

**Armenian earthquake and Jeb Bush`s greatest Christmas gift**



*Jeb Bush, Victor Sukhodrev, Anatoly Mkrtychyan and Suren Harutyunyan  
 Photo: L. Shahzadayan's archive*

Son of former U.S. President George Bush and brother of U.S. President George W. Bush, former Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush (official name is John) brought humanitarian aid to Armenians together with his 12-year-old son George after the devastating Spitak earthquake in 1988. At that time, he was a 35-year-old real estate developer.

In one of his interviews given afterwards, Jeb Bush said that it was “probably the greatest Christmas gift that I could give myself or my own”.

Excited but reserved

Levon Shahzadayan who accompanied the guests during the visit told Mediamax how the newly elected U.S. President’s son and grandson had come to Armenia.

Levon Shahzadayan at that time worked in the USSR Foreign Ministry and he got a posting to the UN Secretariat in the U.S.

When the U.S. President’s son’s delegation was going to arrive in Armenia, Moscow suggested that Levon Shahzadayan accompany Jeb Bush and 12-year-old George.

AmeriCares charity organization was sending aid to Armenia and the guests arrived by one of the cargo planes. AmeriCares was founded by George Bush’s school friend Bob McCauley.

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## Turkey's policy, actions and rhetoric a threat to Armenia's security – FM

RA Minister of Foreign Affairs Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ayman Safadi gave a joint press conference at the MFA

Armenia is ready to establish relations with Turkey without any preconditions, but the process requires two parties, Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan has said.

“However, the policy of the second side is working in an absolutely different direction. The fact of Turkey being a threat gets reflected in the policy it conducts, in its actions and its rhetoric,” Mnatsakanyan said at a joint press conference with Jordan's visiting Foreign Minister Ayman Hsafadi.

“The ongoing blockade of Armenia, the lack of desire to establish bilateral relations, the lack of any step in that direction, the unequivocal military and political support to Azerbaijan in the Karabakh issue pose



a security threat to Armenia,” the Foreign Minister stated.

As for the Zurich protocols [on the establishment of relations], those have been rejected by Turkey, the Foreign Minister stated.

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan refrained from commenting on a recent Nordic Monitor report on Turkey palming a military operation against Armenia.

“I cannot confirm the authenticity of the

report,” Mnatsakanyan said, adding that “it's up to Turkey to do that.”

He, added, however, that “the issue is certainly worrisome, and we'll continue to follow it.”

An unconfirmed report by the Sweden-based Nordic Monitor claims Turkey planned a military operation against Armenia code-named ALTAY.

The report cites a secret memo that reported missing pages from classified documents which detailed the action plan.

The internal memo dated May 23, 2016 and presented to the General Staff by the Directorate of Operations, says some of the pages that included air strike operations against Armenia had gone missing. A legal investigation was launched into the incident.

According to the short memo drawn up by the inspectors to brief the General Staff, the secret plan was finalized on July 13, 2001.

## PM receives Jordan's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan Ayman Al Safadi.

Welcoming the Jordanian Minister's visit to Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan said it would give new impetus and energy to the friendly relations between the two countries. Evoking the historically deeply rooted bonds

between the two nations, Nikol Pashinyan noted that the Government of Armenia is eager to develop multifaceted relationship with Jordan. The Premier highlighted the furtherance of economic exchanges through joint investment projects in the fields of IT, tourism and healthcare.

Thankful for the warm welcome, Ayman

Al Safadi said his country, too, is keen to develop and expand the scope of relations with Armenia. The Jordanian Minister expressed confidence that the fruitful meetings held in Armenia would add momentum to bilateral relations. In this context, the interlocutors stressed the importance of reciprocated high-level visits in the furtherance of interaction between the two countries.

Taking the opportunity, Nikol Pashinyan and Ayman Al Safadi referred to issues of regional relevance, highlighting the maintenance of stability and security in the region, as well as the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

The Armenian Prime Minister thanked the Government of Jordan for its balanced position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process. Prime Minister Pashinyan considered it inadmissible to attribute a religious bias to the conflict and present it as such on international platforms. Concurring with Nikol Pashinyan's remarks, Ayman Al Safadi prioritized the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

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## Jeb Bush's greatest Christmas gift

"He was dressed casual and was accompanied by a large group of people from Moscow. Jeb Bush was excited; one could see he was the first international experience. The excitement was perhaps caused by the tragedy: after the quake, many people in Armenia went crazy - it couldn't but leave him indifferent. On the other hand, the USSR wasn't a friendly state to the U.S.. Anyways, he was a very reserved person and didn't show emotions. The child was also quiet as his father", recalls Levon Shahzadayan.

Jeb Bush left a surprising impression on Levon Shahzadayan.

"I still remember his words. I thought at that time: this is how the U.S. President's son brings up his child.

We visited a little boy in hospital whose legs were amputated. When we went in, Jeb Bush looked at the Armenian boy and turned to his son: "Look at him, how handsome a boy he is, what beautiful eyes he has. If he were born in our family, he would be your brother and the tragedy wouldn't happen to him". His words were sincere, not just for the journalists. It was only us in the room: the doctors, Bush, boy and I".

Little George was entering the hospital rooms, greeting the suffered and handing over Christmas gifts.

"The buildings were destroyed, people walked almost naked and hungry in the streets. The image of the tragedy of the suffered children will always be in my son's and my memory", said Jeb Bush in one of his interviews.



After Spitak, they left for Echmiadzin to see the Catholicos of All Armenians and then entered the Cathedral. The church was empty; they sat silently. The accompanying people left not to interfere. Bush and his son were praying for a long time.

The son and grandson of U.S. newly elected President George Bush were warmly welcomed by Foreign Minister of Armenian SSR A.Mkrtchyan, Chairman of Children's Fund of Armenia, USSR People's Artist E. Hovhannisyanyan, USSR Foreign Ministry associate V. Sukhodrev and associates of U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

John Bush said: "We brought 40 tons of different items - medical equipment, medicine, toys and children's food which was donated by AmeriCares Foundation across the whole U.S.. Thousands of people contributed to this noble enterprise. We were in the airplane while the Christmas was celebrated on the earth. I would like everyone in Armenia felt on that day that Armenians' sorrow was shared by millions of Americans".

Little George, confused by the attention, says to journalists: "I heard a lot of Armenian children suffered from the earthquake. I wish they forgot a bit what they have been through and feel happy about American children's Christmas toys".

U.S. President George Bush's children were received by Catholicos of All Armenians, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos Vazgen I in his office in the evening.

John and George Bush left Yerevan on December 26.

It's hard to say if Jeb Bush often remembers his visit to Armenia, but Armenians never forget him.

Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America grants "A friend of Armenians" title to those who had significant contribution to developing relations with Armenia and Armenians. Jeb Bush, Governor of Florida, was conferred on with that title in 2013.

Jeb Bush and his son's visit to Armenia indeed changed a lot. George Bush's elder daughter Doro Bush Koch writes in "My Father, My President" book:

- The best thing about that was Gorbachev telling me afterwards that when Jeb went to church in Armenia and shed a tear there, it did more for the U.S.-Russia relationship than anything I could possibly imagine, dad recalled".

Ara Tadevosyan, Marie Taryan and Gohar Nalbandyan  
Mediamax

## Charges brought against Armenia's ex-President Serzh Sargsyan

Armenia's ex-President Serzh Sargsyan has been charged with committing a publicly dangerous act stipulated in Articles 38 (complicity) and 179.3.1 (squandering or embezzlement in particularly large amount) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia, the Special Investigative Service informs.

The President is accused of using his official position to organize the execution of a particularly large amount of theft of AMD 489.160.310 from January 25 to February 7, 2013 by a group of officials.

According to the indictment, by the decision of January 24, 2013, the Government of the Republic of Armenia approved the State Assistance Program for the purchase of diesel fuel at affordable prices for agricultural workers, which envisaged to sell 17,041,300 liters of diesel fuel to land users on the basis of applications submitted by Governors' Offices and organizations within the system of the Ministry of Agriculture.

A number of companies, including "Maxhur" and "Flash" LLC, expressed readiness to make a supply within the framework of the project.

As a result of discussions with representative of Maxhur Ltd., which presented the lowest price offer, the officials of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Armenia decided to submit the



data of the listed company as a supplier to the RA Government for approval.

The Special Investigative Service says that ignoring the fact of availability of a cheaper diesel fuel supplier, Serzh Sargsyan used his official position to ensure that "Flash" LLC is named winner.



## No Progress reported in ‘tough’ Armenian-Azeri talks



(RFE/RL – Yerevan) - The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan appear to have made no progress towards a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh during what the Azerbaijani side described as “tough” talks held in Slovakia’s capital Bratislava on December 4.

According to international mediators, they only agreed to meet again early next year “to intensify negotiations on the core issues of a peaceful settlement.”

Armenia’s Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and Azerbaijan’s Elmar Mammadyarov, who met the sidelines of an annual ministerial conference of OSCE member states, exposed lingering disagreements between the conflicting parties in their public statements made on Thursday.

“My meeting yesterday with my Armenian counterpart lasted for three and a half hours,” Mammadyarov said at the conference. “These were quite tough negotiations. Unfortunately, we still have unresolved problems.”

Mnatsakanyan did not comment on the outcome of the talks in his speech at the gathering. Instead, he charged that further progress in the peace process is hampered Azerbaijan’s “maximalist positions” and “preconditions”

The Armenian minister pointed to an official Azerbaijani “memorandum” outlining Baku’s position on the Karabakh settlement which was circulated at the Bratislava conference.

The document demands “immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan.” It also says that Karabakh’s predominantly Armenian population can only be granted “the status of self-rule ... within Azerbaijan.”

By contrast, Mnatsakanyan insisted on Karabakh residents’ right to “maintain and determine a status outside the jurisdiction, sovereignty or territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.”

“Azerbaijan must assume direct commitment to recognition of

the right to self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh by way of legally binding free expression of the will of the people living in Nagorno-Karabakh, the outcome of which should have no limitation,” he said.

“The government of Armenia will never engage in any activities which can violate the right of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to freely determine their political status or can deprive them of the ownership of this process,” he added.

The United States, Russia and France, the three world powers co-heading the OSCE Minsk Group, have repeatedly stated that Karabakh’s internationally recognized status should be determined through a “legally binding expression of will.” This is one of the main elements of their so-called Madrid Principles of the conflict’s resolution first put forward over a decade ago.

The proposed plebiscite would be held after the liberation of virtually seven districts around the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast which were fully or partly occupied by Karabakh Armenian forces during the 1991-1994 war.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and senior U.S. and French diplomats attending the Bratislava conference reaffirmed this peace formula in a joint statement on the Mammadyarov-Mnatsakanyan meeting issued on Thursday.

“We welcome the intention of the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia to meet again in early 2020 under Co-Chair auspices to intensify negotiations on the core issues of a peaceful settlement and to facilitate further talks at the highest level,” read the statement.

“The Co-Chair Heads of Delegation stress once again that the status quo is unacceptable and there can be no military solution to the conflict,” it said. “We therefore call on the sides to engage in good faith substantive negotiations without artificial delays or conditions.”

The mediators also noted a significant decrease in ceasefire violations in the conflict zone and called on the parties to take “additional concrete humanitarian and security measures.” Those include the expansion of a small OSCE mission monitoring the ceasefire regime along the Karabakh “line of contact” and the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. Mnatsakanyan reaffirmed Yerevan’s strong support for that.

Lavrov met with Mammadyarov and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku earlier this week. After those talks, he spoke of “possibilities of achieving a compromise” on Karabakh.

Lavrov also expressed hope that his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts will issue a joint statement with the mediating powers as a result of the Bratislava meeting. The resulting statement was signed only by the Russian, U.S. and French officials.

## Armenian Parliament passes 2020 Government Budget

The Parliament of Armenia adopted the 2020 state budget draft. 77 MPs voted in favor of the draft, while 37 voted against.

Earlier the opposition Prosperous Armenia and Bright Armenia factions announced that they will vote against the budget draft.

The debate of the budget draft on December 5-6 was attended by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and the Cabinet members.

“According to the 2020 budget draft it is expected to have 4.9% economic growth which will allow to have manageable risks. The tax revenues next year will be more



by 0.3%. In 2020 entries of 1 trillion 602 million AMD in tax revenues are expected, which is an improvement by 0.3 percentage

point. And in fact, instead of the expected 1 trillion 464 billion AMD tax revenues this year, it is expected that next year we will have higher tax revenues. The current expenditures will decrease to some extent compared to the great extent expected this year. In 2020 deficit is expected to be 2.6%”, finance minister Atom Janjughazyan said during the debate of the budget draft.

The debate of the budget draft has launched in the Parliament on November 13.



## Resolution on recognizing Armenian Genocide blocked in US Senates

For the third time the US Senate refused to debate the N150 Resolution put forward by Senators Bob Menendez and Ted Cruz on recognizing the Armenian Genocide, Voice of America reported.

According to the rules of procedures of the Senate the legislators should first of all vote for including the resolution to the agenda and then to start the debate and the voting.

“Do we recognize the Genocide that has taken place, or should we allow a country like Turkey to decide our own views, perception of history, moral duties and public opinion?” Senator Menendez said in his remarks, again raising the issue of the Armenian Genocide recognition resolution.

He recalled that the US House of Representatives recently adopted a resolution on recognizing the Armenian Genocide with majority of votes and urged his Senate colleagues to follow this example and vote for the N150 resolution.



“The Armenian Genocide has taken place and this is a fact. Denying it means to deny one of the most horrific historical crimes”, the Senator said.

Republican Senator Ted Cruz also joined his colleague, stating that the Armenian Genocide is an undeniable fact, and the United States has a moral duty before the memory of the innocent victims. Criticizing Turkey’s ongoing policy, the Senator expressed confidence that the recognition of the Genocide would not have any negative effect on the US-Turkey relations.

“The Genocide is already recognized by 12 NATO member states. Yes, Turkey is NATO’s ally, but the allies need to tell the truth to each other”, Ted Cruz added.

However, Republican Senator Kevin Cramer prevented the Senate from voting on a resolution, adding that today it’s not the right time to pass that legislation.

“I don’t think there’s a single member of the Senate who doesn’t have serious concerns about Turkey’s behavior”, Cramer said, adding, “At the right time, we may pass it”.

Menendez disagreed, noting Erdogan recently visited Washington and nothing had changed. He promised to come to the Senate chamber once a week to raise the issue.

“I am not going to cease until we do what is morally and principally right”, Menendez said, as quoted by Reuters.

## EU support to Armenia reforms increased after 2018 revolution, says Federica Mogherini



The European Union will “continue to work for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, encouraging and supporting dialogue at the highest level be-

tween Armenia and Azerbaijan”, said High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament

Plenary debate on eastern neighborhood developments.

“We fully support the mediation efforts and the proposals of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, including through the work of our Special Representative”, Mogherini said about the NK conflict settlement process.

“The [Armenian] government has committed to substantial democratic reforms, in line with our [Comprehensive and Enhanced] Partnership Agreement. In fact, Armenia considers the Agreement with the EU as a true blueprint for reforms, and we are proud of that. Our support to the reform process has increased after last year’s political revolution, including to the ongoing justice reform. And I am confident that this partnership will become even closer in the years ahead”, she added.

## “Salesforce in Armenia” Executive Meeting: SystroTech Takes a Step towards Innovation

SystroTech, in partnership with SYSTRONICS held an executive meeting on December 2 at Golden Palace Hotel.

The speaker was Burag Peksezer, Salesforce Account Executive (SME |

Armenia, Greece & Cyprus) invited from Ireland, who introduced Salesforce CRM to the

participants, demonstrated the platform and answered their questions. Among the participants were representatives from leading Armenian companies in financial,

hospitality and retail industries as well as deans and heads of departments from

Yerevan State University, Russian-Arme-

nian University and American University of

Armenia.

The aim of the meeting was to boost innovation by initiating trilateral cooperation among SystroTech, universities and businesses through Salesforce.

Salesforce an American cloud-based software company headquartered in San

Francisco, California. Salesforce is one of the leading CRM companies who have built

AI in the standard product and is offering industry specific solutions.

SystroTech has been in the international

market implementing and supporting

ERP and CRM systems for over 18 years.

The mission of SystroTech as an official Salesforce Partner in Armenia is to promote innovation and bring cloud technologies

and #1 CRM platform to Armenia.

The CEO of SystroTech, Zareh Tutunjan mentioned that our country should

follow the steps of global digitalization and it is important to have qualified specialists

who can enter the job market after graduation.

## New diamond-cutting factory opens in Armenia



PRESS OFFICE OF THE

A new diamond-cutting factory was opened in the city of Abovyan on December 2. The ADM Diamond occupies an area of 3,600 square meters and has 700 employees.

About \$ 3.5 million was invested in the implementation of the project. The company plans to increase export to \$100 million in 2020.

The company operates on its own raw

materials, using India's experience to allow diamond faceting to be performed anywhere and at any distance.

According to the head of the company, the application of this experience in Armenia enables to create jobs in remote regions

where there is a problem of employment, thus solving the most important social issue.

The company also has a workshop for the disabled, which will be expanded in the future.

Attending the opening ceremony was Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. He attached importance to the development of the sector and noted that the government is ready to provide appropriate support within its capacity





## *Dr Takeo Kanade, the 2019 Laureate of the Global IT Award of Armenia: “I’m Honored and Humbled!”...And...”There is a Lot of in Common between the Armenians and the Japanese”*

**World famous scientist believes in the bright future of the country that is committed to its high-tech sector development**

*By Gourgen James Khazhakian,*  
Chief correspondent

This year the Award Committee decided to “inaugurate” the Laureate with his appearance at the “Silicon Mountains” Forum held in Yerevan on 4-5 December (See a story on the Forum on p.p. 9-10).

Dr Kanade had a presentation entitled “Many-Camera Technologies”.

Your author was especially interested in use of this technology in entertainment – sports and stage, autonomous driving, virtual tourism, medicine and some other areas.

What is the main essence of this technology?

According to Dr Kanade, by observing things happening from many viewpoints will be at least one of the strongest ways to get the whole picture of the event. If you have too many pics, then it is too much for a human being to consume, and computer will help you to organize those many images into a consistent data structure, so you have a right picture, right understanding of what is happening. So that is the power of multi-view, i.e. multi-camera technology.

**-Dr Kanade, however, there is a kind of contradiction between your nice technology and human’s privacy... How to find a good balance between this two?**

-It is always a good question...And the explanation is too long...But...

The fact is I’m not taking a new pic, I’m taking only pictures from existing cameras, so in that sense I’m not increasing any possibility of invading



your privacy...

And I’m not proposing to put cameras in your bathroom or bedroom...

**-What was your first reaction when you heard you are the Laureate ?**

- Surprise, and having learned two things - the previous Laureates are outstanding people, and so I am honored



to find myself in their list, and probably the most important thing the Award is given by the country that is committed to hi-tech...

So if I can do anything in the area of younger people education, I will be happy to do it in my capacity.

**- And what about your plans to work with Armenia?**

-You know, I do not know by this very moment...But I heard a lot of good things about Armenia, the tal-

ents here...Visiting universities and industry here I definitely would generate some collaboration.

**-You are the second Japanese Laureate as few years ago Dr Tsugio Makimoto was awarded** (who stayed with his spouse for one more week in Armenia at his own to know better our country). **Do you**

**know Dr Makimoto personally?**

-I did not contact Dr Makimoto personally, but I’ve read his book on Armenia, and also I’ve read a book (in Japanese) by Dr Hrant Poghosyan, Armenia’s Ambassador to Japan.

*Mr Kanade’s inventions in computer-assisted surgery systems, face-recognition and tridimensional recording technologies have gained him the name of one of the foremost specialists in the sphere. In 2008 Dr Kanade received the Bower Award and Prize for Achievement in Science.*

*Dr Takeo Kanade is also the author of the concept of “virtualized reality”; according to this concept multiple cameras capture reality from different angles combining into a single system model allowing for the virtualized recreation of that image from every angle.*

*Takeo Kanade has been behind the establishment of the Doctoral Program in Robotics opened at the Carnegie Mellon University in 1989, and later also the establishment of the Master’s Program in the same discipline. Dr Kanade has around 300 academic publications and holds 20 patents.*

The Highlights correspondent talked a bit to **Ralph C. Yirikian**, Founding GM of Armenia’s leading telecom operator, VivaCell-MTS, the General Partner both of the GIT Award and the Forum:

*“...That is a great thing when “giants”, especially in ICT area, visit*

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## ...The 2019 Laureate of the Global IT Award of Armenia

Armenia and bring their vision to share it with our specialists, especially the young ones... And so we have been taking big lessons from them that encourage us to dream and make those dreams true...”, Mr Yirikian said.

And what about his impressions from Dr Kanade’s presentation we’ve just



seen ?

Ralph C. Yirikian: *“I’ve got familiar this technology when watching British/European football games. Today the VAR, Video Assistant Refery works via numerous cameras set around the field. As Mr President just said, sometimes that VAR troubles us the fans as it declares a goal cancelled by registering minor breaches. That is good indeed to have the advanced, cutting-edge technologies, from one side, but from another it means our life has been changing”.*

**-Virtual reality, in particular, virtual tourism Dr Kanade presented was impressive...**

-Yes, a person sitting at his own home can thru PC/Internet feel him/herself inside an event that is taking place in real time thousands miles away as it was in case of Osaka Expo demonstrated by Dr Kanade, but here a problem of privacy rises, and, alas, it seems a permanent one, you know... (See Dr Kanade’s explanation on this issue above – **The Highlights**).

By the end of the first day of “Silicon Mountains” Forum Takeo Kanade met with the Armenia’s High-Tech Industry Minister **Hakob Arshakyan** at the Ministry.

According to the Ministry’s press service, the Minister presented the guest activities of the newly established Ministry, the Country’s technological priorities, plans and goals.

Minister Arshakyan touched

upon the potential of Armenian specialists, stressed the achievements of Armenian engineers in radiophysics, microelectronics and other fields yet in the Soviet times. Hakob Arshakyan also mentioned traditional importance of the education for every Armenian family, emphasizing that education and talent in our country are important parts of the ecosystem. Armenia has no gas, no oil, but it has talents that can develop technologies. The Minister presented Armenian model of the technology education development. He also shared with the Japanese scientist plans for infrastructures development, provided details on “Engineering City”, engineering laboratories



established at the National Polytechnic University of Armenia (ANEL), emphasizing that the technology sector, number of technology companies are growing rapidly in Armenia. Dr Kanade has thanked for choosing himself as the tenth GIT Award Laureate, noting that he is admired and has great respect towards a country that is making efforts to become a regional technology hub. World famous scientist shared with the

Minister Arshakyan technology education experience existing in Japan and US, and provided some details on the projects being implemented, mentioning that he is looking forward for his meeting with students at the Polytechnic University with the great unpaintence.

### At the VivaCell-MTS

Dr Takeo Kanade, VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager, member of the Award Committee Ralph Yirikian, Deputy Minister of High-Tech Industry of Armenia Armen Abroyan, Award Committee Coordinator Dr Hovik Musayelyan and the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to Japan H.E. Dr Hrant Poghosyan spoke at the press conference.

It should be stressed that in 2009 VivaCell-MTS invested AMD 20 million for the establishment of the Award. Overall, in the period between 2010 and 2019 the Company’s contribution to the Award has exceeded AMD 200 million.

Dr Takeo Kanade: *“I am honored to be the tenth Laureate of this prestigious global IT Award given by the Republic of Armenia. And I am humbled to be included in the list of the great names in IT industry. My field is Artificial Intelligence, AI, in particular, use of computer vision for intelligent robots. Probably, I was the first who has done the autonomous driving back in 1995, from Pittsburg to San Diego which we named “No Hands Across America”. And I am very glad to see today the autonomous driving is inside, the intelligent help of driving is with us already, and even the complete autonomy is inside.*

*And as I see, the AI is very popular today, at the same time my kind of field is to work with the physical world, not just information bites, we the humans are physical beings.*

*I hope that the fact this Committee kindly selected myself would be a great encouragement for young people who are working by now in this very important field and them who yet will come... I know that this great Award has been given to the industry people, and I am the first rep of the academic world. And for this I also should thank the Committee as it encourages the academic people to contribute to the world...”*

**To be continued**



# “Silicon Mountains” Forum in Yerevan: a Unique ICT Conference to Become Annual...

**By Gourgen James Khazhakian,**  
Chief correspondent

On December 2, at the press conference held at the RA Ministry of High-Tech Industry it was announced that “The Silicon Mountains” Forum dedicated to “Smart Solutions” in ICT industry as well as the developments expected in upcoming years on global scale will be held in Yerevan on 4-5 December. The organizers were the Union of Employers of ICT (UEICT) in partnership with the Ministry of High-Tech Industry. The General Partner of the event was VivaCell-MTS.

It was stated that ICT companies and experts invited in the frame of the Forum will share their vision on the challenges that the world is expected to face in the upcoming years, as well as their understanding of the role of ICT in various branches of economy with the representatives of educational institutions, start-ups, and best students. Participants of the forum were to discuss issues related to cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and modern challenges in ICT education.

The B2B meetings planned for December 5 were intended to embrace issues of practical applications of “smart solutions” in economy.

The 2019 Laureate of the Global IT Award Japanese scientist Dr. Takeo Kanade was declared the honorary guest of the Forum.

RA Deputy Minister of High-Tech Industry **Armen Abroyan**, highlighting the importance of the conference, noted that it refers to high-tech industry, where questions related to Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Information Technologies (IT), ICT and their utilization in the economy will be discussed.

*“The idea behind this joint initiative is to meet the need of having in Armenia an established forum hosting local and international information and communication technologies companies and renowned experts, in order*



*to brainstorm on the perspectives of the developments in the sphere. “Silicon Mountains” is expected to become an umbrella for identifying Armenia’s potential in the ICT sector, finding potential areas of cooperation and integrating our competencies and unique*



*capabilities, with an aim to sustain innovations and technological breakthroughs, and most importantly, to do it by working in synergy,” VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said.*

**Armen Baldryan**, the President of the Union of Employers of ICT said the international forum, the first in its kind, is devoted to smart solutions in ICT, challenges of education, and the advantages of economic digitalization, and is the pilot event of the anticipated annual international congress in the sphere.

*“This technological event is a specific preparatory step ahead of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution for Armenian*

*companies. By uniting local and international companies, top managers of leading enterprises, and private companies as well universities under one roof we keep the pace with the expected changes in global economy and find ways to take advantage of the opening opportunities getting better positions in the new spheres of economy,” Armen Baldryan said.*

*“There is no coincidence that our event is named “Silicon Mountains”. It*



*highlights the vision and goals of our Union. The event once again enables us to put our country on the world technology map. A country where not only ICT solutions are used at the internal market, but we also offer our solutions abroad. The event will feature speakers from top global organizations, with overall seven technology presentations. I think we are going to have very interesting and busy two days,” said **Eduard Musayelyan**, Executive Director*



## ...“Silicon Mountains” Forum in Yerevan



of UEICT.

So on 4 December the Forum was started in Yerevan's Matenadaran Hall.

In his welcome remarks **Yervant Zoryan**, Chief Architect and Fellow at Synopsys, Inc, President of Synopsys Armenia explained why they called the Forum “Silicon Mountains” and what is its uniqueness.

**Armen Sarkissian**, the President of Armenia and **Hakob Arshakyan**, Minister of High-Tech Industry of Armenia delivered welcoming remarks.

In his interesting and all-encompassing speech RA President **Armen Sarkissian** noted that he totally supports all efforts aimed at the development of the technological area. *“I like the title of the conference – Silicon Mountains. I believe, steps taken today are “hills” which one day will merge and become Silicon Mountains,”* the President noted.

According to the President, artificial intelligence, new technologies, machine learning, and mathematical modeling are areas of absolute priority for Armenia. *“I have a dream and a vision of making Armenia a port in the ocean of global information data. We always say that Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai and other places are successful. One of the reasons – they have seaports. Going back 150 years, the great part of the world trade was done not through the Silk Road but through seaports. Those countries, which had opportunities to build seaports, gradually became industrial hubs. However, to have harbors is not enough; it is necessary to work hard, unite, and concentrate. We need to concentrate our forces and efforts to move in the right directions. These directions are new technologies, artificial intel-*

*ligence, machine learning,”* the President underscored. *“There is a great competition today in the world, and it is necessary to exercise huge efforts to win and to build one's own port in the area of information. Together we can do a lot, with our compatriots abroad and here in Armenia, as a state, as a government, as a private sector, together with the Armenians who are already engaged in that industry, and together with the Armenians who will be engaged tomorrow. I believe that we can have Silicon Mountains because we are a hardworking, honest, and flexible nation which survived hardships and found the right solutions. It*



*is in our DNA. Everyone should chip in. When we unite, make efforts, and form our common absolute priority – development of new technologies, believing that Armenia can and will become one of the world's leading technological countries, only then we will succeed.”*

President Sarkissian spoke also of the Presidential initiatives, stressing in particular the ATOM (Advanced To-



tomorrow) program which is aimed at the development of modern technologies and science in Armenia. *“This initiative might become another “hill” which will create a “mountain”, Pres-*

ident Sarkissian added and noted that it is envisaged to bring together in the framework of the ATOM major international technological companies such as IMB, Dassault systemes, THALES Group, Elettronica, and together with them to create scientific and research centers. *“To be able to do that, it is necessary to establish ties with those companies, becoming not just consumers of their products but their partners in the creation of new technologies, in the areas of artificial intelligence and machine building. This is the mission of ATOM. We should bring them to Armenia, establish laboratories where new technologies will be created. All mentioned companies note that would like to work with us in the research and education areas,”* the President of Armenia said.

President Sarkissian invited the participants of the conference to participate to a number of conferences to be held in Armenia next year, including the famous Armenian Summit of Minds which in particular will be dedicated to artificial intelligence and geopolitical risks. Our country is also to host the 6th STARMUS international festival. In the framework of the event, Nobel Prize winners, world-famous scientists, astronauts, and musicians will visit Armenia. The festival aims at making science approachable, at inspiring younger generations and making scientific work attractive for them.

Another event planned for the next year is Horasis-China international conference dedicated to China. In the framework of this conference nearly 300 Chinese companies will be presented in Armenia.

*“I wish great success to you all. I hope that together we will be able to make our common dream – making Armenia a big international port of virtual and information area in the world ocean of global information - come true,”* President Armen Sarkissian underlined.

**To be continued**



## WB Group to help attract investments and empower women entrepreneurs in Armenia

The World Bank Group, in partnership with the United Kingdom’s Good Governance Fund, is launching a new advisory program in Armenia to help the government implement reforms, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), and foster female entrepreneurship to spur business growth and job creation, WB member International Financial Corporation informs.

Since 2008, attracting FDI to Armenia has been challenging due to the global economic crisis, the recession in Russia—the country’s main trading partner—and regulatory and institutional issues. Armenia also faces disparities between women and men in entrepreneurship, reducing economic output to an equivalent of 14 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

The two-year program—titled Economic Growth and the Economic Empowerment of Women in Armenia—will be implemented by IFC, a member of the World Bank Group. The program will work in two directions: it will advise the government on attracting FDI through targeted investment promotion and measures to improve investor confidence; and it will help improve the economic outcomes of women entrepreneurs by improving their business competencies and access to business networks.

Tigran Khachatryan, Armenia’s Minister of Economy, said: “I congratulate all of us for the launch of this advisory program in Armenia. We appreciate the support of our international partners in such important areas as the improvement of the business environment and investment promotion, where they can help us formulate the Government’s reform agenda. We are committed to continuing reforms to provide new opportunities for private sector growth in



the country.”

Ambassador David Moran, British Chargé d’Affaires to Armenia, said: “The UK is pleased to support this project through our Good Governance Fund. It will help the Armenian Government in its work to improve the enabling environment for business and encourage investment to stimulate economic growth. Particularly important is the focus on the economic empowerment of women—a goal at the heart of the UK’s approach to development.”

IFC’s advice will support the growth of high-potential sectors, including identifying promising sectors for targeted FDI promotion. The project will help strengthen relevant legal and regulatory frameworks and help the government identify export potential for selected products. To ensure that women entrepreneurs can benefit from business environment reforms, the project will also help analyze key constraints for women in business and build capacity of women entrepreneurs. “

Higher private sector productivity boosts growth and job creation. Investment climate reforms are key to encouraging private sector development and empower women entrepreneurs,” said Jan van Bilsen, IFC Regional Manager for the South Caucasus. “We will work with Armenia’s government to help ease doing business here as part of the World Bank Group’s broader effort to help Armenia create a more competitive investment climate.” Since Armenia became an IFC member and shareholder, IFC has supported projects in the country totaling around \$700 million, mainly in energy, the financial sector, property, and manufacturing.

## Survey: 76% of Syrian-Armenians want to stay in Armenia



High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan met with a group of Syrian-Armenians at the Aleppo NGO office, noting that he was ready to collaborate, listen, and make their voices heard more frequently.

After the meeting, the Commissioner spoke about the need to learn from the repatriation experience of Syrian-Armenians and Iraqi-Armenians and difficulties sur-

rounding integration.

Currently, there are 10 to 12 thousand Syrian-Armenians living in Armenia. Issues surrounding housing, education, health and labor protection are particularly important to the community.

Despite this, according to a study by



Aleppo NGO 76% of Syrian-Armenians

surveyed want to stay in Armenia, and 90% want to own property in their homeland.

Syrian-Armenians stressed the importance of reestablishing the interdepartmental commission addressing their problems, to which Zareh Sinanyan responded that work was being done to that end. The Commissioner emphasized that preserving Western Armenian is also a principle concern.

At the end of the meeting, 46 Syrian-Armenian and Iraqi-Armenian students were awarded scholarships within the framework of the “Bright Future of Syrian-Armenian Youth” program. The project is implemented by Aleppo NGO with funding from the World Council of Churches Round Table Foundation.

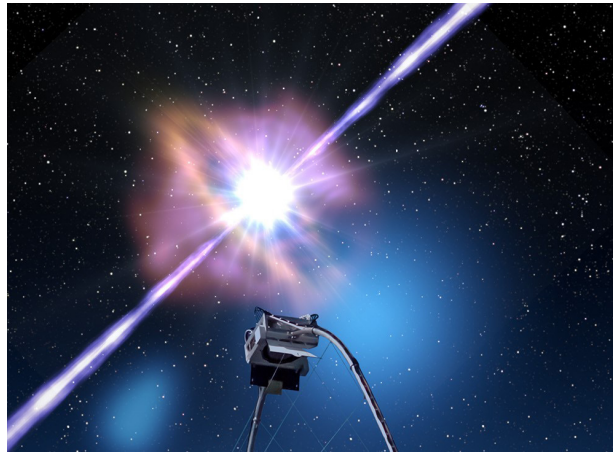
## Armenian physicists involved in discovery of highest-energy photons from Gamma-ray bursts

*After a decade-long search, scientists have for the first time detected a gamma-ray burst in very-high-energy gamma light. This ground-breaking achievement by MAGIC provides critical new insight for understanding the physical processes at work in the most powerful cosmic explosions.*

Gamma-ray bursts (GRBs) are the most violent explosions in the Universe, suddenly appearing in the sky, about once per day. They are thought to result from the collapse of massive stars or the merging of neutron stars in distant galaxies.

The first GRB detected by the MAGIC telescopes, known as GRB 190114C, reveals for the first time the highest-energy photons measured from these objects. On January 14th, 2019, a GRB was discovered independently by two space satellites: the Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory and the Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope.

The event was named GRB 190114C, and within 22 seconds, its coordinates in the sky were distributed as an electronic alert to astronomers worldwide, including the MAGIC Collaboration, which operates two 17m diameter Cherenkov telescopes



located in La Palma, Spain. An automatic system processes in real time the GRB alerts from satellite instruments and makes the MAGIC telescopes point rapidly to the sky position of the GRB in just 50 seconds after the beginning of the GRB.

“After more than 50 years since GRBs were first discovered, many of their fundamental aspects still remain mysterious”, says Razmik Mirzoyan, the Spokesperson of the MAGIC Collaboration.

“The discovery of gamma-ray emission from GRB 190114C in the new, TeV window of the electromagnetic spectrum shows that the GRB explosions are even more powerful than thought before,” he added.

Two papers in the Nature issue of 21 November describe the detection of the gamma rays up to TeV energies with MAGIC and the indication that inverse Compton scattering is the responsible process at work.

Armenian physicists from the A Alikhanian National Lab participated in both the MAGIC and the H.E.S.S. collaborations. Initially, the technique of arrays of Imaging Atmospheric Cherenkov Telescopes (IACTs) had been pioneered at Mt. Aragats in the 1980s. A setup was planned around a large cosmic ray array, named ANI. However, due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, construction of the array stopped and two leading physicists, Felix Aharonyan and Razmik Mirzoyan, moved from the Yerevan Physics Institute to Germany.

With colleagues from the Max Planck Institutes in Munich and Heidelberg, Armenian physicists launched the first system of European ACTs on La Palma, Canary Islands (HÅGRÀ). The IACT technique, and the Armenian design, proved to be very successful and later larger telescopes were commissioned on La Palma (MAGIC) and in Namibia (H.E.S.S.).

## Two new books to tell children about Charles Aznavour and Aurora

Two children’s books will introduce young readers to Charles Aznavour and Aurora Mardiganian. The books are part of the “My Little Book” series initiated by comics-producing company HY Pictures.

The book “Charles” tells about the legendary French-Armenian artist Charles Aznavour. The idea for this book came last year, when Nicolas and Christina Aznavours got acquainted with the first books in “My Little Book” series at the Dilijan Winter Fair.

The book has been created in cooperation with the Aznavour Foundation. It features



episodes from the singer’s childhood, about his first steps in the youth theater. It also presents scenes from film shootings and a meeting with Edith Piaf, which became a turning point in Aznavour’s life. Little readers will get to know Charles as a little boy who was able to overcome many difficulties and become a famous artist and

great benefactor.

The “Aurora” book is about Arshaluys Mardiganian, a survivor of the genocide who was destined to become the first Armenian film star in Hollywood silent cinema. The fate of Aurora was not an easy one, and the book’s authors do not shy away from talking to a small reader in an accessible language about loss and difficulty. The book’s heroes will inspire the little reader to overcome difficulties with their boldness and unwavering will.



## Armenian State Symphony Orchestra to perform in London on January 14



The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra (ASSO) will perform at the Barbican Hall in London on Tuesday, 14 January with its 2019-20 Artist-in-Residence Maxim Vengerov.

Artistic Director Sergey Smbatyan, who founded the ASSO 14 years ago, conducts the Orchestra in a programme which includes the long-awaited European premiere of Armenian composer John Ter-Tatevosian's Symphony No. 2 *The Fate of Man* (1959). They will also play Composer-in-Residence Alexey Shor's Barcarolle for Violin and Orchestra and Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 with Vengerov as the soloist.

This performance is a rare opportunity for UK audiences to hear one of Europe's newest and most distinctive symphony orchestras, under the charismatic leadership of Sergey Smbatyan, who founded the ASSO at just 18-years-old.

The 32-year-old conductor has not only been recognized in Armenia, being recently awarded the title of "Honoured Artist of the

Republic of Armenia" by the President of the Republic of Armenia, but has also received international recognition with the title of Chevalier of the "Order of Arts and Letters", granted by the Minister of Culture and Communication of France, making him the youngest and only Armenian recipient of this title.

One of Smbatyan's and the Orchestra's key missions is to share Armenian culture and history internationally. Their decision to bring Ter-Tatevosian's work to new audiences stems from a wish not only to introduce people to Armenian composers and their music, but to spread the message of hope that many Armenians have felt since the recent revolution.

Armenian composer and violinist John Ter-Tatevosian (1926-1988) based his second symphony on Soviet writer Mikhail Sholokhov's text "The Fate of Man", which tells the emotionally fluctuating tale of a soldier enduring trialling and devastating times throughout the Second World War, but who eventually finds hope in adopting a young boy, also ravaged by the horrors of war. This premiere comes at a pivotal point in Armenian history following their 2018 revolution, alongside continuing, and occasionally violent, tensions with some of their neighboring countries.

Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the ASSO, **Sergey Smbatyan**, said: "*The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra is comprised of extraordinary musicians, not*

*just in their virtuosity and dedication to the highest level of music making, but in their belief in music to spread messages of hope and joy, even in turbulent times. We hope our first ever Barbican performance, and indeed the rest of the European tour, brings a beacon of light from Armenia to the rest of the world.*"

Having worked tirelessly with the Orchestra for 14 years, Smbatyan has been praised for his conducting of "great dignity and nobility" (Hessisch Niedersächsische Allgemeine) and continues to guide the Orchestra from strength to strength as it approaches its 15th year.

The Armenian conductor champions innovation in music. In 2015 he founded the [24/04 World Orchestra](#) to commemorate the centenary of the Armenian genocide, comprising of 123 musicians from 43 countries. Earlier this year, Smbatyan also brought members of the ASSO together with musicians from all five continents for the World Congress of Information Technology, where they performed the first ever piece of music [composed by artificial intelligence](#) in real-time.

The ASSO's Barbican performance is part of a European tour, which takes the Orchestra to cities across Germany, Austria, Russia, the Czech Republic and the UK. The ASSO is supported by the European Foundation for Support of Culture (EUFSC), who are organizing this European tour.

## Armenia issues stamp on 150th anniversary of Komitas



A souvenir sheet with one stamp dedicated to the theme "Prominent Armenians. 150th anniversary of Komitas" has been cancelled and put into circulation by "HayPost" CJSC in the premises of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

The souvenir sheet with a nominal value of 1,100 AMD is printed in "Cartor" print-

ing house in France with a print-run of 20 000 pcs. The author of the souvenir sheet's design is designer Gevorg Poghosyan.

The postage stamp depicts an Armenian Archimandrite (Vardapet), composer, singer, ethnomusicologist, musicologist and a teacher Komitas (1869-1935), Soghomon Soghomonian.

The postage stamp also depicts the logo of UNESCO as the 150th anniversary of Komitas was included in the 2018-2019 UNESCO calendar of renowned people and important events.

The souvenir sheet depicts the Holy Etchmiadzin Cathedral as well as the signature of Komitas.

The souvenir sheet was cancelled by the

Minister of High-Technological Industry of the Republic of Armenia Hakob Arshakyan, the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Arayik Harityunyan, the Chief Executive Officer of "HayPost" CJSC Haik Avagyan, Bishop Anushavan Zhamkochyan, the President of the Union of Philatelists of the RA Hovik Musayelyan.



## Zodiac Weekly Forecast



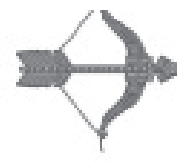
### Aries (March 20–April 19)

You have one or more issues that need to be balanced. You need to care for yourself financially but you may also want to share resources with another. Being fair is the key. If you short yourself you will resent it. If you cheat on the “other” you will feel guilty. Resentment or a sense of guilt is a sure sign that the scales must be reset.



### Leo (July 22–August 21)

You may be surprised to discover something about yourself or your money/debts that you have been avoiding. We are all in denial sometimes. Don't waste time on a guilt trip. Now that you know, it is time to face the facts and collect the threads of a solution. This is not a good time to have a sexual encounter with someone unknown to you.



### Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)

Something unnoticed related to your home or property may suddenly break through your consciousness as in need of repair. It may be in the pipes or related to water. Do not make a major property purchase this week. If not “physical” property, you may discover that your relationship to a family member is not what you thought. Either way, repair is necessary.



### Taurus (April 20 -- May 20)

Jupiter augurs' improvements and good fortune through any or all of the following: legal or ethical issues, contacts with foreign lands or people who live at a distance, the internet, higher education, teaching, publishing and long-distance travel. Events of the next year will broaden your perspective on all of life and expand your sense of connection to a larger circle.



### Virgo (August 22–September 22)

The time has come to relax and let yourself remember how to play. All types of creative work will be enhanced and those with children will find greater satisfaction and a more rewarding relationship in the next year. Those who want children or a new love affair will likely be granted their wish. Give yourself permission to explore new possibilities in creative self-expression.



### Capricorn (December 21–January 19)

You are subject to the temptation of a power trip. This does not “make friends and influence people”. You may very well have the right idea, but people in general will resist you if you force it on them. Think in terms of persuasion. No threats, no coups of power.



### Gemini (May 20–June 20)

For the next three weeks you will want to experiment with and try on multiple points of view. You probably will be taking “polls” among friends and associates. Your capacity for objective thinking grows during this period and it is generally a good time to discuss relationship issues with partners and close associates.



### Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Events of this week trigger your sense of compassion and draw you into the need to assist in the healing of another. As you live into this experience, you will discover that having compassion also heals you. Your spirit is lifted. Don't ignore the call..



### Aquarius (January 20–February 17)

New experiences are brought to you by others in your world. Even if a change was not in your conscious awareness, it is needed for your personal growth, or it would not be happening. Do not play the blame game here. It is possible that you overstepped your boundaries and now someone is pushing back.



### Cancer (June 21–July 21)

You may not be feeling quite comfortable with yourself this week. It appears your mind is in conflict with your feelings. Do the best you can to deal with this issue up front, perhaps by journaling or discussing it with a friend. Keep in mind that it is not a mandate for you to settle on a decision right now.



### Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

This is a week of intense feelings, whether up or down. For many, prevention of depressed feelings can be handled by noticing emotional highs and gently bringing ourselves back to center. When we allow the trapeze swinging highs, it is inevitable that a fall must happen. None of us can remain up, so a down must balance it.



### Pisces (February 18–March 19)

This is not the time to display your work or your goals. You may not be feeling your best and that makes it hard to present things in the finest possible light. You need some extra rest during this period. Beware the temptation to step into a grand savior role now. People often do not appreciate the effort.



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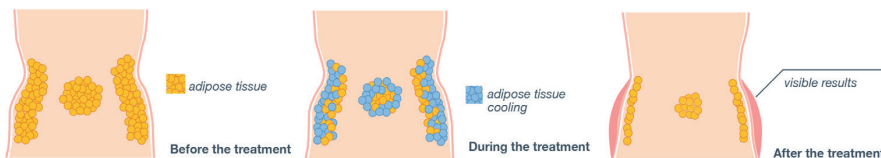
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