

Yerevan Meets New Year and Christmas with Numerous Festivities...



See p. 12

In Paris, Armenian FM discusses preparations for Summit of La Francophonie

p. 2

\$3.6 million raised for villages in Armenia during COAF Gala

p. 7

Chief of Police Vladimir S. Gasparyan Gives Ok to the Police Commandos' Professionalism

p.p. 10-11

Minister Armen Amiryan: "The Coming Cultural Year will be Unprecedented..."

p. 13

Presidents of Armenia, Georgia meet in Tbilisi

The President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili met with the President of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan in Georgia on December 25.

At the meeting held at the Presidential Palace of Georgia, the Presidents of Georgia and Armenia discussed bilateral political cooperation and deepening relations and reiterated the importance of Serzh Sargsyan's visit as a proof of the high level of bilateral political relations.

Giorgi Margvelashvili said Georgia welcomes the Comprehensive Partnership Agreement between Armenia and the EU, which Georgia sees as a significant message from the EU and new opportunities for mutual cooperation.

Giorgi Margvelashvili emphasized that the visit of the President of the Republic of Armenia in 2017 symbolically coincided with the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Georgia and Armenia and noted that in all these years our countries built interstate relations of the new format on the basis of friendship and good neighborhood. Georgia believes that bilateral cooperation in all spheres should be continued and deepened.

Giorgi Margvelashvili spoke about situation in Georgia's occupied territories and illegal actions of Russia. The issue touched upon the important aspects of Georgia's non-recognition policy, as well as the policy of occupation of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region by Russia, which is carried out by the actual integration of the Russian Federation.

The President of Georgia delivered detailed information about Serzh Sargsyan regarding the illegal actions of Russia which he resigned in August 2009 in the Akhalkalaki district of Akhalkalaki district. On



opening the customs post.

Giorgi Margvelashvili noted that the occupied territories of Georgia – Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions are not available for the international community. Human rights are violated in the occupied territories, including the right to education.

The Presidents discussed the existing security environment in the region and noted that the relations between Georgia and Armenia serve as a model for the cooperation of different geopolitical vectors in the country, which can benefit from all the countries that are interested in development in our region and healthy competition.

Armenia's stance on the status of Jerusalem unchanged

"Armenia's stance on the status of Jerusalem remains unchanged," Spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tigran Balayan has said.

"The status of Jerusalem is one of the most important issues on international agenda and can be solved through negotiations within the framework of a settlement that will benefit the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," the Spokesman said.

The comments come after the UN General Assembly decisively backed a resolution effectively calling on the US to withdraw its recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Armenia was one of the 128 countries that voted in favor of the resolution.

"We closely follow all Jerusalem-related developments," Balayan said.

In Paris, Armenian FM discusses preparations for Summit of La Francophonie



On a working visit to Paris, Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian met with Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, Minister of State of the Ministry Foreign Affairs of France.

Minister of State Lemoyne recalled with warmth the meeting with Minister Nalbandian within the framework of the Ministerial Conference of La Francophonie held in Paris on November 26. The interlocutors discussed the preparatory works for the Summit of La

Francophonie to be held in Yerevan in 2018.

The sides discussed a wide range of issues on the agenda of Armenian-French privileged relations. They referred to interparliamentary contacts, decentralized cooperation, expansion of trade and economic ties, and strengthening of scientific-educational collaboration.

The interlocutors also touched upon Armenia-EU relations in light of the signing of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement.

Minister Nalbandian briefed Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne on the joint efforts of Armenia and the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries aimed at the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The interlocutors exchanged views on a number of urgent international and regional issues.

Sargsyan Chides Protesting Students



President Serzh Sargsyan criticized on December 25 youth activists protesting against his government's decision to essentially abolish temporary exemptions from military service that have long been enjoyed by many students of state-run universities.

Speaking at Yerevan State University, he indicated that the government will not scrap a corresponding bill passed by the Armenian parliament last month despite a series of protests staged by several hundred students.

"No matter how much students tell us to publicly ask citizens of the Republic of Armenia to take pity on us and defend the homeland, we will not do such a thing because the homeland is not only ours, the homeland is everyone's," Sargsyan said in a clear reference to the organizers of the protests.

"We have no problem with student activism," he went on. "We have no problem with listening to any proposal. But I believe that now is the time for each of us to perform their duties first and only then teach others how they should perform their duties."

One of the protest leaders, Yuri Avagyan, rejected the criticism. He argued in particular that he and some of the other student leaders have served in the Armenian army. Avagyan also said that the government rejected all major proposals submitted by the protesters during discussions held last month.

Avagyan and another student activist, Davit Petrosyan, went on a short hunger strike last week in a bid to renew their campaign against the bill. Avagyan said on Monday that the campaign will continue. But he could not say what forms it will take.

Draft-age male students having government scholarships have until now been allowed to perform the two-year military service after completing their undergraduate or graduate studies. Under the amended law, draft deferments will be granted only to those students who will agree to undergo parallel military training and serve in the Armenian army as officers for three years after graduation.

Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan, the main author of the controversial bill, said during parliament debates in October that it will close a key loophole for evading military service and reduce "corruption risks" among military and university officials.

The protesting students, backed by the opposition Yelk alliance, say the new rules will prevent many students from becoming scientists or scholars.

EU sees no difficulties with ratification of the new Armenia deal



The European Union does not see any difficulties with ratification of the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Extended Partnership Agreement, says Sajjad Karim, Co-Chair of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee. The national Parliaments of all 28 EU member states have to make a decision, after which the agree-

ment will be forwarded to the European Parliament.

"The agreement includes financial assistance for the implementation of different programs. We have traditionally worked in accordance with the 'more for more principle,' which envisages certain conditions," Sajjad Karim told a press conference following the Committee's 17th sitting in Yerevan.

He added that "Armenia needs to show clear progress in the spheres we have outlined and agreed upon." They reflect Armenia's willingness to develop its own future as a sovereign state. The European Union is ready to provide necessary support to the process," Karim said.

Upon the conclusion of the sitting the Committee adopted a statement, which not only reflects the past and present of EU-Armenia relations, but also outlines the development priorities meeting the interests of the two parties.

They also adopted a document confirming the cooperation between the two Parliaments.

Asked about Azerbaijan's "black lists," Sajjad Karim said "We stand against black lists and will be resisting them. He added that "European parliamentarians are free in their actions, but have to notify in what status they are visiting Nagorno Karabakh." Otherwise, he said "personal statements can be seen as official and create misunderstanding."

UK to provide £4m in the coming years to fund a range of projects in Armenia



The New Year Message of the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Judith Farnworth

As 2017 draws to a close, I think this is a great time to reflect on what's been a very busy and successful year in UK-Armenian relations. From my perspective we've achieved a lot in strengthening and deepening our bilateral cooperation in a range of very important areas.

One of the highlights of the year has been the celebration of the 25th anniversary of UK-Armenian diplomatic relations. The British Embassy team worked closely with a range of our Armenian partners to showcase our cooperation in education, culture and business to mark this really important landmark in our relationship.

There are two really important developments which underlined the

UK's commitment to supporting Armenia in its efforts to consolidate itself as a resilient and prosperous democratic country. In September, Sir Alan Duncan, received a very warm welcome from a range of very high level interlocutors to have important consultation about our bilateral relationship. Sir Alan, our Minister for Europe and the Americas, took the opportunity during his visit to announce that Armenia will be included in Her Majesty's Government's Good Governance Fund from 2018, which will unlock up to £4m a year over the coming years to support a range of projects in Armenia in the fields of governance and economic reform. We intend to use that money to continue our support to government, parliament and civil society in Armenia.

And in September it was announced that Mark Pritchard, the member of the British Parliament, had been appointed by the Prime Minister of the UK as her Trade and Investment Envoy in Armenia. His job is to improve trade and investment relations between the UK and Armenia.

Another highlight for me was the visit in June of the Salamanca Band. They played for our guests at the Queen's Birthday Party and they did a fantastic concert in Freedom Square along with the Armenian Military Band.

All of this alongside our regular work to promote defense engagement, human rights, education and cultural links.

2018 looks set to be even busier so we are delighted to welcome a number of new colleagues to help us with the increased workload. Together, we are looking forward to working closely with our Armenian partners to strengthen and develop our cooperation even further. But before that, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

U.S. Embassy concert showcases 25 years of U.S.-Armenian friendship

A U.S. Embassy-sponsored concert, "Holiday Magic," dazzled the Armenian public with American and Armenian Christmas music performed by talented up-and-coming Armenian bands and musicians. The festive event marked the end of a yearlong celebration of America's 25 years of partnership and friendship with an independent and sovereign Republic of Armenia, using song, verse, dancing, and laughter to send us merrily into the New Year.

"For the past year, the U.S. Embassy has been focused on highlighting the strong partnership between our two countries and the significant accomplishments we've achieved together over the past quarter century," said U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Richard M. Mills, Jr. "From the more than \$1 billion dollars in USAID support, to our strong military cooperation, varied academic and cultural exchanges, English language programs, and growing U.S. trade and investment partnership, the United States has had a noticeable impact on Armenia's development."

The concert featured an impressive lineup of Armenian musical talent, including Sona Rubenyan, Masha Mnjoyan, Narine Dovlatyan, Grigor Kyokchyan, Gor Sujyan, Miqayel Voskanyan, Children's Choir Kamerton and Old Band. Emcees Hayk Petrosyan and Samvel Topalyan kept the mood light and festive, using comedic sketches to highlight cultural



differences as well as the strong camaraderie that exists between our two countries. Their witty commentary also showcased significant U.S.-Armenia accomplishments over the past 25 years.

The United States was one of the first countries to formally recognize the Republic of Armenia, on December 25, 1991, three months after Armenia declared independence, and one of the first to open an Embassy in Yerevan.

continued on page 7

Armenia steadily developing peacekeeping capacities – Amb. Mnatsakanyan



On 20 December Armenia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Zohrab Mnatsakanyan participated at the United Nations Security Council open debate on "Complex contemporary challenges to international peace and security". At the opening of the debate the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres underlined the importance of countering terrorism, promoting the development agenda, protecting human rights, and the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution.

In his statement Ambassador Mnatsakanyan underlined the importance of early prevention of conflicts and countering hatred, intolerance and discrimination. He stressed that: "The irresponsibility of flaring hate speech, intolerance, xenophobia, racial and ethnic profiling, and glorification of hate crimes, especially led and encouraged by

political leaders within a state should be a concern to the entire international community and serve a clear early warning sign of potential conflict and atrocity crimes."

Referring to the role of regional organizations in conflict resolution, Ambassador Mnatsakanyan noted Armenia's appreciation of the support of the international community, of the United Nations and of the Secretary General rendered to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairmanship in the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Recalling the high level meetings of 16 October and 6 December at the level of Presidents and Foreign Ministers and the respective statements in this regard, he reaffirmed Armenia's commitment to negotiations for the exclusively peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict within the internationally agreed format of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship and based on the agreed basic principles and main elements presented as an integrated whole.

In his comments on the threat of terrorism, Armenia's Permanent Representative recalled the atrocities, perpetrated by the Islamic State, Al Qaeda and associated groups against Yazidis, Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities and groups, including the indiscriminate attacks and forced displacement of the ethnic Armenian populations of the Syrian cities of Kessab and Deir-ez-Zor.

He also noted that Armenia had been continually providing humanitarian aid to the Syrian population to alleviate their suffering and hardships and had sheltered around 22,000 refugees from Syria.

Ambassador Mnatsakanyan recalled the participation of Armenian peacekeepers in UN peace operations in Lebanon and Mali. He also noted that Armenia steadily develops its peacekeeping capabilities in accordance with its pledge made by President Serzh Sargsyan at the 2015 World Leaders' Summit on UN Peacekeeping.

Toxic Leak from Armenian Mine "Investigated"

A government agency is investigating a toxic waste spill from a copper mine in northern Armenia that reached a nearby community earlier this month, Environment Protection Minister Artsvik Minasyan said on December 25.

The leak occurred at a tailings dump of a privately owned company operating the old mine. It sent a stream of industrial waste flowing to some parts of the nearby small town of Akhtala, including the courtyard of a local school and an adjacent park. They were not cleaned up for at least ten days.

Local residents said last week they fear that the foul-smelling substance is rich in hazard-

ous heavy metals and therefore poses serious risks to their health.

"It is abnormal when the first reaction to such situations is not very rapid," Minasyan told a news conference, criticizing the company. "That is why we are now carrying out systemic changes [in environment protection.]"

Minasyan said a new environmental inspectorate set up by the government is now "meticulously examining" the causes of the Akhtala accident. He urged the media not to blame anyone before the end of the inquiry.

Speaking to RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am) on December 21, a representative of the Akhtala mining firm blamed the spill on a leaky pipe. He also denied that the waste contains heavy metals. A local environmental activist claimed the opposite, however.

Minasyan said that the government is planning to enact new legislation that will set tougher environmental requirements for mining companies. In particular, he said, they will have to come up with more detailed plans for ensuring the safety of their tailings dumps that have long been a key source of mining-related concerns voiced by Armenian ecologists.

On 27 December **Davit E. Tonoyan**, Minister of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Armenia, a prominent military, diplomat and statesman marks his FIRST semi-centennial jubilee. The Highlights has been widely covering Mr Tonoyan's activities, - be it within his posting as Armenian Armed Forces rep to the NATO, or the First Deputy Defence Minister, and, finally, as the Minister of the Emergency Situations.



For people like Davit Tonoyan people say that fifty years is a brilliant age when a man is experienced enough but, still, is full of energy to work actively and successfully.

We cordially congratulate Mr Minister on this nice jubilee and wish him the strongest health, family happiness and his traditional fruitful work - **IN THE NAME OF THE MOTHERLAND ARMENIA!**



Government discusses implementation of new Armenia-EU deal



Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan chaired a working consultation to discuss the main directions of EU-Armenia cooperation. In particular, the meeting focused on a number

of issues related to the implementation of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the European Union.

"An inter-agency commission is being set up, headed by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of International Economic Integration and Reforms Vache Gabrielyan. We have to make a specific decision as to how we will move forward and, in this regard, we need to clearly identify the task of each of us," Prime Minister Karapetyan said.

Deputy Prime Minister Vache Gabrielyan presented an overview of planned per-sector activities. Deputy Foreign Minister Karen Nazaryan reported on the upcoming work and those programs to be implemented as part of the EU-Armenia cooperation agenda, which stem from the logic of a number of fundamental documents concerning bilateral partnership.

The Premier instructed the heads of the agencies concerned to analyze the activities envisaged by the Agreement falling under their jurisdiction in order to develop an action plan and a roadmap for their implementation.

Armenia placed 88th in Forbes List of Best Countries for Business

Armenia is ranked 88th in the Forbes List of Best Countries for Business. United Kingdom tops the list followed by New Zealand and the Netherlands.

"Under the old Soviet central planning system, Armenia developed a modern industrial sector, supplying machine tools, textiles, and other manufactured goods to sister republics, in exchange for raw materials and energy. Armenia has since switched to small-scale agriculture and away from the large agro industrial complexes of the Soviet era," Forbes writes.

The publication reminds that Armenia has only two open trade borders – Iran and Georgia – because its borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey have been closed since 1991 and 1993, respectively, as a result of the ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.

According to Forbes, "The government has made some improvements in tax and customs administration in recent years, but anti-corruption measures have been largely ineffective. Armenia will need to pursue additional economic reforms and strengthen the rule of law in order to raise its economic growth and improve economic competitiveness and employment oppor-



tunities, especially given its economic isolation from Turkey and Azerbaijan."

"Armenia's geographic isolation, a narrow export base, and pervasive monopolies in important business sectors have made it particularly vulnerable to deteriorations in the global commodity markets and the economic challenges in Russia. Armenia is particularly dependent on Russian commercial and governmental support, as most key Armenian infrastructure is Rus-

sian-owned and/or managed, especially in the energy sector. Remittances from expatriates working in Russia are equivalent to about 7-8% of GDP," according to Forbes.

Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Union in January 2015, but has expressed interest in expanding its economic ties with the European Union as well, and in March 2017 an EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement was initiated.

\$3.6 million raised for villages in Armenia during COAF Gala



Asbarez – The 14th annual Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) Holiday Gala held on December 16 at New York City's renowned Cipriani 42nd Street, raised an impressive \$3.6 million in support of children in Armenian villages. Among the special guests were art-world legend Tony Shafrazi, Emmy & Tony Award-winning actress Andrea Martin, designer Michael Aram, Chef Geoffrey Zakarian, and actress, singer, and performer Vanessa Williams.

COAF's Humanitarian Award was presented to Emmy Award-winning costume designer and fashion icon Patricia Field (*Sex and the City*, *The Devil Wears Prada*). Field, who is of Armenian and Greek heritage, has been a longtime supporter of COAF, sharing its vision of empowering people to realize their full potential, embrace originality, and achieve their individual greatness.

Vanessa Williams delivered a special performance of her Golden Globe and Academy Award-winning song "Colors of the Wind" and paid tribute to Patricia Field, with whom she worked with on the set of the TV series *Ugly Betty*.

The evening also featured performances from two of Armenia's finest young musicians, 14-year-old saxophonist Aleksandr Avetisyan and 9-year-old vocalist Ani Margaryan, who traveled from Armenia for this special event. Gala attendees also heard an inspiring speech from 16-year-old Nareh Galstyan, from the village of Lernagor, who spoke eloquently about how COAF has transformed her life and provided opportunities that would not have existed otherwise.

World-renowned auctioneer and collector Simon de Pury conducted a live auction of uniquely curated art to support COAF's mission. The auction included works donated by such notable artists as Ed Ruscha, Jeff Koons, Richard Prince, Kenny Scharf, and Patrick Demarchelier—as well as a rare piece by renowned Armenian-American author and playwright William Saroyan.

One hundred percent of the \$3.6 million raised at the Gala will go directly toward COAF's education, health, and socio-economic programs in the villages of Armenia, with a focus on its novel SMART initiative. SMART is a unique initiative designed to bring digital technology education, programs in music and art, sustainable agriculture training and more to rural Armenian villages. The construction of COAF's first SMART Center in the Lori region of Armenia has been completed and will be operational in January 2018. Close to 150,000 individuals from the city of Vanadzor and 48 surrounding rural communities will benefit from the establishment of the SMART Center.

U.S. Embassy concert showcases 25 years of U.S.-Armenian friendship

from page 4

See attachment for a few milestones in the bilateral relationship.

USAID has provided over \$1.1 billion to improve the lives of the Armenian people, supporting their efforts to strengthen democratic, economic, and social governance.

USAID helped extend free primary health care to Armenian citizens and contributed to establishing a competitive private sector, reforming the energy sector, transforming the tax code, strengthening rural economies across Armenia, and fostering civil society, independent media, and civic engagement.

USAID helped to launch the American University of Armenia and support its growth, and has modernized the Armenian American Wellness Center to become a state-of-the-art diagnostic facility.

The U.S. Embassy has helped secure U.S. investment in Armenia – more than

\$600 million dollars in just the past two years. This creates jobs for Armenians around the country and improves livelihoods.

Through the U.S. Embassy's academic and professional exchange programs, more than 4,000 Armenians have visited the United States, and hundreds of American students, scholars, artists, and performers have shared American culture with the Armenian people.

The U.S. Embassy's military cooperation with Armenia is based on a shared vision of a peaceful, sovereign, and prosperous Armenia. The United States has helped the Armenian military improve its readiness for peacekeeping operations around the world, and trained hundreds of soldiers through educational exchange programs.

The Embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation has completed 22 humanitarian projects, at a value of over \$5 million, including renovating hospitals, schools, orphanages, and fire stations.

The United States has provided nearly \$40 million in training and equipment to help Armenia strengthen rule-of-law and secure its borders.

More than 1,000 Peace Corps volunteers have lived and worked in towns and villages across Armenia, improving education, enhancing youth and community development, protecting Armenia's environment, and promoting health care.

The United States signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Armenia in 2015, and under our joint economic task force we have realized, among other achievements, the liberalization of the civil aviation sector and Armenia's admission as an Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) country.

The United States has implemented 10-year visa validity for Armenians traveling to America, and over the past 25 years, the U.S. Embassy has helped thousands of Armenian tourists and students travel to the United States.



*Հնորհավոր
Ամանոր և
Սուրբ ծնունդ*



ZVARTNOTS

"Armenia" International Airports C.J.S.C.

*Merry Christmas
& Happy
New Year*

Garro Paylan says some people seeking to carry out another coup in Turkey



Garro Paylan, a member of the Turkish Parliament of Armenian descent, revealed in a press conference on Dec. 20 that he shared intelligence with the Turkish government about potential assassination attempts targeting certain Turkish citizens living in Europe.

Garro Paylan, the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) deputy for Istanbul, said he had confirmed intelligence about a Turkey-based structure planning to carry out assassinations against Turkish nationals living in Europe, especially in Germany, who are known as opponents of the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) government in Turkey.

"Thousands of academics, journalists and politicians have been forced to live in Europe because of the political atmosphere in Turkey," Paylan said, referring to the arrests, court cases and job dismissals that took place with state of emergency decrees imposed in the wake of the July 15, 2016, military coup attempt in Turkey. He also claimed that three assassins were assigned by a "secret structure,"

similar to Ogün Samast, who killed journalist Hrant Dink on Jan. 19, 2007 in broad daylight in Istanbul.

Paylan said a hate campaign smearing Dink of "being a traitor" had been launched to psychologically prepare the public for his murder.

In an interview with the Hurriyet Daily News Paylan said he thought such a structure could be made up of "those who assumed personal missions encouraged by the current political atmosphere in Turkey, or something even more serious than that."

He said it could also consist of people who were seeking an opportunity to carry out another coup attempt or wanted to further distance Turkey from the EU and the West.

Paylan recalled that Turkey in its past has seen similar structures attempt to destroy dialogue between the AK Parti government and outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan between 2012 and 2015, which was done through MİT and the HDP.

Police officers on duty at the time of Dink's murder have recently been arrested; they have alleged links to the illegal network of Fethullah Gülen, the U.S.-based Islamic preacher accused of masterminding the July 15 coup attempt.

When asked whether he was suspicious of the Gülen network of being behind the assassination, Paylan said he did not have adequate information to confirm that, but regarding the Dink murder he said, "Those who made the decision to kill him were part of a secret structure in security institutions and there were Gülenists within it who were aware that Dink would be killed but did nothing to stop it, in order to create more hostility in the political atmosphere."

Paylan urges President Tayyip Erdoğan, political figures and journalists to stop using the language currently used against dissidents and halt targeting them in order not to let the political antagonism to escalate, which could lead to similar consequences, "God forbid."

Turkish state played a role in Hrant Dink Murder, German lawmaker says

Intellectuals who have fled Turkey to Germany are said to be under threat. Cem Özdemir, co-leader of the Green Party, thinks security could be improved and finds it unacceptable that parallel societies exist in Germany.

The comments come after Garro Paylan, a lawmaker of Armenian descent in Turkey's parliament and a member of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), revealed that Turkish academics, journalists and literary figures who have fled the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are in grave danger, particularly those who have come to Germany. Paylan says they could fall victim to attacks plotted out of Turkey.

Cem Özdemir said he had no information about the matter, but added that he wouldn't be surprised "given that Hrant Dink, a Turkish-Armenian journalist and a good friend of mine, was killed by a 16-year-old in Istanbul — and it's known that the Turkish state played a role in this murder."

"Then you also see how Turkish dissidents are not only jailed, silenced or expelled but also intimidated and subjected to physical violence. Germany should be aware of this and above all else prevent the growth of separate societal structures," the lawmaker said.



"I recently attended an event by Turkish-Armenian journalist and blogger Hayko Bagdat, who has become a well-known figure in Berlin. He wore a bullet-proof vest because he'd received credible death threats a day earlier. I think we must make it clear that Germany will not tolerate such a climate of fear. It's bad enough that such fear already pervades Turkish society," Cem Özdemir stated.

Chief of Police Vladimir S. Gasparyan Gives Ok to the Police Commandos' Professionalism

On 22 December Armenian Police Chief, Colonel General of Police **Vladimir Sergeyevich Gasparyan** was on a working visit to the Special Unit of the Police Troops where he attended the next operation of the drills.

According to the drills scenario, a special target group blocked when performing the task. The aid group uses armored vehicles and snipers and are deblocking the building and so taking out the military.

After the demo operation, Vladimir Gasparyan discussed with the commanders of the Unit and special groups the actions carried out under complicated weather conditions, made concrete remarks and gave relevant

instructions.

Guided by the Chief of Police, high-ranking officers laid flowers at the Memorial to the Special Unit members who fell during the Country's defense and professional activities.

At the end of the visit, Vladimir Gasparyan presented his observations on the activities of the Special Unit troops and positively assessed the results of the exercise.

Below The Highlights readers can see detailed and picturesque photo report on the breathtaking numbers of the Armenian Police Commandos.

Source: police.am





Yerevan Mayor Taron A. Margaryan Turned on the Festive Lights of the Capital

On 19 December evening the lights of the main New Year Tree of Armenia were turned, by this giving the start to the festive events. The ceremony was conducted by Yerevan Mayor **Taron A. Margaryan** and the students of municipal music and art schools, schoolchildren who won in various international Olympiads and young sportsmen – winners of various competitions and championships.

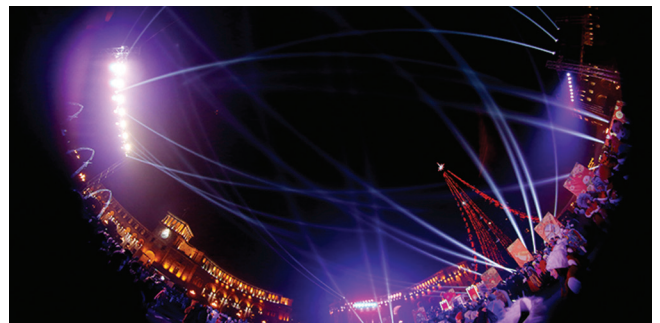
thing will be done to make the Christmas holidays **unforgettable** for residents and guests of the Capital”.

Some 30 events to be held at the Republic Square and in all the administrative districts have been provided for.

“Taking into account the fact that the number of tourists visiting Yerevan is increasing, this year we made an arrangement with entertainment centers and food objects so that they start working

between the Municipality and the private sector.

“I want to point out with delights that from year to year the private sector is joining festive events with increasing readiness and it certainly benefits the festive atmosphere in the capital. I believe that this year they joined the events with more enthusiasm as the coming year is the jubilee of our city. Each of them approached this issue with great



In parallel with the lights of the New Year Tree decorated with 3000 LED lamps and 400 toys, the lights of the New Year Trees in Yerevan administrative districts were turned on, the festive illumination of the main and secondary streets was tuned on as well.

The ceremony was accompanied by the concert and finished with a firework.

At the end of the festive program, answering the numerous journalists' questions, Mayor Taron Margaryan said that “like in previous years this year every-

on January 1 and the tourists can enjoy their holidays. I'd also like to outline that from January 2 municipal museums will be working too. From January 3 the rest of the museums of the Capital will be open as well. I assure you that I will do my **best** to make our City interesting on holidays”, said Mr Mayor

Concerning the festive decoration of the Capital, the Mayor Taron Margaryan particularly outlined the active participation of the private sector which became one of the best examples of cooperation

responsibility so that to present our city properly. I am sure that both our residents and guests of the capital will enjoy their New Year holidays in the capital. Taking the opportunity I want to congratulate all of us on the coming holidays and wish the New Year to be the year of peace, success and happiness”, stressed Taron Margaryan.

Yerevan Mayor visited the Christmas fair at the Northern avenue. In Azatutyan Square (Freedom Square) the Mayor was shown the “Ice City”.

Minister Armen Amiryan: "The Coming Cultural Year will be Unprecedented..."

It seems Yerevan has a good chance to turn to a world cultural capital, really...



By
**Gourgen
Khazhakian**

**Chief
Correspondent**

Starting with a four minute long video clip as well as answering journalists' questions, Minister of Culture of Armenia **Armen Amiryan** summed up the cultural year at a news conference held in one of the most favorite cultural places, - at Aram Khachaturian House-Museum on 22 December.

Unprecedented private investment - about \$ 1 million has been done in culture. Many projects have been implemented due to collaboration of the state and private companies, and this list will be enlarged with the the Ara Guler Museum of Photography, Museums of Armenian Carpet, Sayat-Nova, and many more.

Notably, the number of visitors in cultural centers have been doubled and multiplied.

"The State Dramatic Theater after Vardan



Ajemyan in Gyumri has had 11 thousand spectators in 2016, and the same indicator was 23 thousand in the first six months of this year only. In the Opera Theater this number exceeded 45 percent. Over the past few months, more than 30% growth has been recorded in the financial indicators of the Gabriel Sundukyan National Academic Theater. The Armenian Youth and Philharmonic Orchestras also completes the current year with the high marks.

We have high indicators in all the areas where the management is guided by predetermined the path we've advised", Armen Amiryan said.

According to him, one of the most important issues in the sphere is the right management.

"The format we imagine is capitalization of the culture, culture appreciation that many confuse with commercialization. Whereas, they are different things. Capitalization of culture means appreciation of culture, so that it becomes recognizable, beloved and appreciable on the world stage. Appreciate, the culture to create more added value and

re-invest that value into culture. That is our idea," Minister Amiryan said, pointing to the unprecedented success of the exhibition dedicated to the 200th anniversary of (the great Russian mariner of the armenian origin) **Hovhannes Aivazovsky (Aivazyan)** opened at the National Art Gallery of Armenia.

"Within mere a month, this Exhibition had about 15,000 visitors. Within a month, the National Gallery earned as much money as it had earned over the entire previous year; accepting as many visitors as it had been in the whole year. This is our understanding of the culture capitalization."

Armen Amiryan attached importance to the fact that in 2017 the bulk of culture from the "overcrowded" capital Yerevan was "sent" to the provinces: 426 concerts and performances were staged, and 200 film demonstrations were organized within the framework of the "Cultural Stop" program.

"When we started the "Cultural Stop" program, the some tried to convince me that the classical music was not interesting in remote villages. Meanwhile, the videos record

visible in the spheres of monuments preservation and book publishing.

Upon the request from the Minister, web cameras will be installed at all the monumental construction sites to make the process more transparent and effective.

Speaking on the programs of 2018, Armen Amiryan singled out three key jubilees: Sardarapat Battle 100, the First Republic (of Armenia) 100, Yerevan 2800 and the events within their scope. Importantly, on the occasion of the First Republic jubilee, a unique exhibition will be opened at the History Museum.

Tigran Chukhajyan's "Karineh" opera will be staged in French in the framework of the Francophonie Summit to be held next year in Armenia. In 2018, the Armenian City of Goris will appear in the cultural "epicenter", - as a cultural capital of the CIS.

One of the cultural achievements of the year 2017 was the Pan-Armenian Orchestra's exclusive concert on April 24.

The Minister's great desire is to organize a united choir concert on April 24, 2018 in Yerevan.



the opposite: people, with the great pleasure, enjoyed, for instance, the Komitas Quartet's concert. The idea of "Cultural Stop" gave birth to the "ArAr", the best program for creating cultural units in the provinces that already has 350 beneficiaries and will later become one of the most powerful "weapons" of our cultural life," Armen Amiryan said.

One of the priorities of 2018 is creation of new types of bookstores. The Minister promises that we will see a new and up-to-date bookstore that is being built at the front of Stanislavsky Theater.

Opening of new cinemas is another priority for 2018. The first one was the Gyumri "October" Cinema, - thanks to the investment of \$ 100,000 from the "Paradise" company.

"Cinema can not develop if there is no profit and that's why it should increase the consumption network," Minister Amiryan stressed.

Not only expansion of the consumption network, but also regulation of the legislation field and a number of reforms promise new prospects for the development of Armenian cinema. In 2018, new approaches will also be

revan.

Minister Armen Amiryan finalized the year-end press conference with congratulations on the New Year, warm greetings and wished all the present a year full of culture and many surprises.

When this issue of our Weekly was in the printing house, Minister Amiryan, together with the Art Director and Director of the Al. Spendiaryan Natl Academic Opera and Ballet Theater **Constantine Orbelian, Jr.** participated in a year-end news conference held on 25 December at the Theater.

Minister Armen Amiryan heaped praise to Maestro Orbelian for "unbelievable success" within mere several months. **(And it is very difficult to find somebody who will be able not to agree with such a statement, no doubt!)**

The mammoth-size booklet presents only small part of what will be staged in the coming year.

Details will be presented in The Highlights next issue.

Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

This looks like a week in which uncomfortable circumstances develop that bear a strong kinship to your past. It could go back far enough to trigger family of origin material.

You could be overreacting to a situation in the “now” as though you were a child with no personal resources. Make an effort to stay in the moment.



Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

You are particularly invested in resolving shared financial issues at this time. This focus includes partner's income, debts you may have accumulated, concerns regarding income tax, social security, estate planning, and finances you may share with

others in the stock or bond market. You have a desire to tighten up details concerning these matters.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

You may have been waiting for your partner(s) to make a decision in the last 3-4 weeks. Now that Mercury is turning direct in the house of partner, that which has been on hold will begin to become untangled.

Life will become smoother again.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

This holiday season may not be the best for you. It is possible you don't feel well or you are taking care of someone who needs your attention. Perhaps you are feeling cautious about expenditures and would rather

forego the gift exchanges. The time will move on quickly and the blues will lift soon.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

You are in a somber frame of mind this week. Decisions in front of you have long term consequences, so you do not want to make mistakes. Use whatever helps your imagination and take each option out as far as it can go in your mind. Then return to the present and decide if that is the best route to follow.

turn to the present and decide if that is the best route to follow.



Virgo (August 22–September 22)

During recent weeks your plans for the holidays may have been unsure or perhaps unstable. But now that Mercury is turning direct in your fourth house of home and family, new decisions may evolve, just in

time for Christmas/New Year's. You can set the table with ease now.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Venus is your ruling planet and “she” represents your cooperative and affable personality, along with your attraction to beauty in all its forms. On Dec. 25, 2017, she moves into the sector which is related to home, property and family matters. You likely will enjoy family during the holidays. You will be concentrating upon making your life more secure.



Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

An abandonment issue from the past may be re-enacted in the present, only in different clothing. The symbolism points toward early issues with siblings or elementary education peers. If you have an overdone sense of rage this week, it is most probably caused by the older issues.



Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)

The planet Mercury has been traversing your sign since Nov. 5, 2017. This week the planet turns direct after a three week stint of retrogradation. Details and circumstances that have been held back by indecision or waiting for a “go” signal, will begin to fall into place now. You may be changing your mind on one or more things this week.



Capricorn (December 21–January 19)

There seems to be an unusual emphasis on your responsibility requirements this season. If not that, you may not feel quite up to par on the physical level. A female brightens your outlook and attitude over the holiday weekend.



Aquarius (January 20–February 17)

It is time to take some R&R from the world. Perhaps circumstances have worked that out for you. If this is merely a fantasy, then take some

time off so you can refresh your spirit. When we insist on maintaining forward motion, sometimes the body will take the hit and find a way to make you rest.



Pisces (February 18–March 19)

In the big picture you are on the verge of major change. The need became apparent last winter and it looked easier then. Now you are hesitating. It is wisest to make conservative decisions for the next

several months. Look at how you can make this change in small increments. Take baby steps if possible.

ARMENIA

Yezeguelian Hotel & Residence



In the Green Park
Near Congress Hotel
24 Studios and Apartments
€250 Per Week
(Payment Upon Arrival)

**In the Center
of Yerevan**



Warm Welcome
24/7 Security
Free Cafe & Bar

All Conveniences
Air Conditioned
Apartments



Kitchen, Refrigerator
Safe, TV, Internet



Modern
Rest Rooms

RESERVATIONS:

011 374 91 57 01 70
011 374 91 73 91 91

Yezeguelian@aol.com

Paris Office: 34 Avenue des Champs Elysees
Phone: 011 33 1 43 59 66 72
Yerevan Address: 8, Khorenatsi St.

Nadezhda Benklyan – the only female pilot in Georgia

Georgian Armenian Nadezhda Benklyan, the only female pilot in Georgia, has been flying for six months now and has spent 600 hours in the air.

At 14, Benklyan decided to become a pilot after her father, and airman, allowed her to follow a flight from the cabin.

Before the plane will take off, Nadya checks the Embraer jet, which she has been piloting for six months. She takes to the cabin the thick atlases every pilot needs to make an emergency landing at a different airport.

"I turn on the operating system and the flight route. The boarding starts in 40 minutes, and passengers are allowed into the plane. We get permission from the flight operations officer to take off, which marks the start of the life in the air," Nadya tells Public Radio of Armenia.

Piloting a plane has not been her childhood dream. Like many other girls, Nadya dreamed of being a singer or actress.

The first flight in the pilot's cabin with her father – one of the best pilots in the history of independent Georgia – at the age of 14 encouraged her to make the decision. She started reading books about planes and pilots and watching videos.

"My mother was crying. She would say 'I'm tired of looking into the air every day and waiting for your father'," Nadya recalls.



After soft landings passengers express the wish to meet the pilot and admire seeing a girl, small and delicate.

For Nadya, landing is the most important part of the flight. "At such moments my passengers encourage me to further develop my capacities, to move forward and become the best."

After the Embraer Benklyan plans to pilot a Boeing, other large planes, become a pilot-in-command.

"It's my most cherished aspiration today, and I'm decisively moving towards my goal. I know the day is not far away," Nadya says.

The only female pilot in Georgia was born in the city of Borzhomi and went to a Russian school, but her grandparents speak Armenian at home so that she can practice the language.

Moments before the plane will take off, Nadya says in Armenian. "Happy New Year and safe flights."

AZAD

AZAD Pharma AG AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Switzerland

AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Durachweg 15
CH-8200 Schaffhausen
Phone No: +41 52 632 09 10
Fax: +41 52 632 09 11

AZAD Pharma AG

Bahnhofstrasse 9
CH-3125 Toffen
Phone No: +41 31 810 40 10
Fax: +41 31 810 40 11

Canada

AZAD Fine Chemicals Ltd.

1895 - 55th Avenue
Dorval, Qc H9P 1G9
Phone No: +1 514 636 19 99
Fax: +1 514 636 75 55

Atlit Inc.

16 Westminster Ave.,
Suite 306A
Montreal, Qc H4X 1Z1
Phone No: +1 514 369 25 91
Fax: +1 514 369 81 67

China

Hangzhou Representative Office of AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Room 801-087, Lixin Plaza,
#102 Moganshan Road
310051 -Hangzhou China

Phone +86-571-8761 5336
Mobile +86-153-5505-0903
Fax: +86-571- 8895 8963

Germany

AZAD Pharma GmbH

Fritz-Reichle-Ring 6a
DE-78315 Radolfzell
Phone No: +49 7732 939101510
Fax: +49 7732 9391016

Armenia

AZAD Pharmaceuticals LLC

Vanahovit 8, Proshian
Ashtarak Ave., Kotayk Marz
Phone No: +374 93 40 40 62
Fax: +374 93 40 34 40

The Noyan Tapan
HIGHLIGHTS

The publisher: NT Holding LTD
Circulation: 1500 print copies and
15.600 copies by e-mail list in PDF format
Տպվալը՝ 2.25 մամուլ, տպաքանակը՝ 1500
Լրատվական գործունեություն իրականացնող՝
ՆՏ Խողիմզ ՍՊԸ
Գրանցման վկայականի համարը՝
03Ա898368, տրված 11.01.2013 թ.

President of the NT Media Holding:
Tigran Harutyunyan
Editor-in-Chief of the Media Holding:
Gayaneh Arakelyan
Director of the Weekly:
Marina Harutyunyan
Chief Correspondent: **Gourgen Khazhakian**
Proofreader: **Susanna Mkrtchian**
Layout: **Diana Grigoryan**
Համարի թող. պատ.՝ Մ. Հարությունյան
Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993.
ISSN 1829-0604
Registration certificate and the date:
273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

E-mail: contact@nt.am
URL: www.nt.am

Address in Armenia: 28 Isahakian Str., Yerevan, 0009, RA.
Tel.: (+374 60) 35-11-23
(+374 60) 35-11-22

Address in France: Masion De L' Armenie, Paris 17e - 95
Bld. Gouvion, France.
Tel.: (+33) 01 43 59 66 72

Address in USA: 1146 E. Lexington Dr., #112, Glendale,
CA, USA, 91206.
Tel.: (+1 818) 646 10 72

Հասցի՝ Բաժնեական 28, Երևան, ՀՀ, 0009