

Armenia honors her military heroes on Army Day



The Armed Forces of Armenia were formally established on January 28, 1992, by decree of President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan, several months after the country declared independence from the Soviet Union.

Army Day was first observed in 2001, the same year the President signed Army Day into law as an official holiday and a non-working day.

On this day officials usually visit Yerablur memorial to pay homage to the fallen Armenian soldiers who lost their life defending the homeland.

An award ceremony also takes places to honor servicemen for their dedication, courage and outstanding service rendered in the course of their military duty.

On the occasion of Armenian Army Day, together with Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II, National Assembly Speaker Ararat Mirzoyan, members of the National Security Council, the leadership of the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited Yerablur Military Pantheon to pay tribute to Armenian heroes who sacrificed their lives for the sake of Homeland’s independence.

Prime Minister Pashinyan laid flowers at the tombs of our heroes who perished in the Four-Day War in April, 2016, Sparapet Vazgen Sargsyan and Andranik Ozanyan. The Premier laid a wreath at the Memorial to Fallen Freedom Fighters.

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PM Pashinyan receives foreign minister of Netherlands

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received on January 23 the delegations led by Foreign Minister of the Netherlands Stef Blok, who is in Armenia on an official visit.

As Noyan Tapan was informed from the Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan welcomed the visit of Stef Blok to Armenia and expressed confidence that it will give a new impetus to the development and expansion of the relations between the two countries. Highlighting the organization of high-level visits, the PM added that this year he also plans an official visit to the Netherlands, which will be the 1st visit of the leader of Armenia to that country since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. According to Nikol Pashinyan, the Government of Armenia highlights bilateral coop-



eration in politics, economy, as well as the humanitarian sphere.

PM Pashinyan talked about the development of democracy in Armenia, struggle against corruption and reforms in the judicial and other spheres and emphasized that the Government of Armenia has set an ambitious agenda in the mentioned directions and makes consistent steps to bring

it to life.

Nikol Pashinyan saluted the ratification of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between Armenia and the EU by the parliament of the Netherlands.

Thanking for the warm reception, Stef Blok noted that the democratic developments and reforms in Armenia are obvious and emphasized that the Government of his country is ready to cooperate with Armenia for bringing them to life. The Foreign Minister of the Netherlands noted that there are opportunities for economic cooperation, particularly in the spheres of agriculture and IT. Stef Blok expressed confidence that Pashinyan's visit to the Netherlands will promote the bilateral agenda between the two countries.

The sides also exchanged views on Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement process and other regional issues.

Nikol Pashinyan congratulates Indian Premier on National Day of India

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has sent a congratulatory message to Prime Minister of the Republic of India Narendra Modi on his country's national holiday.

The message reads, in part:

"I cordially congratulate you and the friendly people of India on the 70th Anniversary of the National Day of the Republic of India.

Today we can witness the remarkable progress and achievements of Indian society. I am confident that India will continue

along the path of dynamic and sustainable development, setting an example to other countries.



Armenia highly values its traditionally warm relationship with India, anchored on

our peoples' centuries-old historical ties, good will and mutual trust. I am convinced that the Armenian-Indian partnership will continue to develop and deepen to the benefit of our two nations.

I have kept warm recollections of our meeting in New York. I am prepared to closely work with you in a bid to materialize our cooperation-oriented agreements.

I wish you robust health and further success, as well as peace and prosperity - to the friendly people of India."

PM Pashinyan meets US Ambassador and Kansas Adjutant-General India

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held a meeting with US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy and Kansas National Guard military commander, Kansas Adjutant-General Lee Tafanelli, the Prime Minister's Office said.

"The Prime Minister attached importance to the Armenian-American cooperation in the defense sector and welcomed the general's visit to Armenia especially during these

days when the 28th anniversary of the Armenian Army is celebrated.

Nikol Pashinyan added that the Government of Armenia is interested in raising the level of bilateral partnership and expressed certainty that Lee Tafanelli's visit will contribute to this. During the meeting the interlocutors discussed issues related to the Armenian-American cooperation agenda in both defense and other sectors", the PM's



office said.

Pashinyan claims ‘hybrid’ coup attempt

(RL/RFE – Yerevan) - Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan claimed over the weekend that Armenian law-enforcement authorities have thwarted a “hybrid” conspiracy to discredit and overthrow him which he said was hatched by former and current state officials.

“We can call it hybrid preparations for a coup, and we can now talk about that because that process is fully and irreversibly defeated and crushed,” he told a news conference held in the south-eastern town of Kapan.

Pashinyan said that the alleged conspiracy involved “tens of millions of dollars” spent on the spread of “false information” about him, his family members and associates.

“And that was done through the criminal underworld, various forces, corrupt figures,” he went on. “Why does the word ‘coup’ match this process? Because this process was joined by serving officials who acted against the government while being inside the government. Former officials and some representatives of the judicial system were also involved in that.”

Pashinyan did not name anyone or give



other details of the alleged plot, saying only that it was “neutralized” by Armenia’s National Security Service (NSS) and police several months ago.

“Don’t ask me to name names because I did name names,” he said. “Just save me from the displeasure of uttering concrete names and surnames.”

In a January 11 article, a newspaper controlled Pashinyan’s family, “Haykakan Zhamanak,” accused former NSS Director Artur Vanetsyan of organizing a smear campaign against the family. It said that the campaign was masterminded by a former senior official linked to Mikael Minasyan, former President Serzh Sargsyan’s son-in-

law.

Hrachya Hakobyan, a pro-government parliamentarian and Pashinyan’s brother-in-law, alleged afterwards that Vanetsyan was sacked in September because he was plotting a coup. Commenting on that statement, the NSS said that it is not aware of any coup attempts and will not look into Hakobyan’s claims.

Vanetsyan, who has not been charged with any crimes so far, denounced the “Haykakan Zhamanak” article as slanderous and threatened to file a libel suit against the paper.

The former NSS chief also scoffed at Pashinyan’s latest remarks, tweeting later on Saturday that such “emotional outbursts” are fraught with “very undesirable consequences” for Armenia. He went further in another tweet posted on Sunday, saying that the ruling Civil Contract party should consider replacing the prime minister.

Vanetsyan was an influential member of Pashinyan’s entourage until he was unexpectedly fired for still unclear reasons.

Ex-NSS head committed suicide on “very personal” motive, next-of-kin demands privacy



Former National Security Service Director Georgy Kutoyan committed suicide on a “[very] personal motive”, Investigations Committee Chairman Hayk Grigoryan told in TV.

“Georgy Kutoyan’s wife, Hasmik Bisharyan, has filed a request to the investigative body requesting us not to disclose any information about the motive of the suicide without her consent. Taking into consideration Hasmik Bisharyan’s request, I can say that the suicide was committed on a very personal motive,” Grigoryan said, noting he won’t disclose the motive because of the next-of-kin’s request.

He said more than 10 different forensic tests have been carried out, with more than 90 people being questioned and phone re-

ords investigated. Although the death of Kutoyan hasn’t yet been officially ruled suicide, investigators are currently looking into only suicide as the cause of death.

Kutoyan, who served as NSS director from 2016 to 2018, was found shot dead from a single gunshot wound in his apartment on January 17. There was a handgun near his body, and multiple bullet impact holes in the walls of the home. Investigators said Kutoyan himself erratically discharged his firearm inside the apartment before killing himself.

Armenian Chief Justice to sue Pashinyan for ‘slander’

(RL/RFE- Yerevan) - Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan doubled down on his verbal attacks on Hrayr Tovmasyan on January 27 after the embattled chairman of Armenia’s Constitutional Court decided to file a defamation lawsuit against him.

Pashinyan again lambasted him at a week-end news conference held in the southeastern town of Kapan. In particular, he charged that Tovmasyan “offered his services” and cozied up to him following the 2018 “Velvet Revolution.” He said he rebuffed those overtures because he did not want to cooperate with “representatives of the corrupt former regime.”

Tovmasyan, who has been under strong government pressure to resign in recent months, rejected the claim as untrue and slanderous while challenging Pashinyan to come up with “credible evidence” of it. He said will take legal action if Pashinyan fails to do that.

The prime minister was quick to promise to provide the kind of evidence that will constitute a “disproportionately strong response” to the chief justice. He went on to post on Facebook a photograph of an expensive pen which he said Tovmasyan gifted him at a 2018 meeting in Yerevan of the governing board of a pan-Armenian charity. He portrayed the gift as proof of “the weirdest flattery I’ve ever seen.”

Tovmasyan responded through one of his lawyers, Amram Makinian, later on Sunday. “Constitutional Court Chairman Hrayr Tovmasyan has read Nikol Pashinyan’s



‘disproportionate response’ and asked us to prepare the [defamation] lawsuit,” Makinian wrote on Facebook.

Pashinyan stepped up his verbal attacks in a live video address broadcast on Facebook the following day. He accused Tovmasyan of involvement in what he called a failed “hybrid” plot to overthrow him.

Pashinyan also said that law-enforcement authorities’ allegations that Tovmasyan illegally became the head of the country’s highest court shortly before the 2018 revolution are “effectively proven and irrefutable.”

The Special Investigative Service (SIS) claimed in October that the former Armenian parliament elected Tovmasyan court chairman as a result of an illegal seizure of the judicial authority by a “group of officials.” It said that took the form of forgery committed by former parliament speaker Ara Babloyan and one of his top staffers, Arsen Babayan. Both men strongly deny relevant accusations leveled against them.

In late December, a senior prosecutor declined to endorse those accusations, ordering the SIS to conduct an “additional investigation.”

A few days later, Tovmasyan was indicted on other, unrelated charges. Prosecutor-General Artur Davtyan said that he unlawfully privatized an office in Yerevan and forced state notaries to rent other premises “de facto” belonging to him when he served as Armenia’s justice minister from 2010-2014.

Tovmasyan rejects the accusations as baseless, saying that they are part of the Armenian government’s intensifying efforts to force him to resign. SIS officers searched his Yerevan apartment on Friday.

Pashinyan effectively demanded in August 2019 the resignation of Tovmasyan and other Constitutional Court judges who were installed before the “Velvet Revolution.” He accused them of maintaining links with Armenia’s former leadership and impeding reforms which he says are aimed at creating a “truly independent judiciary.”

Pashinyan’s critics, notably senior members of the former ruling Republican Party, say that he is simply seeking to gain control over all Armenian courts.

Tovmasyan was indicted on December 27 one day after President Armen Sarkisian signed into law a government bill giving seven of the nine Constitutional Court judges financial incentives to resign before the end of their mandate. None of those judges has accepted the proposed early retirement so far.

Pashinyan strongly defended the controversial law during his four-hour news conference.

European Parliament to host conference on “Forgotten Refugees: What Happened to the Armenians of Baku?”

On February 5 the European Parliament will host a conference on “The Forgotten Refugees: What Happened to the Armenians of Baku?”

The conference organized by the European Armenian federation for Justice and Democracy (EAJD) will give an insight into the situation of the Armenian minority in Soviet Azerbaijan in the last months of the existence of the Soviet Union and into what became known as the Baku pogroms.

What happened to the 300.000 Armenians living in the Azerbaijani cities?



How did the international community and the responsible international organizations react to their deportations? First and foremost, how did the eyewitnesses experience this and how did it impact their

lives? What are the lessons learnt and not learnt vis-à-vis the Armenian refugees?

The conference will feature distinguished British humanitarian, Life Peer and former deputy speaker of the House of Lords the Baroness Caroline Cox, eye-witnesses such as the American-Armenian author, lawyer, human rights advocate Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte and ULB lecturer David Babaev who survived the Baku pogroms as children and ended up in different corners of the world.

Italian MP Giulio Centemero delivers remarks on anti-Armenian pogroms in Baku

Giulio Centemero, Member of Italian Chamber of Deputies (lower house of parliament) delivered remarks on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Armenian massacres in Baku.

We present the Italian MP's full speech:

"Just 30 years ago, on January 13-19, 1990, a massacre and deportation of Armenians were carried out in Baku based on ethnic identity. The massacres were organized by the Azerbaijani Popular Front party and were sponsored by the local authorities.

Although after the 1988 events in Sumgait, most of the Armenians living in that post-Soviet republic decided to leave their homes, nearly 35-40.000 Armenians were still living there in early 1990, much less than the 300.000 Armenian population in late 80s.

It was impossible to count the exact number of victims of the massacres because the local authorities were attempting to hide



the facts. According to some international human rights organizations, more than 450.000 people have been killed. Thousands lost their whole property, according to some eyewitness reports numerous Jews, Russians and representatives of other nations were killed only because of looking like Armenians. Those who survived the massacres, settled in different countries of the world as migrants by joining the Diaspora.

Within the course of history massacres of

Armenians in Baku were carried out at least three times – in 1905, 1918 and 1990. The European Parliament condemned the massacres committed against Armenians in its resolutions adopted in 1988, 1990 and 1991. Frelick Bill, chair of US Committee for Refugees, talked about the massacres and their consequences in 2002. On July 27, 1990, an open letter has been published in The New York Times addressed to the international community. The latter was signed by 133 prominent scientists and human

right advocates of Europe, Canada and the USA which were voicing their complaints on the killings and massacres of Armenians in Baku.

The aforementioned crimes, as well as all the remaining crimes of the history should be remembered and should not be concealed through propaganda so that the humanity will remember them and such events will not repeat again".

Armenian Varty Ohanian appointed Lebanon's minister of Youth and Sport

Armenian Varty Ohanian has been appointed Lebanon's Minister of Youth and Sport.

Ohanian, a social worker by profession, is the director of Zvartnots Educational Center. She was proposed as a candidate by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

Lebanon's new Prime Minister Hassan Diab formed a government late Tuesday evening, 34 days after he was nominated on December 19.

The country has been without an effective government since caretaker Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned in October last year under pressure from protests against state



corruption and waste – root causes of the crisis.

Prime Minister Hassan Diab, a 60-year-old professor at the American University of Beirut, now heads a cabinet of 20 members,

mostly specialists backed by political parties.

"This is a government that represents the aspirations of the demonstrators who have been mobilised nationwide for more than three months," Diab said after announcing the government.

PM Diab said that his 20-minister government is technocratic, adding that its main mission will be matching the people demands.

"The new government will fight corruption, regain the plundered funds and maintain stability."

Armenian military to get more Russian warplanes

Armenia's Air Force will receive more Sukhoi Su-30SM fighter jets from Russia soon, Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan said on January 28.

Four such multirole jets were delivered to an airbase in Gyumri late last month less than a year after the signing of a relevant Russian-Armenian contract. Financial and other terms of the deal are still not known.

Tonoyan said that in February Yerevan plans to buy eight more Su-30SMs in the coming years.

The minister was asked on by reporters when the next batch of the advanced warplanes will be delivered to Armenia. "Soon," he replied. He did not elaborate.

The Armenian Air Force had no fighter jets until this year. It largely consisted of 15 or so low-flying Su-25 aircraft designed for air-to-ground missions.



Su-30SM can perform a much broader range of military tasks with more long-range and precision-guided weapons. It is a modernized version of a heavy fighter jet developed by the Sukhoi company in the late 1980s. The Russian military first commissioned such jets in 2012.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan described their acquisition as a "turning point for the security of Armenia" when

he spoke at the Gyumri airbase on December 27. He also noted that the Armenian military has received the "first batch" of Su-30SMs.

According to Tonoyan and Pashinyan, Armenia also acquired large quantities of other Russian-made weapons in the course of 2019. Those include sophisticated Tor-M2MK air-defense systems. The Defense Ministry in Yerevan has said that they will

"considerably" strengthen Armenia's air defenses.

Russia has always been the principal source of military hardware supplied to the Armenian army. Membership in Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) allows Armenia to acquire Russian weapons at knockdown prices and even for free.

EU stands ready to support economic growth and job generation in Armenia

The first meeting of Interagency Commission for the Organization of the EU-Armenia Investment Forum was held today, with participation of Tigran Avinyan, the RA Deputy Prime Minister, Vassilis Maragos, the Head of the DG NEAR Unit at the European Commission responsible for Armenia, Dirk Lorenz, the Deputy Head of EEAS EaP Bilateral Division, the EU Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin, Tigran Khachatryan, the RA Minister of Economy and other senior officials, the EU delegation in Armenia informs.

The Forum aimed to attract multifaceted



foreign investment, establish new business ties, strengthen political and economic relations with the European Union, establish business relationships in practice, and attract foreign direct investment in target areas.

The forum will be seen as a platform

where the state is represented as a private sector partner, ensuring favorable environment for investments and provides them with protection guarantees.

Sectorial associations are also involved in the works of the Forum, as to them the ownership of the Forum shall belong. Visibility of Forum outcomes will be conditioned by feedback and monitoring. The EU stands ready to support and further promote the economic growth and job generation in Armenia.

Armenia represented at FITUR 2020 tourism expo in Madrid



Armenian companies are attending FITUR 2020, the first international tourism exhibition of the year in Madrid.

Nine experienced incoming tour operators are presenting Armenia's tourism attractiveness in a joint pavilion with the support of Tourism Armenia association.

FITUR 2020 has brought together more than 10,000 travel companies from 160 countries. The number of field professionals and visitors is expected to 250,000.

Armenian incoming tour operators highlight the

opportunities of cultural and gastro tourism while presenting our country's attractions to Spanish and European market partners.

Since 1995 Tourism Armenia member companies have been representing Armenia in different regions of the world, laying the groundwork for organized tourism development.

The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Armenian embassy in Spain and the Armenian community have helped present Armenia at its best at FITUR 2020. The exhibition opened on January 22nd and will continue through January 27.



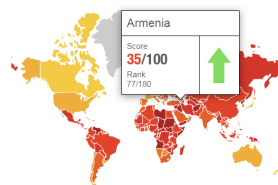
Armenia climbs in Corruption Perceptions index 2019

Armenia is placed 77th (up from 105th last year) among 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions index 2019 released by the Transparency International.

Other countries in the region are placed as follows: Georgia is 44th, Turkey – 91st, Azerbaijan 126th, Iran – 146th.

Armenia's partners in the Eurasian Economic Union Russia and Kazakhstan are ranked 137th and 113th respectively, Belarus is 66th, Kyrgyzstan is 126th.

New Zealand tops the tanking followed by Denmark and Finland.



“Following the revolution in 2018 and the formation of a new parliament, the country has demonstrated promising developments in advancing anticorruption policy reforms,” the report says.

“Despite these improvements, conflicts of interests and nontransparent and unaccountable public operations remain imped-

iments to ending corruption in the country. While improving political integrity will take time and resources, increasing public trust in law enforcement and the judiciary are critical first steps in ensuring appropriate checks and balances and improving anti-corruption efforts,” Transparency International said.

In Armenia, political will and implementation of anti-corruption policies are important, while fundamental and urgent change of political culture and governance is crucial, the report stresses.

Newly-Elected Patriarch of Turkey Lashes Back at Armenian Critics



By Harut Sassounian

After giving a series of interviews to the Turkish press since his election on December 11, 2019, the new Armenian Patriarch of Turkey, Sahak II Mashalyan, responded to his Armenian critics on January 15 by issuing an official “Clarification” to Turkish-Armenian newspapers.

It is important to point out that the Patriarch’s critics were not simply those who live outside of Turkey, unjustly accused of being unaware of the repressive treatment of Istanbul Armenians by the Turkish government. In addition to criticisms from Armenians in Armenia and the Diaspora, the Patriarch was attacked by Armenians living in Turkey, as well as the Turkish-Armenian newspaper “Agos.”

The Patriarch’s interview to the Turkish newspaper “Aksham” generated the most controversy, as he not only distanced Istanbul Armenians from Diaspora Armenians, but also belittled the massive tragedy of the Armenian Genocide. His Beatitude complained that a few of the sentences in his interview with Aksham – drawing the most negative interpretations and exceeding the limits of understanding – reached a campaign of tarnishing his name.

The Patriarch made the excuse that, in his 40-minute interview, he “had provided lengthy explanations and details which naturally were not included in the article. The words appearing in the newspaper were filtered from those explanations which were given as answers for a particular question. That style was the choice of the editor.

Without considering the questions, when only answers are provided, a change in the meaning takes place, which is placed successively, one after another. In this case, they become unclear expressions and failed statements, which make the transmitted idea meaningless.”

The Patriarch then stated that he had given the following answer to the question about Turkish Armenians: “Armenians of Turkey, unlike Armenians in the Diaspora and Armenia, form a third segment. From the point of view of administration and economy, the Armenian Diaspora has no ties with us; we are self-sufficient.”

When he was asked about the irreconcilable attitude of Diaspora Armenians toward Turkey and the reasons for its negative position, the Patriarch claimed that the given answer does not belong to him, but is a simple sociological correction – familiar to all – expressed as such: “One hundred years ago, the people who left these lands with a great tragedy have transmitted the trauma they lived to future generations and realized that for the Armenian identity and its preservation it is beneficial and necessary to form a consciousness of the Genocide. They continued to live for more than a hundred years in a status quo away from Turkey and Turks. But, we – Armenians who have remained in Turkey – continued to share our lives with Turks in these lands and gained the experience of living together. In that sense, we are distinct Armenians in the Armenian world.”

The Patriarch continued: “In such super sensitive subjects, the priority of the people has been that they listen to what they want, and not what the Patriarchs of Turkish Armenians say and under what conditions. The fate of the Armenian Patriarchs of Turkey is like the captain of a ship that is being crushed between two non-melting icebergs. In that circumstance, it is not always possible to secure harmony and errors appear to occur according to one of the sides. Sahak Patriarch too, like his predecessors, has tried to give answers regarding Armenian issues that are satisfactory to all sides. It is never acceptable to any of the sides to

take a rejectionist and disregarding position. Each person must first understand correctly, what in reality has been expressed in the uttered words and then criticize.”

Some in the Diaspora may agree with the Patriarch’s words, emphasizing the dire conditions that he and the Turkish community are in. Any Armenian who is familiar with those repressive conditions can be somewhat sympathetic to the Patriarch’s situation.

Our intent was never to urge the Patriarch to antagonize the authorities in Turkey. After all, he is responsible for the safety of his community. All we ask from the Patriarch is to be cautious in his words, not to alienate his followers in Turkey and to not insult the memory of 1.5 million Armenian martyrs by engaging in outright denialism. Whenever possible, the Patriarch should avoid giving interviews to the Turkish press. He should appoint a press spokesman who is capable of avoiding difficult and sensitive questions, particularly on political issues. If the spokesman makes a mistake, it is less consequential than if the Patriarch himself makes a mistake. Spokesmen can be fired, but the Patriarch’s position is lifelong.

Finally, it is unacceptable for the Patriarch to blame the Turkish newspaper for allegedly misinterpreting his words. First of all, we do not know what exactly the Patriarch told the Turkish newspaper and if it was really misinterpreted. For example, in his above “Clarification,” the Patriarch claims that he had used the word “Genocide” in his interview with the Turkish newspaper. This is not credible!

Secondly, the Patriarch is someone who is born and raised in Istanbul. He knows the Turkish media well. He should have known that the Turkish press often distorts the words of those they interview. Therefore, giving an interview to the Turkish press and then complaining that his words were distorted is not sincere. The Patriarch should have known that in advance. Complaining about Turkish media distortions after the interview is published is foolish!

TUMO center to open in Berlin in October

On January 21, the signing ceremony of a memorandum of understanding establishing a TUMO center in Berlin took place at TUMO Yerevan and the Berlin headquarters of KfW Development Bank.

In October 2020, TUMO Berlin will open its doors in Charlotten-



priorities. With TUMO, we are adopting an innovative project, from a country that KfW also cooperates with in development, to promote the digital education of children. This is exciting, because only if we learn from each other, can we truly be successful in the digital age. I, therefore, hope that we will find many more partners for this project in Germany.”

Students at TUMO Berlin will focus on several learning targets: programming, animation, filmmaking, graphic design, 3D modeling, game development, music, drawing, photography and robotics.

Speaking about the specifics of TUMO’s unique curriculum, TUMO CEO Marie Lou Papazian emphasized that, “The educational program that KfW and TUMO are launching in Berlin is an ambitious one. It will cover some of the fastest-growing fields in technology and design such as artificial intelligence, computational graphics, algorithmic music and include numerous opportunities to explore and prepare for future careers.”

TUMO Berlin will join TUMO’s growing network of international centers such as TUMO Paris and Beirut. Plans to establish new centers in Moscow, Tirana, Tokyo and other cities around the world are in progress.



burg, a historic community in western Berlin, providing a tuition-free education to 1,200 students.

The event was attended by government officials of the Republic of Armenia and the Federal Republic of Germany as well as the heads of the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies and KfW Development Bank.

Welcoming those in attendance, Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Mher Grigoryan said, “Today’s event proves that a country’s geographic location or the richness of its natural resources does not determine its future. Rather, it is a country’s human potential and the richness of its ideas, which have no boundary.”

The establishment of a TUMO center in Berlin was spearheaded by the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies in tandem with

KfW Development Bank.

As Dr. Ingrid Hengster, a member of KfW’s executive board, stated in her address, “Promoting education is one of KfW’s central



“For Kids Recovering, Communication with the Culture is No Less Important than Drugs...”

City of Smile and Opera and Ballet Theatre presents
Cipollino children ballet kids fighting leukemia in hospital



By **Gourgen James Khazhakian**,
Chief Correspondent



On 22 January a touching and remarkable event was held at the Prof. R. H. Yolyan Institute of Hematology in Yerevan where kids from Armenia as well as other countries have been treated of leukemia with the support of City of Smile Foundation founded/presided by the spouse of the Armenian PM **Anna Hakobyan**. The Foundation invited those kids for Cipollino children ballet's mini-show by Al. Spendiaryan Opera and Ballet Natl Academic Theatre dancers.



As a post from the Theatre FB official page says, “...We are confident that not only drugs and chemotherapy are helping our kids to overcome cancer, but also good music, theatrical stagings, ballet as well as communication with the people of positive energy: **Anna Hakobyan**”.

And on her FB page Mrs Hakobyan has written: “Our kids deserve to have happy childhood. And one of the most important

components of the beautiful childhood is communication with the culture”.

And so Opera and Ballet Theatre artists agreed with pleasure to stage this year's first Cipollino performance for the Hospital kids.

Naturally, Mrs Hakobyan was present at the ballet mini-show.

Honored Artist of Armenia **Rouben Muradyan** said the artists themselves came to see kid patients.



He reminded the youngest spectators that Cipollino is the “onion boy” who fights for justice and winning the Evil as “the

kids definitely will win another evil, - their disease”.

He informed the gathered that in December they will stage the Armenian version of another children ballet, Nutcracker by P.I. Tchaikovsky that undoubtedly also will be presented the kids fighting leukemia.

According to the Hematology Institute oncologist Dr **Lilit Sargsyan**, such events helps significantly the treated kids to have in their organisms more endorphins, the so-called “happiness hormones” that helps their organisms in terms of anesthesiology and resistance rising.

Five year old patient **Juliana Manukyan** said she wanted to become a dancer, and such a decision a little beauty made even

before Cipollino staging.

Anna Hakobyan thanked warmly the Theatre artists and Acting Director **Karineh Kirakossyan**. The Theatre people, in turn, invited children to see “full-scale” Cipollino at the Al. Spendiaryan Opera and Ballet National Academic Theatre to be held on Saturday 25 January.

The Highlights correspondent asked the Artistic Director of the Opera and Ballet Theatre Maestro **Constantine Orbelian** who by the moment is in the USA as A TE, O CARA album recorded by Orbelian in cooperation with Met Opera soloist **Stephen Costello** and Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra has been nominated in the Best



Classical Solo Vocal Album category of the Grammy Awards (to be held on 26 January in L.A.) to comment on the above-mentioned.

Maestro Orbelian thanks to whose efforts a legendary Soviet/Russian Director **Henrikh Mayorov** of the Bolshoi Theatre staged Cipollino in Yerevan a couple of years ago said in particular: “I am thrilled that my ideas of outreach performances of our operas and in this case the ballet Cipollino which we performed the other day for children suffering from leukemia has been supported by Mrs Anna Hakobyan. We hope to be able to expand our outreach to bring our great Armenian operas to children in their schools and to hospitals during recovery and treatment periods. Great Music heals the body and soul and our artists from the Yerevan Opera and Ballet Theatre are very happy to perform for the children”.

The Latest News from Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator

VivaCell-MTS and Fuller Center for Housing Armenia hosted by the Muradyans from Mayakovski Village, in frames of reporting visits

Evaluating results is an important part of ensuring the continuity of any project. VivaCell-MTS and Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, partnering to solve the housing problem in different regions of Armenia, have been guided by this principle for many years. Approaches have not changed. Heads of the organizations strive to visit all the villages where construction has been implemented in 2019 and housewarming celebrated. The de-



sire not to ignore anybody is important in getting a full picture of the report and presenting it to the public. It also helps to increase the efficiency of the work.

The visits of 2020 started in Mayakovski village, Kotayk region. The heads and teams of the partner organizations have been hosted to Muradyans for the second time. The first team meeting was



in the summer of 2019 with the volunteers from the two organizations joining

in the construction works. This time, the partners visited to share the feelings of the family who, first time in their life, celebrated New Year in their own home.

The Muradyans who moved from one



house to another for over 10 years and rented houses, finally have their own home and are happy for that. The new home means also a new quality of life. Their everyday life has changed, and the



daily problems have become more bearable. The Muradyans are expecting a new baby this coming spring.

"It was a long-awaited house. I am so happy that our family finally has a house with decent conditions. I wish everyone feels this happiness. This was the fulfillment of a big dream," said **Petros**, the young father of the family.

In 2019, owing to the housing project financed by VivaCell-MTS and implemented by Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, the housing problem of 46 families in 10 regions of Armenia were solved. As a result of the years of partnership, 208 families have been supported, 13 of which in Kotayk region.

"The loaded schedule does not let us visit every family, but we strive to reach everyone. The long years have proven

that every step is crucial where there is a long distance to go. Personal contacts with homeowners and their feedback on the work we do, help us get a clear and objective picture and plan our further steps more efficiently. This is a good way



to assess and report on the work that we do in both quantitative and qualitative terms. No one is guaranteed against problems, which may be solved in the



course of time, but when one feels he or she is not alone, those problems get solved with more confidence. Revived faith is the most important thing," VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said.

"For many years, together with VivaCell-MTS, we have been supporting families in need by providing them with decent housing conditions. With our help, as well as the family's diligence, this young family now has its own home. Petros' son will not have to go through the same hardships as his father did. He will have a carefree childhood," said Fuller Center for Housing Armenia President **Ashot Yeghiazaryan**.

The Latest News from Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator

Viva-MTS: new corporate logo

Viva-MTS: The leading telecommunications operator of Armenia has started a process to restyle the corporate logo. The news was announced on Facebook by the Founding General Manager of the Company **Ralph C. Yirikian** (<https://www.facebook.com/MTSArmenia/videos/172859707403961/>).



Thus, the elements of the logo are changed. The element "Cell" will be left out of the new version, with only the "Viva" and "MTS" kept as part of the logo. The changes reflect the Company's new strategy aimed at development of digital products and services. In line with this approach, the graphical design of the element "Viva" will also be changed.

"We change the logo of our Company. After all, the logo should convey what the company does, it should match the identity of the company," Viva-MTS Founding GM Ralph Yirikian said.

The style change of the logo also emphasizes the strategic orientation of the Company towards youth and the digital world: colorful, bold, and cheerful.

"Viva, which has been so dear to our hearts for many years, the foundation and symbol of our identity has remained unchanged. "Cell", besides its main meaning, symbolizes mobile communication services, that is, what we have always provided. Thus, while continuing to provide telecommunications services, we are growing into a digital company that provides a variety of services," Mr Yirikian clarified.

The changes are intended to underline that today Viva-MTS markets more than just voice and data transfer services,

including a number of gaming, entertainment, and educational applications, electronic wallet, mobile television, cloud services, useful solutions for effective business and financial management, and more.

Viva-MTS is currently undergoing a



transformation from a telecommunications operator to a comprehensive digital services company. According to the Company's General Director, this is in line with global trends in the sector, as well as the growing needs and expectations of subscribers who want to see the Company being more than a telecommunications operator.

Another House Built in Syunik: the Problem of 26 Years Solved

The Minasyans, living in Akhlatyan village of Syunik region, have been slow to take down the Christmas tree. 2020 be-

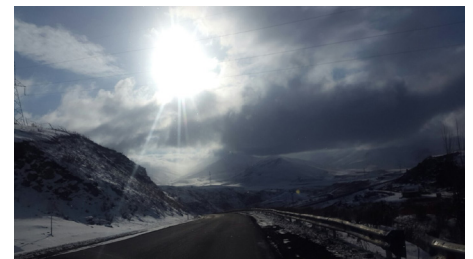


came a year of significant achievements for them. After living in the half-built house for 26 years, they have finally renovated and completed the house construction. Like the elder brothers, the youngest son of the family became a student in autumn, fulfilling the dream of his late mother. It is the second half of January, the three young men and the father of the family joyfully take down the Christmas tree saying the power of the good mood is important. They have decided, from now on, the house will be

filled with only in a positive thought.

The Minasyan family is the eighth in Syunik region supported by Viva-MTS and the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia. The eldest son, Hrach, who is 25, learned about the project from another beneficiary, a friend from a neighboring Darbas village. After being included in the program last summer, the construction works restarted with more rigor. The neighbors and friends have joined them. They were able to complete the work in a short period of time. The semi-constructed building of Minasyan family became a home in seven months. Memories of long and difficult years have remained in the past.

"My eldest son's dream came true. Now I have a wish. I want my sons to start their own families and enjoy the work they have done. The support of partner organizations gave joy and hope not only to our family but also to the village. We don't feel alone," said the father of the family, **Vladik Minasyan**.



"One of the best aspects of the program is that a person builds his own home. The second is the fast-paced construction. What could have been accomplished in 10-15 years without your support, now, is completed in one year. There is also a significant psychological impact; people feel that they are not alone, and that gives them strength and confidence," the elder son of the family, **Hrach Minasyan**, said.

With the support of partners, Viva-MTS and Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, 208 families living in different regions of Armenia have been able to overcome not only their financial but also the psychological problems.

Narek Hakhnazaryan's concert in Washington to mark the centennial of US-Armenia relations

A concert of cellists Narek Hakhnazaryan will mark the centennial of US-Armenia diplomatic relations, Massis Post reports.

The year 2020 marks the centennial of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between the US and the Armenian Republic, the only South Caucasian state recognized and supported by the United States at the time.

On April 23, 1920, the US Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby delivered a note to Armenia's representative in Washington, Armen Garo, that stated: "I am pleased to inform you, and through you, your Government, that, by direction of the President [Woodrow Wilson], the Government of the United States recognizes, as of this date, the de facto Government of the Armenian Republic."

The recognition (by the executive branch) was confirmed by the US Senate on May 13, 1920, upon the unanimous recommendation of its Committee on Foreign Relations.

Held in a renowned Washington institution, this concert will be dedicated to this momentous occasion in the shared history



between American and Armenian people and feature one of the world's most acclaimed cellists, Narek Hakhnazaryan.

Since winning the Cello First Prize and Gold Medal at the XIV International Tchaikovsky Competition in 2011 at the age of 22, Hakhnazaryan has inspired audiences around the world with his artistry. His prior awards included the 1st Prize in the 2006 Khachaturian International Competition in Armenia, the 1st Place in the 2006 Johansen International Competition for Young String Players in Washington, and the 1st Prize in the 2008 Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York.

A distinguished international orchestral soloist, he has appeared with the Baltimore, St. Louis, Seattle, Toronto, London,

WDR, Frankfurt Radio, Sydney, New Zealand, and NHK Symphony Orchestras; the Royal Stockholm, Czech, Seoul, Netherlands, and Rotterdam Philharmonics; the Utah Symphony; Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra; Orchestre de Paris; and the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome, and collaborated with celebrated conductors, such as, Alsop, Bělohlávek, Gergiev, Guerrero, Koopman, Hannu Lintu, Neeme Järvi, Pletnev, Robertson, Sarasate, Slatkin, and Sokhiev. Hakhnazaryan plays on a 1707 Joseph Guarneri cello.

For the program that will include works of Armenian, American, and European composers, Hakhnazaryan will be joined by an American pianist Noreen Cassidy-Polera, who is among the most highly regarded and diverse chamber artists performing today. She maintains a career that has taken her to every major American music center and to Europe, Russia, and Asia, with performances at Alice Tully Hall, Zankel Hall and Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, 92nd Street Y, Jordan Hall, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Kennedy Center, and Salle Cortot.

The Pyramid of Tirana to be reborn as TUMO's newest center



The Pyramid of Tirana, a reminder of Albania's totalitarian past, will be reborn as one of TUMO's newest centers.

Looking like a fantastical skate park or an abandoned modernist shopping mall, the Pyramid of Tirana was erected to celebrate the Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha immediately after his death in

1985, Bloomberg reports.

It's long been abandoned and closed to the public, and the city council even decided to demolish it in 2011, but it was saved after an outcry and now, finally, there are plans to put it to good use, according to Joni Baboci, Tirana's general director of planning and urban development. It will be reborn as an education center where tourists will also be welcome.

In its reincarnation, the pyramid will be known as the Tumo Center, the seventh location of an Armenia-based program that seeks to offer teenagers training and workshops in technology and design. There will also be an open plaza with public spaces, including a library. And there will be units that startups can hire, especially those that are complementary to the Tumo program.

"The pyramid will function as a not-for-profit center whose total leasable area inside is 6,500 sq. meters, out of which 3,000 square meters will house Tumo Tirana and the other half will be dedicated to arts, media, visual arts and the ICT (Information and communications technology) community," according to the Albanian American Development Foundation.

Armenia climbs in The Economist Democracy Index

The Economist has published its Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2019, surveying 167 countries across the world.

According to the survey, Armenia climbed from the 103rd spot in 2018 to the 86th spot in 2019. With a total of 5.54 score, Armenia is ranked among "hybrid regimes" in the index.

The index rates the state of democracy

in different countries based on five measures—electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, democratic political culture and civil liberties.

Countries are ranked in 4 categories: Full Democracy, Flawed Democracy, Hybrid Regime and Authoritarian Regime.

In the 2019 report, Armenia's neigh-

boring Georgia and Iran are 89th and 151st respectively. The other two neighbors – Azerbaijan and Turkey – are ranked 147th and 110th respectively.

Highest scoring full democracies in the report are Norway, Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand, Finland, Ireland, Denmark, Canada, Australia and Switzerland.

Some passengers of Ryanair's Milan-Yerevan flight denied boarding

Some passengers of Ryanair's Milan-Yerevan flight have been denied boarding this morning, the Passenger.am informs on Facebook.

The company quotes its representatives in Milan and passengers as saying that tens of passengers were denied boarding "because of improper organization of the flight"

Passenger.am, which helps solve flight



delay and cancellation problems, inform that under EU Regulation 261/2004, the airline was obliged to provide passengers

return.

with an alternative flight to a pre-booked destination, take care of passengers' food/drink (if the delay lasts more than 2 hours) and accommodation (if the delay lasts more than 5 night hours).

The service recommends passengers to fill in applications on www.passenger.am website to claim compensation from the alleged offender air carrier upon their

Coronavirus death toll climbs to 106 as China tightens measures

The death toll from the new coronavirus now stands at 106, with the number of infections almost doubling in a day, the BBC reports.

The number of total cases confirmed by China rose to 4,515 as of 27 January, up from 2,835 a day earlier.

Japan is sending a plane to Wuhan to evacuate its citizens, as efforts to repatriate foreign nationals from the



city at the epicenter of the outbreak gather pace.

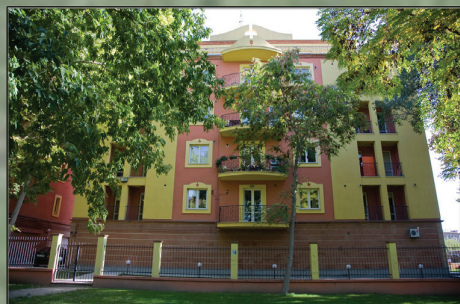
The virus has spread across China and to at least 16 countries globally.

Wuhan, as well as wider Hubei province, are already effectively in a lockdown with strict transport restrictions in and out of the area. Wearing masks in public is now mandatory in some Chinese cities.

The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has warned citizens to temporarily avoid visiting China.

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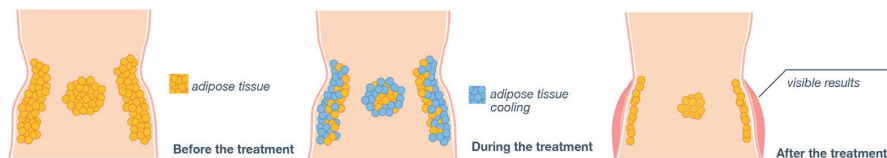
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