

## Armenia celebrates 102nd anniversary of First Republic



*Tribute to the memory of the heroes of Sardarapat battle, May 28, 2020*

The top leadership of Armenia and Artsakh honored the memories of the heroes of Sardarapat Battle. President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, President of Artsakh Arayik Harutyunyan, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and President of the National Assembly of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan attended the official event dedicated to the Republic Day and the May Heroic Battles.

They laid a wreath at Sardarapat Monument and paid tribute with a Lord’s Prayer.

Conditioned by the coronavirus pandemic the citizens of Armenia are not allowed to visit Sardarapat Monument this year.

### PM Nikol Pashinyan’s Congratulatory Message on Republic Day

Congratulations to all of us on Republic Day!

After taking control of Alexandropol on May 15, 1918, the Turkish vanguard forces reached the village of Sardarapat on May 21: it seemed that they would inevitably enter Etchmiadzin and Yerevan, and the rest of the Armenians were doomed.

The situation was critical. However, it was necessary to stand up to the deadly attack. Aram Manukyan was the one to embody the fighting spirit and the strength of the Armenians. Always fair and decisive, Aram used to say in those days of despair. “Let us all get down to work, and we are sure to be on the winning side!”

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## Armenia pleased to see Georgia's achievements: Pashinyan congratulates Gakharia on Independence Day

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has congratulated his Georgian counterpart Giorgi Gakharia on Georgia's on national holiday – Independence Day.

“More than 100 years ago, with the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Georgia on May 26, 1918, the Georgian people expressed their firm determination to restore statehood and build a democratic society. Today as well, Georgia adheres to the values proclaimed in the early 20th century, and continues to build a modern and democratic state,” PM Pashinyan said.

According to him, the Armenian-Geor-



gian relations have been marked by reciprocated deep respect and friendship over many centuries as best evidenced by the ongoing high-level interstate dialogue between our two countries.

He assured Armenia is pleased to see

friendly Georgia's numerous achievements.

“Georgia has a reliable friend and neighbor in the face of the Republic of Armenia,” Pashinyan added.

He highly appreciated the effective cooperation between the two governments amid the spread of COVID-19, especially the uninterrupted implementation of cargo transportation between the two countries and the repatriation of Armenian and Georgian citizens.

“I am convinced that only through joint efforts can we overcome the great ordeal facing the mankind,” the Armenian PM said.

## First official meeting held between Nikol Pashinyan and Arayik Haroutunyan in Yerevan

Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan had a phone conversation with Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship Felipe Sola.

Mnatsakanyan congratulated his counterpart on the upcoming national holiday, wishing the friendly people of Argentina success and welfare.

They discussed the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing the challenges and steps for overcoming the social-economic issues.

The sides reiterated mutual readiness to take practical steps for boosting the bilat-



eral relations and further deepening the historically strong Armenian-Argentine cooperation. In this context both sides especially emphasized the bridging role of the Armenian community of Argentina for

strengthening and boosting the ties and rapprochement of the two peoples.

Among discussed directions of cooperation were trade, IT, tourism, agriculture.

The FMs were pleased to note the existing effective cooperation in multilateral formats based on common values and approaches. In this context they highly appreciated Armenia's and Argentina's close cooperation around the agenda of preventing genocides and crimes against humanity.

International and regional issues were also discussed.

## Armenia's coronavirus crisis worsens

The daily number of coronavirus cases registered in Armenia reached a new record high on May 29, with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan saying that his country now has a higher infection rate than neighboring Iran hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The situation with the coronavirus epidemic in the country is continuing to deteriorate," he said.

Even so, Pashinyan made clear that his government is still not planning to re-impose a nationwide lockdown. He said it will continue instead to promote and enforce social distancing and hygiene rules set by the health authorities.

The total number of COVID-19 cases registered in the country of about 3 million thus reached 8,676. The ministry also reported 7 new fatalities which raised the official death toll from the epidemic to 120.

"I want to stress that in terms of the number of cases per 1 million people we have already surpassed Iran and France and are practically on a par with Russia," Pashinyan told a daily news briefing in Yerevan. "At this pace, we will reach Italy's indicator."

"The reason for this situation is widespread non-compliance with anti-epidemic



rules and our citizens' failure to take epidemiological alarms seriously enough," he said, again calling on people to wear face masks, practice social distancing and disinfect their hands.

Armenians are obliged to wear masks in shops, buses, taxis and all other enclosed public spaces. They must also possess masks when walking in the streets or parks.

The Armenian police claim to have fined or reprimanded in recent days hundreds of people not abiding by this requirement. For their part, sanitary authorities have ordered one-day closures of many restaurants, shops and other businesses flouting other safety rules.

Critics of the Armenian government are skeptical about the effectiveness of this strategy of containing the virus. They say that only a renewed lockdown can slow and ultimately stop the spread of the disease.

Pashinyan again spoke out against re-im-

posing lockdown restrictions now, however. "I hope that there will be such changes in our social behavior that we won't have to revert to a strict lockdown," he said. "None of us wants such a scenario."

"I want to again assure that ... if Armenia's citizens follow the proposed rules -- namely, wear masks, practice social distancing and periodically disinfect hands and don't touch their faces with unwashed hands -- we will very quickly have a drop in new coronavirus cases and reduce them to zero. We will follow this path as long as possible," added the prime minister.

The crisis is putting a growing strain on Armenia's underfunded healthcare system. Faced with the rising number of coronavirus cases, the health authorities stopped late last week hospitalizing or isolating infected people who show mild symptoms of the disease or none at all.

Officials have also warned that intensive care units of the Armenian hospitals treating COVID-19 patients are running out of vacant hospital beds. Arman Hovakimyan, the director of the largest of those hospitals, said on Friday that 95 percent of intensive care beds at the Surp Grigor Lusavorich Medical Center are already occupied.

➔ page 1 Despair soon changed

to enthusiasm. In the

heroic battles of Sardarapat, Bash-Aparan and Gharakilisa, the Armenian nation once and for all earned its worthy place on the world map. The May victories led to the establishment of the Republic of Armenia.

The heroes of Sardarapat, Bash-Aparan and Gharakilisa became the builders of Armenia's independence. Eternal glory to Aram Manukyan, Tovmas Nazarbekyan, Movses Silikyan, Dro, Nzhdeh, Daniel and Poghos Bek-Pirumyans, Yezidi cavalry detachment commander Jhangir Agha! Glory to the Armenian army, the people's volunteer corps fighters and clergy who fought with arms in hand!

On those heroic days of 1918, about 1500 men and women worked hard in the territory of today's Yerablur to erect military fortifications on the initiative of Aram Manukyan. Yerablur was the defensive end of Yerevan. The victorious battle of Sardarapat prevented Yerevan from being captured, and Yerablur became a special place of pil-



grimage years later to commemorate the heroes who gave their lives for the freedom of Artsakh.

Today we are committed to the victorious contribution and message of Sardarapat and Artsakh, we believe that we will have the Armenia of our dream with a just and creative society striving for progress and change, a strong economy and an even stronger and more modern army.

Dear compatriots,

Aram Manukyan used to say. "...you must know that I am powerless without you. The entire Armenian nation is a hero, and our efforts will go in vain unless people want

... to work and save the Armenians from impending doom." Therefore, let us all get down to work for the sake of the Armenia of our dream!

I am convinced that the victorious citizen of the Republic of Armenia will never again allow the loss of statehood or citizenship, the loss of our sovereign rights, the loss of faith and optimism.

The Republic of Armenia must exist on planet Earth forever, the flag of Armenia must fly high forever, symbolizing our spirit and pride, our freedom and sovereignty.

Long live Freedom!

Long live the Republic of Armenia!

Long live the Republic of Artsakh!

Long live the heroes of Sardarapat, Bash-Aparan, Gharakilisa!

Long live the founding fathers of the First Republic!

And long live us and our children who live and will live in a Free and Happy Armenia!



## Austrian Parliament unanimously ratifies the Armenia-EU Agreement

The National Council of the Parliament of the Republic of Austria unanimously ratified the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between Armenia and the EU during the 34th plenary session on May 29, the Armenian Embassy in Austria reports.

Speaking before the ratification, the head of the Austrian-South Caucasus Parliamentary Friendship Group, Gudrun Kugler (NDP) praised the recent democratic changes in Armenia, noting that Armenia and Austria share the same Christian values, and the ratification of the agreement will open up perspectives to further develop bilateral friendly relations.

She stressed that the Agreement is of great importance in establishing a strong legal basis for EU-Armenia cooperation. Kugler noted that the agreement can contribute to the stability and prosperity of the entire region. It will provide an opportunity to improve the investment and business envi-

ronment, which will benefit Armenian and the world.



European companies, including small and medium enterprises.

Gudrun Kugler referred to the Mekhitarist Congregation in Vienna, noting that over the centuries it has been instrumental in preserving Armenian literature and publishing valuable scientific works, as it is one of the largest Armenian cultural centers in

She also mentioned the Armenian Genocide, noting that every year at the Franz Werfel Monument in central Vienna, a tribute is paid to the memory of the 1.5 million innocent victims of the genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire. In this context, he referred to the novel “40 Days of Musa Dagh” by Austrian writer Franz Werfel.

Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Challenberg, Pamela Randy-Wagner (SPÖ), chairwoman of the Austrian Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, spoke in support of the agreement, as did the Austrian Liberal Party (FPÖ, Greens / Grüne, New Austria/NEOS factions.

## Armenian, Greek organizations call on UNESCO to respond to Turkey’s threat to Hagia Sophia status

In Defense of Christians (IDC), the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) and the Hellenic American Leadership Council (HALC) called on UNESCO to respond to Turkey’s continued threat to violate Hagia Sophia’s status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and convert the museum into a mosque.

This week, the Erdogan regime targeted Hagia Sophia— or the Church of the Holy Wisdom – as part of its long-time campaign to convert it into a mosque. Built by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I, the Hagia Sophia served as the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

It was converted into a mosque when Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Empire. Turkey’s first president, Kemal Ataturk, secularized Hagia Sophia and opened it as a museum. In 1985, UNESCO designated the Hagia Sophia – as a component of the



Historic Areas of Istanbul— a World Heritage site.

According to Toufic Baaklini, President and Chairman of IDC, “The Hagia Sophia is one of the most historically Christian sites in the world. It should not be used as a political pawn. Turkey continues to deny the genocide it inflicted on its Christian minorities and it continues to further insult its Christian population by threatening to change the status of this historic Christian cathedral.”

“Erdogan’s move to change the status of Hagia Sophia – the signature Christian

landmark in Constantinople – both reflects and reinforces Turkey’s century-long drive to erase the vast cultural and religious heritage of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians and other now-exiled indigenous Christian nations across the territory of modern day Turkey,” said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian.

“This is worse than a political stunt,” said HALC Executive Director Endy Zemenides. “Erdogan and his officials are dog whistling and appealing to a minority that sees Christianity as an enemy. Hagia Sophia is part of all of our heritage, and UNESCO cannot let Turkey use it to divide, especially as Turkey is set to assume the presidency of another UN body this fall.”

IDC, ANCA and HALC will be launching an advocacy initiative in defense of Hagia Sophia’s World Heritage Status next week.



## ECHR ruling a demand to end Azerbaijan's racist policy against Armenians – MFA

The Republic of Armenia views the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of “Makuchyan and Minasyan vs Azerbaijan and Hungary” as a demand addressed to the authorities of Azerbaijan to restore justice in the dreadful murder of Gurgen Margaryan and end its racist policy towards Armenians, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

To this end, the Republic of Armenia will make consistent efforts in the relevant international bodies.

Today, on May 26, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in the case of “Makuchyan and Minasyan vs Azerbaijan and Hungary,” which is related to the release and glorification by Azerbaijan of Ramil Safarov, who brutally killed Armenian officer Gurgen Margaryan.

In 2004, in Budapest the Azerbaijani officer Ramil Safarov, who was participating in a training course within the framework “Partnership for Peace” programme, murdered Armenian officer Gurgen Margaryan while he was asleep by axing him to death and attacked another Armenian officer Hayk Makuchyan.

Ramil Safarov, who was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Hungarian court, was transferred to Azerbaijan, where enforcement of the sentence should have been continued. However, immediately after the



transfer Ramil Safarov was pardoned and glorified. In this regard the ruling stated: “The court is particularly struck by the fact that, in addition to immediate release, upon his return to Azerbaijan R.S. was granted a number of other benefits, such as salary arrears for the period spent in prison, a flat in Baku and a promotion in military rank awarded at a public ceremony.”

The court has found violations of the 2nd (right to life) and 14th (non-discrimination) articles of the European Convention on Human rights by Azerbaijan.

It's noteworthy that the ruling determined that the violation of those articles was inter-related, thus establishing that the impunity and glorification granted by the highest leadership of Azerbaijan to Ramil Safarov, who was convicted in the brutal murder on the grounds of hatred, had a causing link to the ethnicity of the victims.

This ECHR decision is a ruling against

Azerbaijan's policy of Armenophobia. It not only recognizes, but also adjudicates on the inadmissibility of the promotion on the state level of hate crimes committed against the Armenians by Azerbaijan.

The ruling imposes a legal obligation to Azerbaijan to undertake such actions which will put an end to those violations of the European Convention of Human Rights and redress the effects.

The Republic of Armenia views this ruling of the ECHR as a demand addressed to the authorities of Azerbaijan to restore justice in the dreadful murder of Gurgen Margaryan and end its racist policy towards Armenians. To this end, the Republic of Armenia will make consistent efforts in the relevant international bodies.

The release of convicted murderer Ramil Safarov by the decree of the President of Azerbaijan and his glorification is a disrespect and affront to the standard of civilization and human dignity. Today, when those actions received their legal assessment, we more than ever are determined to prevent hate crimes and protect the security of the Armenian people in the region.

We will continue to work relentlessly to achieve a peaceful and secure region free of hatred.

## Russia's military-technical cooperation with Armenia “very close” – Lavrov

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has hailed the effective military-technical cooperation between Russia and Armenia, RIA Novosti reports.

“We have established a very close, productive work, not even dialogue, when it comes to military-technical cooperation

and the military-technical assistance we provide to the Republic of Armenia, and the work is constant and professional,” he told a press conferences following the meeting of the CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers.

The Minister reminded that a Russian

military base is located in Armenia, which helps ensure stability and security in the region.

“We assess relations as allied, and this applies to relations within the CSTO and our bilateral relations. Military cooperation is very, very close,” Lavrov added.

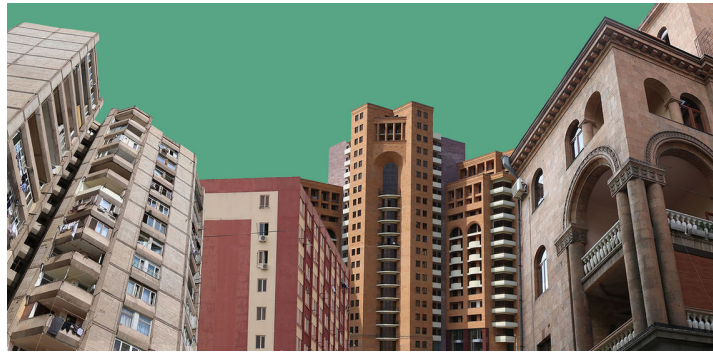
## Armenian Government announces property tax hike as economy sharply contracts

By Mark Dovich

On May 27, Armenia's National Assembly passed an amendment to the country's tax code that will result in a considerable increase in property taxes. Finance Minister Atom Janjughazyan voiced his support for the amendment, arguing that local governments, whose budgets are largely dependent on property tax revenues, stand to benefit from the changes. The amendment enters into force on January 1, 2021 and is to be implemented gradually over the course of a three-year period.

Under the new procedure, taxes will be based on a property's market value rather than its cadastral value, as is currently done. A cadastral value is an estimate of a property's worth calculated by the government, rather than by the market. A property's cadastral value is oftentimes significantly lower than its market value.

Therefore, collecting taxes based on a property's market value, rather than its cadastral value, will considerably raise tax revenues for the government. Janjughazyan himself estimates that the government's property tax revenue could more than



quadruple as a result of the amendment. Currently, Armenia's property-tax-to-GDP ratio of 0.2 percent is one of Europe's lowest. As a point of comparison, Georgia's ratio stands at 1.1 percent, and Russia's at 1.2 percent.

Under the amendment, tax brackets will be created for apartments and individual residential buildings, with higher taxes paid on properties falling in higher brackets. For instance, any apartment valued on the market at 10 million drams (USD 20,000) or fewer will be taxed at 0.05 percent, whereas apartments valued above that figure will be subject to additional taxation beyond the 0.05 percent baseline. To that end, the government has said it will review real estate prices at least once every two years in order to keep the system up-to-date.

Speaking at a government meeting on

May 27, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan defended the changes, claiming that the bracketing system detailed above had been chosen in an effort to increase taxes on holders of luxury properties, while keeping taxes affordable for the average citizen. Pashinyan also highlighted that the amendment had been developed over a considerable period of time and had been drafted as a result of in-depth discussions among numerous government bodies.

The government's move to raise property taxes comes against the backdrop of a deepening economic recession in the country. Largely the result of social restrictions that had been imposed in March to mitigate the public health impact of the ongoing coronavirus crisis, index of economic activity [an indicator close to economic growth] in Armenia contracted 17 percent in April. Economic forecasts for the year expect this recession to continue: the Armenian government is currently predicting a growth rate of -2.0 percent for 2020, while the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has projected a -3.5 percent growth rate for the region overall.

## Citizens of Armenia can travel to China without visa from June 1

Armenian citizens holding ordinary passports will be able to travel to China without a visa from June 1, as the suspension of the visa waiver due to Covid-19 comes to an end.

However, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs urges the citizens of Armenia to plan a visit to China only in very urgent cases.

At the same time, it informs that in case of planning a visit, before leaving for China, the



citizens of Armenia must fill in a relevant statement on their health condition. Besides, upon arrival in China, citizens will be required to spend 14 days in quarantine in a specified place at their own expense.

The visa-free regime between Armenia and China came into force in January this year, but was shortly suspended due to the spreads of the novel coronavirus.



## EU provides 30 motoblocks to 13 rural settlements of Armenia flights to/from Armenia



The European Union continues immediate actions to support the vulnerable farmers of Armenia to overcome the severe

socio-economic consequences of the coronavirus crisis.

“In total 30 high-quality motoblocks have been donated in the Northern regions of Armenia and as our final destination, we have reached Lori to deliver motoblocks to the 41 vulnerable producers from 13 rural settlements,” the EU Delegation to Armenia said in a Facebook post.

The agricultural machinery was provided

in close cooperation with the Lori Regional Administration within the framework of the GAIA Armenia project.

In response to COVID-19 outbreak, the European Union provides a total of €456,500 to support the agricultural sector. The measures are aimed at immediately supporting the most vulnerable farmers and producers in the current situation in the target regions of the project.

## Housing issue of 185 refugee families in Armenia to be solved

The Armenian government approved on May 27 the second stage of the housing program for refugees deported from Azerbaijan, who still live in temporary shelters.

According to the government’s decision, 2.1 billion AMD will be spent to solve the housing problem of 185 families residing in temporary shelters in Kentron, Erebuni, Nor Nork, Arabkir, Davtashen administrative districts of Yerevan.



More than half of 112 refugee families living in temporary shelters in Ajapnyak, Avan, Malatia-Sebastia, Nor-Marash, Kanaker-Zeytun administrative districts were provided with apartments in the first stage.

Problems that arose in the first stage of the program have been explored to ensure a smoother course of the second stage.

## Aircompany Armenia to operate Yerevan-Lyon-Yerevan flight on June 2

Aircompany Armenia will operate a special Yerevan-Lyon-Yerevan flight on June 2, the company’s Deputy Director General Gevorg Khachatryan informs.

Citizens of the Republic of France or those with residence permit can take a flight from Yerevan to Lyon.

It is necessary to register for the flight at the Aircompany’s head office at 10, Vazgen Sargsyan Street in Yerevan or call +374 60 51 77 77 and +374 11 74 77 77.

Citizens of the Republic of Armenia, those with residence permit and family members of an Armenian national can take a flight in the opposite direction.

To register for the flight, it is necessary to call the Armenian Embassy in France (tel: +33753380239), the Permanent Representation in Strasbourg (tel: +33643964105), the Armenian Consulate General in Lyon (tel: +33666763191) and the Consulate General in Marseilles (tel: +33760323678).



## Government approves 19th program as part of its effort to curb the adverse economic impact of COVID-19: Support will be provided to those starting a business from scratch

A Cabinet meeting was held on May 27, chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The Government approved the 19th COVID-19 response action, which seeks to help citizens and businesses overcome the pandemic's adverse economic impact by implementing competitive business plans. The purpose is to support the startups

by providing entrepreneurial knowledge and facilitating access to funding sources, which in turn will help develop innovative business plans.

75% of the funds needed under this program shall be made available as interest-free loans with a maturity of 8 years, and 25% as grants. The program shall be implemented through the ISC Foundation by providing guarantees for preferential lending.

Highlighting the decision, Nikol Pashinyan said: "Providing a corridor for creating a business from scratch is one of the most important points of My Step bloc's electoral platform. The decision comes at the right time as we are facing a global crisis."

The draft law "On Making Amendments and Addenda to the RA Tax Code" was approved. The purpose of the amendment is to move from the real estate tax calculation system based on cadastral values to the real estate tax system calculated on the basis of market values.

In this connection, Prime Minister Pashinyan noted: "This is one of our government's most important reforms. In my opinion, a number of revolutionary changes will take place here. First, the notion of non-taxable real estate is eliminated as a matter of fact. Second, in this context, the concept of non-taxable threshold is to be eliminated.



We say that if a person's property is low, he should pay 100 drams a year. Perhaps this does not matter much from the fiscal perspective, but it implies a huge relationship in psychological and political terms when every citizen has the same relationship with the state. In general, yes, the property tax will increase, and mostly will increase on the property that we conventionally call castles, mansions, and so on. If we look at property taxes these big houses are paying today, we can say that they are symbolic in fact," Nikol Pashinyan said, noting that this will play a key role in promoting an urban development culture in Armenia.

Emphasizing the need to introduce a 4-stage tax reform system, the Prime Minister said: "During this crisis period, the property tax of about 600,000 citizens will decrease in the first year, and will gradually increase from next year. In 2021, we will be in a crisis in terms of property taxes. But I am convinced that the pace of economic growth will be restored and that these increases will be commensurate with our situation."

The Executive approved the government's legislative initiative on the package of draft laws On Amending the RA Administrative Procedure Code and On Amending the RA Law on Administration and Guidelines for Administrative Proceedings.

The draft proposes, in addition to Article 83 of the Code of Administrative Pro-

cedure, to exclude from the effect of suspension the cases of disputing favorable administrative acts for the addressee of the administrative act or the favorable part of the accompanying administrative act.

As a result, the challenge of the administrative act addressed to another person by third parties will not automatically lead to

the suspension of the administrative act.

According to Deputy Minister of Justice Rafik Grigoryan, the problem arose from the dispute over construction permits due to which construction work is suspended. About USD 400-500 million worth of construction work has been suspended so far.

"It turns out that the application of Article 83 of the Code in some cases leads to the abuse of their procedural rights by third parties who are not the addressees of the administrative act, and there is no way to protect the rights of the addressee of the administrative act. The latter cannot mediate to stop or take other actions," the Deputy Prime Minister said, adding that in many cases, these lawsuits are unfounded and are often rejected.

Touching upon the draft package, Nikol Pashinyan noted that following heated discussions it was decided not to allow loopholes for suspending construction. In other words, no construction will be stopped automatically, but every single case will be discussed, and if the complaint is well-founded, then it will be suspended.

"Yes, this draft needs to be adopted soonest possible, because it comes as a strong incentive for capital construction, especially in times of a crisis," the Premier said, noting that its adoption will create thousands of jobs.



## An incredible Armenian who retrieved Armenian orphans from the Syrian desert

By Harut Sassounian  
Publisher, The California Courier

Parnag Shishigyan is a heroic Zeytountsi who retrieved hundreds of Armenian orphans from Arab families in the Syrian desert after the Armenian Genocide. His name is not known to most Armenians. Therefore, it is worthwhile to focus attention on his life and his good deeds. He is buried in the little town of Hovdashad, a few miles outside of Yerevan.

Last month, Zarmik Sargsyan from Yerevan posted on her Facebook page a very moving tribute to Parnag Shishigyan after visiting his grave. The only reference to his unique accomplishment is a booklet published 30 years ago by Hagop Jghlyan whose family he had rescued. The book was aptly titled, “A Life Left in the Shadows.” Sargsyan attempted to take Shishigyan’s life out of the shadows and present him to the public at large.

From April 10 to May 18, 1915, the heroic town of Zeytoun in Cilicia was depopulated. The men were herded into the infamous Ottoman Turkish “Labor Battalions.” On the road to Deir Zor, Syria, 14-year-old Parnag, ignoring the snakes and scorpions around him, spent days cuddling the corpse of his mother who was killed by the sword of a Turkish soldier. He was rescued by a Bedouin Arab from the Shammar tribe, who, after digging a grave in the sand for Parnag’s mother with his dagger, placed the young boy on his horse and took him to his home.

Young Parnag who already knew Armenian, German and Turkish, soon also learned Arabic. Besides herding sheep and camels, Parnag, renamed Ahmet El Jezza, taught the tribesmen how to write in Arabic. He became very popular in the region because of his diligence, humility, and serious demeanor.

Soon, in the course of herding sheep, Parnag came across in the desert many Armenian children adopted by local Arabs. He reminded them of their Armenian heritage and began to write down their names and places of residence in a notebook.

In 1924, 23-year-old “Ahmet”, as a trusted and literate young man, was asked to deliver a herd of sheep bought by wealthy Arabs from Aleppo. Once in Aleppo, he was surprised to see Armenian signs on store fronts and people speaking in Armenian. He was offered a job and a place to stay by local

Armenians, but he turned down the offers, saying he had a family in the desert and could not abandon them.

He then showed to an Armenian shoemaker his notebook listing the names and places of Armenian children living in the desert with Arab families. He had promised himself to gather these Armenian children, help them marry each other and find their relatives, if still alive. It was a very difficult task. Most of the children, having lived with Arab families for several years, did not remember their heritage and did not know that there were other Armenians still in existence. But Parnag persisted despite the obstacles.

The shoemaker Panos, President of the Rescue Committee of Armenian orphans from Arab and Kurdish tribes, was stunned. During the last few months, the Committee had barely rescued a couple of children, and now Panos was seeing an entire notebook full of Armenian names.

After returning to his tribe, Parnag kept sending list after list of Armenian children to Aleppo. The Rescue Committee would then go to the desert, pay off the tribesmen and take the Armenian children to Aleppo or Beirut.

Eventually, the Syrian government allocated two villages in the desert to Armenians. Parnag got married to an Armenian woman by the name of Wadha who later changed her name to Siranoush. Respecting their adoptive Arab parents, they agreed to have the marriage ceremony performed by a Muslim Sheikh. The couple planned to have an Armenian wedding later on. Parnag’s four Arab “brothers” were not happy that he was leaving them to go and settle in the new Armenian village of Tel El-Brak. They divided the family belongings into five. Parnag took with him 100 sheep, five camels, a horse, a rifle, and household items.

Parnag brought the hundreds of Arabized Armenians to his village, gave them Armenian names and arranged their marriages. He organized the young men of the village to collect the bones of Armenian martyrs



from Deir Zor, Raqqa, around the Euphrates and Khabour rivers and the tragic cave of Sheddede. Parnag held a memorial ceremony for the souls of the deceased!

The two Armenian villages in the desert soon prospered. They formed a sports organization and a music band. In 1947, when Parnag became aware of the mass migration back to Soviet Armenia he decided to return to the homeland! He left all his possessions behind except for one thing, his Arabian horse, which he donated to a horse ranch after arriving in Armenia.

Parnag’s family settled in Hovdashad, a village near Echmiadzin where he worked as a farmer. His wife, Siranoush, had five more children in Armenia. Even though Parnag had retrieved hundreds of Armenian children, he always thought of the hundreds of other children who were not, including his wife, Siranoush’s sister.

In the Hovdashad cemetery, there is a statue of Parnag in Arabic attire. The house that Parnag built in 1956 in that village is now like a museum, where his clothes and his photos are displayed. Facebook writer Zarmik Sargsyan recalls that Parnag’s great-grandson Hagop was married in Los Angeles on April 17, 1997, in the presence of his seven siblings. It is ironic that the descendants of the man, who had sacrificed so much to rescue Armenians and moved to the homeland, now live far away from Armenia, in Los Angeles!

Armenians both in Armenia and the Diaspora should visit the village of Hovdashad and Parnag’s grave to pay tribute to the man who retrieved hundreds of Armenian orphans and returned them to their heritage.

Photo: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute

## First WHO/Europe virtual mission provides assistance to Armenia on the shifting of COVID-19 measures

WHO has turned to digital platforms to ensure that, despite travel restrictions, countries in the European Region continue to benefit from timely and tailored support to respond to COVID-19. WHO/Europe's mission to Armenia is the first to take place virtually and follows approximately 60 COVID-19-related missions over the past two months to countries in the Region.

Experts from WHO/Europe, alongside the Robert Koch Institute, worked with Armenian health authorities on assessing the COVID-19 situation and offered advice on the strategy for easing COVID-19 measures. As part of this effort, 400 participants worked together in a virtual space over the course of two weeks.

Recommendations from the support mission for the transition phase

Armenian health authorities have established systems to contain COVID-19 transmission in the country. They focus on identifying, testing, isolating and treating cases, as well as tracing and quarantining contacts.

"Recommendations highlight the importance of ensuring that the country can cope with a possible resurgence of cases once COVID-19 measures are eased", says Adrienne Rashford, Team Lead for Emergency Preparedness and Readiness with the Health Emergencies Programme. "Restrictions should be shifted one at a time, allow-



ing time in between to evaluate the impact of shifting each measure".

Consideration should be given to ensuring that the risk of virus spread is minimized, especially in high-vulnerability settings such as long-term care facilities. Workplaces should take preventive steps by encouraging physical distancing and providing adequate handwashing facilities. The team also noted the need to manage the risk of exporting and importing cases from communities with high risk of transmission.

Communication is crucial during the transition. Timely information needs to reach communities to engage and inform them about the active role they play. Follow-up suggestions include adopting an updated risk communication and community engagement plan to help combat public fatigue and to convey key messages, particularly around the transition.

Knowledge transfer

Nine virtual sessions ran in thematic groups, with health personnel and technical partners willing to adapt and work through

logistical challenges. Due to travel restrictions imposed in the wake of COVID-19, experts can no longer travel to countries to advise on public health, so they have embraced new ways of working.

"It's not just any other meeting, it's an exercise that takes the place of a field visit to the country to provide in-depth technical advice so you need to make sure both sides have good internet access as well as proper back-up support with simultaneous interpreters and a dedicated amount of time," notes Partnerships Officer at WHO Europe, Dr Oleg Storozhenko.

Benefits to this style of working include no need for participants to wear personal protective equipment or, indeed, to travel to another country, as would usually be required by a mission or team of WHO experts supporting national authorities during a public health crisis. Dr Storozhenko highlights the response to this online WHO initiative as a great example of solidarity and goodwill.

Although this is the first remotely conducted technical WHO mission, the idea itself has been in the pipeline for some time. Those involved trust that their methods will also serve as a model for future country missions, highlighting best online practices whilst facilitating efficient knowledge transfer between WHO Europe and countries, both during and after COVID-19.

## Trump breaks US ties with World Health Organization



US President Donald Trump announced on May 29 that the United States will terminate its relationship with the World Health Organization, a move he has threatened throughout the coronavirus pandemic, the CNN reports.

"Because they have failed to make the requested and greatly needed reforms, we will be today terminating our relationship with the World Health Organization and redirecting those funds to other worldwide and deserving, urgent global public health needs," Trump said.

The President said that the "world needs answers from China on the virus. We must have transparency."

Earlier in his remarks, he said that China had not properly reported information it had about the coronavirus to the World Health Organization and said China had pressured the WHO to "mislead the world."

"Chinese officials ignored their reporting

obligations to the World Health Organization and pressured the World Health Organization to mislead the world when the virus was first discovered by Chinese authorities," Trump said.

"Countless lives have been taken and profound economic hardship has been inflicted all around the globe," he added.

The President had previously announced a temporary halt of funding to the WHO and sent a letter to the agency earlier in May saying that the US would permanently pull funding if the WHO did not "commit to major substantive improvements in the next 30 days."



**JOINT STATEMENT  
BY THE THREE  
MOBILE  
OPERATORS OF  
ARMENIA  
25/05/2020**



We have to note that recently conspiratorial, anti-scientific materials related to mobile communication and, in particular, 5G network, and having nothing to do with the reality have been actively circulating throughout the country.

We consider it necessary to inform that only 2G, 3G, 4G and 4G+/LTE Advanced networks are deployed in the Republic of Armenia, for which the Public Services Regulatory Commission of Armenia has provided appropriate frequency ranges to the mobile operators. This information is open and accessible. Network upgrades and expansion are carried out exclusively in 2G, 3G, 4G and 4G+/LTE Advanced networks.

At the same time, the three undersigned mobile operators of Armenia, who operate under the RA legislation and relevant licenses issued by an authorized state body, urge to refrain from disseminating false, inaccurate, scientifically unfounded information that causes unnecessary alarm among citizens, as well as provocative statements that pose a threat to the assets of operators. In the situation caused by the pandemic, the three operators are doing their best to ensure that the

**Viva-MTS Latest News**

Armenian telecom customers always stay in touch with their loved ones, colleagues/partners and important people living abroad, work and learn online, thus preventing the spread of the virus by staying at home. In case of further dissemination of statements containing threats and provocations, the Armenian mobile operators will be forced to turn to the law enforcement agencies. Thank you for understanding.

“UCOM” CJSC  
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**Roof to Collapse to be Restored**



The *Gulakyan* family lives in Khashtarak village of Tavush region, 12 km from the state border. Having a decent house is not just a convenience but a matter of security

for the family. Built over nine decades ago the house has solid foundations and walls, but there is a risk of the roof collapsing. Two years ago, the kitchen ceiling was torn off by heavy spring rains, and threatens



the safety of the family.

*“There was a lot of soil on the roof; roofs were made of earth in the past. The soil got damp and heavier over time. And then, one day the ceiling was ripped off and the soil*



*went down inside the house. It now threatens another room. We are scared. We are not undertaking any*

➔ page 12





works there because the roof needs to be replaced completely,” said the housewife, **Zarineh**.



The homeowner, **Harutyun**, a military serviceman, has been living in his aunt's house with his wife and three daughters for 17 years. He gets worried every time he leaves his family at home when he needs to go out for work. The young-aged homeowner was absent when as the shooting was underway.

There is still a danger of collapse, but Harutyun now knows how to get rid of it. The problem has been presented to organizations cooperating within the framework of the housing program. With the funding of Viva-MTS and the support of the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, the roof will be replaced by the end of the year. Another family living in a remote region will get rid of the problem of years. Zarineh assures that she will support her husband. But meanwhile, she is busy with the education of her daughters, keeping up with the goal of self-development, too. She is now engaged in a distant learning program, and is a role model for her girls.



## “Recharge+” - use now, pay later

Viva-MTS informs that from now on, one can activate the “**Recharge+**” service and continue using Viva-MTS services for up to AMD 1500 instead of AMD 1000 before.

By the way, the AMD 1500 can be used to add to the insufficient sum available on your account balance when activating the “**Viva**”, “**X**”, “**Y**” and “**Z**” tariff plan packages, as well as “**BIT**”, “**Super BIT**”, “**Super 0 Daily**”, and “**Super couple**” services.

To activate the service use “**My Viva-MTS**” app or simply dial \*221#. Download “My Viva-MTS” application on [Play Store](#) / [App Store](#).

The sum provided by the service can be consumed within 30 days starting from the moment of activation. If you wish to manage your negative balance and deactivate the service before the expiry of the 30-day period send \*221\*0#.

The service activation is available only in case of having a positive account balance. The service activation fee will remain AMD 20 as before.

The offer is available till 1 August 2020, inclusively.



## Zvartnots-type Churches of Ancient Armenia

By **Gourgen James Khazhakian**  
Chief Correspondent

“Byzantium has a world-famous St. Sofia (Christian Cathedral, currently in Istanbul (fmr Constantinople), Turkey, a museum to be turned soon to a muslim mosque - **author** ), and Armenia was opposed by a Zvartnots that is a high architectural gem among all Byzantine buildings”, - in this way **Toros Toramanyan**, an outstanding Armenian architect (1864-1934) qualified Zvartnots Temple.

“When the stone statue of King Gagik, keeping in hand model of St. Gregory’s Cathedral, was found in Ani, it became clear that King Gagik copied



the composition of St. Gregory’s Cathedral of Zvartnots built in the VII century, while building the City of Gagkashen in the X century”.

“This was confirmed by Toros Toramanyan’s scientific proofs which seemed just imaginary years before, - that is the three-story composition of the Zvartnots Temple, hence the concept of “Zvartnots-type churches” has appeared”, says **Grigor Nalbandyan**.

Among the monuments of Armenian architecture that have reached us are the churches of the settlements of Ishkhan and Banak (VII century)

built by Catholicos of All Armenians **Nerses IV Tayetsi**, in Lyakit (VII century) in the Kingdom of Aghvank (“Caucasian Albania”), and of St. Gregory (XI century) in Ani. St. Astvatsatsin Church built in the VII century by Catholicos Nerses IV Tay-

one during the restoration.

In 652-658 in the village of Banak, Tayk province, Greater Armenia during the reign of Catholicos Nerses IV Tayetsi, another Zvartnots-type church was built. It was renovated by **Kyurikeh** from Banak upon request of

Prince **Atrnerseh**. The Church stood until the XVII century. At the beginning of the XX century, the two floors of the Church could still be seen. The composition of the Zvartnots-type church was also used in the VII century church of Lakit built in the Caucasian Albania (Aghvank) (currently Kakhi Region, Azerbaijan) which was a simplified replica of

etsi is located in the village of Ishkhan, Tayk Province, Greater Armenia.

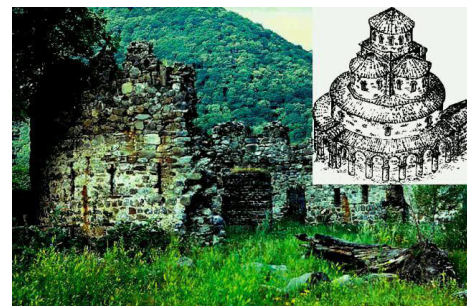
The Church destroyed during the Arab invasions was restored in the IX century by **Saban** from Ishkhan and re-consecrated with Chalcedonian ritual. The inscriptions on the renovated church are in Georgian, due to Georgian worship in the Church and its clergy’s being ethnic Georgians.

Along with the Georgian inscriptions, we find dates written by the Armenian alphabet that testifies presence of the Armenian population of the village. According to some scholars, the



Church was originally a Zvartnots-type structure, and later became a cruciform

Zvartnots.



Gagkashen, Gagikashen or Grigor Lusavorich Temple in Ani: was built in 1001–1010 by the architect **Trdat**, by order of King **Gagik I Bagratuni**, by this reconstructing the model of the ruined Zvartnots in the Capital of Ani.

In 1013, the Temple was severely damaged (due to structural defects), and some parts of it (the both central columns of the apse, the arches of the middle floor, etc.) were fortified.

However, Gagkashen fell down (earlier than the other church buildings in Ani). Later it suffered from the Turkish invasions as well.

## “An Armenian Trilogy,” documentary about music’s Dan Yessian, debuts on Amazon

An Armenian Trilogy, a new documentary about Dan Yessian’s journey from advertising music creator to writing his first classical composition in honor of the victims of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, has been released on Amazon, SHOOTonline reports.

In addition, his three-movement classical composition, “An Armenian Trilogy-Live in Yerevan,” performed by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra, is now available on iTunes, Spotify, and Amazon. This concert is also included as bonus footage at the end of the film. Yessian is the founder of Yessian Music Inc., an international music and sound company responsible for creating original music for TV commercials and programs, movie trailers, video games, theme parks and memorials, including the One World Observatory at the site of the former World Trade Center in New York City.

“When my Armenian church priest asked me to create a piece of music to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, it proved to be a life changing request. I discovered the path my ancestors had taken during this dark time and I began to tell their story through music, then ultimately film,” said Yessian, who is Armenian-American. His film, in surround sound and closed-captioned in English, has been



shown at festivals throughout the U.S. and has won numerous awards including Best Score, Audience Choice and Exceptional Merit.

Yessian initially wrote “An Armenian Trilogy” as a duet arrangement for violin and piano creating three movements: The Freedom, The Fear and The Faith, which debuted in Michigan in 2015. Yessian then took on the immense task of orchestrating his composition for 91 pieces, which was performed at the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra in Armenia in 2017.

The documentary film, An Armenian Trilogy, follows Yessian through his childhood as a budding clarinet player, the early years of his company which was started in a 200-square-foot bait shop in metro Detroit, through to the success of the international company he heads with offices in Detroit,

Los Angeles, New York City and Hamburg, Germany. The film centers on Yessian’s visit to his ancestral homeland of Armenia, where he and his family explore their rich heritage and the composer hears, for the first time, his composition performed by a full orchestra.

Yessian was inducted into the 2018 Adcraft Hall of Fame in Detroit and was recognized for Lifetime Achievement at the Detroit Music awards in 2016. Nowadays, he can be found working alongside his sons Brian and Michael, on campaigns for companies such as United Airlines, Ford Motor Company, Macy’s, McDonald’s, Taco Bell, Nintendo, Disney, Walmart, Toyota and Mercedes-Benz.

Yessian Music has also provided music for many television shows including NBC’s Sunday Night Football, The Voice and America’s Got Talent, ESPN’s College Football and all Major League Baseball, A&E’s Veteran’s Day with A&E and Live PD, PBS’ Sesame Street and other themes and promos on channels including NBC, Disney Channel, HGTV, Lifetime, PBS and CBC. This year Yessian was responsible for preparing a 360 audio experience for Aerosmith’s Las Vegas residency.

## Billboards in Yerevan light up in colors of the Georgian flag on Independence Day

Digital billboards in Yerevan were lit in the colors of the Georgian flag on Georgia’s Independence Day.

The initiative came from the Armenian Embassy in Georgia and Ambassador Ruben Sadoyan.

The day marks the May 26, 1918 adoption of the Act of Independence, which established the Democratic Republic of Georgia in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1917. It is the national day of Georgia.



On this day 102 years ago, Georgia gained independence from the Russian Empire, a part of which it had been since the early 19th century. On May 26 the National Council of Georgia adopted the Act of Independence that gave birth to the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

Armenian President and Prime Minister have congratulated their counterparts on this occasion.



# ARMENIA

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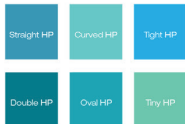
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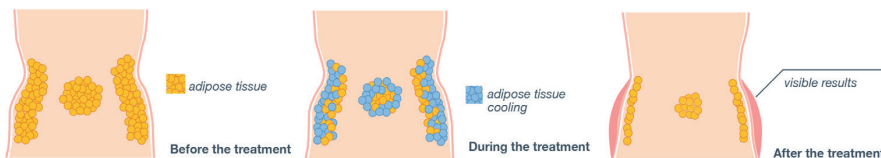
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