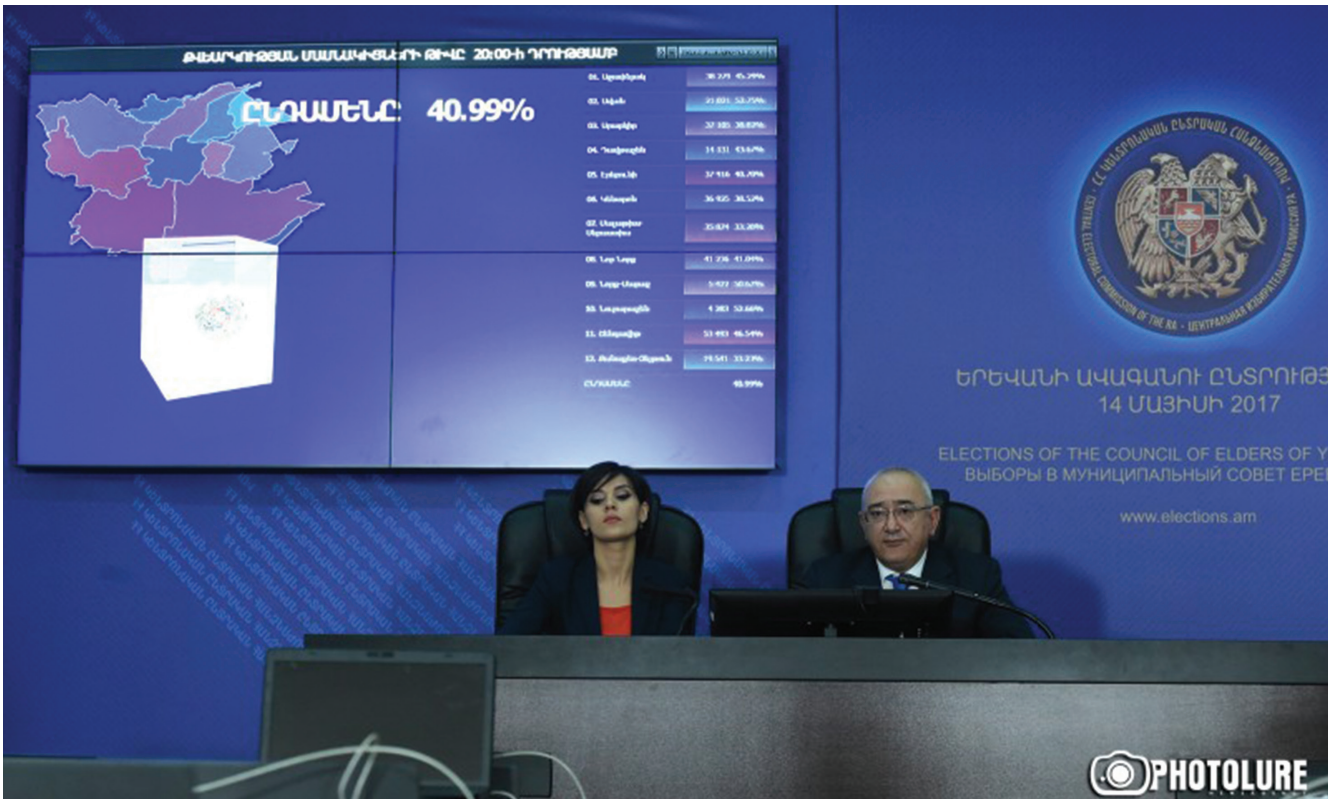


# Yerevan Municipality Elections: CEC tabulates voting results



*The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) on May 15 convened a news conference to announce the preliminary outcomes of the Yerevan City Council elections.*

*see page 3*

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## Armenia, Qatar discuss perspectives of visa liberalization

Prospects of liberalizing the visa regime between Armenia and Qatar were discussed among other issues during Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's visit to the Gulf region country on May 15, according to his press office.

Meeting with the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad al Thani, Sarkisian also reportedly discussed opportunities of deepening Armenia's cooperation with Qatari airlines, which both parties said would enhance "mutually beneficial cooperation."

Emphasizing Armenia's "special relations" with Arab countries "based on centuries-long friendship", the Armenian leader said that Yerevan is interested in "the invigoration of the high-level political dialogue with the State of Qatar and deepening of cooperation in all areas."

From the viewpoint of boosting mutually beneficial trade and economic relations, the president of Armenia and the emir of Qatar stressed the importance of expanding the legal field of the two countries as well as holding sessions of the intergovernmental commission.

The Armenian side proposed for consideration a number of investment projects in different areas, among them the use of Armenia's transit opportunities, especially access via Armenia to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union, a Russian-led grouping including five-post Soviet states.

As part of his official visit Sargsyan the same day also met with the CEO of Qatar Airways Akbar Al Baker.

The parties reportedly discussed Armenian-Qatari cooperation in the area of aviation and prospects for developing it. President Sargsyan spoke about "the significant role of flights carried out by Qatar Airways in the expansion of the agenda of interstate bilateral cooperation." Qatar Airways entered the Armenian aviation market



last May and is carrying out regular Doha-Yerevan-Doha flights.

According to the Armenian president, the increase in the number of tourists from the Gulf countries, including from Qatar, is also conditioned by the existence of direct flights.

Noting that Armenia has adopted the Open Sky policy in 2013, President Sargsyan underscored that "Armenia's policy in the area of civil aviation and air communications provides new opportunities to the Armenian and foreign companies and ensures equal and free competition field for all."

Serzh Sargsyan noted that Armenia will encourage and support Qatari investors to make investments in different areas of the Armenian economy, including aviation.

Akbar Al Baker, for his part, noted that his company sees prospects for the development of cooperation and is seeking to promote this mutually beneficial cooperation.

## One unit of military equipment damaged in Azer missile fire – Artsakh MoD

The Azerbaijani side opened fire from a guided missile in the direction of the military objects of the Artsakh Defense Army at about 16:30 on May 15.

One unit of military equipment has been partially damaged in the shelling, the Artsakh Defense Ministry said. No casualties are reported.

The Defense Army said in a statement "the provocation of the Azerbaijani armed forces will not go unpunished," and added that "the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan will bear full responsibility for the consequences."

## Armenian TV cameraman wounded on Karabakh frontline

A cameraman for an Armenian television station was wounded late on Wednesday when a car carrying him came under fire near the Armenian-Azerbaijani "line of contact" in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Davit Atoyanyan was part of a Shant TV crew that was visiting Karabakh Armenian army positions in the north of the disputed territory on assignment. He was reportedly shot in the leg and underwent surgery in a military hospital in Stepanakert.

"The car was shot at from a long-range sniper rifle," Vitali Balasanyan, a senior Karabakh security official, told RFE/RL's Armenian service.

Another official in Stepanakert, Davit Ba-



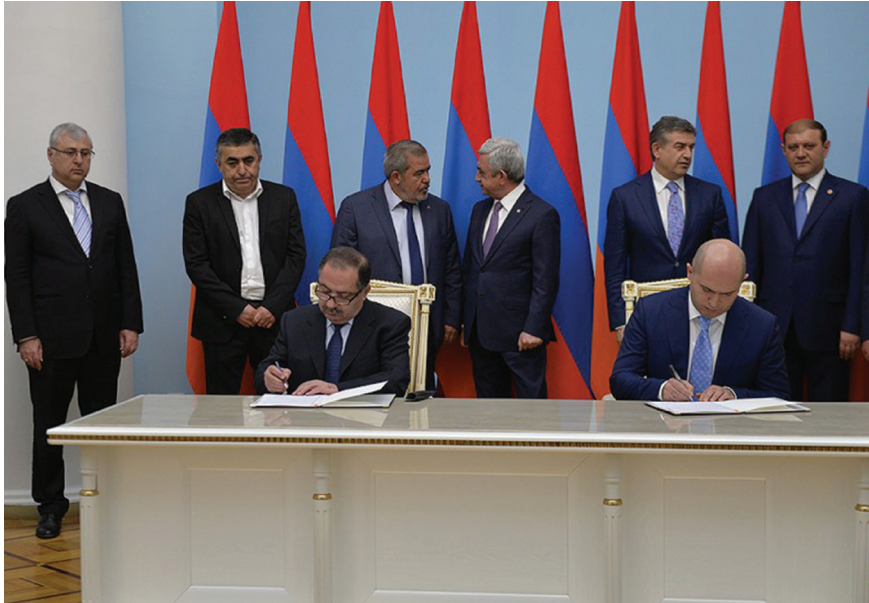
bayan, said that Azerbaijani troops stationed nearby deliberately targeted the civilian vehicle. "They knew that it is carrying journalists," he claimed.

According to the APA news agency, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry claimed that its frontline troops shot at a "camouflaged vehicle of the armed forces of Armenia" in response to gunfire coming from it.

Ceasefire violations at this and other sections of "the line of contact" intensified in the first two months of this year. They appear to have been less frequent since the end of March.

Still, daily reports by Karabakh's Armenian-backed Defense Army suggest that tensions on the frontlines have somewhat increased in the past week. A statement by the army said that Azerbaijani forces fired a dozen rounds from mortars and light cannons at its positions in northeastern Karabakh on Wednesday and early Thursday.

## Republican Party of Armenia, ARF Dashnaktsutyun ink coalition agreement



Just over one month after winning Armenia's parliamentary elections, President Serzh Sargsyan and his Republican Party (HHK) formally extended their power-sharing agreement with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun) on May 11.

Top representatives of the two parties, the HHK's Armen Ashotyan and Dashnaktsutyun's Aghvan Vartanyan, signed a relevant coalition deal at the presidential palace in Yerevan. Both Sargsyan and Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan attended the signing

ceremony.

The joint declaration calls for better governance and "new impetus to the fight against corruption" but says nothing about the government posts that will be given to Dashnaktsutyun as a result. Ashotyan and Vartanyan also declined to specify them when they held a joint news conference after the ceremony.

Dashnaktsutyun is represented in the current Armenian cabinet by Environment Minister Artsvik Minasyan, Local Government Minister Davit Lokyan and Education Minister Levon Mkrtchyan. The three men said

earlier this month that they will not take up their seats in the newly elected parliament, suggesting that they will retain their current posts.

Dashnaktsutyun received three ministerial portfolios as well as a number of other senior government posts line with a similar power-sharing agreement signed with the HHK in February 2016. The ruling party expressed readiness to extend that deal after the April 2 parliamentary elections in which it won 58 of the 105 parliament seats that were up for grabs. Dashnaktsutyun will control only 7 seats in the new National Assembly.

"This agreement will be valid during the entire tenure of the new parliament, namely until 2022," Vartanyan told reporters. He spoke of the two parties' "joint resolve to effect radical and qualitative changes." He singled out the need to boost the country's security and speed up its economic development.

Vartanyan claimed that Dashnaktsutyun's year-long presence in the government has created "grounds for optimism" about such changes.

The new HHK-controlled parliament will hold its inaugural sitting on May 18. It will almost certainly give a vote of confidence to a new Armenian cabinet which is due to be formed soon. The HHK leadership has made clear that Karapetyan will be reappointed as prime minister.

## Yerevan Municipality Elections: CEC tabulates voting results

Yerevan's incumbent Mayor Taron Markaryan and his ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) were on course to score a comfortable victory in Sunday's municipal elections marked by low turnout and opposition allegations of vote buying.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) said shortly after midnight that with around 60 percent of ballots cast counted, the HHK won more than 70 percent of the vote.

The party headed by President Serzh Sargsyan will therefore control the overwhelming majority of seats in the new municipal council empowered to appoint the city mayor.

The opposition Yelk alliance came in a

distant second with 21.2 percent of the vote, according to the official results. The third election contender, the opposition Yerkir Tsirani party, got almost 8 percent.

The CEC put the voter turnout at almost 41 percent. A considerably larger number of Yerevan residents voted in Armenia's parliamentary elections held on April 2 and also won by the HHK.

Several other major parties and blocs chose not to join the mayoral race in the capital for various reasons. Those included businessman Gagik Tsarukyan's alliance, which finished second in the legislative polls.

"The elections were competitive and dem-

ocratic, and according to the preliminary results, the HHK team has achieved a convincing victory," the party's spokesman and campaign manager, Eduard Sharmazanov, told a late-night news conference.

Yelk did not immediately react to the early vote returns. Its mayoral candidate, Nikol Pashinian, implied after casting a ballot early in the afternoon that the election outcome will be strongly affected by vote bribes handed out by the HHK.

Yerkir Tsirani alleged vote buying and other serious irregularities throughout the day. "This has not been an election," its mayoral candidate, Zaruhi Postanjian, charged two hours before the closure of the polls.

## China to donate more ambulances to Armenia

China will donate 200 new ambulances to Armenia soon as part of its continuing economic assistance to the country, the Armenian government said on Thursday.

The government announced the impending donation as it approved a draft Chinese-Armenian agreement on “technical-economic cooperation” at a weekly session in Yerevan chaired by Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan.

“After the delivery of these vehicles, the Armenian side will be able to fully satisfy domestic demand for ambulances,” read a government statement issued after the meeting.

The statement noted that the Chinese government already provided Armenia with 88 such vehicles several years ago.

Armenia has received Chinese economic aid on an annual basis ever since 1999. It totaled \$37 million between 2012 and 2014, according to the Armenian Foreign Ministry. That included an \$11 million grant provided in 2013 for the construction of a Chinese school in Yerevan and the purchase of equipment for the Armenian customs service.

In 2012, Beijing also donated 250 brand new Chinese-manufactured buses to Yerevan’s public transportation system.

China’s President Xi Jinping and his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan agreed to deepen ties between their nations



then they met in Beijing in 2015. In a joint statement, they noted “mutual understanding on issues relating to pivotal interests and concerns of the two countries.”

A high-ranking Chinese military official visited Yerevan last month, holding talks with Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan and the chief of the Armenian army staff, Lieutenant General Movses Hakobyan. The Armenian Defense Ministry said they reached agreements on “expanding cooperation and implementing a number of mutually beneficial projects.”

## Lithuanian economists see Armenia as the best platform to enter the EEU market

“Armenia is the only CIS country that is of increasing interest to Lithuanian businessmen,” noted Aleksandr Izgorodin, the economic analyst at Confederation of Industrialists of Lithuania and Lithuanian Innovation Center, in his latest presentation about Lithuanian trade tendencies and perspectives during the Competitiveness Forum.

Lithuanian businessmen consider Armenia the most effective platform through which to enter the EEU market. “This opens new corridors in the development of trade and attracting investments from the Baltic States to Armenia, as it is the gateway to the major CIS and six Arab markets. Despite the geographical distance, Armenia and Lithuania have a lot in common; both are small economies, place an emphasis on human capital, have a lack of natural resources and a similar country positioning,” added Izgorodin.

According to the representative of DFA in the Baltic States, Rena Saribekian, economic ties between Lithuania and Armenia in different sectors have been de-

veloping constantly since 2014. “Today, the Lithuanian textile industry is looking for opportunities to outsource services; we believe that Armenia’s progress in the field could meet these expectations, making it a good regional hub,” claims Saribekian.

Lithuanian businessmen are also interested in developing bilateral relationships in the IT, start-up, innovation and renewable energy, food and processing sectors. Furthermore, the IT, textile, science and technology sectors have already attracted potential investors and a business delegation representing the pharmaceutical and food industry distributors will visit Armenia this fall.

Statistics. According to the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, trade turnover between Armenia and Lithuania comprised almost €23.7 million and increased by 28.8% between 2015 and 2016. Lithuanian exports to Armenia increased by 30.2%, while Armenian exports to Lithuania increased by 16.2%, to a total of €2.1 million. Armenia mainly exports brandy, cigarettes, wine, and medicine.

## World Bank also expects faster growth in Armenia

Economic growth in Armenia, which practically ground to a halt last year, will reach 2.7 percent in 2017 and accelerate further in the following years, the World Bank said in a regional report released on May 11.

“Growth is projected to accelerate to 2.7 percent in 2017, reflecting the sustained expansion of the tradable sectors and a modest recovery in domestic consumption,” says the report. It forecasts growth rates of 3.1 percent and 3.4 percent for 2018 and 2019 respectively. The International Monetary Fund similarly said last month that the Armenian economy should expand by around 3 percent this year not least because of improving conditions in Russia, Armenia’s main trading partner, as well as additional capital spending planned by the authorities.

The World Bank report cautions that the country’s growth outlook is susceptible to “negative impact external shocks” such as a possible slower-than-expected recovery in Russia. It also says that recent parliamentary elections might lead to the kind of cabinet changes in Yerevan that

would “adversely affect investor confidence” and “slow the pace of reform.”

The authors of the report further made clear that the growth rates anticipated by them will not sharply reduce poverty in Armenia in the coming days. “The poverty rate [measured by the World Bank] is projected to fall from 23.8 percent in 2017 to 22.2 percent in 2019,” they said.

Ending a two-week mission to Yerevan on April 12, a senior IMF official, Hossein Samiei, insisted that Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan’s cabinet is committed to “decisive” reforms which he said are needed for achieving faster growth. He pointed to ongoing government efforts to improve the domestic business environment, tackle tax evasion and attract foreign investment.

“Currently, we estimate potential growth – the maximum that Armenia at the moment can achieve – at around 4 percent,” Samiei told a news conference. “However, in my view, Armenia has the potential to grow much faster – 6 percent, 7 percent – if the structural reforms ... take place.”

## Armenian Customs Officers Arrested Over Azeri Fruit “Smuggling”



Yerevan – (RFE/RL) - Two Armenian customs officers have been arrested on charges of accepting bribes by smugglers to allow illegal tax-free imports of Azerbaijani apples to the country.

The apples bearing Azerbaijani labels were first discovered in some food stores in Yerevan late last month, causing a stir in the Armenian press and on social media. Some commentators decried the discovery on moral grounds, saying Armenia must not buy any products from a country with which it remains in a de facto state of war.

Many others pointed out that the imported apples were not taxed and did not undergo mandatory safety inspections at the border. The Armenian State Service for Foodstuff Safety cited this fact when it confiscated hundreds of kilograms of the fruit from stores and markets.

The State Revenue Committee (SRC), which comprises the national customs service, officially stated on April 26 that its customs checkpoints on Armenia's borders with

Georgia and Iran did not formally process any Azerbaijani imports. It said afterwards that customs officers at the Bagratashen border crossing with Georgia took kickbacks to allow the smuggling of the apples.

Armenia's Special Investigative Service (SIS) announced on May 11 that two officers have been arrested and charged with bribery. It claimed that the officers, identified only by their initials, were bribed to make sure

that “various types of fruits and vegetables, including Azerbaijani apples” are not taxed by the customs and checked by food safety inspectors at Bagratashen.

An SIS statement did not specify the amount of the alleged bribes or the physical volume of the smuggled agricultural produce.

The law-enforcement agency reported on Wednesday that criminal charges have been levelled against four other persons who it said smuggled the Azerbaijani apples via Georgia from January through April. It accused them of evading more than 7.3 million drams (\$15,000) in taxes.

The head of the SRC, Vartan Harutiunyan, took responsibility for the alleged smuggling operations at a news conference held earlier on Thursday. “Perhaps it was also my failing,” he said.

Harutiunyan bristled at reporters' suggestions that nobody would have been prosecuted had media and ordinary citizens not cried foul. “What's wrong with the fact our society is so sensitive that it sees every crime?” he said. “I find it positive?”

The tax and customs chief also said that



customs controls at Bagratashen and other border crossings have been tightened as a consequence of the smuggling scandal.

Armenian law allows tax-free imports of up to 50 kilograms of agricultural goods by private individuals. Many residents of villages close to the Georgian border have long taken advantage of this legal provision, including for commercial purposes. Some of them staged a protest near the Bagratashen checkpoint last week, saying that customs officers are now forcing them to pay taxes.

Harutiunyan essentially confirmed and defended his subordinates' actions. “Should we let them bring in 50 kilograms [of produce] 20 times a day? This is what they want,” he claimed.

## Turkey denies German lawmakers access to troops at Incirlik base

Turkey has prohibited several German members of parliament from visiting German soldiers stationed at Turkey's Incirlik air base, people familiar with the matter told dpa on May 15.

As a result, the German federal government is considering removing its soldiers from the base, according to information given to members of the Bundestag defence committee by the Defence Ministry.

Last year a delegation of lawmakers including members of a parliamentary defence committee were initially denied access to Incirlik, but were later allowed to carry out the trip.

Germany has about 260 soldiers stationed at Incirlik as part of the anti-Islamic State military coalition. The German deployment is a combat-support mission which includes reconnaissance and jet refuelling.

The dispute first arose after the German parliament voted to condemn the killing of Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Empire as a genocide.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's efforts to lobby Germany's Turkish expatriate population to vote in favour of constitutional reform to extend his powers earlier this year caused new tensions between the two countries.



The sources said the latest decision from Turkish authorities had been taken in part as a response to Germany's decision to grant political asylum to members of the Turkish army.

The Defence Ministry has already vetted alternative military bases for its soldiers in Jordan, Cyprus and Kuwait and a decision is expected in the coming weeks.

## 8 Armenians receive 2017 Ellis Island Medal of Honor

Asbarez – On Saturday, eight Armenian-American received the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor during an official ceremony at the iconic and historic gateway for hundreds of thousands who were welcomed into the United States by the Statue of Liberty and made America their home.

The National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations, which awards the medals, announced that Varant Frank Melkonian, Dr. Garo M. Tertzakian, Ara Tekian, Joan Agajanian Quinn, Lucine Mardirosian, Harvey, Andy Andranik Madadian, Ruth

Bedevian and Kurken Yetvart Berksanlar will receive medals of honor.

From successful businessmen, to a pioneering physician, to artists who enrich our lives through art and music and those who dedicate their lives to the advancement of our community through philanthropy, service to church and our organizations, the eight Armenians represent a cross-section of our ever-expanding reality.

The eight Armenians were joined by such luminaries as journalist Fareed Zakaria, and former astronaut Buzz Aldrin.

An Ellis Island International Medal of Honor was also presented to Malala Yousafzai, the teenager who won the Nobel Peace Prize after being shot in her native Pakistan while fighting for a girl's right to an education.

According to the NECO website, "the Ellis Island Medals of Honor embody the spirit of America in their celebration of patriotism, tolerance, brotherhood and diversity. They recognize individuals who have made it their mission to share with those less fortunate their wealth of knowledge, indomitable courage, boundless compassion, unique talents and selfless generosity; all while maintaining the traditions of their ethnic heritage as they uphold the ideals and spirit of America. As always, NECO remains dedicated to the maintenance and restoration of America's greatest symbol of its immigrant history, Ellis Island."

Past Armenian-American Ellis Island Medal recipients include, Harry Nadjarian, Mike Sarian, Vahe Karapetian, Elizabeth Aghababian, Maria Mehranian, Dalida Keuroghlian, Sylva Akaragian and Christopher Atamian among dozens of others.



## US National Intelligence warns of 'large-scale hostilities' in Karabakh



*Armenian Weekly* — The United States Director of National Intelligence Daniel R. Coats published on May 11 the U.S. Intelligence Community's (IC) 2017 "Statement for the Record" entitled "Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community," which includes a part on the increased tensions between Artsakh and Azerbaijan that took place in April 2016.

The IC is a federation of 16 separate U.S. government agencies that work separately and together to conduct intelligence activities considered necessary for the conduct of foreign relations and national security of the United States. The statement that assesses potential threats to U.S. national security reflects the collective insights of the Intelligence Community.

The statement, which is divided into global and regional

threats, includes subcategories like cyber threats, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and counterintelligence.

Relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan are addressed in the "Russia and Eurasia," section of the regional threats division, in a subsection entitled "The Caucasus and Central Asia."

The statement provides particular attention to the escalation of tensions between Artsakh and Azerbaijan and concludes that the situation is likely to remain in 2017. It also makes a reference to Azerbaijan's economic difficulties and the possibility of Azerbaijan's regime being challenged as a result.

"We in the Intelligence Community are committed every day to provide the nuanced, multidisciplinary intelligence that policymakers, warfighters, and domestic law enforcement personnel need to protect American lives and America's interests anywhere in the world," read a part of the report.

Below is the section on Armenia and Azerbaijan in its entirety:

\*\*\*\*

Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabagh flared in April 2016, and both sides' unwillingness to compromise and mounting domestic pressures suggest that the potential for large-scale hostilities will remain in 2017. In Azerbaijan, ongoing economic difficulties are likely to challenge the regime and increase its tendency to repress dissent to maintain power while it continues to try to balance relations with Russia, Iran, and the West.

## Uruguayan Human Rights Lawyer Denounces Baku's 'Blacklist'



Agencia Prensa Armenia – Uruguayan human rights lawyer, Oscar Lopez Goldaracena, denounced Azerbaijan for adding him to their so-called "blacklist," after the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry forbade him and other deputies and authorities of Bolivia who had officiated as international observers during the constitutional referendum in the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) Republic, from entering the country.

Goldaracena said that "I immediately made the complaint to the Chancellor of the Republic Rodolfo Nin and to the National

Human Rights Institution" and explained that Nagorno-Karabakh is "a country of Armenian population, independent for 25 years by history and by decision of its people; A democratic, republican country, with an institutional framework in rights, with an Ombudsman and mechanisms of direct democracy that really work."

"An example," added the lawyer. "A country that is not recognized by any other country in the world but exists. It is Azerbaijan who attacks it."

"The population is at risk and has been the victim of war crimes. Hundreds of international observers, among whom I find myself, have corroborated what I am writing, as a way of threatening and preventing its recognition as an independent state. I would like to express my hope that, for peace and freedom, Uruguay repudiates these practices of 'black lists' and recognizes the independence, as sovereign state, of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh," said Goldaracena.

Bolivian Members of Parliament Alicia Canqui, Nelly Lenz, Mario Mita Daza, and the Coordinator of Multi-Sector Solidarity Fair in the Bolivian Chamber of Deputies, Sandra Quiroz Quiro, are some of the new names of the extensive list of "personae non grata" in Azerbaijan.

## VivaCell-MTS News

### VivaCell-MTS hosted students of “Aregnazan” School

Choosing future profession is one of the most crucial issues among high school students. Information and Telecommunications Technologies (ITT) are among the spheres in the focus of attention of the young people. The doors at Armenia’s leading telecommunications operator VivaCell-MTS are always open for schoolchildren to support them in developing understanding of a number of spheres, professional orientation, and help in choosing a path of life. For this purpose, the Company has been organizing Open Door events for senior school kids and students.

This time VivaCell-MTS hosted twenty one 10th grade students from “Aregnazan” School



most importantly, creativity and commitment, to work. VivaCell-MTS has the best specialists. Being the best requires not just education and knowledge but consistent work to continuously improve skills and to achieve the goals set by the Company,” said VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph Yirikian**.

“Aregnazan” School, founded in 1994, is the first and only Waldorf School in Armenia. Waldorf pedagogy is based on a holistic approach to education that strives to ensure equal development of children’s intellectual abilities and personal qualities, in harmony with their age and temperament. The Waldorf education focuses on creating wider opportunities for the holistic growth of each child.

There are over a thousand Waldorf schools all over the



and their instructors – Information Security Expert **Samvel Martirosyan** and **Gayane Dashtoyan**. VivaCell-MTS General Manager Ralph Yirikian introduced the history of the Company, its mission and main directions of activities. Ralph Yirikian talked about VivaCell-MTS’ key values, the importance of the culture of corporate management and its specifics, underlining its role as the most important precondition of innovation. VivaCell-MTS General Manager introduced the principles of corporate responsibility, the work and the crucial projects implemented by the Company within the strategy. The students got acquainted with the model of business management, as well as the basics of mobile communication. The guests also had a tour in the Company headquarters and visited the main operational centers accompanied. The meeting was closed up with a Q/A.

*“ITT is a dynamically developing industry. It involves sub-industries, which require education, knowledge, and,*



world. The majority of them are situated in German-speaking European countries, in Western and Eastern Europe, in the USA and Canada, and in Southern America. Waldorf schools exist also in Israel, Japan and Egypt. All Waldorf schools have state license: high school certificates and transcripts are recognized in respective countries.

### VivaCell-MTS has acquired the assets of the ADC Company

The leading telecommunications operator in Armenia VivaCell-MTS (“MTS Armenia” CJSC) announces about the acquisition of the assets of the ADC Company (“Armenian Datacom Company” CJSC), through participation in an open auction, in accordance with the provisions set by the Republic of Armenia Law on Bankruptcy.

The present subscribers of ADC will be offered to continue

using the services provided by the Company on the current terms and conditions, and the uninterrupted provision of the services will be ensured. As soon as the process of asset acquisition is over, VivaCell-MTS will significantly enlarge the scope of the services provided, as well as will implement continuous quality improvement.

The decision of VivaCell-MTS to acquire the assets of the ADC Company is based on the necessity to expand the capacity of its telecommunication network, which will also help improve the quality of the services provided via VivaCell-MTS mobile network.



## Awaited visit that ended up with a surprise

One of the families having a half-built house in Katnaghbyur village of Aragatsotn region has been selected for assistance for the 2017 housing project financed by VivaCell-MTS and implemented by Fuller Center for Housing Armenia.

The study visit turned into a surprise for the 52-year-old homeowner **Hayk Baghdasaryan** and his family. Taking into consideration the compliance with the conditions of the program, the family was told about becoming a beneficiary.

The foundation of the Baghdasaryans' house have been dug 20 years ago when they were full of hope that finishing the house construction is not a difficult problem. Till now the homeowner was able to build only the walls and to partly protect it with concrete ceiling. The construction was

stopped and it became a dream to turn the half-built house into a decent home.

It is already two decades, Hayk's family, his wife and the three adult sons, had to live first at Hayk's paternal house, then rented the neighbor's half-damaged house. The elder son, Argishty, serves in the Armenian Army, in Martakert. The other two sons are schoolchildren.

The partner organizations, that have given moments of happiness to more than a hundred families, now give confidence for the future to one more family. The construction of the half-built house of the Baghdasaryan family will be finished



till the end of the year.

*"My happiness is endless. It's so long we have not heard any good news. All our life, my entire family, my wife, my sons and I have worked hard to finish the construction of our half-built house, but it was hopeless. We could care only everyday needs. Today it's a happy day for us,"* said the father of the family, Hayk.

*"The housing project supports low income families in building and renovating their houses. The housing problem in Armenia is big and we have to select the families; we visit them, evaluate the level of the housing need, then start the construction with the selected family and finish it till the end of the year. I am happy for this family, as well as for all the other families who will have a decent place to live in till the end of this year, thanks to partnership between VivaCell-MTS and Fuller Center,"* said Fuller Center for Housing Armenia President **Ashot Yeghiazaryan**.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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



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## Europe Day celebrations launched in Armenia



The Delegation of the European Union to Armenia has started the Europe Day public celebrations. This year the Europe Day celebrations will be held in 6 Armenian cities and will culminate in Yerevan.

Yerevan is hosting the celebrations from 6 to 27 May, 2017.

Europe Day annual celebrations in Ar-

menia include information events which present the EU-Armenia close cooperation and partnership, and the European culture's diversity.

Information Fairs and open-air concerts will be held in Gyumri, Vanadzor, Dilijan, Kapan, Goris and Yeghegnadzor. The events in Yerevan will be more diverse.

In Yerevan, the Europe Day Information Fair will take place on 27 May, at 15:00, at the Northern Avenue. The Head of EU Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador Piotr Świąłowski and the EU Member States Ambassadors will attend the Fair.

This year the Europe Day celebrations are entitled 'The European Union for Armenia'. The EU-funded projects which focus on the balanced development of all the Armenian regions in many areas such as human rights, justice, agriculture, culture, education, environment, tourism, business support, civil society, migration, health will be presented during the Information Fair. Visitors will have an opportunity to tour the outdoor booths, learn about the programmes and later become participants, as well as participate in cultural events, various competitions, enjoy the music and dancing.

Europe Day celebrations will be concluded in Yerevan with an open-air concert at the Northern Avenue. Artists from Armenia and Poland will perform; famous Polish singers Adryjan Jan feat Cesko will be the special guests of the evening.

## \$1 million funding restored for Armenian American Museum

Asbarez – Senator Anthony J. Portantino (D – La Cañada Flintridge) on Thursday said he is very pleased with one significant aspect of Governor Brown's May revision of the California State Budget, the restoration of funding for the Pasadena Playhouse and the Armenian American Museum in Glendale.

"While others were declaring defeat, I got to work and advocated in favor of the budget allocations for these two laudable projects. I'm very pleased and grateful that the Governor responded to these requests and restored the funding for two outstanding projects in the 25th State Senate District," commented Portantino.

The Pasadena Playhouse is the State Theatre of California. It is a showcase for world class theatrical productions and educational programs targeted to California's diverse population. The Armenian American Museum, proposed to be built in Glendale, is a new facility slated to bring Genocide awareness and educational programming to our

region. Both facilities were set to receive \$1 million dollars from last year's budget but had that funding initially suspended by the Governor in his January budget proposal.

Upon seeing the budget draft, Senator Por-

tantino impressed upon the Governor's office, the Department of Finance and the Senate Budget staff on the importance of these projects. The Governor agreed by restoring the funding for both.



## Two Benefactors to be Honored at AMAA Centennial Banquet October 21

BY FLORENCE AVAKIAN

Paramus, NJ – On October 21, 2017, the Edward Avedisian, and Charles Bilezikian families will be honored at the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) banquet in New Jersey, for their generous and far-reaching philanthropy in Armenia, Artsakh and the United States.

Both families have contributed to dozens of causes, but one of the most important and inspiring projects was the building of a 100,000 square foot school, Armenia's first green school – Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian K-12 School and Community Center, located in the Malatia-Sepastia region of Yerevan called Bangladesh, chosen because it is the most impoverished area of Armenia's capital city.

**THE AVEDISIAN FAMILY** story begins during the Genocide when several dozen immediate and extended family members on both his mother's and father's side from Kharpert were killed. His father, Khoren who had been trained to be a priest had come to New England in 1905 to work and send money back for the support of his family. As the Genocide was soon to begin they told him not to return, the result of which wiped out most of his family.

His mother who survived the Genocide by being in the German Missionary School received wonderful care and an education. She eventually went to Aleppo with her mother. Khoren Avedisian who



had heard of her through a friend, had sent her his photo and after an exchange of letters went to Cuba, where he met and married her in 1926, before coming to the United States. Yes, Shooshanig was a picture bride. Their union produced four children, Paramaz, Zvart, Edward and Paul. Though the family had little money during the Depression era, Khoren brought the three surviving family members to America.

### A VALUABLE LESSON NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN

Avedisian refers to an experience in his childhood when his mother, who had survived the Armenian Genocide, was raising a family of four children together with her husband Khoren. At the end of World War II, when all the textile mills in New England were closing, his mother who had been working in a mill was laid off her job and was collecting unemployment checks while looking for new employment. "She asked me to accompany her on one trip to the unemployment office as I needed new shoes before school started in September and to also buy the necessary groceries for the following week."

"We arrived at the office well before the 9am deadline and were still standing in line when the office manager arrived and ordered everyone to leave and closed the store. We left the building forlorn and heartbroken. I'll never forget, it was a beautiful sunny summer day and for what seemed like forever when mother suddenly said let's go. I asked where and she said to the Mayor's Office because the Mayor had attended an Armenian function the year before (election time) and had told everybody that if you have any problems come and see me, my door is always open. At 9 years old, I already knew that was not to be believed. So off we went to the Mayor McCoy's Office. She lodged her complaint to the Mayor who promptly put in a call to the Unemployment Office and instructed the manager to have my mother's check ready, as she would soon be there again. Sure enough, we went back got the check, bought new shoes for me, purchased food for the following week and went home. It was just another day of challenge in the life of an immigrant but for sure an undocumented Profile in Courage."

"How could I let those kids down in Armenia after I had learned a very important lesson from my mother when I was very young," says Edward Avedisian, in a telephone interview with this writer. Edward Avedisian, a gifted professional musician, successful investor, generous philanthropist, and Ellis Island Award winner added, "Those lessons didn't come easily."

"That experience taught me a lot," he says proudly.



## FIRST GREEN SCHOOL IN ARMENIA

"If the Germans did so much for children like my mother during the Genocide, why can't Armenians do the same for Armenians," declares Avedisian who founded this school and is its main benefactor.

Edward Avedisian and wife Pamela who have gone to Armenia 30 times beginning in 1982, say "there is no school like the Avedisian School in Armenia or the entire South Caucasus. This first solar-heated designed school building, spearheaded by Senior Advisor, Architect Ronald Altoon with solar design by Armen Gharibyan was opened in 2014 with great fanfare, with attendees including Armenian President Serge Sargsyan, and wide coverage on Armenian television and radio.

Besides its solar-powered uniqueness, the school has the highest academic standards, is non-sectarian and is specifically for the children of families who are experiencing socio-economic difficulties in this poorest area of Yerevan. "We want to give these children a chance to excel, and they have been responding by winning country-wide competitions," Avedisian declares with obvious pride.

The government is now pushing for many government buildings to be solar-powered. It is the best thing for Armenia because the country is so polluted and as a result has a very high cancer rate, explains Avedisian. "By using solar, you get free power, no pollution and a reduction in the cancer rate, just by harnessing the sun."

Jeanmarie Papelian, a former AMAA Board of Directors member, also on the Avedisian School Building Committee, and a good friend of both the Avedisian and Bilezikian families, related that this new school replaced the former decrepit building. She revealed that when Edward Avedisian's mother Shooshanig turned 90 in 1994 her birthday present was to replicate, in Armenia, the Orphanage she attended operated by German Missionaries in Kharpert. This 90th Birthday Celebration was in fact the birth of the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian K-12 School and Community Center that was to be operated by the Armenian Missionary Association of America. Papelian revealed that Edward and Pamela Avedisian are also principal benefactors for the Paramaz Avedisian Building at the American University of Armenia (AUA), in memory of brother Paramaz, where students who cannot afford the tuition, can attend without charge.

In June of 2017 The Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian K-12 School will celebrate its first 12th grade graduation since its inception 18 years ago in 1999. The school is especially pleased that the Commencement Speaker will be from the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) in New York.

For his many contributions to Armenia, which have included philanthropy to the American University of Armenia and the Dzidzemagapert Genocide Memorial as well as the complete renovation of a school in the Haghtanag Village and the Nork Children's Cardiac Hospital, Edward Avedisian was twice awarded the Movses Khorenatsi Medal by President Serge Sargsyan.

This medal, which is Armenia's highest honor, is for contributions to education, culture, literature and the arts. Avedisian's professional history includes being a world class clarinetist for three decades with the Boston Pops, four decades with the Boston Ballet Orchestra, soloist with Armenia Philhar-



monic, Adjunct Professor of Music at Boston University, and Artistic Administrator of the Harvard Chamber Orchestra, among many others.

## BILEZIKIAN PHILANTHROPY

The Charles and Doreen Bilezikian family has contributed greatly to the Avedisian School by building its elementary wing in memory of his parents Krikor and Beatrice Bilezikian, as well as the Bilezikian Family Library. They have also funded a kindergarten in Shushi, Artsakh, which is operated by the AMAA.

Doreen (nee Portnoy) who was married to Charles Bilezikian for 52 years, and who is of Jewish background, speaks enthusiastically of the closeness of the two ethnic groups, and their history of genocide. "Armenians and Jews believe in a close family, education, and share cultural values," she says.

"We have always believed that through education a child can become a better citizen and can give to society more than it receives," she related in a telephone conversation.

"My husband's father hailed from Marash, and mother from Harpoot. Marash was protected by the French who then pulled out for political reasons. "The French escaped silently by covering the hooves of their horses. My father-in-law Krikor Bilezikian knew that if he stayed in Marash, he would be killed by the Turks, so he followed the French out, and walked all the way to Aleppo on foot."

The AMAA, she says in tribute, has always looked out for emigres. "They found my husband's two uncles and the rest of the surviving Kasparians, and reunited them with the rest of the family in Boston."

In America, the Bilezikians are a rags to riches saga, starting one Christmas Tree Shop, which mushroomed into a very successful chain of stores throughout several states.

Doreen and her late husband, who have two sons, Gregory and Jeffrey, and six grandchildren, have visited Armenia four times, donating to various causes. Before his passing last year, the two sons went to Armenia with Charles' express desire that they continue his contributions in Armenia.

"The country has changed dramatically in 20 years. It is trying very hard to develop a stable economy," she observes.

Doreen who is having a difficult time getting over the loss of her husband calls the Bilezikians "part of my family. They are warm, loving, and I am very blessed and fortunate to have them."

She reminisces emotionally that every year for 80 years, the Bilezikian and Kasparian families have gotten together at the Armenian Memorial Church hall in Watertown, MA to celebrate Thanksgiving together, thus "uniting four generations."

In tribute to the two honorees, AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian stated that the Armenian Missionary Association of America which funds and operates the tuition-free Avedisian School in Yerevan and the Bilezikian Kindergarten in Shushi, "salutes the grace and humanity of the generous benefactors, and is looking forward to honoring them at the East Coast Centennial Banquet on October 21, 2017. We call on the community to save the date and join the AMAA in honoring the Avedisian and Bilezikian families."

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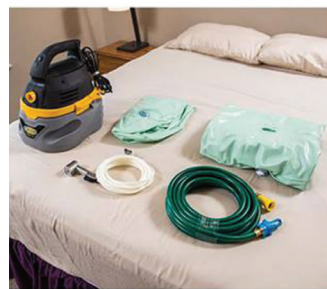
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This type of care includes personal care aides, home care aides, and home health aides. Home health aides might also provide limited assistance with things such as taking blood pressure or offering medication reminders.

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

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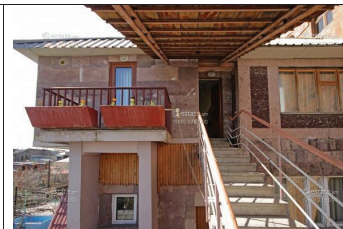
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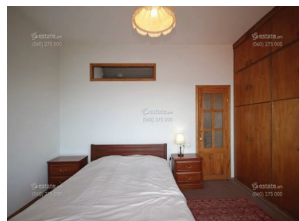
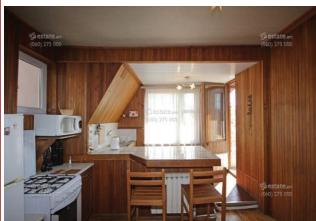
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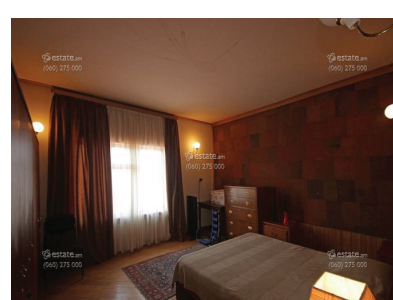
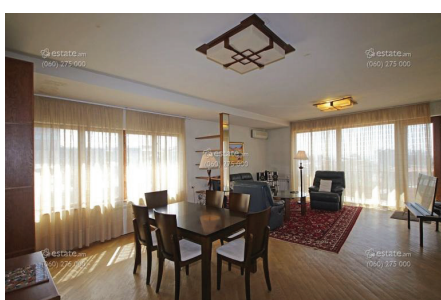
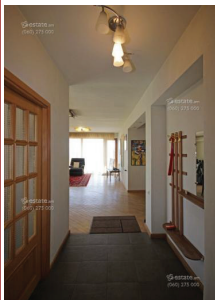
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