

Estimations of Armenia's economic growth are pretty solid compared to neighbors – World Bank



Economic growth in Armenia will remain faster than in neighboring Georgia and Azerbaijan in the coming years, according to the World Bank.

In its latest Global Economic Prospects report released on January 9, the bank revised upwards its economic growth forecasts for Armenia. By contrast, it expects even slower growth in Georgia and Azerbaijan than was forecast in its previous report released in June.

The Armenian economy has expanded robustly since 2017 after years of sluggish growth that followed the 2008-2009 global financial crisis. According to government data, economic growth reached 7.5 percent in 2017 but slowed to 5.2 percent in 2018, which saw a dramatic regime change in the country. Government officials say it accelerated to more than 7 percent last year.

The World Bank estimated Armenia's 2019 growth at 6.9 percent, sharply up from 4.2 percent projected by its June report. It said the Armenian economy will grow by 5.1 percent this year and slightly faster in 2021 and 2022. The bank predicted lower growth rates in June.

According to its latest report, the Georgian economy grew by 5.2 percent in 2019 and should expand by 4.3 percent this year and slightly faster in 2021 and 2022. The bank sees much slower growth in hydrocarbon-rich Azerbaijan: 2.5 percent in 2019, 2.3 percent in 2020 and 2.1 percent in the following years. These figures represent downward revisions of the bank's previous GDP projections for the two South Caucasus states.

Two years ago, the World Bank upgraded Armenia's status from a "lower middle income" to an "upper middle income" nation. The official poverty rate in the country fell from 29.4 percent in 2016 to 23.5 percent in 2018.

The robust growth allowed Armenia to surpass Georgia and nearly match Azerbaijan in terms of GDP per

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Nikol Pashinyan offers condolences to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Iranian President Hassan Rohani

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan extended condolences to Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky and IRI President Hassan Rouhani over the tragic plane crash near Tehran.

The message to the President of Ukraine reads:

“Dear Mr. Zelensky,

I was deeply saddened to learn that an Ukraine International Airlines plane crashed near Tehran.

On behalf of the Armenian people and



on my own behalf, I extend my deepest condolences and sympathy to the vic-

tims’ families and friends. In these difficult times, we are with the friendly people of Ukraine.” The message to the President of Iran runs as follows:

“Excellency,

I was deeply saddened to learn of the tragic January 8 plane crash near Tehran that left dozens dead. On behalf of the Armenian people, I offer my sincere condolences to you, to the victims’ families and the friendly people of Iran.”

National Security Service operates specialized division for safeguarding foreign investments



The National Security Service (NSS) of Armenia has a specialized division whose mission is “to combat corruption occur-

rences which are obstructing foreign investments”, the NSS said.

It said the division is functioning as part of the Department of Economic Security and Anti-Corruption which was formed in October 2018 as result of reforms.

The division is studying the overall investment picture and is revealing the sectors having risks of corruption.

“The National Security Service Department of Economic Security and Anti-Corruption is willing to provide continuous

support to the government’s steps in the direction of development of favorable investment environment, ensuring equal competition conditions and encouraging investments in the real sector of the economy”, the NSS said in a news release.

It urged any individuals or companies carrying out foreign investment programs to contact the NSS at +37415579193 or anti-corruption@sns.am in the event of facing any corruption manifestations in the state system during their operations.

Meeting on Armenia’s energy security held in Government

On January 9, a meeting on the energy security of the Republic of Armenia was held in the Office of Government, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan.

Tigran Avinyan noted that the emerging regional challenges compel the authorities to assess and analyze the risks and threats that may arise in the energy system in order to identify ways of dealing with them. Issues related to energy self-sufficiency, increased power supply reliability, intro-



ducing new infrastructures, and ensuring sustained operations in the power network

were discussed during the meeting.

The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, other government agencies outlined the potential development scenarios, the steps to take in each scenario and the sequence of actions.

In conclusion, the meeting participants emphasized that Armenia is prepared for any development scenario and the state can ensure energy system’s self-sufficiency and sovereign activities.

Armenia reaffirms neutrality on U.S.-Iran standoff



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reiterated on January 8 that Armenia will steer clear of any “anti-Iranian” and “anti-American” actions after the latest upsurge in tensions between neighboring Iran and the United States.

Pashinyan discussed with senior Armenian officials the fallout from the assassination of prominent Iranian General Qassem Soleimani. A photograph of the meeting posted by him on Facebook showed that Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan,

Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan and the Armenian army chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Artak Davtyan, were among those officials.

Pashinyan gave no details of the meeting in the social media post. “The situation in the region is worrying,” he wrote instead.

“Our position remains the same: Armenia will not be drawn into anti-Iranian actions, Armenia will not be drawn into anti-American actions, and our hope and appeal to our friends Iran and the U.S. is to immediately

embark on negotiations to prevent a further deterioration of the situation,” he added.

Pashinyan made a similar statement on Sunday following a phone conversation between Mnatsakanyan and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Mnatsakanyan urged Tehran and Washington to de-escalate their tensions. He also offered condolences to his Iranian counterpart over Soleimani’s death.

Yerevan was quick to express serious concern after Friday’s U.S. strike in Iraq which killed the commander of Iran’s elite Quds Force as well as other Iranian military officials and their Iraqi allies. But unlike Russia, Armenia’s main ally, it stopped short of explicitly condemning the assassination.

Soleimani’s killing raised fresh fears in Yerevan of a direct military conflict between the U.S. and Iran which could further complicate Armenia’s transport and trade links to the outside world. Armenia’s top diplomats and military officials discussed potential consequences of the crisis at separate emergency meetings held on Friday.

US-Iran conflict stepping into strategic dimension – Ruben Safrastyan

The first stage of the conflict between the United States and Iran is over, Ruben Safrastyan, Director of the Oriental Studies Institute of the National Academy of Sciences, told a press conference at Sputnik Armenia on January 10.

He considers that the tactical stage is over, and the conflict will now move to a strategic dimension, should the US refuse to withdraw troops from the region.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran has pledged to do its best to put an end to the presence of American troops in the Middle East. This is an important strategic goal that will lead to essential consequences,” Safrastyan stated. As for the US, he said, the goals are not that clear-cut.

He further elaborated that while Trump has pledged to cut its military presence worldwide, he fails to implement the promise as the opinion is not shared by the “establishment.”

According to him, the world is stepping into a new stage of inter-

national relations, where a single state, namely, the US, will not be able to spread its influence in different parts of the world.



Ruben Safrastyan says the Middle Eastern region will still be in turmoil over the coming two years.

Authorities complete corruption probe of Serzh Sargsyan

(RFE/RL - Yerevan) - An Armenian law-enforcement agency has concluded a criminal investigation into former President Serzh Sarkisian, insisting that it had enough evidence to bring corruption charges strongly denied by him.

The Special Investigative Service (SIS) indicted Sarkisian a month ago. It said that he “organized the embezzlement by a group of officials” of 489 million drams (just over \$1 million) in government funds allocated in 2013 for the provision of subsidized diesel fuel to farmers.

The SIS claimed that Sargsyan interfered in a government tender for the fuel supplier to ensure that it is won by a company belonging to his longtime friend, rather than another fuel importer that offered a lower price. The ex-president rejected the accusation as politically motivated.

The SIS announced on January 10 that it has completed the investigation and sent the high-profile case to prosecutors for formal approval. Such an endorsement would pave the way for Sarkisian’s trial on embezzlement charges carrying between five



and eight years in prison.

Sargsyan’s lawyer, Amram Makinian, said he has already familiarized himself with materials of the case.

“The accusations are baseless, fabricated and aimed at subjecting Mr. Sarkisian to political persecution,” he told RFE/RL’s Armenian service. “The case lacks relevant and credible evidence that can prove his alleged deeds.”

Makinian said the case is based on false incriminating testimony given by a single individual. He did not deny that that person is former Agriculture Minister Sergo Karapetyan.

Karapetyan and Sargsyan were reportedly brought face to face and interrogated by SIS investigators later in December. The

former minister has still not made any public statements on the case.

Echoing statements by the former ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) still headed by Sargsyan, Makinian claimed that his client was prosecuted in retaliation for his public criticism of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The 65-year-old ex-president, who ruled Armenia from 2008-2018, accused Pashinyan’s government of jeopardizing democracy and stifling dissent in a November 20 speech at a congress of the European People’s Party held in Croatia. He had kept a low profile since resigning in April 2018 amid mass protests against his continued rule led by Pashinyan.

Pashinyan has repeatedly implicated Sarkisian, his family and political entourage in corruption both before and after coming to power in the “Velvet Revolution.”

Some of Sargsyan’s relatives, cronies and political allies have also been prosecuted on corruption charges. One of his two brothers fled Armenia shortly before being indicted in June 2018.

Iran admits ‘unintentionally’ shooting down Ukrainian plane

Iran has admitted “unintentionally” shooting down a Ukrainian passenger jet, killing all 176 people on board, the BBC reports.

An investigation found that “missiles fired due to human error”, President Hassan Rouhani said. He described the crash as an

“unforgivable mistake”.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran deeply regrets this disastrous mistake. My thoughts and prayers go to all the mourning families,” Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said.

The military said the jet flew close to a sensitive sight belonging to Iran’s Revolutionary Guards and was then mistaken for a hostile aircraft.

“Human error at time of crisis caused by US adventurism led to disaster,” Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif tweeted.

Iran previously rejected suggestions that it was responsible for the crash.

The downing of Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752, on Wednesday, came just hours after Iran carried out missile strikes on two airbases housing US forces in Iraq.

The strikes were a response to the killing of senior Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani in a US drone strike in Baghdad on 3 January.



US House votes to limit Trump war powers on Iran

The US House of Representatives has approved a largely symbolic resolution seeking to limit President Donald Trump's ability to make war on Iran.

The measure passed the Democratic-run chamber 224-194, but faces an uphill climb in the Republican-held Senate.

It aims to mandate congressional approval for any conflict with Iran, except in cases of an imminent attack against the US.

Neither the US nor Iran has declared plans for further military action.

Iran this week fired missiles at Iraqi bases housing American forces, injuring no-one, after the US last week killed a senior Iranian commander in a Baghdad drone strike.

Thursday's measure directed the president to "terminate the use of United States



Armed Forces" against Iran unless granted congressional authorization.

It offered an exception when necessary to "defend against an imminent armed attack".

Even if the House measure cleared Congress, it would not face a potential Trump veto because it is known as a concurrent resolution, which does not require a presidential signature.

Man arrested in Armenia over Iran-related fake news



The Armenian National Security Service has revealed the identity of the person, who disseminated false information claiming Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan congratulated Donald Trump on launching "successful" campaign against Iran.

A Facebook user named Diana Harutyunyan claimed on January 3 Pashinyan had congratulated Trump on killing top Iranian

military commander Qasem Soleimani.

This false news was reposed by Azerbaijani and Iranian media outlets.

The man running the fake account has been detained. He has confessed to having created the page in 2018 to post politically motivated information.

"I made the latest post about Nikol Pashinyan's so-called congratulation to Donald

Trump to discredit the authorities, as I consider that keeping former President Robert Kocharyan under custody is unfair," the man said in a video published by the National Security Service.

He added, however, he could not have imagined the post would be widely disseminated, causing harm to the interests and national security of the Republic of Armenia.

The man said he regrets and apologizes for the deed.

"This is the case when the false "freedom" of speech poses a threat to our national security. The authors of the news and their motives need to be clarified," Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in a Facebook post on Saturday.

The Prime Minister added that Iran and the United States are friendly countries and Armenia cannot be drawn into anti-Iranian or anti-American actions.

Following Iran-EAEU FTA, trade between Armenia and Iran rises



The free trade agreement between the EAEU and Iran has had a significant impact on Armenia-Iran bilateral trade, ARMENPRESS reports head of the Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce Hervik Yarijanian

told IRNA news agency.

Hervik Yarijanian said that the Iranian and Armenian parties are using tariff discounts in line with the agreement.

He went on to say that the volume of trade with Armenia during the pe-

riod of the agreement entering into force has significantly increased. He clarified that Iranian products are now cheaper than those of Turkey, which give Iran an advantage in the Armenian market.

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capita last year. The International Monetary Fund forecast recently that Armenia's GDP per capita, worth an estimated \$4,530 in 2019, will also exceed Azerbaijan's by the end of 2020.

Economist say the Armenian dram's relatively stable exchange rate is another reason for this trend. Unlike the national currencies of Azerbaijan and Georgia, the dram has avoided a major devaluation since the collapse of international oil prices which began in late 2014.

By Sargis Harutyunyan

Yarijanian noted that the major item exported from Armenia to Iran is red meat. Iran also exports polymer raw materials, machinery, industrial gas, leather to Armenia.

Earlier "Tehran Times" wrote that despite of the resumption of the U.S. sanctions on Iran, Armenia preserves and expands economic relations with Iran.

The FTA between Iran and EAEU entered into force on October 27, 2019

Armenian citizens can visit 62 countries without visa

Armenia is ranked 81st (up from 84th last year) in the latest Henley Passport Index.

The index is the original ranking of all the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.

Armenian citizens can visit 62 countries without visa.

The ranking is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which maintains the world's largest and most accurate database of travel information, and enhanced by ongoing research by the Henley & Partners Research Department.

For the third consecutive year, Japan hung



on to its lead. Japanese citizens can enter 191 countries either without a visa or a visa on arrival. Singapore dropped down to second place with a score of 190.

Meanwhile, South Korea and Germany

lost one rank, moving down to third place. Passport holders from those countries don't need to bother with visas in 189 destinations.

Armenian airports report 6% increase in passenger flow in December 2019



In December 2019 the two airports of the Republic of Armenia served 238,066 people in total, thus exceeding the indicator of the same month of 2018 by 6%.

As compared to December 2018, a 6% increase in passenger

flow was observed at “Zvartnots” International Airport of Yerevan in the 12th month of 2019. In December 2019 “Zvartnots” served 226,786 passengers against 213,953 of the past December.

As for “Shirak” Airport of Gyumri, in December 2019 it served 11,280 passengers, while this indicator was 10,535 in December 2018. Thus, there has been a 7.1 % increase.

In December 2019 passenger flow at two of airports of Armenia was 3,169,144 people, which exceeds the indicator of the same period of the previous year by 10.9 %.

In January-December 2019, at “Zvartnots” and “Shirak” airports there has also been recorded an increase of 13.7% in the number of takeoff-landings, as compared to the same period of the previous year.

Armenia raises baby bonuses, child benefits



The Government of Armenia has raised the amounts of baby bonuses and child benefits with the purpose of improving the demo-

graphic situation.

Under previous regulations, the baby bonus for the first child was 50,000 drams, and 150,000 drams for the second child.

By the new amendments, the baby bonus for both the first and second child will be 300,000 drams. The decision will come into effect from July 2020.

The Cabinet also approved another decision on also raising the child benefits for children up to 2 years of age. The amount has been increased from 18,000 drams per month to 26,500.

The regulation covering the benefits envisages doubling the amount for rural areas in the event of the mother being employed.

IMF: Armenia ahead of Georgia and Azerbaijan in terms of real GDP growth

Armenia is ahead of Georgia and Azerbaijan in terms of real GDP growth.

According to IMF data, Armenia saw 4.76% growth in 2019, while the number stood at 4.63% and 4.72% for Georgia and Azerbaijan respectively.

Gross domestic product is the most commonly used single measure of a country’s overall economic activity.

It represents the total value at constant prices of final goods and services produced within a country during a specified time period, such as one year.

Armenian prosecutors appeal release of adoption scam suspects



Prosecutors have appealed against court decisions to release the director of Armenia's main maternity hospital and two other individuals accused of arranging illegal adoptions of Armenian children by foreigners.

The hospital chief, Razmik Abrahamyan, his deputy Arshak Jerjeryan, the director of a Yerevan-based state orphanage, Liana Karapetyan, and the two other suspects were arrested in mid-December as part of a criminal investigation launched by the National Security Service earlier in 2019.

In a November statement, the NSS claimed to have found evidence that three dozen Armenian children were illegally adopted by Italian nationals who paid hefty

bribes. In particular, it said, in 2016-2018 several officials used threats, blackmail and lies to convince over a dozen pregnant (and presumably unmarried) women to abandon their expected children.

According to the statement, immediately after their birth the children were taken to state-run orphanages whose senior employees later arranged their adoption by foreigners through forgery of their medical records and other violations of adoption rules set by the state. The NSS said that members of the crime ring made sure that Armenian citizens could not adopt the babies.

Another law-enforcement agency, the Investigative Committee, brought corresponding criminal charges against the five

suspects. They all were released from custody a few days later, however.

In particular, a Yerevan district court refused to allow investigators to hold Abrahamian in pre-trial detention. The other detained individuals were freed on bail.

A spokesman for the Office of the Prosecutor-General said on Thursday that it has asked Armenia's Court of Appeals to overturn the lower court decisions relating to Abrahamian, Karapetyan and another suspect. He said the prosecutors may also appeal against the release of the remaining suspects.

Most of those individuals are understood to deny the accusations of bribery and illegal separation of children from their mothers or child trafficking leveled against them.

Abrahamian, 76, was already charged in April with giving a bribe to then Deputy Health Minister Arsen Davtyan. Unlike Davtyan, who was reportedly caught red-handed in his office, the veteran doctor was not arrested at the time.

According to government data, a total of 54 Armenian children were adopted by foreign nationals, most of them Italians and Americans, from 2016-2018.

Armenia joins the Council of Europe's drug policy expert body, Pompidou Group

Armenia has become the 40th member of the Council of Europe's Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs (Pompidou Group).

The Government's decision takes effect from 1 January 2020. Paruyr Hovhannisyan, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the Council of Europe, sent the official letter to this effect to the Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić on 7 January 2020.



The Pompidou Group is the Council of Europe's drug policy co-operation platform established in 1971 at the initiative of the then French President Georges Pompidou.

It promotes a balanced approach in the response to drug use and illicit trafficking in drugs, supporting both demand and supply reduction. The Pompidou Group offers a forum for open debate, exchange of experiences between its member States and, as a platform for science and evidence-based innovation, it links policy, research and practice.

Senate Adoption of Genocide Resolution Upsets Newly-Elected Patriarch of Turkey



By Harut Sassounian

I responded last month to the interview given by the newly-elected Patriarch of Turkey, Bishop Sahak II Mashalyan, to a Turkish newspaper in which he had criticized the adoption of the Armenian Genocide Resolution by the U.S. Senate.

Since then, the Armenian world was disturbed that the Patriarch has continued giving interviews to the Turkish media, making pro-Turkish and anti-Armenian comments. As I have written before, it is understandable that the remnants of the Armenian community in Istanbul are hostages in the brutal hands of the Turkish regime. Consequently, we should express some understanding for their questionable pronouncements. Nevertheless, not every statement is made under duress. Some of their negative statements are made of their own free will, without any pressure from the Turkish government. Sometimes, certain Armenians in Turkey make anti-Armenian statements either to protect their own business arrangements with Turkish officials or to preserve their seats by endearing themselves to the Turkish authorities. Therefore, one should not automatically jump to the conclusion that we should refrain from criticizing their pro-Turkish statements just because they live in Turkey. It all depends on the circumstances of the statement and the extent to which an Istanbul Armenian attacks Armenians and their political demands.

After giving interviews to two Turkish newspapers – Milliyet and Sabah – Patriarch Mashalyan continued to be the center of attention of the Turkish media. He told the Aksham newspaper on January 2 that Diaspora

Armenians and Istanbul Armenians have no connection with each other, and that the Diaspora has remained 100 years behind.

Patriarch Mashalyan added: “All minorities in Turkey agree that we live in our most comfortable period under the reign of President Erdogan.” The Patriarch seems to have forgotten that, for the last 12 years, the Armenian community was not allowed to elect a replacement Patriarch after the comatose state of the previous Patriarch. Erdogan’s government was also the one that banned the participation of several Turkish Armenian clergymen in the patriarchal election, simply because they were serving in parishes outside of Turkey. Patriarch Mashalyan most probably would not have been chosen if the other candidates were allowed to participate in the election.

“Ever since the period of the Ottoman Empire, the problems of minorities have been exploited to interfere in the internal affairs of Turkey. We do not want this issue to be the reason why Turkey suffers losses in international politics. We are the citizens of this country. Any word against this country hurts us too,” the Patriarch told Aksham newspaper.

Furthermore, the Patriarch of Turkey stated that “the Armenian Diaspora has no connection with us. 1915 and its subsequent memories have been transmitted through generations. They have seen that this issue at least preserves their unity and creates a negative collective consciousness. A collective consciousness has been created based on a tragedy. They do not wish to lose it. But we remained on these lands after those events. We chose to live together with the other elements. The Diaspora has remained 100 years behind.... There is a difference between the way we understand Islam and the way the Diaspora understands it. In reality, the people are much softer. They remember on April 24, and forget it until the next April 24.

Continuing his anti-Armenian crusade, Patriarch Sahak II told the Turkish NTV on January 2 that the decision of the U.S. Senate approving the Armenian Genocide Resolution “hurt me.” The Patriarch also stated: “We are not the Diaspora. We have always been here and stayed in this country. After the bitter events of 1915, we chose to stay here.

We lived for 105 years differently from the Diaspora Armenians. They existed with the 1915 trauma with bitter memories which they passed from generation to generation. We survived that trauma. We did not forget it, but we survived it. The magic of living together has taken place.”

Patriarch Sahak II has had a controversial past with various odd incidents. But I prefer not to dwell on those issues right now. It is not pleasant to attack a high-ranking Armenian clergyman. I just want to quote briefly from the Patriarch’s 2017 writing: “I gave the church my life, my youth and my masculinity. I do not have a family. For six years, I lived in a 20 meter square room in the Patriarchate.”

The statements made by Patriarch Sahak II to the Turkish media, at the very beginning of his term in office, even prior to his ordination, are not a good sign. Many Armenians, both inside and outside Turkey, were complaining that his rival, Archbishop Aram Ateshyan, was too subservient to the Turkish authorities. While that kind of behavior is somewhat understandable, given the oppressive nature of the Turkish authorities, the newly-elected Patriarch has far exceeded his rival’s submissive conduct.

Patriarch Sahak II’s self-demeaning words to the Turkish media are simply the repetition of the Turkish denials of the Armenian Genocide and rejection of the recent recognition by the U.S. Senate. Furthermore, by aligning himself with the Turkish government, the Patriarch is distancing himself and the Turkish Armenian community from the Diaspora, just as Turkish officials have banned Turkish Armenian clergymen serving in the Diaspora from participating in the patriarchal election.

Patriarch Sahak II is living in the honeymoon stage of his new position. However, as we have seen in the past, the Turkish government can at any moment tighten the screws on the local Armenian community. When that happens, it is the Armenian Diaspora that will come to the rescue of the Turkish Armenian community, ignoring the Patriarch’s unwelcome words against the Diaspora!

Furthermore, I am mindful that the Patriarch will use Diaspora’s critical statements to score points with the Turkish authorities.

Armenian nuclear scientist Areg Danagoulian and colleagues voted 2019 Arms Control Persons of the Year



Professor Areg Danagoulian and colleagues at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) were selected as the 2019 Arms Control Persons of the Year through an online poll that drew participants from over 100 countries. The annual contest is organized by the independent, nongovernmental Arms Control Association.

Prof. Danagoulian and his team were nominated for their work developing an innovative new nuclear disarmament verification process using neutron beams. This process addresses the fact that parties to arms control treaties more often destroy delivery systems than warheads (e.g., the U.S. dismantling B-52 bombers for compliance with START).

This leaves large stockpiles of surplus nuclear weapons, increasing risks of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism. Instead, the neutron beam test authenticates the warheads' isotopic composition without revealing it, enabling a verified dismantlement of nuclear warheads.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association remarked, "This innovation paves the way for more effective arms control agreements, inspections, and enforcement. Professor Danagoulian's MIT team has brought the best science to arms control and provided a creative solution that can reduce nuclear threats and enhance security."

This year, 10 individuals and groups were nominated by the Arms Control Association staff and board of directors. All of the nominees demonstrated extraordinary leadership in advancing effective arms control solutions for the threats posed by mass casualty

weapons during the course of 2019.

This contest is a reminder of the diverse and creative ways that dedicated individuals and organizations from around the globe can contribute to meeting the difficult arms control challenges of today and the coming decades. It is a hopeful way to close out 2019 and begin 2020.

Online voting was open from Dec. 12, 2019, until Jan. 8, 2020.

Previous winners of the "Arms Control Person of the Year" are:

- 4,000 Anonymous Google Employees whose open letter to company leadership led to Google ending its work on "Project Maven" with the Pentagon (2018);
- Diplomats from Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, and South Africa, and Costa Rica who secured the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (2017);
- Tony de Brum and the government of the Marshall Islands (2016);
- Setsuko Thurlow and the Hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, (2015);
- Austria's Director for Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Ambassador Alexander Kmentt (2014);
- Executive-Secretary of the CTBTO Lassina Zerbo (2013);
- Gen. James Cartwright (2012);
- Reporter and activist Kathi Lynn Austin (2011);
- Kazakhstan's Deputy Foreign Minister Kairat Umarov and Thomas D'Agostino, U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration Administrator (2010);
- Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) (2009);
- Norway's Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and his ministry's Director-General for Security Policy and the High North Steffen Kongstad (2008); and
- U.S. Congressmen Peter Visclosky (D-Ind.) and David Hobson (R-Ohio) (2007)

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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



The address:
Baghramyan
1st DL, 2-nd building,
2-nd floor.

Phone: +374 60 536 536

E-mail:
spa.city@yahoo.com

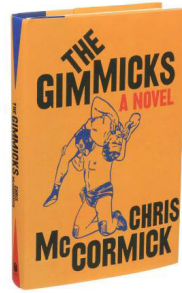
Website:
www.cityspa.am

The Gimmicks: Book about Armenian Genocide makes it to The New York Times Editor's Choice

The Gimmicks – a novel about Armenian Genocide – has made it to The New York Times Editor's Choice.

The Gimmicks by Chris McCormick begins in the early 1970s, nearly 60 years after the Armenian genocide conducted by the Ottoman Empire.

The story follows two cousins in Soviet Armenia who consider themselves brothers: Ruben Petrosian, a promising backgammon player obsessed with politics, and Avo Gregoryan, a large, sweet teenager who eventually becomes a professional wrestler in the United States.



Ruben convinces Avo, then 19, to move to Los Angeles and join members of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (Asala), a group intent on securing “global acknowledgment, apologies

and reparations” for the genocide.

The operatives in California make plans for the assassination of a genocide-denying professor. But Avo's heart is not in it.

Instead, Avo is recruited to become a wrestler (named The Brow Beater, for his prominent unibrow) by Terry “Angel Hair” Krill, a washed-up manager who narrates sections of the novel set in the late 1980s.

Chris McCormick's mother and his extended family immigrated from Armenia, and he grew up learning about Armenian history.

Older than Stonehenge: Zorats Karer in Armenia on The Traveler's list of must-visit sites



Zorats Karer – an archaeological site in Armenia's Syunik Province is on The Traveler's list of 20 ancient sites older than Stonehenge worth visiting.

“Rustic sites like this one are the expectation when talking about ancient monuments. Stones dulled by old age are pretty common, but the jagged edges of Zorats Karer make it look much more authentic. Armenia's gorgeous summer scenery makes attractions like these easy additions to the itinerary,” The Traveler writes.

Known as the “Armenian Stonehenge,” Zorats Karer or Carahunge is a prehistoric archaeological site near the town of Sisian. This famous megalithic structure consists of hundreds of vertically arranged two-meter stones or menhirs that are stretched from the south to the north.

Archaeoastronomers suggest the standing stones could have been used for astronomical observation. Seventeen of the stones were associated with observations

of sunrise or sunset at the solstices and equinoxes, and 14 with the lunar extremes.

Research by radiophysicist Paris Herouni and his research team in 1994–2001 led them to the now disputed conclusion that Carahunge is the world's oldest astronomical observatory.

From lula kebab to ghapama: Armenian cuisine to be featured in new PBS series

No Passport Required with Marcus Samuelsson, which explores the food and communities of America’s immigrant neighborhoods, kicks off season 2 on PBS January 20 with the premiere episode featuring L.A.’s Armenian community and cuisine, *L.A. Weekly* reports.

The Ethiopian-born chef raised in Sweden journeys from East Hollywood to Glendale, visiting Phoenicia Restaurant, Mid-east Tacos, Papillon International Bakery, Sahag’s Basturma among others meeting Armenians from Russia, Lebanon, Syria, Ethiopia and Egypt. From lula kebab to ghapama (pumpkin stuffed with apricots, rice and Aleppo peppers,) Samuelsson explores the rich Armenian history passed down from generations in L.A.’s foothills in the series co-produced with Eater.

“I discovered how extremely diverse the



community is, whether it’s Persian Armenian or Turkish Armenian,” the New York-based Samuelsson told *L.A. Weekly*.

“It has so many geographically different entry points – which also means bringing a lot of different traditions together and says a lot about the strength of the community and their commitment to holding on to these traditions. I had some of the most delicious food and best conversations and saw how deeply proud these people are to be

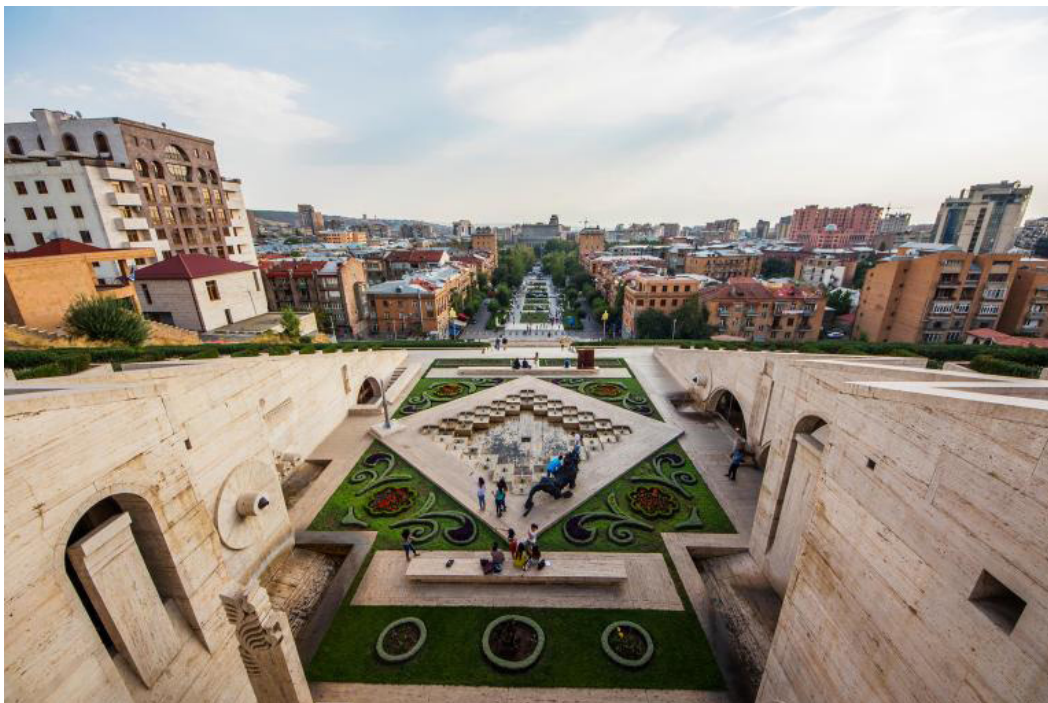
both Angelenos and Armenian,” he added.

The premiere highlights the combination of younger chefs born in Los Angeles, blending new ingredients and techniques with traditional Armenian rituals passed down to them by their grandparents.

“You have the young caterer who is walking a walk between traditional Armenian food and ingredients you might find in French restaurants, balancing between rituals and spices and traditions,” Samuelsson said.

Other upcoming episodes will journey to Houston for West African food, the Italian American community in Philadelphia and the Chinese community of Las Vegas. Samuelsson will also venture to the greater Boston area to learn more about the Portuguese, Brazilian, and Cape Verdean diasporas.

Armenia among Evening Standard’s hottest travel destinations 2020



The Evening Standard has included Armenia’s capital Yerevan among 2020’s hottest travel destination.

“Currently a relatively undiscovered corner of the world for Brits, Yerevan has museums, Soviet-era architecture and medieval churches aplenty. Geghard, a Unesco World Heritage Site, is

a must. A labyrinthine monastery, carved into the mountains, dating back to the Fourth century,” the *Evening Standard* writes.

The author advises to make the most of the lively, ever-evolving foodie scene – try Armenian dolma or head to the Yerevan Brandy Company distillery to sample Winston Churchill’s favorite brandy, Ararat. Tastings are pleasingly generous.

British luxury travel agent Black Tomato has added a tour of Yerevan to its 2020 offerings. “Summer is the best time to visit,” says the company’s co-founder Tom Marchant, “when locals flock to the so-called Pink City to make the most of its outdoor cafes and gathering

in Republic Square to literally soak in its fountains and lakes.”

The Brits are also advised to visit Bhutan, Kanazawa (Japan), Faroe Islands, Mexico, Paris and Transylvania (Romania).

Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

The full moon side of this eclipse season may bring fresh news to light about someone in the family. For example, a pregnancy is announced. The new moon calls upon you to take steps toward beginning something new in your life direction, even if it feels like a risk. Start your research.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

During this eclipse season you may discover or reveal one or more secrets. Dreams and intuition are very strong. Issues of mental health are emphasized. The strength of the interplay between physical and emotional health is apparent. You likely will vow to change health habits that are destructive.



Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)

This eclipse pattern will emphasize issues of sexuality, intimacy, and material accumulation. Reorganization of debt, investments and your estate may be in progress. You may now be more conscious than usual about existential matters related to life, death, and what is on “the other side” of normal, waking consciousness.



Taurus (April 20 -- May 20)

The accent of this eclipse cycle will be on travel, education, care of vehicles and relationships to siblings, roommates, neighbors, or others who daily traverse your life. Habit patterns of thought will be brought to consciousness so negative thinking can be corrected. You will be introduced to new practical life skills.



Virgo (August 22–September 22)

The results of contributions you have made to your community become apparent. “Your community” may include organizations to which you belong, your circle of friends, and various connections you have made along the way. A new beginning occurs in the arena of romance or life with children, and the territory of play.



Capricorn (December 21–January 19)

This eclipse series will draw your attention to your partnerships. Patterns from your childhood history needed to be uncovered, repaired or removed in order to allow your growth into a more mature relationship. Psychotherapy may be truly helpful. There may be a crisis of consciousness at this time.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

During this series of eclipses you will be learning to value yourself in new ways. Alongside of that comes education in the management of money and other resources, such as time and energy. There will be less assistance from others in these arenas, but you are creating these resources for yourself.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Matters concerning your family and property are accented. Old problems in relationships, even with the deceased, will surface for cleansing and healing. A new family member may enter the scene, or you may begin to spend more time with family in general.



Aquarius (January 20–February 17)

This eclipse pressures you to concentrate on improvement of work related relationships and health maintenance. Diet, exercise and improvement of physical regimen is imperative. Honing your management systems in personal and work arenas is necessary to create order in your daily work routine.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

This eclipse season may bring you to the point of becoming firm about who you are and who you are not. An issue of identity and declaration of self is at hand. The new moon eclipse represents your inherent need to attend to relationships. Your partner may be starting something that affects both your lives..



Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

You will be mulling over where you stand with regard to moral, ethical and philosophical issues. Information has come to your attention that pressures you to recognize a fallacy in your belief system. This is disturbing, but it is the only way to mature the system. What has been a black/white issue has a lot more gray than you previously thought.



Pisces (February 18–March 19)

This eclipse pattern emphasizes your progeny or other personally creative births. Romantic ventures will be intensely emotional and self-revealing. You are learning a few lessons in discernment concerning friendships and associations that no longer serve you well.

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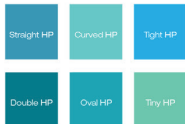
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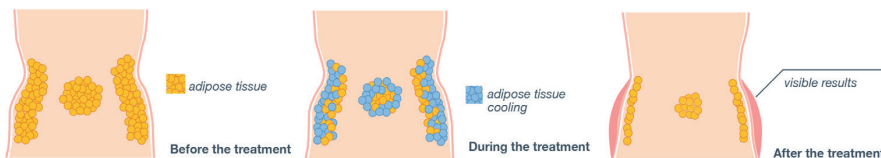
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Switzerland

**AZAD Pharmaceutical
Ingredients AG**

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

AZAD Pharma AG

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

Canada

**AZAD Fine
Chemicals Ltd.**

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

Atlit Inc.

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

China

**Hangzhou
Representative
Office of
AZAD Pharmaceutical
Ingredients AG**

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

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

Germany

AZAD Pharma GmbH

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

Armenia

**AZAD Pharmaceuticals
LLC**

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



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

Address in Armenia:
28 Isahakian Str., Yerevan, 0009, RA
Tel.: (+374 60) 35-11-22 (+374 60) 35-11-24

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

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

Հասցե՝ Իսահակյան 28, Երևան, ՀՀ, 0009