as a symbolic gesture not likely to continue in the future. “I think Armenia’s unsettled conflict with Azerbaijan, the complicated relations with Turkey and the alliance with Russia are a completely different matter in international relations. It has nothing to do with the military or political balance in the Middle East. Hence the concerns that Armenia may be entangled in the Middle East developments are not absolutely to the point. This has to be cut from the context; secondly, I don’t think it will essentially escalate the situation to affect Armenia,” he added.

Ruling Party Coy About Post-Election Coalition With Tsarukian

The ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) declined to clarify on Friday whether it could reach a power-sharing deal with businessman Gagik Tsarukian's alliance, the runner-up in the April 2 parliamentary elections.

The HHK spokesman, Eduard Sharmazanov, said the party's governing body did not discuss possible coalitions at its most recent meeting held on Thursday. "We still have time," he told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am). "We should not deviate from our agenda. We will discuss it when the time is right."

"The issue of forming a coalition with the Tsarukian Bloc is not on the Republican Party's agenda at the moment," he said.

Sharmazanov did not deny or confirm media reports that President Serzh Sarkisian and Tsarukian met earlier this week. "I can't say if there was such a meeting because I don't know," he said.

The Tsarukian Bloc shed no light on its next political moves in a statement released on Monday. None of its leaders has made public statements since then.

Armenia - Businessman Gagik Tsarukian campaigns in Masis, 24Mar2017.

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Tsarukian's Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK), the dominant force in the bloc,



was part of Sarkisian's government from 2008-2012. It withdrew from the ruling coalition amid mounting tensions with the president that culminated in a bitter confrontation two years ago. Tsarukian was forced to retire from politics at that time.

Tsarukian announced his return to the political arena in January, fueling media speculation that his comeback is the result of a secret deal with Sarkisian. BHK representatives denied that.

According to official election results, the HHK won just over 49 percent of the vote and will control the majority of seats in the new parliament. The Tsarukian

Bloc finished second with 27 percent.

"There are two options," said Sharmazanov. "The first one is that the Republican Party forms the government single-handedly -- and it has a mandate to do that. The second option is a coalition government with shared responsibility. But we will discuss it."

The official again indicated that the HHK expects to extend its power-sharing arrangement with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun), which is represented in the current government by three ministers. The official results showed Dashnaksutyun winning 6.6 percent of the vote.

Armenia's President offers condolences over deadly blasts in Egypt churches



President Serzh Sargsyan today offered condolences to the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi over the deadly blasts at St. George's Church and St. Mark's Cathedral in Alexandria, which claimed the lives of dozens of innocent people.

"The Republic of Armenia strongly condemns these inhumane acts and reaffirms its solidarity to fight against international terrorism.

At this difficult time for Egypt I express my deepest condolences to you, to the friendly people of Egypt and to families of the victims, wishing them fortitude and a speedy recovery to the injured," President Sargsyan said in a letter.

Ter-Petrosian Bloc To Challenge Election Results In Courts

Former President Levon Ter-Petrosian's opposition alliance said on Friday that it will ask Armenia's Constitutional Court to annul the official results of the April 2 parliamentary elections because of what it called widespread vote buying and other "systematic" irregularities.

The Congress-HZhK bloc alleged "mass distribution of vote bribes," intimidation of voters by government loyalists, violations of the secrecy of the ballot as well as "numerous registered cases of multiple voting." "The large-scale and systematic violations of the electoral process precluded a free expression of the people's will," it claimed in a statement.

The Congress-HZhK said ahead of the elections that multiple voting will be practically impossible because of opposition-backed amendments to the Electoral Code enacted by the authorities last fall. In particular, those changes led to the installation of electronic voter authentication devices in all polling stations.

The authorities also agreed to publicize the signed lists of voters that cast ballots on April 2. This allowed opposition parties to verify whether somebody else voted in place of those Armenians who were absent from the country or simply boycotted the polls.

The Congress-HZhK statement did not say whether the bloc has examined those lists and found evidence of such fraud. One of its leading members, Levon Zurabian, told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutjun.am) that the bloc will



present evidence of its allegations during Constitutional Court hearings.

European election observers did not report significant instances of multiple voting in their preliminary report released on Monday. They cited instead "credible information about vote-buying, and pressure on civil servants and employees of private companies."

Virtually all Armenian opposition parties and blocs have said that vote buying was decisive in the ruling HHK's landslide election victory. Ter-Petrosian similarly said on Monday that the election outcome was not unexpected "in a country where ... the people are condemned to utter misery."

"Vote bribes were only a bonus [for the authorities] because in reality the people were forced to vote [for the HHK,]" claimed Zurabian. "Pressure on voters was exerted through administrative resources and criminal elements. Vote

bribes were only an additional component of that whole system."

The HHK spokesman, Eduard Sharmazanov, admitted on Wednesday that vote bribes were handed out but insisted that they did not significantly affect the vote results. Sharmazanov also argued that the United States and the European Union gave largely positive assessments of the conduct of the ballot.

The EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, said through a spokesperson on Tuesday that the official results reflect "the overall will of the Armenian people." She also said the EU will work closely with Armenia's "democratically elected new parliament and government."

According to the Central Election Commission (CEC), the Congress-HZhK won 1.65 percent of the vote. Ter-Petrosian's bloc will therefore have no seats in the new Armenian parliament.

Vulnerable Infrastructures Of Armenia And Azerbaijan: Defense And Political Issues



A seminar titled Vulnerable Infrastructures of Armenia and Azerbaijan: Defense and Political Issues was held in Noravank Foundation on April 5, 2017.

Keynote was delivered by Davit Petrosyan, Military-Political Analyst of Noyan Tapan, covering vulnerable infrastructures of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the context of Artsakh problem and military-political processes occurring in the South Caucasus region.

The speaker also elaborated on resources to change political and public stances of the conflicting parties, and opportunities of dialog between them.

An active discussion unfolded afterwards with exchange of various viewpoints on the matter.

Proceeds from 'The Promise' will create human rights institute at UCLA

\$20 million of proceeds from the upcoming Armenian Genocide movie "The Promise" will be used to create a new institute within UCLA's law school, The Los Angeles Daily News reports.

The Promise Institute for Human Rights "will put our law school and this university at the forefront of human rights education and advocacy," said Jennifer L. Mnookin, dean of the law school in announcing the institute Monday. The \$20 million is the largest donation the law school has ever received to create an institute, Mnookin said.

"We hope that by moving out of the darkness that is the Armenian Genocide, we can move to the future and really lead through education, research, advocacy and scholarship in the realm of human rights," said Dr. Eric Esrailian, a co-producer of "The Promise" and co-chief of the Division of Digestive Diseases at UCLA's medical school.

UCLA law professor Asli Bali will be the first faculty director for the new institute.

The announcement at law school conference on human rights came a week before Genocide Remembrance Day on April 24, when members of the Armenian diaspora commemorate the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

"My great-grandparents were genocide survivors, so the story of the Armenian Genocide is personal for my family," Esrailian said after the public remarks at UCLA Monday.

It was philanthropist and billionaire Kirk Kerkorian, who died in 2015, who envisioned the movie and got Esrailian involved, Esrailian said. They spent two years researching the Genocide and

governments' efforts, including by the United States, he said, to suppress a movie being made about the event, before forming a production company to make the movie. Kerkorian didn't live to see the filming, but he did see the creation of the story.

Kerkorian wanted the film to be epic, and a love story, on the scale of classics like "Dr. Zhivago," Esrailian said. "He didn't want it to be a history lesson or for it to be preachy," he said. "Unlike the general awareness of the Holocaust, there is a lack of general awareness about the Armenian Genocide. . . . We wanted also it to appeal to everybody, not just Armenians, of course."

The story centers around a love triangle: Christian Bale plays an American photojournalist who comes to Constantinople at the eve of World War I and the Genocide and falls for an Armenian artist played by Charlotte Le Bon. At the same time, an Armenian medical student, played by Oscar Isaac, also falls in love with Le Bon's character. Terry George, director and co-writer for "Hotel Rwanda," directed and co-wrote "The Promise."

"Hopefully, from this story, people will be moved and feel a desire to go and learn more," Esrailian said. "Ironically, if you look at this modern world, it's equally barbaric to the world of 102 years ago."

The same tools are being used now as then to target certain groups: marginalization, fear, forced migration and violence. Adolf Hitler drew on the tactics of the Armenian Genocide, Esrailian said. Later examples came in Bosnia, South Sudan, Cambodia and Rwanda.

"Armenians are not just focused on our own history," he added. "We want people to learn from our history so that others can benefit from that knowledge."

Closed borders with Turkey reduce risks for Armenia



Turkey shifts to presidential system of governance after the Constitutional referendum narrowly passed on Sunday. The 18 constitutional changes were passed by a 51-to-49 'Yes' vote in favor. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan now gets direct control over the army, the general staff and the government. The Prime Minister's post gets eliminated, and the President actually becomes the head of government and can now manage the country's budget. In fact, Erdogan theoretically has an opportunity to remain in post until 2029.

At the same time Erdogan's policy strengthens national and religious sentiments inside the country. To put it differently, nationalism and Islam are becoming a serious political factor. "This cannot but affect the foreign policy," says Bagrat Estukyan, Armenian editor for Agos daily. According to him, Turkey is becoming more unpredictable and Erdogan might adopt a more aggressive foreign policy in relation to both the South Caucasus and the Middle East to divert public attention from domestic issues and consolidate the society," Es-

tukyan told a press conference at the Media Center today.

Expert of Turkish studies Levon Hovsepian noted that all facts indicate Turkey's foreign policy is going to become more aggressive. "Ankara's foreign policy is widely dependent on the logic of domestic policy and interests. Therefore, when political Islam and nationalism reinforce here, it cannot but affect the regional policies," he said.

Hovsepian considers that Turkey will maintain its anti-Armenian policy and there are no grounds to speak about the perspectives of improvement of Armenian-Turkish relations.

Bagrat Estukyan believes that the lack of relations with Turkey is better for Armenia under the current circumstances. According to him, Turkey has grown into a center of regional instability and there are huge dangers coming from Ankara. "Along with Saudi Arabia, it is one of the main forces destabilizing the Middle East. Turkey rouses the flame of war in Syria. Closed borders reduce the risks for Armenia," he stated.

Armenia reports 15% growth in turnover with EAEU countries

“Armenia’s turnover with the EAEU countries grew by more than 15%, and the export of the Armenian goods to the Eurasian market grew by 65% in 2016,” Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan said at the session of the Eurasian Supreme Economic Council in Bishkek.

“The shaping of our common economic area and its development for the second year in a row is taking place in a complex global economic situation which is manifested in the decreasing tempo of the global economic growth and geopolitical convulsions. All this on one hand creates certain problems for the full-fledged functioning of our Union, on the other hand it opens new opportunities for a closer cooperation of our countries,” he said.

“Under these conditions, the concerted steps taken by our countries allowed the member state to stabilize to some extent the situation, to achieve the macroeconomic stability through the assistance to some areas and branches, which has translated into the tendency of growth in some countries in the areas of industrial and agricultural production. In particular, in 2016 the gross domestic product indicators in Armenia showed positive dynamics; there was registered the increase of activities in the production, agricultural, and service areas. Armenia’s turnover with the EAEU countries grew by more than 15%, and the export of the Armenian goods to the Eurasian market grew by 65%. Turnover with third countries has also increased,”

President Sargsyan noted.

“Our countries have similar goals for development which we, in particular, see in the introduction of industrial innovations, high technologies in the area of agriculture, digitalized economy, and renewable sources of energy. It is also important to make concerted efforts aimed at the implementation of the mutually beneficial cooperation programs. We have two main objectives: First, to fortify the Union from within, further liberalize our common economic area through the elimination of the barriers, reduce exemptions related to the free move of goods, services, capital, and labor. Second objective is the amplification of the EAEU’s international engagement. These two objectives complement each other and affect the efficiency and international standing of the Organization,” the President said.

“From the viewpoint of further strengthening of the international standing of our integration union, we attach great importance to the invigoration of the EAEU cooperation with the third countries which are ready for a true partnership, and with pivotal integration units. In 2016, issues of cooperation with Iran, China, India, Egypt and some other countries were discussed in a constructive spirit. Armenia is interested in securing these agreements legally, particularly with the Islamic Republic of Iran with which we have pragmatic, mutually beneficial, and good neighborly relations,” Serzh Sargsyan said.

“From this point of view, we assess positively the cooperation process between the Eurasian Economic Commission and European Commission as an important factor for the promotion of a dialogue between the two integration unions which will be conducive for the exchange of experience, exploration of the avenues for integration and cooperation, and a harmonious, complementary and mutually beneficial development,” he added.

“The efficiency of the EAEU is also dependent on the smooth and coordinated works of the state bodies of the member states, Eurasian Economic Commission, and business circles. With this regard, we expect that the Eurasian Economic Commission, within the scope of its authority, will provide proposals on the resolution of the problems facing the Union. We also view as important the creation and publishing by the Eurasian Economic Commission in cooperation with the state bodies of the member states of the so called White Book which will present by consent of the parties 60 barriers existing within the Union’s market. I hope that the road map for their elimination with the proper timetable will be created soon,” President Sargsyan said. “Armenia will continue to implement the preset programs aimed at thwarting the negative tendencies present in the global economy, promoting sustainable development, including through the utilization of the integration potential of the Union,” the President concluded.

Armenian carrier Taron-Avia to launch flights to Russia

Privately-owned Armenian carrier Taron-Avia is gearing up to re-enter the Russian-Armenian air services market, Russian Aviation Insider reports.

On April 10, a Boeing 737-500 repainted in the Taron-Avia livery arrived at Shirak airport outside the city of Gyumri, where the airline will be based. The airplane, which was previously operated by now-bankrupted Air Armenia, sports the word “Gyumri” on the vertical stabilizer.

Taron-Avia has launched a new website, obtained the Russian Transport Clearing House’s permission to use that organization’s blank forms for its air tickets, and taken some other steps in the run-up to the launch of commercial operations.

The carrier is expected to commence flights to Russia in late April. The list of destination airports includes Krasnodar, Rostov-on-Don, and Samara’s Kurumoch airport.

The airline deliberately chose Shirak as its base airport (Armenia’s other operational airport, Zvartnots, serves the capital city Yerevan). First, on December 31, 2014 the Shirak management waived the surcharge of 10,000 dram (\$21.39) per outbound passenger; on January 1, 2017 the airport reduced the air navigation service fee by 50%, and meteorological support is provided free of charge. “Having taken

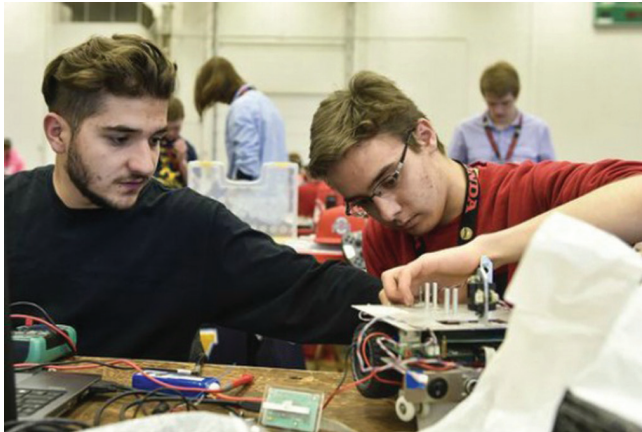
these advantages into consideration, Taron-Avia decided to operate from Shirak,” a representative of Armenia’s General Department of Civil Aviation told Russian Aviation Insider. Second, Gyumri is the hometown of Taron-Avia owner and CEO Garnik Papikyan.

Apart from the newly delivered Boeing the carrier has two more 737-500s, which it used to sublease.

If everything goes to plan, Taron-Avia will become Armenia’s second carrier to offer regular services to Russia. Last summer Zvartnots-based airline Armenia broke onto the Russian market. Armenia management declined to comment on the new carrier’s plans but offered their congratulations.



Armenian Robotics Team Excels in Ohio Competition



Students from Ayb High School in Armenia's capital city made their second trip to Marion this week to compete in the National Robotics Challenge, The Marion Star reports.

The three-day open robotics competition started Thursday and continues through Saturday at Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

"Last year we heard about it and decided to participate," said Vazgen Gabrielyan, director of the robotics laboratory at Ayb High School.

"We really liked that the competition has no limits, not limiting us to any kits and having the chance to create things from scratch. That's our approach to robotics."

That approach proved to be successful as the Ayb students captured a Honda Innovation Award and a silver award in the lightweight/self-controlled sumo robot competition at the 2016 edition of the NRC.

"We've had a lot of success in both local and international championships since the school opened," Gabrielyan said.

The Ayb team's accomplishments in Marion had both the school and the country "boiling," according to Gabrielyan.

"That was a big pleasure for us to get that (Honda Innovation Award), because we put a lot of hard work into that robot," said Armen Barseghyan, a senior at Ayb. "Reporters were coming to our school and doing interviews, asking how it was to go to the National Robotics Challenge from a little country and take the silver medal and the higher award."

Barseghyan and classmates Areg Kalantaryan, Areg Karapetyan, Felix Ghandilyan, Simon Zohrabyan, and Arman Mnatsakanyan have entered two robots in this year's competition — one combat robot and one maze robot.

Minister of Transport of Armenia excludes presence of practice of "kickbacks" in road construction

Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technologies of Armenia Vahan Martirosyan excludes the presence of practice of "kickbacks" in road construction. "If there are facts proving the contrary, I ask to share them," Vahan Martirosyan stated in an interview with journalists on April 6 after the meeting of the country's government. At the same time, responding to the question of ArmInfo, the minister acknowledged that the condition of many roads in Armenia remains unsatisfactory.

According to the Minister, there are many problems related to road construction, but we must reckon with the financial possibilities. Within three weeks, the Ministry of Transport promises to make proposals in this direction, but recognizes that even a billion-dollar investment cannot solve this problem in a short time.

According to Vahan Martirosyan, the rehabilitation and repair of roads in Armenia will require very serious investments, since the roads in Armenia require major repairs, rather than temporary solutions in the form of a separate backfill, as is usually done. "At this stage, the necessary amount of investment is being specified," according to preliminary calculations, huge investments are required," said the head of the Ministry of Transport, promising to give more specific information within three weeks." The expected investments, as the minister explained, involve both budgetary funds and investments from International donors, and despite the desire of the Government not to increase the country's debt burden, as explained by Martirosyan, in the matter of improving roads, the government will have to go on attracting external credit. However, as Vahan Martirosyan stated, there is no hope that the local business will express a desire to invest in road construction - the state can not force the business to build roads. However, if the business is interested in financing road construction, then afterwards they will be paid.

As the minister pointed out, the reasons for this state of the roads of



Armenia are not only that overhaul has not been done for a long time, but also in the climatic conditions of the country. "You can see the temperature changes in Armenia: from +50 in summer to -30 and -40 degrees in winter, in such conditions road maintenance is extremely difficult," he said.

Nevertheless, as Martirosyan noted, roads built in recent years in the republic are of high quality. For example, as he assured, the new road to Georgia (Vanadzor - Alaverdi - the border of Georgia) will serve the term of 12 years. "According to the standards, the lifespan of a new road with asphalt concrete pavement is estimated at 12 years, but with the condition of routine repairs on the 7th or 8th year," he explained.

The head of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and IT does not agree with the fact that unsatisfactory state of roads can be associated with poor quality of the supplied bitumen. As Vahan Martirosyan assured, there can be no censures, because, according to the conclusion of relevant laboratories, the bitumen used in road construction corresponds to the established standards.

OSCE monitoring: No cease-fire violation reported



On April 5, 2017, in accordance with the arrangement reached with the authorities of the Republic of Artsakh, the OSCE Mission conducted a planned monitoring of the Line of Contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan, in the direction of the Hadrut

region, near Karakhanbeyli.

From the positions of the Defense Army of the Republic of Artsakh, the monitoring was conducted by Field Assistants to the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Mihail Olaru (Moldova) and Ghenadie Petrica (Moldova), as well as staff-member of the OSCE High-Level Planning Group Lieutenant-Colonel Patrick Farrelli (Ireland).

From the opposite side of the Line of Contact, the monitoring was conducted by staff member of the Office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE CiO Peter Svedberg (Sweden), Personal Assistant to the CiO Personal Representative Simon Tiller (Great Britain), and Head of the OSCE High-Level Planning Group (HLPG) Colonel Hans Lampalzer (Austria).

The monitoring passed in accordance with the agreed schedule. No violation of the cease-fire regime was registered.

From the Artsakh side, the monitoring mission was accompanied by representatives of the Republic of Artsakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense.

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Russia hopes parties to Karabakh conflict will resume dialogue

Russia hopes the parties to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict will return to the negotiating table, Spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said.

"Today marks the anniversary of the end of large-scale military actions at the line of contact between the Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in what became the worst violation of the ceasefire regime since 1994," Spokesperson Maria Zakharova told a briefing today.

"The OSCE Minsk Group and the international community have been taking measures to help create conditions for furthering the negotiations. For that purpose two summits were organized in Vienna and St. Petersburg. Work in that direction continues, and we hope the parties will return to the negotiating table and continue discussions," Zakharova said.



France committed to bringing negotiated solution to Karabakh conflict

France has reiterated the belief that the current status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh is unsustainable.



"A year ago, the hostilities that had broken out in Nagorno-Karabakh between April 2 and 5, to the grief of the people of the region, were suspended. As co-chair of the Minsk Group, France worked actively with its Russian and American partners to end the fighting and resume negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan," the Foreign Ministry of France said in a statement.

"France reiterates its belief that the current status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh is unsustainable and that there can be no military solution to the conflict. It calls on the parties to respect the commitments made at the Vienna Summits of 16 May 2016 and St. Petersburg on 20 June 2016, namely respect for the ceasefire, confidence-building measures and recovery Negotiations," the statement reads.

"As the President of the Republic, during his recent talks in Paris with his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts, reiterated, France remains fully committed to bringing a negotiated and lasting solution to this conflict for the benefit of stability, stability and prosperity of the entire region," the statement concludes.

Sasna Tsrer group member Aram Manukyan`s accusation will be toughened



ArmInfo.A new article appeared in Aram Manukyan's, Sasna Tsrer group member accusatory case (Pavel Manukyan warrior's son-editor's notes).

As Harutyun Baghdasaryan, Manukyan's lawyer informs his defendant is also incriminated crimes introduced by Article 185 of CC (deliberate destruc-

tion or other's property damage). The lawyer also informed that Aram does not consider himself guilty on incriminated crimes towards him.

To note, Sasna Tsrer Group member Aram Manukyan in July 2016 was accused by Article 219 1st 3 part (Capture of buildings, transport means, messages or relations committed by organized group) and Article 3 part 235 (Illegal purchase, sale, saving, transfer or keeping weapon, armament, explosive stuff and explosive device done by organized group) Armenian Criminal Code, Article 218 part3 point 1 (hostage taking) and Article 238 (weapon rape, armed technique, explosive devices).

As means of suppression was selected arrest. Appeler court rejected to change the suppression way on August 23 2016.

October 2017, First Armenian National Cognac Festival

Armenian national cognac festival will be held for the first time on October 2017. The initiator of «Armenian national cognac festival» is the founder and president of BPA (Business Partners of Armenia) company Vruyr Penesyan.

Recently during the conversation with correspondent of «Noyan Tapan» newspaper he informed, that the first Armenian national cognac festival is planning to be held on October 2017 and the festival's aim is bringing to Armenia more tourists and the businessmen engaged in cognac activity.

«Actually, we were planning to hold festival in spring, however according to the proposal of experts of cognac production we decided to hold it in autumn, so that tourists and festival participants will have the opportunity to become a direct participant in the process of grape harvest», he said, adding that he does not want to reveal all further plans.

According to V. Penesyan, famous international musicians will be invited to the festival, who will glorify the national festival of Armenian cognac.

Going back to business forum «Invest Armenia» which was organized and performed by BPA Company during many years in spring, the company's president said that unlike previous years this year «Invest Armenia 2017» will be held in autumn.

«Every year, we get new projects

from representatives of public and private sector. This year, during the business forum of «Invest Armenia» will be announced about the formation of new economic structure that I am sure will have a positive impact on economic development and expansion of business ties of our country», said V. Penesyan.



City Spa, one of the founders of Aesthetic medicine in Armenia, that was established 14 years ago, is still following the main principles that were implemented since the launch: to use only clinically and scientifically approved, highly effective and safe with FDA approval products and equipments imported mainly from UK and Europe.

Depilation: Last year City Spa launched a very safe, painless and fast acting new machine for permanent hair removal. It is the "Primelase" produced by Cocoon Medical. The machine has an innovative



international leading brands such as ZO Skin health (Beverly Hills US), GLO therapeutics (ColoradoUS). Skin Ceuticals (US) etc.

And that's not the all: pedicure, manicure and massage will make your day.

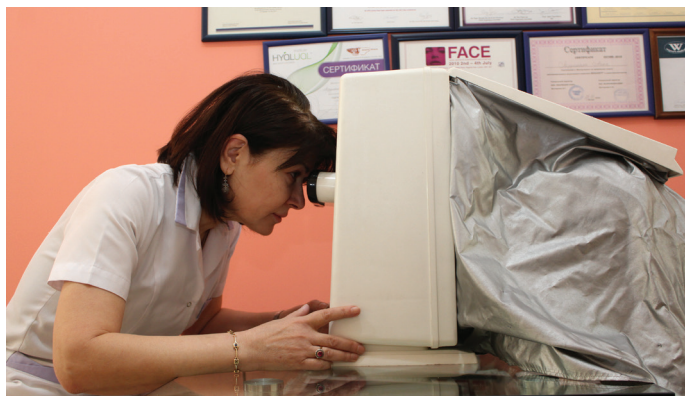
You are welcome to City Spa. The aesthetic doctor's consultations and skin diagnostics with Skin Scanner is fee. The atmosphere in City spa is full of love and peace. The pricing strategy is very flexible and discounts for good long term clients are available during whole year as well as different Gift Cards.

method (dynamic mode) which allows to treat very large areas of the body within few minutes.

Localized fat removal: In Armenia the first cryolipolysis method was implemented by City Spa in 2016. Cooltech is an innovative machine that acts as a none surgical liposuction, with a new method of cryolipolysis for permanent localized fat removal and body reconturing. It is safe, painless and very effective. City Spa is equipped also with the Wellshape machine for anti-cellulite treatment.



Anti aging Facial treatments and Care: City Spa offers the latest scientifically approved anti aging treatments and products for care. The doctors are regularly improving their qualifications in London and Paris, bringing the new inventions to Armenia. The products used in City Spa are only



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Elżbieta Penderecka: “There is a Great Orchestra in Armenia Headed by Wonderful Conductor Sergey Smbatyan”

As The Highlights has informed already its readers, on 11 April the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia performed within the framework of the Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival in Poland. Headed by conductor **Sergey Smbatyan**, the SYOA presented Symphonic Images by Ghazaros Sarian,

Penderecki) noted that the concert proved that there is a great orchestra in Armenia headed by wonderful conductor Sergey Smbatyan. “Not only Polish, but also international music lovers enjoyed the concert”, she said.

The Ambassador of Armenia to Poland

of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Poland and the 650th anniversary of the Armenian community in Poland. The soloists **Narek Haknazaryan** (cello) and **Jarosław Nadrzycki** (violin) performed with the orchestra.

On 12 April the orchestra performed at



“Scheherazade” symphony suite by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Concerto-Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra by Aram Khachaturian at Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall.

The President of the Ludwig van Beethoven Association **Elżbieta Penderecka** (who is the spouse of the world famous Polish composer of the Armenian origin **Krzysztof**

Egdar Ghazaryan noted that he felt pride, joy, excitement, as the the Polish audience was presented an Armenian classical music by the talented young musicians, and the concert was accompanied by the storm of applause.

The concert of the orchestra was dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the establishment

Centrum Spotkania Kultur in Lublin. During this concert **Bartosz Kozia** (cello) and Jarosław Nadrzycki (violin) played with the SYOA.

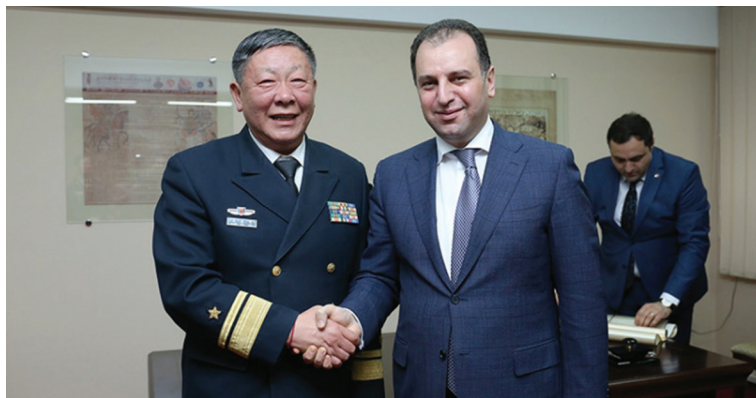
Photos:
Bruno Fidrych/plasterstudio
and courtesy RAMFA

The Army News

Armenia-China: broadening military cooperation

Armenian Defense Ministry informs that on 14 April Head of the Defense Policy Department of Armenian Defense Ministry **Levon Ayyazyan** and the Chief of the International Military Cooperation Office of the Central Military Council of the People's Republic of China Rear Admiral **Guan Youfei** signed a Cooperation Program 2017.

Chinese delegation had meetings with Minister of Defense of Armenia **Vigen Sargsyan**, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia Lieut. – Gen. **Movses Hakobyan** and **David Pakhchanian**, Deputy Defense Minister of Armenia and the Chairman of State Military Indus-



trial Committee.

During the meetings the current state of the bilateral cooperation as well as its prospects were discussed, and agreements were reached on expansion of cooperation in defense sector, as well as implementation of a number of projects of mutual interest.

At the meeting with DM Vigen Sargsyan the parties discussed and summarized results of talks and the agreements reached.

Praising existing high level of bilateral political dialogue, RA Defense Minister emphasized the importance broadening of the bilateral interaction and inclusion of new ever areas.

An educational conference on cybersecurity at the “HyeTech” center

As a result of the joint initiative of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and the “HyeTech” Cybersecurity Center, the Softline Armenia corporation organized a conference to discuss questions concerning cybersecurity at the “HyeTech” center, on the April 13th. Representatives of a number of agencies and IT companies as well as

bloggers participated in the event.

The Checkpoint Software corporation presented the latest solutions in cybersecurity.

This is the second educational conference of the kind that was organized by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and the “HyeTech” Cybersecurity Center. The purpose of such meetings and discussions is to acquaint professionals with the latest innovations from around the globe and increase awareness of modern solutions and approaches to cybersecurity.

Checkpoint Software was established in 1993, and was the first to incorporate FireWall-1 in IT security. It was also the creator and first user of the State full inspection system.

“Preparation of military equipment and technology for summer use”: training in the 1st Army Corps

Three days of training for transitioning military equipment towards summer use took place in one of the military bases of the 1st Army Corps (Commander Major-General **Tigran Parvanyan**).

Deputy Commanders of the military bases of the 1st Army Corps as well as Chiefs of various technical services participated in the training sessions.

During the theoretical and practical training sessions, regulations for planning and carrying out routine services on military equipment and technology, the procedures and sequences for transitioning military equipment and technolo-



gy from winter to summer use, the safety regulations concerning servicing, use and repair of military equipment, the particulars of utilizing military vehicles in the summer, and other questions were discussed.

The training sessions were concluded with a practical presentation entitled “Preparation of Military Equipment and Technology for Summer Use.” The particulars of transitioning military vehicles and tanks to summer use, the procedures for carrying maintenance service on artillery and missile stations, methods for utilizing fuel-smearing substances and safety regulations were presented in field conditions.

VivaCell-MTS: Helping Compatriots to Move from a Metal Container into a Decent Home

The devastating earthquake of 1988 had impacted tremendously not only on those directly affected by the earthquake, but also on the generation born after the disaster. After the earthquake metal containers became a shelter for all those families in need of housing in the disaster area and in various regions of Armenia.

The housing program financed by VivaCell-MTS and implemented by Fuller Center for Housing Armenia is aimed at improving the housing conditions of our fellow citizens who are in difficulty. As a result of the five-year partnership the housing problem has been solved for 135 families.

The heads of the partnering organizations paid a regular visit to Gegharkunik region.

choice. My three children have been raised in this metal container and haven't had a normal childhood. Last spring, with the support of VivaCell-MTS, we restarted the construction of our half-built house, which we had started many years ago but could not complete," said Valtter, the father of the

ahead will change for this family. I want to believe that the comfortable conditions will make this family leave the memories of hardships in the past," said VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph C. Yirikian.

"The existence of metal containers in our communities shows unfortunately that we still have a lot of work to do, and that many of our compatriots are deprived of basic necessities vital for living. The housing need is really high in Armenia, and we are glad that as a result of the corporate social responsibility of our partner, it becomes possible to solve, at least, some part of the housing problem," said Fuller Center for Housing Armenia President Ashot Yeghiazaryan.



In 2016, in the frames of the housing project, three families have been supported in this region. Two families have renovated their houses and a family has finished the construction of the half-built house.

The **Stepanyans** from the Varser village of Gegharkunik region had been living at Valtter's, the family father's parents' home, 12 people in a small house, before moving to live in a metal container.

"We lived in a metal container for 17 years, as my parents' house was too small. We moved to a metal container; we had no

family.

"Often times, when speaking by figures, people focus on indices, whereas there is a question more important and more sensitive than numbers. We need to remember that there is human life behind this math. Meanwhile, seventeen years are a whole period of juvenility. The children in this family have spent theirs in this wagon. Their careless and bright dreams have ceded giving way to the early realization of the heaviness of their parents' burden. Gone years will never return, but the life

ATTENTION: For the implementation of the housing project, VivaCell-MTS has invested about AMD 105 million in 2016 and more than AMD 333 million in five years.

Editor's note: And where are OTHERS – for instance, our TYCOONS??

(Or they remember about THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE only in the eve of the next elections?!)

Diaspora Armenian celebrities urge culture workers to visit Artsakh



On a visit to Artsakh, Arsine Khanjian, Serj Tankian, Atom Egoyan, Eric Nazarian and made a statement, urging the culture workers of the world to visit Artsakh and support the people of Artsakh who continue to write, compose, play and paint even when they are isolated from the world because of the war, Artsakhpess reports.

“On these days a year ago, the Artsakh contact line again flared up when the Azerbaijani armed forces—in a sudden offensive—fired not only the frontline positions but also peaceful residents, schools and unarmed residents. The Artsakh self-defense forces calmed this aggression for the twentieth time, the only result being new human

and material losses on both sides. Since 1988 or the day when Artsakh or Nagorno-Karabakh people decided to create their own fate and exercise their right to free self-determination, having overcome the bitter spirit of the Soviet Union and international laws, Azerbaijan has been opposing this by displacements, attacks and large-scale military actions. However, despite all this the Artsakh people have been able to defend its ancestral lands, organize an independence referendum and establish a state.

On this historical land parcel, where there are more news on ceasefire violations, victims and wounded than any other information, thousands of children are deprived of their fair right to create, since the country remains blocked, the ceasefire being fragile. Thousands of gifted people are obliged to take weapons instead of a pen and brush and go to the front to defend their homes and homeland. Because of the Azerbaijani attacks and these forced attacks, these youths are deprived of the right to create and discover their talents. Numerous pupils living in border settlements listen to the sounds of exploding bombs and firing instead of songs and music.

But despite this, there are lots of artists, who continue to write, create, play music and paint. They are in blockade because of the war, unfortunately having very little opportunity to communicate with their colleagues worldwide. The blockade and isolations reduce the mutual visits, communication and exchange of experience. The opportunities of opening themselves to the world and knowing each other are limited for these creative talents.”

Sergey Minasyan: Election results come as no surprise



The election results came as no surprise to political scientist Sergey Minasyan. The one thing he that was unexpected to him was the defeat of the Armenian Renaissance Party. He believes the party had to cross the threshold of 5 percent, considering the administrative resources its leader Arthur Baghdasaryan possesses and many other factors.

Sergey Minasyan says he's impressed by the results of Yelk bloc, and wonders why the Armenian National Congress decided to form an alliance to run for Parliament. He believes the force could make it to the National Assembly as a party.

According to the political scientist, Levon Ter-Petrosyan's recent interviews played into the hands of ARF Dashnaktsutyun. “My impression is that Levon Ter-Petrosyan did everything for the Congress to fail to collect 5 percent,” Minasyan told a press conference today.

The political scientist says Karen Karapetyan played a positive role for the Republican Party. “The rebranding of the party was important at least during the election campaign,” he said.

Minasyan says the assessment of the elections by international observers was more positive than expected.

“The assessment shows there must be no problems with the signing of the Armenia-EU Framework Agreement,” he said.

Sergey Minasyan says Yelk bloc will be the only opposition force in the National Assembly, while representatives of Tsarukyan Alliance will play more of a role of ‘constructive opposition.’

British Embassy issues statement on parliamentary elections in Armenia

The British Embassy in Yerevan has issued the following statement regarding the 2 April parliamentary elections in Armenia:

The UK shares the assessment of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Observation Mission that these elections were well-administered and fundamental rights were generally respected but that they were “tainted by credible information about vote-buying” and pressure on some voters.

The UK welcomed the inclusive process pursued by government, opposition parties and civil society in shaping the new electoral code. Along with other in-

ternational partners – EU, Germany, US and UN – and the Government of Armenia, the UK supported the introduction of a new voter authentication system.

We welcome OSCE/ODIHR's assessment that this technology reduced the scope for voting irregularities. We note, however, the complaints and allegations relating to the overall electoral process and encourage the relevant authorities to deal with them efficiently and effectively.

The UK will continue to support all in government, parliament and civil society committed to strengthening democracy, prosperity and stability in Armenia for the benefit of its people.

Turkey starts mine-clearing along the borders with Armenia, Iran and Azerbaijan



Efforts to clear mines have been launched on Mount Ararat in Turkey's eastern province of Iğdir as part of a project financed by the European Union and Turkey in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Hurriyet Daily News reports.

According to the source, the project aims to clear Turkey's eastern border of mines to increase Ankara's ability to control the border and provide socio-economic development. As part of the project, mines along the borders with Armenia, Iran and Azerbaijan will be cleared within two years.

South African firm DENEL-MECHEM will conduct the mine-clearing works as part of the project. Company officials said a total of 15 square kilometers will be cleared of 222,000 mines in 511 areas near the Armenian, Azerbaijani and Iranian borders within two years. Speaking at the ceremony, the head of the EU delegation in Ankara, Ambassador Christian Berger, said hundreds of innocent people, including children, die each year after stepping on mines. Berger also said land mines produce serious societal and financial effects and prevent development, as well as killing individuals.

"This project aims to reduce these effects by taking plenty of precautions including clearing the area of mines and helping the victims. The support given by the EU to mine activities is a part of our support for border management. The mines were planted between 1984 and 1999 for border security. Turkey, the EU and the U.N. are jointly working to clear the area of mines, as well as creating a modern, humanitarian and strong border security," Berger said on April 4.

Azerbaijan disrupts any initiative aimed at excluding resumption of hostilities – Artsakh MFA

Baku deliberately deepens the mistrust between the parties and tries to make the process of peaceful settlement of the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict a hostage of its destructive policy and maximalist demands, the Artsakh Foreign Ministry said in a statement, marking the anniversary of the end of Azeri aggression.

The statement reads:

Today marks exactly one year since the end of military aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh with a view to resolving the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict by force. On the night of 1 to 2 April 2016, in flagrant violation of the ceasefire, the Azerbaijani armed forces launched a large-scale offensive along the entire border using heavy equipment, artillery and aviation. Only after suffering heavy losses in manpower and military equipment, on 5 April 2016, Azerbaijan was forced to ask for a cessation of hostilities with the mediation of Russia.

The April aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh, accompanied by numerous violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes, became a serious challenge to regional peace and security and caused great damage to the negotiation process for the settlement of the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the mediation efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

During the year that has passed since the end of the hostilities on 5 April 2016, the Co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group have been making efforts to ensure conditions for a full restoration of the negotiation process.

The Republic of Artsakh has been consistently supporting the statements of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs on the need for the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement of 12 May 1994, practical application of the provisions of the agreement of 6 February 1995 on strengthening the ceasefire regime, as well as implementation of the agreements reached in Vienna (16 May 2016) and in St. Petersburg (20 June,

2016) on introduction of a mechanism for investigating incidents and increasing the capacity of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

Azerbaijan not only rejects these proposals, but also disrupts any initiative aimed at excluding the possibility of resumption of hostilities. Moreover, throughout this time Azerbaijan has been sparing no effort to transfer the logic of confrontation to the spheres of economy, culture and even human contacts.

While demonstrating complete unwillingness to reach a negotiated peace settlement, the Azerbaijani authorities threaten to unleash another war. By consistently increasing the degree of tension on the Line of Contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan and continuing the policy of confrontation and hostility, Baku deliberately deepens the mistrust between the parties and tries to make the process of peaceful settlement of the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict a hostage of its destructive policy and maximalist demands.

Artsakh Ombudsman holds meetings in Washington, DC and New York

Republic of Artsakh Ombudsman Ruben Melikyan recently completed a ten-day tour organized by the ANCA Eastern Region to highlight Azerbaijan's human rights abuses and the potential war crimes committed during the Four-Day War in April 2016. The Ombudsman made stops in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Washington, DC, New York, and New Jersey holding over 40 meetings with government officials, media representatives, and NGOs active in the fields of human and legal rights.

"We were happy to be able to connect Mr. Melikyan with key officials and groups during his visit to the U.S.," said ANCA-ER Community Outreach and Communications Director Dr. Artur Martirosyan. "Today, in the midst of rising autocratic and populist tendencies in the entire region, Artsakh stands as a beacon of democracy, human rights, and freedom. We are proud of the progress that the Artsakh Republic has made in upholding Western values and traditions since its independence a quarter century ago."

His Washington, DC itinerary included two public talks and a series of meetings with various groups and officials. On March 15 Melikyan headlined an event entitled, "Human Rights in Non-Recognized States: The Case of Karabakh" at the prestigious Center for Transatlantic Relations at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. Benedikt Harzl, Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation Fellow at CTR, moderated the event. The Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to the United States hosted Melikyan for his second public event where he presented his recent report "Atrocities Committed by Azerbaijan During the 2016 April War" and answered questions from the audience.

"It is important to deliver Artsakh's message throughout major capital cities in the world," said Melikyan. "I am



thankful to the ANCA Eastern Region for organizing such a fruitful visit to Eastern United States and look forward to collaborating with all of our partners throughout the Diaspora to raise awareness and understanding about Republic of Artsakh and its unique human rights situation."

Melikyan's visit to Washington, DC also included an interview with the renowned Foreign Policy Magazine as well as discussions with reporters from The Washington Post. He also met with other leading human rights, civil society, and public policy organizations discussing the general human rights situation in Artsakh Republic and the projects that his office undertakes to safeguard and further strengthen the overall human rights situation in the country. Melikyan also met with ANCA coalition partners In Defense of Christians, A Demand For Action, and the Hellenic American Leadership Council, where he shared the details of his report on the Four-Day War. The parties also exchanged ideas about regional developments and held consultations.

His visit to Washington, DC concluded

with meetings held on Capitol Hill with various Members of Congress, including House Intelligence Committee Ranking Member Adam Schiff (D-CA), Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Dave Trott (R-MI), Jackie Speier (D-CA), and David Valadao (R-CA), and Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA). Melikyan touched upon the duties and responsibilities of his office, the general human rights situation in the country, and challenges facing the region. The Ombudsman's last Capitol Hill stop was the event commemorating the one-year anniversary of U.S. recognition of ISIS Genocide, where Melikyan was present in solidarity with all the victims of this horrific atrocity.

In New York, Melikyan held meetings with the representatives of the Armenian Bar Association, Archbishops Oshagan Choloyan and Khajag Barsamian as well as leading human rights organizations headquartered in the city. A special community briefing entitled, "Human Rights in Artsakh Amid Azerbaijani Aggression" was held at St. Illuminator's Cathedral and Fr. Nareg Terterian of St. Sarkis church hosted Mr. Melikyan on his podcast show.

ANCA Advances Armenia and Artsakh foreign aid priorities

The Congressional Armenian Caucus has called on key U.S. House appropriators to prioritize Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) foreign aid policies “strengthening Armenia’s independence, promoting peace in Nagorno Karabakh, and supporting Armenia as a regional safe haven for at-risk Middle East refugees,” reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

In a bipartisan letter, addressed to Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY) and Nita Lowey, the Chairman and Ranking Democrat, respectively, of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State-Foreign Operations, more than two dozen U.S. Representative underscored the importance of “the U.S.-Armenia partnership, a relationship founded upon a shared commitment to faith, freedom, and democratic values.” They stressed that “U.S. assistance has empowered progress in the areas of democracy, rule of law, freedom of expression, and free enterprise.”

Among the specific priorities advanced by the Caucus were:

— U.S. support for Armenia as a regional safe haven for Middle East refugees, in the form of a \$40 million appropriation to support transitional programs, including short-term housing/rental assistance and social and economic integration initiatives.

— A renewed focus on aid to Artsakh, with an appropriation of at least \$8 million for de-mining, rehabilitation programs (such as the Lady Cox Rehabilitation Center), and water supply systems.

— A focused effort to check Azerbaijani aggression, through the appropriation of at least \$20 million to support implementation of the Royce-Engel peace proposals, the suspension of U.S. military aid to Baku, and the strengthening of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act.

— An appropriation of at least \$40 million in economic aid to Armenia, and no less than \$11 million in military aid, with a focus on advancing U.S.-Armenia defense cooperation goals, promoting NATO interoperability, and supporting increased Armenia’s participation in global peacekeeping operations.

“Armenia – a genocide survivor state, landlocked and illegally blockaded by Turkey and Azerbaijan – has stepped forward, despite its own economic hardships, as a regional safe haven for Middle East refugees,” said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. “We thank our friends in the leadership of the Armenian Caucus for seeking at least \$40 million in FY18 funding to help transition thousands of at-risk

families to a secure, stable life in Armenia. More broadly, we would like to express our appreciation to all the signatories for supporting increased aid to Artsakh and each of the other foreign aid priorities in their letter to Chairman Rogers and Ranking Democrat Lowey.”

Joining with Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs, Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Jackie Speier (D-CA), and Vice-Chair, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), in signing this letter were Representatives Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Michael Capuano (D-MA), Tony Cardenas (D-CA), Judy Chu (D-CA), David Cicilline (D-RI), Mike Coffman (R-CO), Jim Costa (D-CA), Joe Crowley (D-NY), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Jim Langevin (D-RI), Dan Lipinski (D-IL), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Colin Peterson (D-MN), Jared Polis (D-CO), Linda Sanchez (D-CA), John Sarbanes (D-MD), and Brad Sherman (D-CA).

On March 16th, Representatives Schiff and Pallone delivered powerful testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State-Foreign Operations, echoing the priorities shared in the Congressional Armenian Caucus letter.



The ANCA supports the Armenian Caucus FY18 appropriation request for \$40 million to position Armenia as a regional safe haven for at-risk refugees.

anca.org

Building formerly slated for Armenian Genocide Museum sells for \$57m

Washington Business Journal – Lincoln Property Co. is now in control of the former National Bank of Washington at 619 14 St. NW, paving the way for its planned redevelopment of the historic building that's been a blight on the resurgent downtown for years.

D.C. deed records show the Cafesjian Family Foundation Inc. sold the building and three adjacent parcels Tuesday for \$57 million. The buyer is 14th G Street Holdings LP, and Bari Nichols, a senior vice president with Lincoln Property, signed the trust documents reported with the deed. Lincoln Property acquired the property in partnership with Pearlmark.

The trust shows that a firm called Cara Investment GmbH is putting up more than \$48 million for the project.

The partners plan to start work on the trophy office development in the fourth quarter of 2017, Lincoln Property said in a release. The new building, to be branded as 699 Fourteenth, is slated for completion in the fourth quarter of 2019. Lincoln Property will oversee the project's development, leasing and management.

Lincoln Property in August filed plans to redevelop the bank and the adjacent parcels with an 11-story office building that would sit behind it on G Street NW. Lincoln is working with architect Shalom Baranes on the proposal, which would add 127,186 square feet to the 35,000-square-foot existing building.

The historic bank building, which dates to the 1920s, would



serve as the main entrance to the building, with the cavernous, ornate bank hall serving as the building's lobby. The proposal does include restoration of the bank's historic facade, as well as the bank hall and mezzanine level in the building. The Historic Preservation Review Board approved a slightly modified version of the concept in December.

It is just the latest proposed breath of new life for the Classic Revival structure, in which the Cafesjian Family Foundation hoped to install an Armenian Genocide Museum before those plans fell through and the property became embroiled in years of litigation.

Later, the foundation floated the idea of filling the building with retail tenants.

Armenian Genocide Library opens in Washington

Historians and researchers will now have access to more than 5,000 publications on Armenian Genocide.

The Armenian Genocide Library of the Armenian National Institute (ANI) opened in Washington on April 5, Voice

of America reports.

The Armenian and English books here do not present the Armenian history and national identity, but provide detailed information on the most painful page of Armenian history – the Arme-

nian Genocide.

Director of ANI Ruben Adalyan says the library currently hosts 5,000 books, but they hope to increase the number.

"We have created a system, which will allow researchers to use the precious collection acquired by the Armenian Assembly of American and the Armenian National Institute over the past 40 years," he said.

Attending the opening ceremony was Hayk Demoyan, Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, who welcomed the creation of the library and the perspective of cooperation with Armenia.

"Opening of an Armenian information center in Washington is a very important event. The opening of such a center in the US capital is a huge achievement by itself," Demoyan said.

He added that the center will become a venue for meetings, discussions and coordinated work.



Armenian Genocide movie 'The Promise' screens at Vatican

Variety – “The Promise,” a movie about the Armenian genocide, screened at the Vatican on Tuesday with director Terry George, producer Eric Esrailian and some talent in attendance, in a clear sign of Catholic Church support ahead of the film’s upcoming U.S. release.

The big-budget epic was bankrolled by late billionaire Kirk Kerkorian. Its lead actors, Christian Bale and Oscar Isaac, did not make the trek to Vatican City, but the intimate event held for Vatican officials in the 50-seat Vatican Cinematheque’s screening room was attended by stars Shohreh Aghdashloo and James Cromwell and by singer-songwriter Chris Cornell, who composed the theme song.

The Vatican screening comes after Pope Francis last year made his first visit to Armenia. During the visit, he used the term “genocide” to describe the slaughter of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians by Ottoman Turks during World War I.

The pope’s remark sparked an angry reaction by the Turkish government, which strongly denies that a genocide occurred, arguing that it was wartime and many Turks were killed as well and insisting there was never a systematic plan to execute Armenians.

Esrailian, head of Survival Pictures, which he set up with Kerkorian to produce “The Promise,” traveled to Armenia for the papal visit.

“When he [Pope Francis] mentioned the word ‘genocide’ once in the big Mass, you could hear a kind of collective gasp and people getting tearful because he spoke really as a world leader,” Esrailian recalled. He noted that Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, “so it has a special place in Catholicism.”

“When there was awareness [within the Vatican] that a major film was being made, we were contacted to screen the movie. So we sent a private link to be viewed,” he said.

“The Promise,” which world-premiered at the Toronto Film Festival last September, will go on wide release in the U.S. on 2,000 screens via Open Road Films on April 21.

The roughly \$100-million film is considered a breakthrough after several at-



tempts to make a Hollywood film about the Armenian genocide failed during past decades because of what director Terry George calls a “denialist lobby,” which these days is efficiently run by the government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, he claims.

George said there was a denialist propaganda machine behind “The Ottoman Lieutenant,” a film with strikingly similar elements to “The Promise,” but which allegedly takes the side of the denialists. “Ottoman Lieutenant” went on release via New York-based Paladin on roughly 200 screens in the U.S. in March.

“It’s an Erdogan propaganda film released as a feature film in the United States, remarkably, just ahead of us,” the director said. “The Ottoman Lieutenant,” which stars Josh Hartnett and Ben Kingsley, was produced by a Turkish company called Eastern Sunrise Films.

Variety critic Dennis Harvey, in his review of “The Ottoman Lieutenant,” wrote that, “[in] this primarily Turkish-funded production, the historical, political, ethnic and other intricacies — not to mention that perpetual elephant in the room, the Armenian Genocide, which commenced in 1915 — are glossed over in favor of a generalized ‘Whattaya gonna do... war is bad’ aura that implies conscience without actually saying anything.”

“The Promise” faces its own challenges, including tepid reviews. Variety critic Peter Debruge called it “a sloggy

melodrama in which the tragedy of a people is forced to take a back seat to a not especially compelling love triangle.”

“The Promise” centers on a love story involving a medical student (Isaac), a journalist (Bale), and the Armenian woman (Charlotte Le Bon) who steals their hearts. All three find themselves grappling with the Ottomans’ decision to begin rounding up and persecuting Armenians.

“The construct of the love triangle is clearly there for people who are unaware of the genocide or not particularly that interested in it,” said George. “It’s a big, old-fashioned love story. I think we’ve created a classic form of story, and hopefully women in particular will be entertained by it,” the director added.

As part of its marketing strategy, Survival Pictures has launched a #KeepThePromise social impact campaign for which it has already recruited Elton John, Barbara Streisand, Andre Agassi, Cher, Sylvester Stallone, among others, for an anti-genocide call to action connected to the film which has a strong philanthropic aspect. Survival Pictures’ cut of the box office will go to charities including The Sentry, the non-profit group co-founded by George Clooney and activist and author John Prendergast.

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Special cover cancelled on 25th anniversary of Armenia-China diplomatic ties

A Special cover dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the People's Republic of China was cancelled on April 5.

The Special cover represents a unique philatelic product – a thematic cover, which is cancelled with a Special postmark.

The Special cover has been designed with a print run of 1000 pcs. The author of the Special cover's design is the designer of "HayPost" CJSC Vahagn Mkrtchyan.

The Special cover depicts Etchmiadzin Cathedral and the Temple of Heaven in Beijing designed by the Armenian ornament and Chinese dragon symbolizing Armenia and China respectively. The stamp dedicated to the theme "Armenian national costumes. Yerevan" issued by "HayPost" CJSC in 2014 and the stamp dedicated to ancient towns of China is-



sued by China Post in 2016 are attached on the Special cover.

The participants of the cover signing ceremony were the RA Minister of Transport, Communication and Information technologies Mr. Vahan Martirosyan, the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr.

Edward Nalbandian, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China in Armenia Mr. Tian Erlong, President of the Union of Philatelists of the RA Mr. Hovik Musayelyan, "HayPost" CJSC Trust Manager Mr. Juan Pablo Gechidjian.

Leonardo DiCaprio applauds creators of Armenian Genocide film The Promise

Oscar-winning actor Leonardo DiCaprio has applauded creators of the Armenian Genocide film The Promise.

"Oscar Isaac, Christian Bale and Charlotte Le Bon, under the direction of Terry George, provide extraordinary performances in the upcoming film The Promise," DiCaprio said in a Facebook post.

"I applaud the entire team, together with my good friend the legendary producer Mike Medavoy, whose enduring talent, dedication and commitment brought this important project and subject to life," the actor added.

Set during the last days of the Ottoman Empire, "The Promise" is an epic human drama about a love triangle between Michael Boghosian, a brilliant medical student played by Golden Globe winning actor Oscar Isaac, the beautiful and sophisticated Armenian



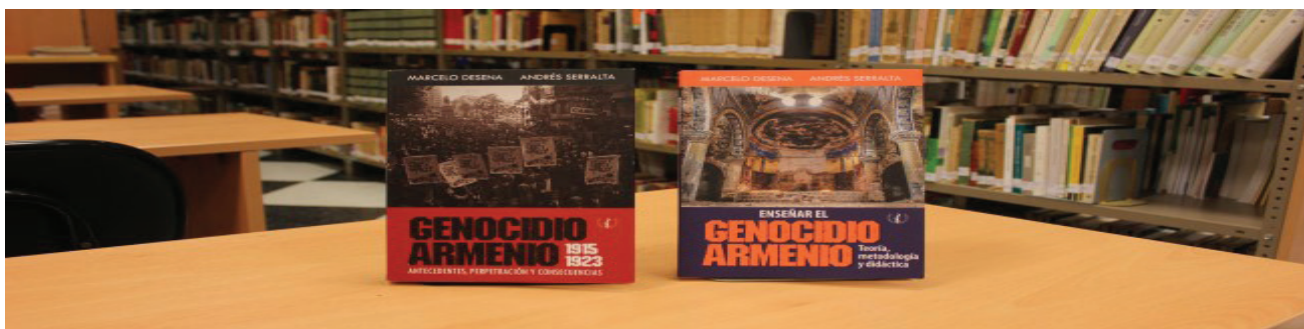
artist Ana played by Charlotte le Bon, and Chris Myers, a renowned American photo-journalist covering the war played by Oscar-winning actor Christian Bale.

The film is also supported by an im-

pressive cast of international actors. Their relationships unfold amidst the start of the Armenian Genocide, causing major upheaval of their lives and a struggle just to survive.

The Promise hits theaters April 21.

Research book on Armenian Genocide published in Uruguay



Professors Andrés Serralta and Marcelo Desena by the Faculty of Humanities and Education of the University of Montevideo, have published their educational research book “Teaching Armenian Genocide. Theory, Methodology and Didactics,” the University’s official website informs.

According to the source, the work was presented by national authorities in the area of education and human rights, before a public

that brought together personalities from national and international human rights organizations as well as social organizations, community entities, educators and national cultural referents.

This work complements a previous work of historical research, “Armenian Genocide 1915 -1923. Antecedents, perpetration and consequences,” which dealt with general aspects of the Armenian Genocide and its international recognition.

Armenian Genocide remembered on Capitol Hill



Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives joined with Armenian American community leaders, genocide-prevention coalition partners, and diplomats representing Armenia and Artsakh in a standing-room-only Capitol Hill remembrance of the Armenian Genocide that featured strong bipartisan calls on the President and Congress to reject the gag-rule that Ankara has long enforced against honest American commemoration of this still-unpunished crime against humanity, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

“We were pleased to join, once again, with our friends in the Armenian Caucus to bring together so many legislators, community leaders, and coalition partners for today’s Capitol Hill remembrance,” said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. “With renewed resolve, we reaffirmed our collective commitment to ending U.S. complicity in Turkey’s denial of the Armenian Genocide, overcoming Turkey’s obstruction of justice for this crime, and paving the way toward a truthful and just international resolution that will contribute to Armenia’s security and, ultimately, serve all the citizens of the region.”

The annual Capitol Hill Armenian Genocide commemoration was sponsored by the Congressional Armenian Caucus, in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia, Office of the Artsakh

Republic, and Armenian American organizations.

Members of the Senate and House participating in the solemn observance included Senator Ed Markey (D-MA), House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA), Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Dave Trott (R-MI) and David Valadao (R-CA), Vice-Chair Adam Schiff (D-CA), and Representatives Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Judy Chu (D-CA), Katherine Clark (D-MA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Brad Schneider (D-IL), Brad Sherman (D-CA), and Tom Suozzi (D-NY).

Capitol Hill veteran Dean Shahinian served as Master of Ceremonies for the evening, inviting clerical leaders Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Vicar General of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church Eastern US and Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Legate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church to offer opening and closing prayers, respectively.

Among those offering keynote remarks were His Excellency Grigor Hovhannissian, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia, the Honorable Robert Avetisyan, Artsakh Representative to the U.S, and Hayk Demoyan, the Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan. Joining in the commemoration were California State University Fresno President Joseph Castro, former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia John Evans and Mrs. Donna Evans, and representatives of In Defense of Christians, Hellenic American Leadership Council, A Demand for Action, and other friends and allies from human rights groups and the Greek, Assyrian and Kurdish communities. ANCA National Board member Greg Bedian, from Chicago, took part in the remembrance.

This year’s Congressional commemoration followed just two weeks after the special Capitol Hill viewing of “The Promise” – the Armenian Genocide-era epic starring Christian Bale, set for nationwide release on April 21st – which drew a capacity crowd of Members of Congress, senior Congressional aides, coalition partners, and a broad cross-section of the Washington, DC foreign policy community.

Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

A plan or agreement to move forward early in the week may be reversed or detoured by the week's end. There is a sense of general chaos among corporate bodies and it appears to include you in a personal way.



Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Please note the lead paragraph. This time Mercury is changing direction in your sign, emphasizing the overall shift in your direction as well. You could be changing your mind this week about speaking up on your own behalf. This is likely not permanent. You may be realizing the timing is just not "right" yet.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

Mercury is your ruling avatar planet. As he slows down to turn retrograde, you may be rethinking a previous plan. There is a shift of your attention to matters of your personal history that may go back quite a long time. You will be looking inside yourself for meditative peace, answers to serious questions, and encouragement from your source.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

You may have a minor struggle with yourself about whether to take care of others or yourself. Helping others may look good, but it isn't what you want to do right now. Because Mercury is turning retrograde this week, you may be splitting your time and attention between both.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

You are in a handicapped spot right now. You may have legal or ethical issues on your plate. The Powers That Be are running the show and almost any move you make outside of the box will be challenged. For the time being you are surrounded. Accept this with grace for the present.



Virgo

(August 22–September 22)

Your ruling planet is changing directions in the territory which deals with education, publishing, travel, public speaking, the law, and philosophy. Therefore any of these activities are subject to shifts, changes, or sudden deceleration due to lack of decision. Maybe the right solution just is not available yet. Have a sense of humor. You know Mercury is retrograding.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Venus retrograde will cause you to focus on your health unless that is normal for you. For those who are routinely conscious of fitness, you may be surprised that you are prone to let good habits slide. Don't beat yourself to pieces. A retrograding planet in this territory asks us to make positive health decisions again and again.



Scorpio

(October 23–November 21)

An agreement is reached between you and another early in the week. Life looks like it will move forward at an agreeable pace. However, something or someone out of your control steps in to throw a wrench in things on or about Mar. 8. A vehicle may not cooperate.



Sagittarius

(November 22–December 20)

This is a time in which your exuberance and enthusiasm may carry you farther than you really intended to go. You will certainly have more energy to do whatever you choose, but take care that you don't promise way more than you can deliver. Your warm and generous heart could get you in trouble.



Capricorn

(December 21–January 19)

A new project or person that began at the first of this year is now up for review. The time has come to grow it or let go. If you wish it to grow, you must put considerably more resources into it. This week your planetary avatar, Saturn, is turning retrograde. You may wish to opt out of this one.



Aquarius

(January 20–February 17)

Necessary expenses (those not of the "fun" type) may develop this week. If not that, you could be just having a little blue mood. It is one of those times when we become aware that our loved ones can never know or understand fully what is inside of us. This is an existential dilemma that everyone encounters now and then. It will pass quickly.



Pisces (February 18–March 19)

Be careful with your spending this week. Over-optimism may drive you to spend too much or blow away a chunk of change on something you don't really need. If a thing looks too good to be true, it probably is. Be aware of vampires. You tend to attract them. Disengage as soon as you recognize it.

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Yerevan Home Care is the first and the only one company launched in 2011 in Yerevan. The company is providing a 24/7 qualified care service to older adults, disabled people, people suffering from chronic diseases or those who need postoperative care, as well as to people with dementia.

Creating the company we concenter to support many families that live abroad and have their elderly family members staying in Armenia. We succeed in supporting these families to have not only a solution of the raised problem but to have a deep feeling of satisfaction that their relatives are in good hands.

The organization's greatest wealth is educated, professional, skilled, experienced staff and people with high values and psychological knowledge.

We treat each patient with a strong sense of responsibility and show an individual approach to the families, at the same time maintaining the accepted norms and using contemporary approaches.

Taking your relative's care on our shoulders, we bring harmony between the different generations.

Apart from the professional knowledge the company pays a great attention to the humanitarian qualities of the serving staff, to their kindness, patience, attention and cour-



teous manner. Home health aides might also provide limited assistance with things such as taking blood pressure or offering medication reminders.

Nursing care is more related for patients after surgery, traumas, different chronic diseases

Rehabilitation service is for people who need professional rehabilitation in their recovery periods after some types of diseases and surgery. Dementia /Alzheimer /special care is for people with dementia in all stages when you worried about their safety or a health problem.

Yerevan Home Care provides all type of medical equipment that will increase the quality of life of your loved ones. (rent of the equipment is acceptable)

Transportation is a key issue for older adults and for people with temporary or permanent disabilities especially in Armenia where the streets and buildings are not adjusted for disabled people. Yerevan Home Care is providing a transportation service for people that are in wheelchairs.

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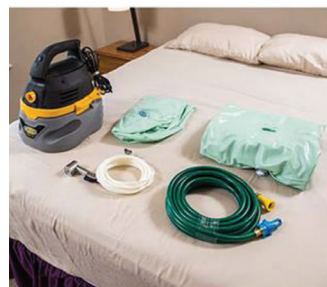
yerevanhomecare.am 010 546 546

teous manner.

We assure that we will be your irreplaceable assistant in helping and surrounding your relative with care and support.

We provide service to all type of patients who needs care assistance.

Personal care is for elderly people who are alone and need support in daily living, such as dressing, bathing, feeding, or meal preparation. This type of care includes personal care aides, home care aides, and



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