

Iran, Armenia kick off economic talks

The 12th Iran-Armenia joint economic cooperation commission starts in Tehran December 15 and will continue for two days, Mehr News agency reports.

The bilateral commission meeting will be attended by 8 cabinet ministers of Armenia including ministers of Energy and Natural Resources, Finance, Communications, Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, City Planning, Health, and Culture who are in Tehran to extend bilateral economic and industrial ties with Iran.

Hamid Chitchian, Iran's minister of energy and Yervand Zakharyan, Armenian minister of energy and natural resources will chair the meetings.

The 2-day meetings will focus on joint economic and industrial ventures, technical and engineering services exchange, energy especially



natural gas and electricity bartering as important subjects of interest.

Iran and Armenia had already hammered out an initial agreement on constructing of a joint hydroelectric power plant on River Araxes, natural gas and electricity barter, and construction of a electricity transfer line, where both sides

discussed transfer of Iran's electricity through Armenia, Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Russia. Hamid Chitchian and his counterpart had told recently that they agreed on construction of two power plants on River Araxes, with banking and financing arrangements being solved to launch the project as soon as possible.

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Armenian FM meets Vice-President of Uruguay

On December 8 Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Nalbandian met Vice President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, the President of the Chamber of Senators of General Assembly of Uruguay Danilo Astori.

Welcoming the guest, Minister Nalbandian mentioned that Armenia highly appreciates friendly relations with Uruguay, and despite the thousands of kilometers' distance between Armenia and Uruguay, both states are close to one another, and are united by strong friendship and commitment to the universal values.

The Vice President of Uruguay expressed gratitude for the warm reception and highlighted that Uruguay greatly commends and attaches significance to the friendship with Armenia and the Armenian people. He noted that both friendly states share historic and cultural commonalities. Danilo Astori placed highlighted the presence of large Armenian community in Uruguay and its activity to deepen cooperation with Armenia.

The sides underscored that arrangements reached and documents signed during the state visit of the President of the Republic of Armenia to Uruguay this year gave a new impetus to the bilateral cooperation.

Edward Nalbandian mentioned that being the first to recognize the Armenian Genocide back in 1965, Uruguay launched the process of its international recognition and condemnation. The



Minister expressed gratitude for the decision to establish the Armenian Genocide Museum in Montevideo.

The sides exchanged thoughts over the steps towards the development of bilateral cooperation.

Minister Nalbandian briefed about regional issues and the approaches of Armenia towards the resolution of those issues. In this regard Danilo Astori highlighted that Uruguay will continue extending support towards the efforts exerted by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs towards the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

Will Uruguay become the first to recognize the NKR?

Will Uruguay become the first state to recognize the Nagorno Karabakh Republic just like it became the pioneer in recognizing the Armenian Genocide?

"My country is working in that direction," Vice-President of Uruguay Danilo Astori said at a joint press conference with the Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Galust Sahakyan.

Mr. Astori added, however, that his government is aspiring to maintain good relations with all countries, including those involved in conflict.

As for the relations between Armenia and Uruguay, the Vice-President said there are no discrepancies between the

two countries and this is reflected in the voting within the framework of international organizations, particularly the UN.

Uruguay's Vice-President refrained from responding to a question about the probability of recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Israel before the 100th anniversary. "I'm sorry I can't speak for others," he said.

Speaking about the issue, Armenian Parliament Speaker Galust Sahakyan said "there have been serious discussions in Israel on the Armenian Genocide recognition over the past years." He informed that an Armenian parliamentary delegation will visit Israel in January 2015.



As for the process of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, in general, Danilo Astori said "the world has already recognized it, but does not confess it, taking into consideration the economic and other realities."

Azerbaijan does not understand the language the international community speaks: Armenian FM

Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics has arrived in Armenia for a working visit at the invitation of his Armenian counterpart Edward Nalbandian. The Foreign Ministers of the two countries discussed the further cooperation within the framework of the EU Eastern Partnership Programme. Latvia will assume EU presidency from January 2015 and will host the Eastern Partnership Summit in May.

Ministers Nalbandian and Rinkevics discussed a number of bilateral, regional and international issues. The Armenian Foreign Minister briefed his Latvian counterpart on the efforts of Armenia and the Minsk Group co-chairing countries towards the peaceful settlement of the Karabakh issue.

"The ongoing belligerent statements by the Azerbaijani authorities after the meeting of the OSCE Foreign Ministers in

Basel come to prove that Azerbaijan continues to ignore the statements of the Co-Chairs and does not understand the language the international community is speaking. Azerbaijan does not understand the declarative language; therefore, the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs should make corresponding conclusions," Minister Nalbandian told reporters after the meeting.

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Georgian, Armenian PMs meet in Tbilisi



Armenia's decision to join Russia-led Eurasian Union will not affect bilateral relations between Tbilisi and Yerevan, Georgian PM Irakli Garibashvili said after meeting with his Armenian counterpart, Hovik Abrahamyan, in Tbilisi on December 11, Civil.ge reports.

"Although Armenia will become a member of the Eurasian Union from January, and we signed the Association Agreement with the EU, it will not affect our bilateral relations. On the contrary, we will use it for the benefit of our countries and our interests," PM Garibashvili said.

"We also pay special attention to maintaining existing trade regime between the two countries and further deepening of our economic relations," said the Georgian PM, who visited Armenia in August, 2014.

Calling his Armenian counterpart "my friend," the Georgian PM also said that that

"today's meeting confirmed once again that Armenia and Georgia - the two friendly countries - have unwavering will to further develop and strengthen relations."

Armenian PM said that he had a "warm and friendly" meeting with his Georgian counterpart.

PM Abrahamyan said that modernization of border crossing points between the two countries, including building of a new bridge on the border, as well as development of transport and communication infrastructure between the two countries was also discussed.

The Armenian PM noted importance of smooth operation of the Kazbegi-Zemo Larsi border crossing point between Russia and Georgia, which is currently the only available land link for Armenia with Russia. This border crossing point was closed down twice this year because of landslide in Georgia's Dariali gorge.

The Armenian PM also noted importance of planned new high-voltage power line, which will link Armenian electricity grid with the Georgian one. Funds for this project were made available from German development bank KfW, the European Investment Bank, and the EU-funded Neighbourhood Investment Facility.

Weaker dram blamed for food price rises

Recent weeks' increases in the prices of key foodstuffs in Armenia are the inevitable consequence of a major depreciation of the national currency, the dram, state anti-monopoly regulators said on December 11.

Artak Shaboyan, the head of the State Commission on the Protection of Economic Competition (SCPEC), said that the regulatory body has so far found no evidence of large food importers abusing their dominant positions in the market.

"The exchange rate fluctuations have had a direct impact on the prices of imported goods, which started rising from November 20. Price rises were then recorded in the markets for locally manufactured goods," Shaboyan told Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan and members of his cabinet.

Shaboyan addressed the cabinet meeting to present the findings of the SPEC's ongoing monitoring of consumer prices, which began after the dram started weakening against the U.S. dollar a month ago. According to him, the prices of imported

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NKR Defense Army takes preventive measures along with defense: Armenian DM



Armenian Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan said 2014 was a rather tense year for the NKR Defense Army. "The NKR Defense Army is tasked with implementing preventive measures along with defense," Minister Ohanyan told reporters on the sidelines of the Human Rights Conference in Yerevan.

He blamed Baku for provocations and added that Azerbaijan carries the burden

for border incidents.

Speaking about the current situation at the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, Seyran Ohanyan said: "The border tensions periodically escalate and fade. In the past the rival was violating the ceasefire 30-50 times firing 1,000 shots, while today the number of ceasefire violations has reached 170-200 with the number of shots hitting 3-6 thousand a day."

He said the Armenian side responds only to sniper shots, ignoring the irregular firing. "But in case of provocations,

we not only defend, but also take preventive measures," the Minister added.

With inciting border provocations the rival tries to influence the negotiation process, but fails to do so. "Experience shows that we manage to defend our position at the negotiating table."

Speaking about the helicopter of the NKR Air Force downed by Azerbaijani during a training flight on November 12, Minister Ohanyan said "investigation is under way, and there is nothing to add for now.

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Armenia Lifts Visa Requirement for U.S. Citizens

Citizens of the United States will no longer need visas to visit Armenia starting next month, the Armenian government said on December 11.

Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian announced the lifting of visa requirements for them, effective from January 1, during a weekly cabinet meeting in Yerevan.

Nalbandian said that the U.S. government will reciprocate by easing some of its own, much stricter visa procedures for Armenian nationals. In particular, "many categories" of Armenians will now be eligible for multiple-entry American visas valid for 10 years, he said.

Yerevan's plans to unilaterally abolish the visa regime with the U.S. were first revealed by one of Nalbandian's deputies, Sergey Manasarian, in May. "This shows that the level of our relations with the U.S. is really rising," Manasarian told Armenian parliamentarians.

Armenia's visa procedures for much of the outside world have been quite simple since the late 1990s. U.S. citizens, many of them ethnic Armenians, have been able to easily get visas not only at Armenian consulates abroad but also the country's border crossings and airports.

Citizens of European Union member states already can enter Armenia and stay there visa-free for up to 90 days. The Armenian



government scrapped visas for them in 2012 shortly before signing a visa facilitation agreement with the EU. The agreement, which took effect in January 2014, eased the EU's stringent requirements for some categories of Armenians travelling to Europe.

The authorities in Yerevan have maintained the visa-free arrangement for Europeans even after controversially deciding last year to seek membership in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Armenia is expected to complete its accession to the EEU by the end of January.

Azerbaijan does not understand the language the international community speaks: Armenian FM

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A few days ago the Turkish Foreign Minister called on Armenia to start cooperating with neighbors. In response to this, Edward Nalbandian said "our foreign policy has always targeted the establishment and development of cooperation with all countries."

"But is it possible to cooperate with a country, which refuses to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia, which keeps the border closed and comes forth with a number of hostile expressions related to Armenian and the Armenian people?" Minister Nalbandian said. "It will be possible to cooperate with Turkey, when the latter faces its own history and when it agrees to meet the commitments it has



assumed," Minister Nalbandian said. He reminded that "the international community has declared on many occasions that the ball is in the Turkish court."

Latvia will preside over the European Union in 2015. In this regard, the Latvian Foreign Minister noted that "it's important to discuss the issue of the Eastern Partnership roadmap. "Taking into consideration Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union, it will implement individual partnership plans with EU member states," Edgars Rinkevics said.

Armenia's EEU membership to leave relations with US unchanged: State Dep't

Washington's collaboration with Yerevan will continue after Armenia officially becomes a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), Jen Psaki, spokesperson for the US State Department, has announced.

"The United States will continue to work with Armenia to support democratic and economic reforms and preserve the progress made through the US-Armenia relationship," Psaki said at a press briefing on December 11.

The spokesperson emphasized that all countries have the right to choose their own path of economic integration and development in accordance with their national interests.

"No country has the right to determine the political and economic orientation of another country, nor decide which alliances and trade agreements it can join," Psaki stressed.

The Russian State Duma (lower house of parliament) ratified the treaty on Armenia's joining the EEU on December 10. Yerevan is expected to officially join the union in January, 2015 when the ratification procedures are finished. The republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have also expressed interest in joining the organization.



Another Oppositionist Attacked In Yerevan



An Armenian opposition lawmaker was beaten up late on Thursday, the latest in a series of violent attacks on prominent participants of recent anti-government demonstrations staged by three major opposition parties.

Aram Manukyan, a veteran politician affiliated with the Armenian National Congress (HAK), was assaulted outside his apartment block in Yerevan. Manukyan, who had a black eye and other visible facial injuries, described the attacker as a middle-aged who said nothing while throwing punches.

Manukyan required medical examination and aid. He was also questioned by police later in the evening. Nobody was arrested in the following hours.

Other senior members of the HAK were quick to arrive at the scene of the incident. They accused the Armenian authorities of ordering the violence.

Levon Zurabyan, the HAK's deputy chairman, linked it with similar beatings that were endured by three other opposition activists earlier this week. They are well-known veterans of the Nagorno-Karabakh war actively participating in a campaign of anti-government rallies organized by the HAK, the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) and the Zharangutyun party.

"The regime's jackals are attacking opposition representatives," Zurabyan told reporters. "In their primitive view, they can thereby break up our popular movement."

According to Zurabyan, Manukyan's beating was filmed by a surveillance camera placed at the entrance to the apartment building. He said police investigators can therefore easily identify and prosecute the attacker. "If they don't do that, it will be further proof that Serzh Sargsyan and his regime were behind this crime," added Zurabyan.

Aram Manukyan was one of the speakers at nationwide rallies held by the opposition trio this fall. In one of his speeches, he made derogatory comments about Serzh Sargsyan which angered senior members of the ruling Republican Party of Armenia.

Meanwhile, Armenia's human rights ombudsman, Karen Andreasyan, on December 12 expressed serious concern at and strongly condemned the beatings of the four oppositionists as well as earlier arson attacks on cars belonging to several members of another opposition group. Karen Andreasyan urged law-enforcement authorities to punish the perpetrators "as soon as possible."

Nobody has been arrested or charged in connection with those incidents so far.

Opposition Parties Promise New Action Plan



Three leading opposition parties assured thousands of supporters rallying in Yerevan on December 10 that they will soon publicize a plan of further joint actions aimed at achieving "regime change" in Armenia.

"The popular movement will soon present a program of joint actions, including mass public gatherings, aimed at expediting complete regime change in Armenia and establishing a government of the people through pre-term free and fair elections," Levon Zurabyan, a senior member of the Armenian National

Congress (HAK), said in a speech delivered in Liberty Square.

The HAK and the Prosperous Armenia (BHK) and Zharangutyun (Heritage) parties held the rally there to mark International Human Rights Day more one month after their most recent anti-government protest. They have yet to shed light on the future of their joint push for power announced in September.

Levon Ter-Petrosian and Gagik Tsarukyan, the top leaders of the HAK and the BHK respectively, were conspicuously absent from the latest demonstration. Zharangutyun's Raffi Hovannisian attended it but avoided addressing the crowd before it marched through the city center. Hovannisian said he is still awaiting Ter-Petrosian's and Tsarukyan's responses to his calls for the opposition trio to draw up a specific "common agenda."

Like the HAK, Zharangutyun is seeking a joint effort to try to force President Serzh Sargsyan into resignation. Tsarukyan and his aides have made more vague statements on this score.

Speaking to RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am), Tigran Urikhanyan, the BHK spokesman, insisted that his party is committed to "regime change." Asked whether that means Sargsyan's ouster, Urikhanyan said, "It's up to you and the public to draw conclusions."

EIB lends Armenia \$61.4 million to aid SMEs

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is lending EUR 50 million to finance projects promoted by SMEs in Armenia, particularly in the agro-processing, rural and tourism sectors.

The EIB loan is being granted to the Central Bank of Armenia, which will make the EIB funds available to well-established financial intermediaries for on-lending to smaller projects. The loan will target particularly the agro-processing and rural sectors, which play an important strategic role in terms of development.

EIB Vice-President Wilhelm Molterer, responsible for EIB lending in Armenia, commented: "This is the first EIB loan extended via a Central Bank in

the EU's Eastern Partnership. We are proud of this innovative cooperation, which underpins our engagement in Armenia."

Chairman of the Central Bank of Armenia Arthur Javadyan, added: "This loan to SMEs will complement our long-term fruitful cooperation and increase the EIB's role in the sustainable development of the Armenian economy."

Even though Armenia's SMEs account for the majority of businesses in the country, their contribution to GDP, employment, foreign trade and foreign investment remains low. The provision of affordable targeted loans to facilitate the adoption of modern technologies is a precondition for the development of the



Armenian SME sector. The loan is in line with the objectives of the EIB's mandate for lending outside the EU, which focuses on the development of the local private sector, in particular support for SMEs, social and economic infrastructure and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

German Loan To Boost Armenian-Georgian Energy Ties

The Armenian government secured on December 9 an 85.2 million-euro (\$105.6 million) German loan which it said will be used for synchronizing the national power grids of Armenia and Georgia through a new transmission line.

The state-run German development bank KfW disbursed the loan with an agreement which one of its senior executives signed in Yerevan with Finance Minister Gagik Khachatryan and the head of Armenia's national electricity transmission network, Aram Ananyan.

A statement released by the Armenian Ministry of Finance said the loan will finance the construction of the high-voltage line and a substation on Armenia's border with Georgia. It said that Yerevan will also receive 20 million euros in grants and loans from the European Union for the same purpose.

The German and EU funding, the statement went on, will ensure the implementation of the first phase of a project designed to make the Armenian and Georgian power grids "operate in the same regime." This will make it much easier for each country to import electricity from the other, according to the Finance Ministry.

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili and Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze discussed the issue with their Armenian counterparts when they visited Yerevan in August. The Armenian Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources said at the time that two neighboring states will be able to more than triple mutual electricity supplies after the new transmission line goes on stream in 2018.

It was also officially announced during Gharibashvili's trip to Yerevan that a



little-known company partly or fully owned by a Georgian businessman, Teimuraz Karchava, will invest \$600 million in building a natural gas-fired power plant in northern Armenia that will supply electricity to Georgia. Under an agreement finalized by Karchava and Energy Minister Yervand Zakharyan, the Armenian government will give the company tax breaks and guarantee "supplies of sufficient volumes of gas" to the plant. The precise dates of its construction are still not known.

AGCC begins process to select architect for Armenian American Museum

The Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee of the Western US (AGCC) on Wednesday announced its process for the selection of an architect for the Armenian American Museum proposed for construction in Glendale, California, Asbarez reports.

Interested architects can obtain a complete request for qualifications (RFQ) packet by writing to architect@armenianamericanmuseum.or

g. Responses to the RFQ are due by Jan. 14, 2015.

AGCC's Screening Committee will review the responses to the RFQ and invite up to 5 architects or their firms to submit proposals with design concepts. The AGCC plans to select the Architect for the Armenian American Museum project prior to April 24, 2015.

The preliminary program of the project envisions the construction of an

approximately 30,000 square foot building to include a museum with 2 or more exhibit halls, a theater/auditorium, classrooms, a research library and support spaces. The project will also include subterranean parking, site work and landscaping. Space will be provided for the construction of a memorial/monument in the open space outside of the Museum

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Armenian Parliament Approves 2015 Budget

The National Assembly has adopted Armenia's government-drafted state budget for next year which calls for relatively modest increases in public spending and tax revenue.

The bill, which was passed by 71 votes to 46 late last week, commits the Armenian government to increasing its expenditures by over 5 percent almost 1.31 trillion drams (\$2.9 billion) in 2015. Projected at 1.19 trillion drams, state revenue is to rise at virtually the same rate. The resulting budget deficit would be equivalent to less than 3 percent of Gross Domestic Product.

The government based these projections on the assumption that the Armenian economy will grow by 4.1 percent.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects a lower growth rate: 3.3 percent. A senior IMF official pointed last week to increasingly visible spillover effects of a looming recession in Russia, a key trading partner of Armenia and the main source of cash remittances supporting a large part of its population.

The government's spending and revenue targets had risen by roughly 10 percent annually in previous years. Its reluctance to set higher targets for 2015 appears to stem from the worsened economic outlook. Speaking during parliament debates in Yerevan, Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan said his cabinet will seek to spur growth by "substantially improving the business environment" in a way that would result in a level playing field "in all areas." Opposition lawmakers have repeatedly dismissed such government pledges, saying that some key sectors of the domestic economy remain monopolized by wealthy businessmen close to the ruling elite. Abrahamian also emphasized the fact that around half of the expenditures planned for next year will be channeled into social security, healthcare, education and culture. Social programs alone will absorb over 392.6 billion drams in government funding.

The Armenian military will continue to be the second largest recipient of public funds, a fact reflecting the unresolved conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The 2015 budget sets aside almost 200 billion drams for national defense. Another 100 billion drams is to be spent on law-enforcement.

Weaker dram blamed for food price rises

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products such as flour, sugar, poultry, eggs, butter and cooking oil have risen by between 2 percent and 13 percent. The dram has weakened by more than 11 percent against the dollar in this period.

Armenian dairy companies have also raised their prices, citing the weaker dram. Shaboyan argued that they import large amounts of powdered milk in winter months because of a seasonal drop in domestic milk production.

Artur Javadyan, the governor of the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA), said

earlier this week that the price hikes will likely raise consumer price inflation by up to 2 percentage points. But he insisted that the annual inflation rate will remain within the Armenian authorities' target band of 4 percent (± 1.5 percentage points).

Babken Tunyan, an economic writer with the "168 Zham" newspaper, said that the increased inflation is already reduced the purchasing power of most Armenians. "All products are affected by sizable price increase," he said. "The population is already feeling their impact."



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- 2836. **Pushkin str.**, 4/4, 5, 400sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC. Price: 460.000 USD.
- 2990. **North Ave.**, Newly built, 11th floor, 295sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, parking. Price: Negotiable.

PREMISES

- 1789. **Charents str.** Land-1270sq.m, 5 storied building, each floor-400sq.m., basement, capitally repaired, parkings. Price: 4.000.000 USD negotiable
- 1598. **Komitas, Nairy Zaryan str.**, 1000 sq.m., working restaurant, 1st line, capitally repaired. Price: negotiable.
- 1603. **Northern Ave.**, Ground floor of the building, 160 sq.m., zero level, window glasses. Price: 2.600.000 USD.
- 2035. **Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 220sq.m., 1st line, facade-55m., capitally repaired, h-5m., cellar. Price: Negotiable
- 2013. **Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 265sq.m., 1st line, capitally repaired, heating system, cellar. Price: 1.300.000\$ negotiable
- 2012. **Mashtots Ave.**, 5/1, 2, 140sq.m., window glasses, capitally repaired, AC. Price: 1.100.000\$ negotiable
- 2155. **Mashtots ave.**, 3storied building, 540sq.m., each floor-180sq.m, window glasses, parking. Price: 3.600.000 USD
- 2020. **Hr. Kochar str.**, Land-300sq.m, 1st line, 4storied building, 1080sq.m., each floor-270sq.m, h-3.6m, without divisions, parkings, 3 access. Price: 1.400.000 USD negotiable
- 1986. **Cascade**, Land 1000sq.m. 3storied building 1200sq.m., unfinished, parking. Price: 1.000.000 USD.
- 2167. **Sayat Nova str.**, newly built, 38sq. m, capitally repaired. Price: 200.000 USD
- 2175. **Tumanyan str**, Ground and 1st floor of the building, 600sq.m, ground floor 300sq.m, 1st floor-220sq.m, basement-80sq.m., - 1st line, zero level, 2 entrances, facade-15m, 4 window glasses, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, Price: 3500 USD per sq.m,
- 2172. **Isahakyan str**, 92sq.m, 1st line, 7 degrees above zero level, facade-9m, 2 window glasses, h-3.20m, 2 halls, cabinet, bathroom, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: 450.000 USD

LANDS

- 2122. **Davitashen**, 1800 sq.m., water, gas, electricity, possible to sell separately 600 sq.m., and 1200 sq.m. Price: 150 USD per sq.m.
- 2121. **Demirchyan str.**, 1338 sq.m., building permits. Price: 2million USD.
- 2013. **Cascade**. 1000 sq.m. building permits, first line, gas, water and electricity possibilities. Price 460.000USD
- 1402. **Hr. Kochar Str.**, 1100 sq. m., facade -25 m. Price negotiable.
- 2090. **Lori region**, close to Stepanavan, Gyargyar village, 6 hectares, forest 2 hectare has building permits, 3 water source, electricity. Price: 100.000USD.
- 2406. **Avan**, Mher Mkrtyan block, 1000 sq.m., electricity, gas, water, the district is inhabited. Price: 30USD per sq.m
- 2310. **Monument, Babayan str**, 1000 sq. m, facade-25m, privatized, Price: 350 USD negotiable
- 2107. **Monument**, 2400sq.m, building permits, building project. Price: 400 USD per sq.m.
- 2413. **Ashtarak roadway**, 1000sq.m, building permits, building project. Price: Negotiable
- 2414. **Demirchyan str.** land-750sq.m., building permits. Price: 750.000 USD.

PRIVATE HOUSES

- 3348. **Blur, Barbysus str.** Land - 800 sq.m, 3 storied bld.-700 sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control. Price: 1.2 million USD
- 3146. **Aygestan**, Land-500 sq.m., 5 storied bld-765 sq.m., each floor-180 sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, heating system, elevator. Price: 2.300.000 USD.

- 3583. **Nork-Marash**, Land-1100sq.m, 2 storied bld-520sq.m, 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, swimming pool, garden. Price: 1.350.000 USD.
- 3432. **Aygedzor**, Land - 1021 sq m, 3 storied bld.-501 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, central heating, AC, boiler room garden, swimming pool, sauna, garage, security system. Price: 1.000.000 USD
- 3576. **Avan**, Tsarav Akhbyur /near Botanical garden/, Land-560sq.m., 4 storied building-560sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, a kitchen, office, capitally repaired, heating system, swimming pool, garden, 2 car parking. Price: 850.000 USD
- 3606. **Avan**, Tsarav Akhbyur/near Botanical garden/, Land-1000sq.m., 3 storied building-750sq.m., 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, 2 kitchens, capitally repaired, heating system swimming pool, garden, sauna, 2 car parking. Price-1.500.000 USD
- 3574. **Blur**, Land-779sq.m., 2 storied building-720sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, heating system, sauna swimming pool, garden. Price: 2.000.000 USD



- 3590. **Blur, Barbysus str.**, Land-450 sq.m., 4 storied building-470sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: 680.000 USD
- 3651. **Blur, Barbysus str.**, Land-900sq.m., 5 storied building-800sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: 1.700.000 USD.
- 3401. **Antarayin str**, Newly built, land-700sq.m, 3 storied bld-690sq.m, 5 bedrooms, capitally repaired. Price: 1.300.000 USD

NEWLY BUILT RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

- 74. **Cascade**, Verin Antarayin. 136-315 sq m., walls plastered, electricity, water, gas, euro windows, no exploitation fees. Price: 1200 USD per sq.m, parking -15.000 USD.
- 107. **Monument**, Verin Antarayin. inhabited, 8 floors, gas, windows, street view -1000 USD per sq.m., city looking -1500 USD per sq.m., parking - 4 million USD preliminary.
- 87. **Sayat-Nova str.**, 21 floors, 3 bedrooms -188 sq.m., 199 sq.m., Price 1900 USD per sq.m., 2 bedrooms have a beautiful sight - 117 sq.m., 120 sq.m., 124 sq.m., Price: 1700 USD per sq.m., climate control, gas.
- 93. **Kievyan str.**, Given to the operation in October 2011, 16 floors, walls plastered, windows, exterior doors, h -3, 15 m, gas, parking. Price: 1500-1600USD per sq.m, parking-12 000 USD. Possible with mortgage, for 13 years term.
- 94. **Masiv**. 3 floors, 8 flats, each flat has 3 bedrooms, 210 sq.m., parking. Price: negotiable.
- 130. **Antarayin str.**, 34 flats, 110-275 sq.m., 4 penthouses-200-275sq.m, available services-car wash, cleaning service, garbage removal service, parking. Price: Negotiable
- 131. **Busand str.**, commercial, office and residential areas, penthouse, available services-car wash, cleaning service, garbage removal service, parking. Price: Negotiable

Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator: GM Speaks on Human Rights in Business, Helping Border Villages and Surprises for Subscribers

VivaCell-MTS General Manager Ralph Yirikian spoke at the Economic Rights Conference

On 10 December, on the occasion of the Day of International Human Rights, a one-day conference on Economic Rights was organized at Hotel Marriott under the aegis of the Human Rights Defender Office of Armenia. The conference was presided by



the Ombudsman of Armenia **Karen Andreyan**, gathered under one roof representatives of the executive, legislative, state regulatory, educational and business spheres, as well as representatives of human rights, consumer protection and other non-governmental organizations. The conference was attended by the RA Prime Minister **Hovik Abrahamyan**, the Ambassadors of US, UK and representatives of international organizations in Armenia.

VivaCell-MTS General Manager **Ralph Yirikian** was invited to the conference as a guest-speaker representing business. In his presentation "Ensuring non-discriminatory conditions for business, and prevention of monopolies and dominant position in the market" Mr Yirikian touched upon the issue of healthy competition from the perspective of utilizing the internal potential of market players for implementing the principles of Human Rights and ensuring daily operation in line with what is set by Human Rights. In particular, VivaCell-MTS General Manager spoke about the need to reveal and enact internal drivers for the institutionalization of Human Rights at the Company level.

Ralph Yirikian stressed that working in a highly competitive market of information and communications technologies, VivaCell-MTS has proven that it's possible to work in the market, achieve and maintain market leadership, without compromising

Human Rights in the course of its daily operations. And also he expressed readiness to share this solution with other market players.

"Throughout years of operation, VivaCell-MTS has proven that there are certain activities that can be implemented by companies at the organizational level, including the adoption of ISO 26000, with an aim to confirm themselves to rules of ethical conduct of business, fair competition, respect for Human Rights, including con-

sumer rights and employees' rights, respect for the law, and timely and lawful fulfillment of tax obligations. I believe these activities implemented from bottom-to-up should go in parallel with up-to-down activities implemented by the regulator and policy-makers, for ensuring fair competition in the market," Ralph Yirikian concluded.

Alternative Energy in the border village Vahan

Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets and its General Partner VivaCell-MTS will mark the conclusion and present the results of yet another project implemented within the framework of the Joint Alternative Energy Project. This initiative included the installation of a solar water heating system in the kindergarten in the border village Vahan, Gegharkunik region. The implementation was supervised by VivaCell-MTS General Manager Ralph Yirikian, founder of FPWC **Ruben Khachatryan**, head of Vahan community **Gourgen Balian**, and the community residents.

"The name of this village ("vahan" means "shield" in Armenian) corresponds to the location of the borderland village and the heroism of its inhabitants. Vahan is the north-eastern shield of Armenia. The commitment of keeping far-reaching vil-

lages in the focus of VivaCell-MTS' attention has a special place in the strategy of the Company. The solar thermal system installed in the village is not only a convenient approach to heating, but also beneficial from economical point of view as a cost-efficient solution. Projects of this kind are also justified from the environmental perspective. I am glad that we manage to ease the social burden of our compatriots," VivaCell-MTS General Manager Ralph Yirikian commented.



Vahan community having a 28km border with Azerbaijan, has 1228 inhabitants. Its two-story kindergarten was built in the late 60s and currently houses 42 children and eleven employees.

The system implemented within the Alternative Energy Project has been connected to the kindergarten's heating and hot water system, through which the kindergarten is able to receive heat and hot water free of cost during the day. Given that the kindergarten only works during daytime and at night only heating needs to be provided so that the system does not freeze, there is up to 60% saving on gas consumption.

The heating system includes 6 solar water heating collectors, each of which comes with 30 vacuum tubes (total 180 vacuum tubes). The vacuum pipes have a diameter of 70mm, which are the largest and the most effective ones in Armenia (until now only 58mm pipes have been used in Armenia). The length of each pipe is 2.1m. The system has double coils water tank with a 500 liter capacity and a pump station with controller. The solar water heating system installed in the kindergarten is energy efficient and environmentally friendly as it reduces water heating costs by 100% in the summer and up to 50-60% in the winter.

About the Alternative Energy Project

The Alternative Energy project aims to reduce pollution and protect the environment by giving villagers an opportunity to use alternative sources of energy. This ten month long project will be implemented in six communities of the Gegharkunik (Vahan and Tsovagyugh) and Ararat (Paruyr Sevak, Shaghap, Lanjanist and Urtsadzor) regions and contains two components: capacity trainings for local villagers and access to renewable energy (solar thermal system, electric fences, LED street lights). As Armenia has a fairly good

potential for solar energy, investment in alternative and energy efficient technologies can significantly benefit environmental and social issues. The project aspires to become a long-term cooperation between the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC) and VivaCell-MTS in the fields of environmental protection and sustainable use and conservation of natural resources. Both parties emphasize the use of modern technologies in the field of environmental protection.



About FPWC

Established in 2002, FPWC is Armenia's leading foundation for the protection and conservation of the country's unique natural heritage. Working at the crossroads of wildlife protection, environmental education, as well as community and infrastructure development, the foundation emphasizes the involvement of rural populations in the sustainable development of Armenia. In all its projects, FPWC advocates for mutual respect between human beings, the natural environment, and cultural heritage, as these are indispensable conditions for the positive development of Armenia.

VivaCell-MTS implemented the final awarding of the "365" draw

The final stage of the "365" draw among VivaCell-MTS' "Personal" and the "City Talks" tariff plans subscribers, who are users of the "Special" package in active status, was held. The draw was being



implemented based on a-smartphone-a-day-within-a-year principle.

VivaCell-MTS hosted the 100 out of the 153 winners of the final stage of the draw from Yerevan and near regions at its

headquarters and awarded them with the MTS Ego smartphones. The prizes to subscribers of remote regions were given by a surprise visit of VivaCell-MTS employees, or at VivaCell-MTS service centers.

"As it was promised, now the 365 smartphones have reached their owners. The aim of the project was making the innovative services offered by VivaCell-



MTS available for subscribers not only in Yerevan, but the regions as well, and encouraging the subscribers of the "Special" package", commented VivaCell-MTS General Manager Ralph Yirikian.

To remind, a special software was created for the "365" draw ("Microsoft.NET Random class selection on the system time"), which allowed selecting winners from the database randomly. Bilaterally disconnected phone numbers, and those, who had won previously, did not partici-



pate in the draw.

Due to "365" draw, in the course of the year 365 subscribers from Yerevan and the regions have won smartphones: Yerevan - 83, Aragatsotn - 26, Ararat - 39, Armavir - 38, Gegharkunik - 42, Kotayk - 27, Lori - 8, Shirak - 28, Syunik - 39, Tavush - 25, Vayots Dzor - 10.

The "Special" package provides 1500 minutes of on-net airtime and 150 SMS messages for sending to RA mobile networks for only AMD 2500 per month.

"Hayphone", "HTC One", "HTC Desire 200" and "Nokia Lumia 925" smartphones at new, discounted prices

Now, with the New Year coming, "Hayphone", "HTC One", "HTC Desire 200" and "Nokia Lumia 925" smartphones are available at VivaCell-MTS service centers at discounted prices.

Phone model	Old price (AMD)	New price (AMD)
"Hayphone"	65 000	24 900
"HTC One"	325 000	219 000
"HTC Desire 200"	95 000	49 900
"Nokia Lumia 925"	249 000	169 900

By the way, when purchasing "HTC One" and "Nokia Lumia 925" smartphones, one can also get a special package (for prepaid subscribers only), providing 10 000 on-net airtime and 10 000 MB of Internet.

For more information one can visit www.mts.am or pda.mts.am mobile site, contact 111 free of charge hotline, chat with us through "111 Online", or approach one of our service centers across Armenia.

Sergey Smbatyan: "...This Year We've Introduced Many Novelties to the Armenian Audience"

Non-Stop Concerts by the Youth Orchestra: Festivals, "Non-Stops" and many more...



By **Gourgen James Khazhakian**
Chief Correspondent

Armenian Composing Art Festival initiated and organized by the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia (SYOA) and Union of Composers and Musicologists of Armenia was finalized by a concert held on November 11th at the A.Spendiaryan Natl Opera and Ballet Theatre during which world premieres of unpublished symphonic and choral works by **Avet Terteryan** (whose name was given to this year's Fest) were held. Among them were "Symphony for Eight Trumpets", "It's a Fest" (A capella for a choir), Symphonies No.No.4,5 performed by the SYOA with **Hakob Khalatyan** as the soloist, kyanancha (a famous old Armenian folk string instrument) as well as the "Hover" State Chamber Choir, with conductors **Sergey Smbatyan** and **Sona Hovannisyan**.

The Festival's closing concert was devoted to the prominent Armenian painter, People's Artist of Armenia **Edward Isabekyan's** 100th anniversary.

"What is the secret of the SYOA's concerts permanently being sold-out?"

That was a question asked the Orchestra's Founding Artistic Director and Principal Conductor **Sergey Smbatyan**. *"The Composing Art Fest distincts from the similar ones by it's narrow specialization; we have been trying to propagate serious classical art to our people. We've been striving to present our audience works by contemporary composers both the foreign ones and the Armenian. Terteryan is accepted and popular composer worldwide. His works are frequently performed in Germany, and Germany is a country where the classical music is the most valued,"* Maestro Smbatyan stated.

Sergey Smbatyan also underlined the fact that the contemporary musical art festivals are being held under the patronage of the Armenian President: *"It means that the Government attaches great importance to the work of contemporary artists."* According to the SYOA Head, in 2015 the Composing Art Fest will bear a prominent Armenian composer **Edgar Hovannisyan's** name.

According to Mr Smbatyan, SYOA playlist has always been combining works



by the world music giants with those by foreign and Armenian contemporary composers. And, also, we've got knew that our audience liked much our projects being held



under "Non Stop" title, since 2012, during which we've been playing soundtracks from Hollywood movies and cartoons, he said *"As I've mentioned before, importantly, the 5th Composing Art Fest dedicated to Avet Terteryan's anniversary, was held under the high patronage of the RA President, with support from the Compo-sers' Union and the Ministry of Culture, and our General Partner; VivaCell-MTS, remained unchanged",* Maestro Smbatyan said. As he noted, there was also another important factor that brought people into the hall. *"Even a few professionals knew about the Tchaikovsky Festive Overture on the Danish National Anthem, and some other pieces we played",* Sergey Smbatyan stated.

For the first time the Youth Orchestra brought an opera genre to a festival program: on December 8th at the Armenian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet after Alexander Spendiarian, within the frameworks of the 5th Armenian Composing Art Festival, the "Terteryan Fest", Terteryan's opera "Earthquake" was performed. (With director **Levon Ivanyan**, conductor **Ruben Asatryan**, choirmaster **Hrachya Boryan**, the stage/costumes artist **Avedis Barseghyan**).

Maestro Smbatyan, asked by a reporter of the "Aravot" Daily, is it possible in near future, to see him as an opera conductor?, answered: *"... Well, I am very fond of opera ... By this moment I have been invited by renowned opera theaters in Europe, and I'm going to accept the invitations...As to staging an opera in Yerevan, frankly, I've not thought on it yet..."*

Photos by Luci Sargsyan and courtesy Union of Composers and Musicologists of Armenia



Robertson, Fisk to speak at Armenian Genocide centennial conference in New York



Jurist Geoffrey Robertson and journalist Robert Fisk are among the confirmed speakers at "Responsibility 2015," the international conference marking the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide, to be held on March 13-15, 2015, at New York's Marriott Marquis Hotel, the Armenian Weekly reports.

Geoffrey Robertson is an international jurist, human rights lawyer, and academic. His latest book is *An Inconvenient Genocide: Who Remembers the Armenians?* In recent years, he has been particularly prominent in the defense of Julian Assange and WikiLeaks. He has also represented author Salman Rushdie, and prosecuted General Augusto Pinochet. In 2008, he was appointed by United Nations (UN) Secretary General Ban Ki-moon as a "distinguished jurist" member of the UN's Justice Council, which nominates and

supervises UN judges. His memoir, *The Justice Game*, has sold over 150,000 copies.

Robert Fisk is the Middle East correspondent of the Independent newspaper. He holds numerous awards for journalism, including two Amnesty International UK Press Awards and seven British International Journalist of the Year awards. During the 30 years he has been reporting on the Middle East, he has covered every major event in the region, from the Algerian Civil War to the Iranian Revolution, from the hostage crisis in Beirut to the Iran-Iraq War, from the Russian invasion of Afghanistan to Israel's invasions of Lebanon, and from the Gulf War to the invasion and ongoing war in Iraq. His books include *The Great War for Civilization: the Conquest of the Middle East*.

The three-day conference will feature a lineup of prominent historians, policymakers, authors, and artists from around the globe. The program will consist of concurrent morning and afternoon panels and discussions focusing on justice and reparations for cases of genocide, the responsibility to protect (R2P), genocide research, activism for justice and accountability, building solidarity, and artistic responses to genocide and mass violence.



The "Responsibility 2015" conference is being organized by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Eastern U.S. Centennial Committee, under the auspices of the Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee of America, Eastern Region.

Evening sessions bringing together policymakers, political leaders, artists, and celebrities known for their activism and humanitarian work will highlight the theme of responsibility to confront past injustices and struggle towards preventing new ones.

Photography and art exhibits with the theme of survival will be held at the same venue for the duration of the conference.

The organizing committee is comprised of the following scholars and activists: Khatchig Mouradian and Hayg Oshagan, co-chairs; George Aghjayan, Kim Hekimian, Antranig Kasbarian, and Henry Theriault.

Invitation to visit Armenia on April 24 a challenge to the Turkish President: Giro Manoyan



Giro Manoyan, Head of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Bureau's Hay Dat and Political Affairs Office, says the year 2014 stood out for three important events: Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union, the frequent ceasefire violations at the Armenian-

Azerbaijani border and the acts of sabotage, the events in Syria and the problems of the Armenian community.

Giro Manoyan says in 2015 we should start speaking about the consequences of the Armenian Genocide and reparation rather than recognition. "This will be the greatest achievement of the 100th anniversary," he said. As for the commemoration to be held in Istanbul, he said "this is not the first time such events will be held in Istanbul." "Commemoration of the 100th anniversary in Istanbul will be of special importance, but what's more important is to send a special message to the Turkish society. The Turkish public should know not only what happened in the past, but also what the Armenian people demand today,"

Manoyan said. He also attached importance to the refusal from the Armenian-Turkish protocols. "These protocols need to be killed legally," he said.

Referring to the invitation to the Turkish President to visit Armenia on April 24, Giro Manoyan said "it's a challenge rather than an invitation." "I'm not sure about how this invitation will be accepted. I don't rule out Turkey will take certain counter-steps, and Armenia should be ready for it." Manoyan also advised Armenians not to concentrate on what the US President will say on April 24. "Uttering the word 'genocide' will be a pressure on Turkey, that's why Obama has refrained from using the word," he concluded.

Global Militarization Index 2014: Armenia ranked third

Armenia is the third most militarized country, according to the Global Militarization Index (GMI) issued by the Bonn International Center for Conversion.

In the 2014 GMI, Israel, Singapore, Armenia, Syria, Russia, Cyprus, South Korea, Jordan, Greece and Azerbaijan (rank 1 to 10) are amongst the ten countries with the highest levels of militarization three of which are situated in the Middle East, two in East Asia and the remaining five in Western and Eastern Europe. The high levels of militarization in these countries are mostly the result of comprehensive arms purchases.

The causes for the generally high levels of militarization in The Middle East are manifold. They range from the defense of existing authoritarian regimes against possible internal adversaries to external conflicts and potential threats from the outside. All in all, one will have to assume that the level of militarization in the region will remain high or will even increase.

The neighboring states Armenia (rank 3) and Azerbaijan (rank 10), both belonging to Europe, show very high levels of militarization and have initiated major increases in their military expenditures over the past years. The high levels of militarization in these two countries must, however, be seen in the overall context. Russia (rank 5) delivers arms to both South Caucasian republics and has been pursuing a comprehensive military reform since 2008.

Between 2009 and 2013, expenditures for equipment and procurement in European NATO states fell by more than US \$ 9 billion. Still, some states show high levels of militarisation (Greece: 9, Estonia: 21, Turkey: 24, Bulgaria: 27, Portugal: 28).

Singapore (rank 2) and South Korea (rank 7) are the two countries within East Asia that are amongst the ten most militarized countries in the world. Singapore's procurement efforts are a reaction to its many unresolved territorial issues, the importance of strategic waterways in the region and the Chinese anti-access / area denial strategy. South Korea's high level of milita-



zation can be understood in the context of the ongoing state of war with North Korea, but also with unresolved territorial issues with Japan and China in the Yellow Sea.

The Global Militarization Index (GMI) depicts the relative weight and importance of the military apparatus of one state in relation to its society as a whole. The update of the GMI 2014 is based on data from the year 2013 (i. e. the most recent year for which data has been available) and comprises 152 states. BICC's GMI is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The GMI is divided into three overarching categories: expenditure, personnel and heavy weapons. Military spending in relation to GDP and health spending are the most important indicators for determining the level of militarization. Besides military expenditure, the level of militarization is also represented by the relation of military personnel to the total population and physicians. As its third category the GMI takes into consideration the number of an armed forces' heavy weapons in relation to the total population.

Russian Parliament OKs Armenian Entry into Eurasian Union

The lower house of Russia's government-controlled parliament on December 10 unanimously ratified a recently signed treaty on Armenia's accession to the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

The State Duma voted on the treaty one week after it was overwhelmingly approved by the Armenian parliament. "I want to bring your attention to the fact that in the last several years no legislation has been adopted by Armenia's parliament with such an overwhelming majority," Oleg Lebedev, a parliamentary leader of President Vladimir Putin's United Russia Party, told fellow deputies during a brief debate on the issue.

Representatives of the three other parties represented in the Russian parliament also voiced support for the treaty which Putin and his Armenian, Belarusian and Kazakh counterparts signed in Minsk in October.

Leonid Slutsky, the chairman of a Duma committee on ties

with ex-Soviet states, called Armenia's upcoming membership in the EEU a "landmark event." Slutsky, who reportedly has warm ties with Azerbaijan's leaders, noted at the same time that Yerevan's membership talks bid faced "some controversy" related to the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. "Armenia is joining the Eurasian project with its internationally recognized borders," he stressed.

Slutsky clearly alluded to misgivings voiced by Kazakhstan earlier this year. Echoing concerns expressed by Baku, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev demanded that the accession treaty make a special reference to those borders, which do not include Karabakh.

The treaty has to be also ratified by the parliaments of Kazakhstan and Belarus in order to take effect. The Armenian government hopes that the ratification process will be completed by the end of this month.

Trial of Azeri saboteurs proceeds in line with all international norms



The trial of Azerbaijani saboteurs in Nagorno Karabakh proceeds in line with all norms incorporated in international

conventions, Executive Director of the Foundation Against the Violation of Law (FAVL), First Human Rights Defender Larisa Alaverdyan told reporters on December 9.

She stressed that although an unrecognized country, the Nagorno Karabakh Republic is committed to all norms of international humanitarian law, particularly the right to fair trial. As for the lack of reaction from international structures, Larisa Alaverdyan said "it's a positive message to us."

According to her, although no one recognizes Nagorno Karabakh de jure, everyone recognizes it de facto, and the facts that there are NKR Representations

in different countries and the superpowers hold talks with de facto authorities of Nagorno Karabakh come to prove this.

Therefore, she said, Azerbaijan's statements ignoring these facts are nothing but a political error and a crime. The fact of Azeri saboteurs entering Nagorno Karabakh was a demonstration of such a crime, she added. Alaverdyan said the trial will continue till the end, and everyone will get the due punishment.

The human rights defender also informed that the results of the expertise on Karen Petrosyan case will be available soon, after which the European Court will give a clear and worthy assessment to Azerbaijan's actions.

Adam Schiff condemns killing of Karabakh soldier by Azeri forces



U.S. Representative Adam Schiff (D-CA) on Tuesday condemned the killing of an Artsakh Defense Army soldier on Monday by Azeri forces along the border,

Asbarez reports.

"The killing of yet another Karabakh soldier by Azeri forces is the latest outrage perpetrated by Baku against the Armenian people and I extend my condolences to the family and colleagues of the dead soldier," Schiff said.

"This unprovoked and deadly violence against the people of Artsakh and its people must stop. Yesterday's incident comes only weeks after Azerbaijan shot down an unarmed NKR helicopter that was operating inside the airspace of Nagorno Karabakh and should serve to spur the

Minsk Group to redouble its efforts to mediate a peaceful solution to a standoff that could erupt at any moment."

"I also urge Secretary of State John Kerry to take this issue up with the Aliyev regime as soon as possible and before more innocent lives are lost," Schiff said in his statement.

19-year-old Artsakh Defense Army serviceman Garik Ispiryan was shot dead on Monday by Azeri forces firing in the direction of Armenian positions at the eastern section of the border between Artsakh and Azerbaijan.

AGCC begins process to select architect for Armenian American Museum

From page 2

building. The request for qualifications or proposals related to the memorial/monument will be issued at a later date.

Responses to the RFQ should demonstrate familiarity and experience in the design of civic, cultural and educational spaces.

On Nov. 4, the Glendale City Council decided to enter into an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement with the AGCC for the ground lease of a 1.7 acre property located to the south of the Glendale

Civic Auditorium and across the street from Glendale Community College. This site is being considered for the construction of a world class museum and cultural/educational center.

The submission of conceptual design plans and a narrative description of the project are two of the requirements stipulated in the Exclusive Negotiating Agreement between the City and the AGCC.

The Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee of Western US helps oversee, coordinate and organize events and activ-



ities in observance of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in the region.

Sweeping Reforms Needed to Resolve Critical Pan-Armenian Issues

By Harut Sassounian

I delve this week into a thorny subject that has distressed much of the Armenian world: the uproar generated by the highly critical and harshly-worded letter posted on the internet by the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Nourhan Manougian addressed to His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians.

I was asked by several reputable individuals in leadership positions in Armenia and Diaspora to comment on this controversy hoping to calm down the tense atmosphere. I consented, not because I believe that my column would resolve the immediate problem, but to address the larger issues facing the Armenian nation at this critical juncture in our history.

The Jerusalem Patriarch's lengthy letter contained two specific complaints: His understanding that at a meeting last September in Etchmiadzin, there was a discussion about converting the historic and autonomous Patriarchate of Jerusalem into one of the Dioceses of the Mother Church. The Jerusalem Patriarchate is one of the four Hierarchical Sees of the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with the Catholicosate of All Armenians, Catholicosate of the Great of Cilicia, and the Patriarchate of Istanbul. Patriarch Manougian's letter also complained about Karekin II's refusal to ordain Father Baret Yeretian as Bishop, at the request of the Synod of the St. James Brotherhood of Jerusalem.

While Catholicos Karekin II and several of his Primate's adamantly deny that there ever was discussion on converting the Jerusalem Patriarchate into a Diocese, some attendees of the September meeting have reported otherwise. There was a similar controversy involving the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul over a decade ago. Back then, Patriarch Mesrob Mutafian had also written an angry letter to Karekin Vehapar denouncing any attempt to lower the status of the Istanbul Patriarchate to a Diocese of Holy Etchmiadzin. In response to the Jerusalem Patriarch's Nov. 24 letter, the Supreme Spiritual Council issued a statement on Dec. 1, followed by individually-written letters by a few Primate's affiliated with the Catholicosate of All Armenians, denouncing the 'unacceptable' tone and 'false' content of the Patriarch's letter. They also expressed indignation that Patriarch Manougian had posted his letter on the internet rather than sending it privately to His Holiness Karekin II. The Patriarch had justified his decision by explaining that

Karekin II had not responded to his previous letter. Ironically, the Primate's castigating the Jerusalem Patriarch for posting his letter on the internet were doing the same thing themselves, further publicizing the Patriarch's letter and fanning the flames of controversy.

The dispute over the Jerusalem Patriarch's letter should not be viewed as an isolated incident. It is merely one manifestation of many serious, but neglected, tribulations inflicting the Armenian nation. Such high-level public controversies only aggravate our existing problems, including public distrust of leaders in Armenia and Diaspora, dwindling church attendance, declining membership in community organizations, economic crisis causing emigration from Armenia, Armenia-Diaspora disagreements, and weakening cultural identity in the Diaspora. These internal failings diminish the ability of the nation to confront existential issues, such as the security of the Armenian Republic, the Artsakh (Karabagh) conflict, Armenian demands from Turkey, survival of the Armenian community in Syria, and the preservation of the Armenian Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Istanbul.

These grave challenges, which could have catastrophic consequences for the survival of Armenia and the Armenian people, cannot be resolved by letter-writing campaigns. What is needed is a globally coordinated effort to find pan-Armenian solutions.

One possible solution is creating a democratically elected Diaspora-wide body that can truly represent the seven million Armenians throughout the world, outside Armenia and Artsakh. These Diaspora representatives, in conjunction with the leadership of Armenia and Artsakh, can claim to speak in the name of all Armenians worldwide. Whenever a crisis arises, this trio would have the authority and standing to settle all political, ecclesiastical and socio-economic discords among Armenians as well as defend the nation from external threats. In the absence of such a worldwide elected entity, the existing Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee should be restructured so that after next April it can coordinate all significant issues with leaders of Armenia, Artsakh, and major Armenians organizations, along with some notable personalities.

It is incumbent on all Armenians to come together and resolve their critical issues before internal feuds and external perils threaten the survival of this ancient nation!

German Court decision due on Armenian gospel stolen from Turkish-occupied areas of Cyprus

A German Court of Appeal will issue its final decision on the fate of the remaining 85 treasures stolen from the Turkish occupied areas of Cyprus, including fragments of church wall paintings, icons, a manuscript of an Armenian gospel and 40 prehistoric antiquities, the Cyprus Mail reports.

The Court of Appeal of Munich is expected to issue its final decision in relation to the remaining items found in the possession of Turkish dealer in illicit antiquities Aydin Dikmen in apartments he maintained in Munich, unless by the 13th of February 2015 there is a friendly settlement. A total of 173 looted treasures found in Aydin Dikmen's possession in Munich were repatriated to Cyprus last October.

Yesterday, a hearing took place in the Court of Appeal in Munich, where the German judge proposed an out of court friendly settlement by the 13th of February 2015, otherwise, the Court will issue its final decision by March 16, 2015.

In statements to CNA, Bishop Porphyrios of Neapolis said that the Church of Cyprus and the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus will try to reach an amicable settlement with the other party provided that "the settlement is reasonable and will allow the repatriation of all Cypriot treasures".

Turkish art smuggler Aydin Dikmen had his headquarters in Munich and channeled the booty taken from the occupied areas through Turkey, to the whole world. One of the biggest cases of illicit trading in antiquities involving Aydin Dikmen was the plundering of the wall paintings from the church of Agios Euphemianus and the 6th century wall mosaics from the Church of Panagia Kanakaria in the occupied areas of Cyprus.

In October and November 1997 the German Police raided apartments maintained by the Turkish dealer in illicit antiquities in Munich. The number of works of art they uncovered was astonishing: treasures were found from about fifty looted churches in Turkish-occupied Cyprus.

The records kept by the Turkish illicit dealer in antiquities have been lodged as exhibits at the Bavarian Court. The detailed

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December 10 is Human Rights Day

The UN General Assembly proclaimed 10 December as Human Rights Day in 1950, to bring to the attention 'of the peoples of the world' the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.

This year's slogan, Human Rights 365, encompasses the idea that every day is Human Rights Day. It celebrates the fundamental proposition in the Universal Declaration that each one of us, everywhere, at all times is entitled to the full range of human rights, that human rights belong equally to each of us and bind us together as a global community with the same ideals and values.

UN Secretary general Ban Ki-Moon has issued a statement on Human Rights Day:

"On Human Rights Day we speak out.

We denounce authorities who deny the rights of any person or group.

We declare that human rights are for all of us, all the time: whoever we are and wherever we are from; no matter our class, our opinions, our sexual orientation.

This is a matter of individual justice, social stability and global progress.

The United Nations protects human rights because that is our proud mission - and because when people enjoy their rights, economies flourish and countries are at peace.

Violations of human rights are more than personal tragedies. They are alarm bells that may warn of a much bigger crisis.

The UN's Human Rights Up Front initiative aims to heed those alarms. We are rallying in response to violations - before they degenerate into mass atrocities or war crimes.

Everyone can advance the struggle against injustice, intolerance and extremism.



I call on States to honour their obligation to protect human rights every day of the year. I call on people to hold their governments to account. And I call for special protections for the human rights defenders who courageously serve our collective cause. Let us respond to the cries of the exploited, and uphold the right to human dignity for all."

Archeologists uncover details of ancient Metsamor's sacking

Archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Warsaw have discovered evidence of the destruction and capture of the ancient city of Metsamor, one of the most famous archaeological sites in the vicinity of Yerevan.

"In the entire area of research we found layers of burning and ash. The city was probably captured by the army of Argishti I, the ruler of Urartu," said Dr. Krzysztof Jakubiak, head of the project.

Argishti I was the king of Urartu, the biblical Kingdom of Ararat in the Armenian Highlands. During his reign, the boundaries of the state expanded to the Caucasus, the area of today's Yerevan. Among the evidence of the city's sacking is a skeleton of an approximately 30-years-old woman, whose head was cut off, and of another person with a split skull.

"We believe that both of them were killed during the attack on the city,"

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way in which he kept his records is unprecedented: photographs and sketches prior to the theft of the mosaics and wall paintings, during their removal and after, as well as copies of the mosaics intended to be sold as originals in the illicit antiques trade.

The uncontrolled situation in the Turkish-occupied area of Cyprus after the Turkish invasion in 1974 has fostered the development of a network of dealers in illicit antiquities whose aim was to sell out the cultural heritage of Cyprus. With the encouragement and help of the Turkish army, the trade in illicit antiquities has

brought great profit to those involved, and Cypriot treasures already adorn private collections in a number of countries including Turkey, Russia, Switzerland, Holland and the UK, and even as far as the US, Australia and Japan.

More than 500 churches situated in the areas under Turkish occupation since 1974 have been destroyed, plundered and looted or turned into stables, warehouses, restaurants and hotels. For this the Cyprus government and church have repeatedly protested to the UN, the World Council of Churches and many other international and religious organisations.



Zodiac Weekly Forecast

Aries (Mar. 20--Apr. 19) :

Circumstances in your career have been highly pressured for at least two years. This cannot be good for your physical body, even though Aries usually has a strong constitution. Give yourself frequent breaks from the stress if you possibly can. Cat naps, looking at beautiful scenery on youtube.com, and exercise are some options.

Taurus (Apr. 20--May 19):

Between now and Jan. 3 your attention is focused in the areas of travel, education, publishing, teaching, the law and the internet. Venus, your ruling planet, will generally smile upon you when you work within these borders. People will want to support you here, or you may be helping them.

Gemini (May 20 -- June 20) :

Your frame of mind is expansive and optimistic. You want to talk to everybody in sight, but particularly to those closest to you. Twins with clientele will have a busy week with lots of appointments and people asking questions. You will make a friend of each of them.

Cancer (June 21--July 21) :

You are an observer as you watch many others in your life who are playing out fairly important dramas. Your partner is struggling for a sense of footing due to significant changes in his/her life. The "Other" fears annihilation of one layer of the ego's life. A new chapter is beginning.

Leo (July 22 --Aug. 21):

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 will have a heyday.

Virgo (Aug 22--Sep. 22) :

At this time of year you usually do well. Virgo is prone to do her shopping early in good years, so that you will have fewer details to handle during the holidays. Love and romance is favored this season. Activities involving family are less hectic and more enjoyable than at other times.

Libra (Sep. 23--Oct. 22)

As your planetary ruler, Venus, moves toward a conjunction with Pluto, your thoughts are turning to intense concerns about family matters. You may feel compelled to move into a dark situation and simply take over. Don't do this unless you believe you have some clout. You could get hurt in the process.

Scorpio (Oct. 23--Nov. 21) :

If someone owes you money and cannot pay, now is the time to cease your services. You need a clear contract here. If it is you who owes the money or the service, then this is the time to pay it off or set up a specific plan to do so. Aspects have a "buck stops here" look and you must step up to your best self.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22 --Dec. 20):

Your mood is expansive and optimistic this week. It is one of those "good luck" times that occasionally happen to the Archers. You have a grasp of the big picture and could use this energy to promote your projects and gain support. Or you could simply kick back and enjoy the positive feelings.

Capricorn (Dec 21 -- Jan 19) :

One part of you is looking for escape from the crucible of your own belief systems. If this does not come from the inside, you will be challenged from the outside to crack a belief system and allow the rush of a great gulp of fresh air. The freedom will be exhilarating, once the struggle is over.

Aquarius (Jan. 20--Feb. 17) :

During the next two weeks surprises and sudden shifts of circumstances will be prominent in your life. You may decide it is time soon to make a change you have considered, but no one else knows about. Or you may be surprised by the twists and turns of others in your life.

Pisces (Feb. 18--Mar. 19) :

This is a good week to enjoy friends and parties. The arts and all things of beauty are of a special pleasure to you now. You have a desire to reach outward to others. Activities involving travel, education, publishing or legal matters are favored.

Archeologists uncover details of ancient Metsamor's sacking

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added Dr. Jakubiak. The discovered remains were not buried in the tombs, only randomly scattered among the buildings of the so-called lower town. What drew the attention of researchers was a small amount of findings in the form of historical objects, which may illustrate the scale of the Urartu invasion.

The invaders did not spare the holy shrines. Archaeologists found a small, oval urban sanctuary, which had been looted during the invasion. Inside, on stone platforms, they discovered broken pottery and one vessel preserved in its entirety, made of stone.

Metsamor is a protected archaeological reserve. Excavations within the reserve have been conducted for almost 50 years. Previous studies have shown that during its heyday, from the fourth to the second millenniums B.C., the settle-



ment occupied more than 10 hectares and was surrounded by monumental walls.

In the early days of the Iron Age, from the eleventh to the ninth centuries B.C., Metsamor had grown to nearly 100 acres. The central part of the fortress was surrounded by temple complexes with seven shrines. At that time, it was one of the most important political and cultural centers in the Aras Valley.

From the eighth century B.C., Metsamor became part of the Kingdom of Urartu. Polish archaeologists began excavations in Metsamor in 2013. The project was possible thanks to an agreement signed between the University of Warsaw's Institute of Archeology and the Institute of Archaeology of the Armenian Academy of Sciences.

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Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993.
 The publisher: NT Holding LTD.
 Circulation: 1500 print copies and 15.600 copies by e-mail list in PDF format

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 Mkrтчian**
ISSN 1829-0604
 Registration certificate and the date: 273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

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