

# Award ceremony on 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armed Forces



On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, President Serzh Sargsyan awarded over two hundred military servicemen and freedom fighters with the highest awards of the Republic of Armenia, medals

and orders, and bestowed on them high military ranks for the courage manifested in defending the borders of the Fatherland, valor, boundless dedication, as well as for their contribution to the army building and enhancement of the battle readiness of the troops.

The President of Armenia congratulated the servicemen and the freedom fighters on the occasion of the holiday and on receiving high state awards.

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## Armenian, Russian Prime Ministers Meet in Moscow

"We have special allied relations with Armenia and we always have what to discuss," Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said as he greeted his Armenian counterpart Karen Karapetyan.

Medvedev said he hopes that the documents to be signed within the framework of the Armenian Prime Minister's visit will further enhance the development of economic ties.

"Our commodity turnover has been stable, despite the international conjuncture and the change in energy prices," Dmitry Medvedev said.

"If we speak of our country's imports and supply of products from Armenia, we stated a 70% growth last year which, to my mind, is the result of Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union and strengthened economic ties," he added.

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan said, in turn, that "the meeting is a good opportunity to discuss directions of the Armenian-Russian cooperation."

"We have been traditionally boasting quite a hectic agenda of bilateral relations. As you noted, our governments have been able to move on amid a complicated international situation faced in recent years. You may know that the Russian capital is widely represented Armenia's economy. However, I believe that we should not relax, and today we can explore and outline new directions of cooperation,"



PM Karapetyan said.

"A series of reforms are underway in Armenia aimed at creating a favorable environment for investors. In this respect, we would highly appreciate the commitment of the Russian capital. We have come along with a number of new proposals, which will allow us to diversify and expand the vectors of cooperation. I am confident, too, that we are in for a constructive conversation," Karen Karapetyan stated.

On the sidelines of the working breakfast, the official delegations of the two countries will discuss a wide range of issues of mutual interest and sign a number of documents.

## Territorial integrity cannot be opposed to self-determination, Armenia's Deputy FM says

"Territorial integrity of a country can't be opposed to the people's right to self-determination," Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharyan has said.

The comments come after the statement of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev at the opening of a military camp in Baku.

"We will never allow the creation of the second fictitious Armenian state on the territory of Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh will never be granted independence", Aliyev said. "The fact that the state of Azerbaijan appeared on the world's map less than a century ago, cannot serve as a justification for Azerbaijani leadership's lack of knowledge

of fundamental norms of international law," Shavarsh Kocharyan said in comments to Panorama.am. "It is worth reminding that according to the UN Charter the status of self-determined subject is decided by its people, and the territorial integrity of a country can't be opposed to the people's right to self-determination," he added. "The leadership of Azerbaijan should have read the UN Charter long ago not to become an object of mockery with its rattling illiteracy, and should come to terms with the inevitability of the prospective to recognize the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic," the Deputy Foreign Minister stated.



## Armenia's Foreign Minister, OSCE Chairman-in-Office meet in Vienna



On January 27 in Vienna, Edward Nalbandian, Foreign Minister of Armenia, had a meeting with Sebastian Kurz, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Austrian Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs.

During the meeting a number of issues of the Armenian-Austrian cooperation were discussed. The Ministers noted that it is symbolic that their meeting takes place on the days, when Armenia and Austria mark the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations, and expressed satisfaction over

the dynamic development of bilateral cooperation in different fields.

The interlocutors touched upon the issues concerning the different dimensions of the OSCE activity.

Edward Nalbandian and Sebastian Kurz praised the activity of the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Foreign Minister of Armenia and the OSCE CiO exchanged views on the importance of the implementation of agreements reached at Summits on Nagorno-Karabakh, held in Vienna and St. Petersburg.



## **Congratulatory message by President Serzh Sargsyan on the occasion of Army Day**

Dear Compatriots,

I congratulate you on the occasion of the Army Day and the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia.

The Armenian Army was created along with the reestablishment of our statehood. However, the formation of the Army started earlier, and it started not from the top but from the bottom, spontaneously, through the instinct of self-defense of the people.

Hideous events, which had taken place in Sumgait, Baku, and other places in Azerbaijan, awakened our historic memory with the blood-chilling pictures of massacres and forced deportations. Formed spontaneously but deeply consciously the voluntary movement and first units of volunteers had become the axis on which the glorious and victorious structure – the Armenian Army would rise.

We, as a nation, had united. Last time, we had been united like this at Sardarapat. The superior resources of the foe did not scare us. On the contrary, that fact made us serious, organized, and focused. Our Army was formed at the battlefield. We were fighting against the enemy literally inside our own home.

I recall a true story: a man with the arms in hands was fighting the enemy in his own home. He fought and retreated from the doorway to the kitchen, then still fighting he retreated to the living room, then he took back his kitchen and his doorway. This is not an allegory; this is a true story from the heroic battle of Karintak. The war imposed on us, made us all the Army; this is the truth.

On the other hand, we need officers – professional, experienced, and deeply knowledgeable of the military science. We have been able to smoothly and effortlessly to intertwine the professional capabilities of the military and the strong battle spirit of the

home guard. We were aware that the Fidayi movement, even if of a heroic nature, had no prospects. The time had come to create a professional army. Military servicemen all over the Soviet Union answering the call of the Fatherland gathered here and carried out that tremendous task.



Dear Compatriots,

Twenty-five years ago, by the order of Vazgen Sarkissian our Army became a state structure. From that day on, we were fighting in the self-defense war at the state level. From that day on, the new and glorious history of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia is being written. Many of the pages and heroes of that history have already appeared in history books. Moreover, that history has become an indivisible part of our national identity. That history is our self-respect, human and national dignity, the proof of our freedom.

I have stressed on many occasions that no military action, to say nothing of a new war can solve the Artsakh issue. Moreover, a new war will become an additional, thorny component of the issue which is complex enough, but not a solution.

Events of last April proved once again (and I stress “once again”) to our adversaries that the use of force or threats to use force is a tragic and dead-end road, which means it’s not a road at all.

Those events had also proved the vital and crucial importance of the safety zone created around Artsakh. We are not going to fight another elongated war in the doorway and kitchen of our own home, we have done it already.

Dear Fellow Citizens,

The blood of our martyrs is the price we have paid for our freedom and our future. Today, the thankful generation is bowing to the memory of our immortals and continues with honor the patriotic work of their grandfathers and fathers.

Today’s servicemen and conscripts, now with new structures and new weapons, continue to improve and develop, continue to be the unswerving shield for Armenia and Artsakh. Currently, it would be hard to find a stronger defender and a more ardent proponent of peace than the Armenian Army.

Next twenty-five years will be a period of a new qualitative rise for our Army. Officers, as a special stratum of our national intelligentsia, will have a greater public standing and weight, will have a greater professional, including technological, efficiency. For the conscripts, the military service will truly become a school of life, starting from the military skills and up to civil and psychological readiness.

The 25th anniversary of the creation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia is a great holiday, a great holiday indeed. I once again congratulate us all and wish courage, indestructible resolve, and peace.

Thank you.

## **Award ceremony on 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armed Forces**

*from page 1*

Congratulatory remarks of the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan addressed to the awardees

Dear Awardees,

I congratulate you on the occasion of the Army Day and on the receiving the Fatherland’s high awards and ranks.

We are grateful to you for the enormous work you have done and which is called the service to the Fatherland. First, we shall

commemorate those immortals who are being awarded today posthumously. We, as a nation, stand by the parents who raised these heroes and send to their families the words of compassion and support.

Those boys fell defending their families, their friends and us all. They fell so that Armenia can live, so that aspirations of our people live on and become a reality. They became immortals and together with us will continue the millennia-long and incessant march of the Armenian nation.

I congratulate those present in this hall and those who in our Armed Forces carry on with the dedicated work of their fallen brothers in arms. Be aware that the Fatherland trusts you and believes in you. We are proud of you; you are the worthy sons of our nation, the power and reliance of our people,” said President Serzh Sargsyan. In the presence of the participants of the official award ceremony, the President sent his congratulatory message to the people of Armenia on the occasion of the Army Day.

## Armenian Defense Minister visits Iran

Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan flew to Tehran on January 30 for an official visit that will underscore what appears to be growing military cooperation between Armenia and Iran.

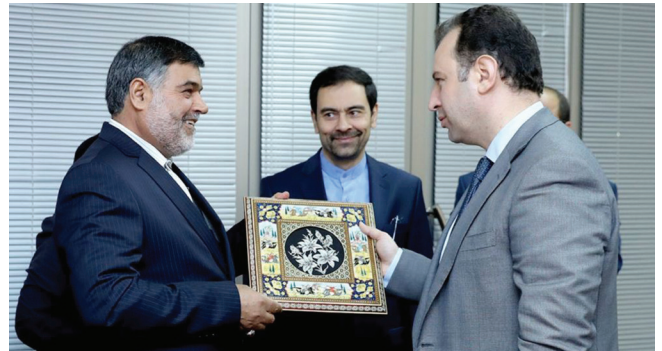
The Armenian Defense Ministry said Sargsyan will meet with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Dehqan to discuss “the current state of bilateral defense cooperation and prospects for its development.” They will also touch upon “international and regional security,” the ministry said in a statement.

The statement added that Sargsyan, who was appointed as defense minister less than four months ago, will also hold talks with other senior Iranian officials and visit “various scientific-research and industrial enterprises.” It did not name those entities.

Iran’s Deputy Defense Minister Nasrollah Kalantari visited Yerevan and met Sargsyan and two of his deputies in October. One of them, Davit Pakhchanyan, runs a Defense Ministry division overseeing the Armenian defense industry.

Another Armenian deputy defense minister, General Movses Hakobyan travelled to Iran in June. Hakobyan was in charge of arms and other procurements at that time and became chief of the Armenian army’s General Staff in October.

During that trip, Hakobyan held talks with the chief executive of Iran’s state-run ETKA corporation that supplies food, clothing and other non-lethal items to the Iranian military. The Armenian Defense Ministry reported at the time that he reached agreements with the Iranian side on “the advancement of cooperation in a number of areas.”



*Armenia - Armenian Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan (R) meets with Iran’s Deputy Defense Minister Nasrollah Kalantari in Yerevan, 18 Oct 2016.*

It did not elaborate.

ETKA’s top executives visited Armenia and met with then Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan in February 2016. Ohanyan and Dehqan held talks in Moscow in late April just weeks after the outbreak of heavy fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.

President Serzh Sargsyann again praised Tehran’s “balanced position” on the Karabakh conflict when he received Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani in December. Rouhani said after their talks that there can be no military solution to the conflict.

## Government, Opposition Reach New Deal on Election Broadcasts

Armenia’s government and three major opposition parties have reached a new agreement to ensure live online broadcasts of voting and ballot counting in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

The government had agreed to install web cameras in all of the country’s 2,000 or so polling stations as part of a September 2016 deal with the parliamentary opposition aimed at minimizing electoral fraud.

The government warned last week, however, that it may be unable to do that due to financial reasons. A senior government official said a single private company interested in providing and operating the broadcasting equipment has set a disproportionately high price for its services.

A special multi-partisan commission implementing the September

scrambled to find a way around this financial hurdle.

An opposition member of the commission, Avetis Avagyan, announced on Thursday that it has worked out an alternative cost-cutting solution whereby cameras will be installed in at least 1,500 polling stations across Armenia. He said 93 percent of the country’s eligible voters reside in those precincts.

“This is a minimum number,” Avagyan told reporters. “There is still room for increasing the number of cameras.”

Avagyan said that the new deal was made possible by the European Union’s decision to raise to 2 million euros (\$2.2 million) the amount of its funding for the purchase of the broadcasting equipment. He said the head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, Piotr Switalski, has also helped to convince the government to promise that the equipment will be exempt from a 20 percent import tax.

Avagyan, who represents the opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK), went on to praise the government for the promised concession. “I can conclude from this that they too are interested in the implementation of this program,” he said.

As part of the landmark deal with the opposition, the authorities in Yerevan will also introduce electronic verification of voters’ identity and post-election publication of signed voter lists. These measures are meant to prevent multiple voting by government loyalists.

The EU as well as the United States have also pledged to finance the purchase of electronic machines that will be used for voter identification. Armenia’s Central Election Commission (CEC) said earlier this month that it will hire 4,000 computer-savvy people to operate them.





## Former Prime Minister Abrahamyan leaves Ruling Party

**YEREVAN (RFE/RL)** Former Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan unexpectedly announced on January 24 that he has decided to leave President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) ahead of crucial parliamentary elections.

"Yes, I've made a decision. I'm leaving the HHK. I will issue a statement tomorrow," Abrahamyan said.

Abrahamyan refused to give any reasons for the move or to clarify whether he plans to join another party.

The announcement came more than four months after he was sacked as prime minister in a government reshuffle which Sargsyan said will reinvigorate economic reforms in the country. Abrahamian has kept a low profile since then.

Abrahamian, who turned 59 on Tuesday, was one of the HHK's most influential figures even before he was appointed prime minister in 2014. He has managed the ruling party's presidential and parliamentary election campaigns since 2008.

The HHK's governing body is due to meet on Thursday to name its campaign manager and draw up a list of its candidates for the parliamentary elections slated for April 2.

Ruben Tadevosyan, a senior official at the HHK secretariat, said that Abrahamian's decision to quit the party took him by surprise. Tadevosyan said the former premier, who is also one of the party's deputy chairpersons, has never openly disagreed with the party line.

"I can't comment until we talk to Mr. Abrahamyan," added Tadevosyan.

Abrahamian's surprise decision follows the influential businessman Gagik Tsarukyan's decision to return to active politics almost two years after he was forced to resign as leader of the Prosperous



Armenia Party (BHK), the second largest force in the outgoing Armenian parliament. The two men have long had a warm personal relationship.

A spokesperson for Tsarukyan pointedly declined to rule out the possibility of Abrahamian joining a new electoral alliance which is currently being formed by the tycoon. Let's wait for official statements," Iveta Tonoyan said.

Stepan Markaryan, a senior representative of another opposition bloc taking shape now, said it has held no election-related talks with Abrahamian. "We respect him... But there have been no such discussions," he said.

Markaryan's bloc will bring together at least four opposition parties. It is expected to be joined by Former Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan, a key member of Abrahamian's cabinet who was also sacked last fall.

## French Court Again Overturns Law On Armenian Genocide Denial



France's constitutional court has struck down a new bill criminalizing the denial of the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey and other crimes against humanity recognized by the French state.

The bill passed by both houses of France's parliament last year took the form of an amendment to a French law on "equality and citizenship." It stipulated that any public denial of those atrocities will be punishable by up to one year's imprisonment and a 45,000-euro (\$50,000) fine.

The French Constitutional Council ruled on January 26 that this represents an unconstitutional "blow to the freedom of expression which is neither necessary nor proportionate."

The court already overturned in 2012 a similar law that was engineered by then President Nicolas Sarkozy.

French Socialist Party leader Francois Hollande promised to help enact a new law making it a crime to deny the Armenian genocide before he was elected France's president later in 2012. Socialist lawmakers overwhelmingly backed the new bill in 2016.

The measure has long been championed by France's influential Armenian community. Accordingly, the CCAF, an umbrella structure uniting leading French-Armenian organizations, on Friday condemned the court's decision as a "humiliation" and vowed to continue to fight against genocide denial.

By contrast, Turkey, which strongly denies the extermination of 1.5 million Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, welcomed the ruling. "This decision is a significant legal gain preventing the unlawful restriction of democratic debates on historical controversies for the sake of futile domestic political concerns," the Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Armenia did not officially react to the development as of Friday evening. Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian praised French lawmakers after they passed the bill in question last year.

France formally recognized the Armenian genocide with a special law enacted in 2001.

## Armenia, Russia sign protocol on nuclear safety information exchange

Russia's Rosatom state nuclear energy corporation and the Armenian Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources signed a protocol on January 24 on practical measures to meet commitments on prompt warning about a nuclear accident and the exchange of information on nuclear and radiation safety, TASS reports.

The procedures are envisaged in the inter-governmental agreement on the exchange of information on nuclear and radiation safety between the two countries inked on October 7, 2015.

The accord was signed with a focus on the implementation of recommendations from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It specifies conditions of mutual emergency warnings in matters of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Under the document, the countries permanently exchange information on nuclear and radiation safety at nuclear facilities.

Under the terms of the agreement, once it comes into effect, the par-



ties will draw up practical measures for implementing the commitments they undertook, including deciding the order and the amount of information transferred on a regular basis about the present conditions regarding nuclear and radiation safety at nuclear facilities.

## Talks on new EU-Armenia Framework Agreement to be finalized in 2017: Piotr Switalski

The negotiations on a new Armenia-EU Framework Agreement are in a final stage, Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador Piotr Switalski told a press conference in Yerevan. He hopes that the 2017 will bring the new Framework Agreement into reality.

"By the EU standards the pace of negotiations on a new Armenia-EU Framework Agreement has been very fast and very constructive. Normally, negotiations on bilateral on similar bilateral agreements take more time," Piotr Switalski said.

He said there are issues that are still open, but there is no doubt they will be settled within a reasonable period of time.

He said "the issues are related to the new circumstances that emerged after 2013, after the aborted agreement on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as other developments, even on the EU side."



## Armenia, China keen on developing economic cooperation



Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan received on January 26 Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Armenia Tian Erlong.

The interlocutors discussed issues related to intensification of economic cooperation between the two countries. The sides expressed satisfaction with the joint projects implemented in different sectors and discussed cooperation in promising areas.

Thankful for the assistance provided to our country by the Chinese government, Karen Karapetyan stressed the need to overhaul bilateral relations. "I want Chinese businessmen to feel comfortable in Armenia. We also want to establish air

communication with China," the Head of Government noted.

The Premier said his government interested in attracting foreign direct investment in the economy and ready to assist Chinese entrepreneurs with their possible involvement in Armenia. He suggested developing specific programs, noting that they would be discussed in all detail by the Government of Armenia.

The Chinese Ambassador said the Chinese side attaches great importance to the deepening of economic cooperation with Armenia and is going to organize a series of events that might contribute to the implementation of investment projects.



## Armenian Military Seeks More Weapons



Armenia is planning to more arms acquisitions in addition to \$200 million defense contracts recently signed with Russia, Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan said on January 27.

Vigen Sargsyan made clear that Russia will not be the sole source of more arms supplies to the Armenian military. But he refused to name other potential or actual suppliers.

"What we have been receiving from Russia ... cannot satisfy our Armed Forces 'need for state-of-the-art weapons,'" he told a news conference. "We are therefore looking for all opportunities in the Russian market and other partner countries to supply our Armed Forces will necessary weapons."

Sargsyan said that Yerevan is also negotiating with Western nations on possible arms supplies but refused to name any of them. "I cannot say much because such negotiations are confidential," he said.

"We are continuing our dialogue with all potential partners and already have results and even supplies," added the minister appointed in October.

Russia has always been Armenia's number one arms supplier, reflecting close military ties between the two states. Membership in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has enabled Armenia to receive Russian weapons at discounted prices or even for free.

In 2015, Moscow approved a \$200 million loan to Yerevan which is being spent on the purchase of more Russian military at internal Russian prices that are well below market-based levels. The Russian government subsequently publicized a long list of items which the Armenian side is allowed to buy with that money. It includes, among other things, the Smerch multiple-launch rocket system, TOS-1A heavy flamethrower, anti-tank weapons and shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles.

Sargsyan said that some of that weaponry has already been delivered to Armenia. The Armenian Defense Ministry is keen to get hold of the remaining weapons covered by the loan "as soon as possible," he said.

The Armenian military demonstrated Smerch systems as well as several other new weapons at a September 2016 parade in Yerevan.

The parade also featured Iskander missiles also acquired from Russia. The cost and source of funding for that acquisition remains unknown. Citing senior Russian defense industry executives, the Russian daily "Vedomosti" said earlier in September that Armenia did not use the \$200 million loan to pay for the advanced missiles that have a firing range of at least 300 kilometers.

### HayPost cancels two stamps dedicated to Army Day

Two postage stamps dedicated to the 25th anniversary of formation of the Armenian Army were cancelled and put into circulation on January 27.

The postage stamps with nominal values of 280 AMD have been printed at "Cartor" printing house in France.

One of the postage stamps depicts some types of the RA Armed Forces troops and the second stamp depicts a row of the Armenian soldiers in combination with the waving Armenian tricolor. Both postage stamps carry the coat of arms of RA Armed Forces. The author of the stamps' design is the designer of "HayPost" CJSC, Vahagn Mkrtchyan.

The postage stamps were cancelled by the RA Minister of Defense Vigen Sargsyan, the RA Minister of Transport, Communication and Information Technologies Vahan Martirosyan, the Managing Director of "HayPost Trust Management" B.V. Juan Pablo Gechidjian and the holder of the second-class Order of the Combat Cross, soldier Narek Malkhasyan.

### 41,000 Georgians reside in Armenia

There are 41,000 Georgians living in Armenia today, according to a study published by The Financial.

"Georgia was one of the richest republics in the Soviet Union, and so, in 1990, very few Georgians – even among those with Armenian background – had reasons to emigrate to Armenia. Less than 2,000 Georgians resided in their southern neighbor country. The subsequent failure of Shevardnadze is nicely illustrated by the migration development in the years that followed: by 1995, almost 28,000 Georgians had moved to Armenia, and in the year 2000, this number stood at 47,000," the study says.

"When the reformers took over in Georgia, many of these people decided to return to their home country. By 2005, there were only 31,000 Georgians left in Armenia, and by 2010, this number had gone down to 26,000. Now we are back to 41,000, giving support to the perception of many people that in the last years, Georgia's economic fortunes worsened," the Financial said.

According to the study, in 2015, there were 1,980 Armenian nationals residing in Georgia, while there were almost 41,000 Georgians in Armenia.

In search for the reasons of the difference,

The Financial refers to the figures presented by the Armenian statistical office Armstat, which claims that wages are slightly higher in Armenia. "In 2014 the average wage was 788.5 lari in Georgia and 818 lari in Armenia (converted by the official rate of the Central Bank of Armenia). These numbers do not conflict with the fact that most sources state a slightly higher nominal per capita GDP for Georgia."

"Unlike in Tbilisi, walking around in Central Yerevan evokes the impression that one is in a rather wealthy and very well-developed country. However, the suburbs of Yerevan do not look much different than the suburbs of Tbilisi, and the countryside of Armenia is in many places very dilapidated," the Financial writes.

"A more plausible explanation might be that many of the Georgians in Armenia are in fact ethnic Armenians who moved to Armenia in the 1990's for good, integrated in the Armenian society and just did not return their Georgian citizenships. They would still be counted as Georgian migrants living in Armenia, while in fact they are Armenians living in Armenia who are essentially culturally and economically indistinguishable from their compatriots."

## Armenia planning to increase the share of renewable energy, President says

President Serzh Sargsyan attended the opening ceremony for the Energy Week-2017 being held in Yerevan within the framework of the Solar Energy Investment Conference. The Conference is organized by Armenia's Renewable Resources and Energy Efficiency Fund and the Expomedia Center of Exhibition Projects, President's Press Office reports.

The Conference aims to present the recent developments of the energy efficiency and renewable resources area in Armenia, the existing problems, investment opportunities, possible funding sources, technological and design solutions, and prospective projects. The Conference is attended by over thirty companies from different countries which are interested in the possibilities for the construction of solar energy stations in Armenia.

The program of events to be conducted on January 25-27 includes also a three-day exhibition which will present the local manufacturers and companies specializing in this area. According to the organizers of the exhibition, the event will allow the participants to familiarize with the heat insulation materials, energy efficient systems of illumination and heating, samples of solar technology and services offered in this area.

### Welcoming remarks of President Serzh Sargsyan at the opening ceremony of the Solar Energy Investment Conference

Distinguished Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I cordially salute the participants of the Solar Energy Investment Conference which is being held in the framework of the Energy Week-2017 event.

As one of the most important areas of the Armenian economy, the energy area in recent year has registered substantial achievements. The works conducted in this area are aimed at raising the level of the energy security of Armenia, providing dependable and uninterrupted services.

With the assistance of the international financial institutions, the high-voltage substations of structural importance have been almost totally renovated. Constant and persistent activities aimed at the creation of new



capacities, construction of new power lines, and introduction of new technologies are being carried out in this area. In the regional context, we are efficiently cooperating with our neighbors – the Islamic Republic of Iran and Georgia. Armenia-Iran and Armenia-Georgia power lines will be put into operation in 2019 which will allow to elevate the energy system of Armenia to a qualitatively new level. The implementation of the mentioned above programs will allow to carry out the transit of energy power, seasonal sub-flows and swaps, as well as other com-



mercial deals.

As a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, Armenia can become a unique bridge between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union. This factor creates excellent opportunities for the implementation of various investment projects by the state as well as private sectors.

In the long-run, the economies based on “green” principles are more promising and stable. For that very reason, in the development strategy of this particular area, we especially stress the importance of the development of the renewable energy such as solar, wind, thermal and hydro energy.

According to numerous of scientific explorations, Armenia possesses a great potential for the development of solar energy. In order to create an attractive milieu for the investors, in recent period of time we have implemented a number of legislative reforms, using the best world practices.

It is necessary to note that in recent years the cost of technologies for solar photovoltaic panels has decreased by nearly 80%. For that very reason, compared to other technologies for energy production, the industrial-scale technology for solar photovoltaic panels has become competitive. The preliminary studies show that thanks to these modern technologies currently it has become possible to get a competitive price for solar photovoltaic panels which in turn will allow to avoid negative impact on the set energy price for the ultimate consumers.

Thus, the world famous companies have every opportunity to participate at the tenders in Armenia and to build great capacity solar

photovoltaic panels.

In coming years, we are planning to dramatically increase the share of renewable energy in the general energy “balance sheet” through the construction of solar, wind, and thermostations.

Distinguished Colleagues,

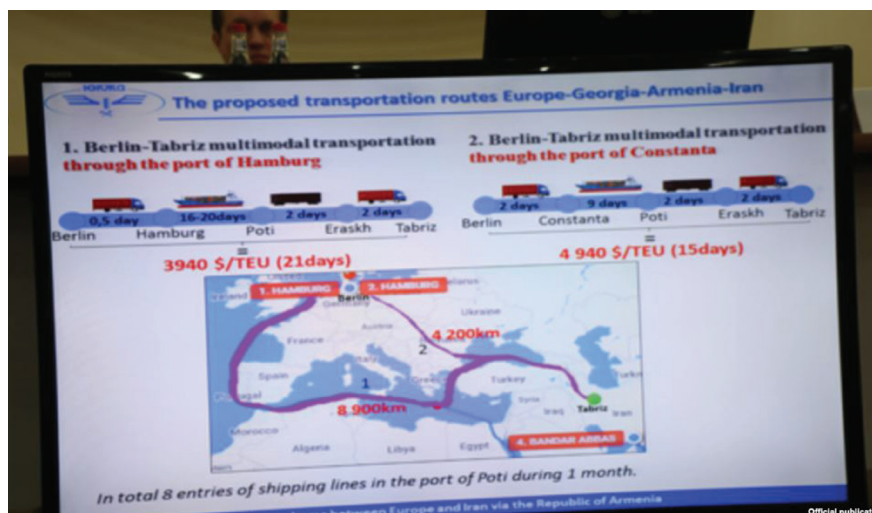
This Conference may become an excellent platform to discuss the latest developments in the area of renewable energy in Armenia and investment opportunities.

I wish you productive work and every success. I am confident that the results will not be long in coming.

Thank you.



## Iran Urged To Use Armenian Territory for Trade with Europe



Armenia is encouraging businesspeople in neighboring Iran to use its territory for shipping commercial freight to and from Europe.

Senior officials from Armenia's Ministry of Transport and Communications and Russian-managed rail network promoted this transit route on January 25 at a meeting with a group of visiting Iranian entrepreneurs. They presented financial and logistical details of the proposed corridor, which would also pass through Georgia and the Black Sea.

"This mode of transport is beneficial for entrepreneurs in terms of both costs and saving time," Dmitry Gvozdev, a senior railway executive, said at the meeting. "All cargos will be covered by insurance."

The meeting came one week after Armenian Transport Minister Vahan Martirosyan and the chief executive of the Armenian railway, Sergey Valko, discussed the matter with Iran's ambassador in Yerevan, Seyed Kazem Sajjad. According to Martirosyan's press service, Sajjad assured them that he will recommend the "fairly efficient" transit option to relevant Iranian companies.

President Serzh Sargsyan likewise promoted the trade route during his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani's official visit to Yerevan in late December. Sargsyan said that landlocked Armenia can serve as Iran's "shortest and safest" commercial conduit to Europe.

Rouhani sounded supportive of the idea, saying that Armenia and Iran should connect Persian Gulf and Black Sea ports with a new transport corridor.

Under the transit project championed by the Armenian government, Iranian cargos would be transported to Yeraskh, a railway station about 50 kilometers southeast of Yerevan, by trucks and then delivered to the Georgian Black Sea port of Poti by rail.

Iran, which has mainly used Turkey's territory for trade with Europe until now, reportedly carried out a test shipment of two freight containers from Germany via Armenia in November.

"The containers were shipped from Hamburg in a relatively shorter journey, compared to the Turkish route," Gholamhossein Amiri, secretary of the

International Transport Association of Iran, told the Mehr news agency at the time.

"In the past couple of years, we have had problems on the Turkish side of the border regarding transport of cargo from Europe. This prompted us to start negotiations with several other countries for alternative routes," said Amiri.

He cited a dispute with the Turkish customs service and growing instability in Turkey's eastern regions bordering Iran.

The Armenian government hopes that the Armenian transit route will become more attractive to Iranian firms after it completes the ongoing reconstruction of Armenia's main highways stretching more than 550 kilometers to Georgia and Iran.

In 2015, the government borrowed \$150 million from the Kazakhstan-based Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) to rebuild a 20-kilometer road in southeastern Armenia leading to the Iranian border. Armenian officials say that alone will significantly shorten travel from Yeraskh to the border.

Most of the EDB loan is due to be spent on the construction of a 4-kilometer tunnel under an Armenian mountain pass situated over 2,500 meters above the sea level. The tortuous Kajaran pass is frequently closed to traffic in winter months because of snowstorms and ice.

*By Emil Danielyan*



## Armenia will be the best country for all Armenians, Prime Minister assures

During his official visit to the Russian Federation, Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan called at the Armenian Embassy in Moscow, where he met with representatives of the Armenian community. In addition to the members of the Prime Minister-led delegation, the meeting was attended by the primates of the New Nakhichevan and Russia Dioceses, Armenians engaged in business activities in Russia, political, public and cultural figures.

In his speech, Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan summed up the results of his first meeting with the Russian Prime Minister, gave details of the talks, expressing satisfaction with the achieved agreements. The Premier took the opportunity to summarize his government's 100-day activities. "I would like to be accountable before you, raise your awareness of what the Government has done in the past 4 months. You have the 100-page summary of our past activities. I think we have presented a pretty serious document. It consists of four parts. The first part features the per-sector diagnosis of problems, in the second part, we have provided information on what the problems are and what solutions have been proposed in this area and what are the measures to take. The third part summarizes what we have done during these 100 days, and the fourth part relates to the public-private partnership based on the Center of Strategic Initiatives," Karen Karapetyan said.

Introducing his vision for the country's development, the Prime Minister reminded the four main components as mentioned before – independence, security, as well as a fair and intellectual environment.

"We have no other options left: we need to abide by intelligent management in all spheres. Human capital is the supreme value in our country. I have had several occasions to state this on different platforms. Nations do not become any happier for their oil, gas deposits and other natural resource, instead favored are those countries where there are most favorable conditions available to creative people," the Prime Minister pointed out, adding that the Government is set to provide fair and transparent conditions for all hard-working, thoughtful and creative individuals.

Coming to Homeland-Diaspora relations, Karen Karapetyan pointed out that the Diaspora is an asset for our country, and one can long talk about the importance of Armenia-Diaspora relations. "We need to understand that these are two parts of one whole. I personally see



a huge potential in the Diaspora's involvement in the construction of our country. First of all, I would like to see Armenia-Diaspora relations apart from the erroneous idea that Armenia is only interested in having charity and investments from the Diasporas. We need to bring in good management practices and a culture of communication," the Premier underscored.

As a success story, the Prime Minister cited the repatriation of Syrian Armenians who specifically went a long way toward improving the quality of restaurant services. "I think we need to raise your awareness of the new rules of the game and the more favorable conditions in the business environment. If we do so, each Armenian will find a niche of his own and will come to work in the Motherland. I am confident that we will succeed," the Head of Government said.

Asked about what is being done to restore and develop the earthquake-hit Gyumri, the Premier noted that in addition to the regional development programs, serious attention is being paid to the promotion of business projects submitted by the local business community in the public-private cost-sharing format.

"Following the visits paid to Shirak Marz, we approved 7 of 8 such business projects," the Prime Minister stated, adding that serious discussions are underway to develop as a tourist network in Gyumri. "Should the Government have a commitment for Gyumri? Yes, of course. The Kumayri program provides for the reconstruction of two old streets, which may not only turn into a tourism destination, but also change the atmosphere and the mood in the town," the Prime Minister emphasized.

In his closing remarks, the Prime Minister said that meetings like that provide a platform to exchange views and new ideas. "I was one of you not so long ago. I know very well that you all live in thoughts, looking back and taking interest in what is going on in the country. You may rest assured that Armenia will be the best country for all Armenians. I know that the sense of pride and dignity depends on how well Armenia is. I promise that our team will do everything possible," Karen Karapetyan concluded.

At the end of the meeting, ex-Ambassador to Russian Georgy Ter-Ghazaryan summed up the outcome of Karen Karapetyan's visit to Russia, noting that despite the difficult times, the Armenian community supports the new government's approaches and stands by the Prime Minister.





## Industrial Commodities Prices to Surge in 2017: World Bank

*Tight supply, strong demand boosts energy, metals prices*

The World Bank is forecasting strong gains for industrial commodities such as energy and metals in 2017, due to tightening supply and strengthening demand.

In its January 2017 Commodity Markets Outlook, the World Bank is holding steady its crude oil price forecast for the year at \$55 per barrel, a 29 percent jump from 2016. The energy price forecast assumes members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other oil producers will partially comply with an agreement to limit production after a long period of unrestrained output.

The Bank is raising its metals price forecast to an increase of 11 percent from the 4 percent rise anticipated in its October outlook on further tightening of supply and strong demand from China and advanced economies.

“Prices for most commodities appear to have bottomed out last year and are on track to climb in 2017,” said John Baffes, Senior Economist and lead author of the Commodity Markets Outlook. “However, changes in policies could alter this path.”

Agriculture prices as a whole are expected to rise by less than 1 percent in 2017. Small increases are anticipated for oils and oilseeds and raw materials, but grains prices are forecast to drop almost 3 percent on an improved supply outlook.

Precious metals prices are seen declining 7 percent as benchmark interest rates rise and safe-haven buying slows.

A Special Focus shows how commodity-exporting emerging and developing economies have been hit hard by slowing investment growth, which has declined from 7.1 percent in 2010 to 1.6 percent in 2015.

“Investment weakness – both public and

private – hinders a range of activity in commodity-exporting emerging market and developing economies,” said Ayhan Kose,

Director of the World Bank’s Development Prospects Group. “Most of these economies have limited policy space to counteract the slowdown in investment growth, so they need to employ measures to enhance the business environment, promote economic diversification, and improve governance to better growth prospects over the longer term.”

The World Bank’s Commodity Markets Outlook is published quarterly, in January, April, July and October. The report provides detailed market analysis for major commodity groups, including energy, metals, agriculture, precious metals and fertilizers. This edition extends price forecasts to 2030 for 46 commodities and provides historical price data.

## Armenia ranked 113<sup>th</sup> in Corruption Perceptions index 2016

Armenia is placed 113th in the Corruption Perceptions index 2016 released by the Transparency International on January 25.

Other countries in the region are placed as follows: Georgia 44th, Turkey – 75th, Azerbaijan 123rd, Iran – 131st.

Armenia’s partners in the Eurasian Economic Union Russia and Kazakhstan share the 131st place with Iran, Belarus is 79th, Kyrgyzstan is 136th.

According to the report, more coun-

tries declined than improved in this year’s results, showing the urgent need for committed action to thwart corruption.

The Corruption Perceptions Index aggregates data from a number of different sources that provide perceptions of business people and country experts of the level of corruption in the public sector.

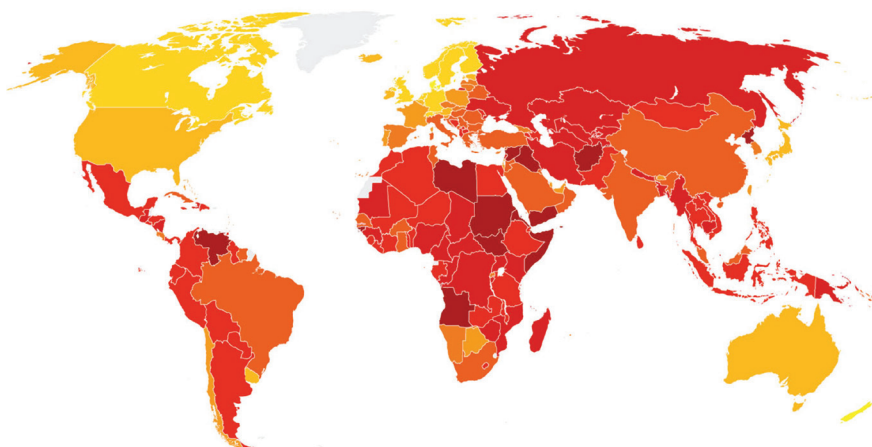
The methodology follows 4 basic steps: selection of source data, rescaling source data, aggregating the res-

caled data and then reporting a measure for uncertainty.

Each source is then standardized to be compatible with other available sources, for aggregation to the CPI scale. The standardization converts all the data sources to a scale of 0-100 where a 0 = highest level of perceived corruption, and 100 = lowest level of perceived corruption.

Each country’s CPI score is calculated as a simple average of all the available rescaled scores for that country (note, we do not use any of the imputed values as a score for the aggregated CPI). A country will only be given a score if there are at least three data sources available from which to calculate this average.

The CPI score is reported alongside a standard error and 90% confidence interval which reflects the variance in the value of the source data that comprises the CPI score. The standard error term is calculated as the standard deviation of the rescaled source data, divided by the square root of the number of sources. Using this standard error, we can calculate the 90% confidence interval, assuming a normal distribution.



## Rex Tillerson pledges to support open dialogue between Armenia and Turkey

On January 23, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved President Donald Trump's Secretary of State nomination of Rex Tillerson by a party line vote of 11 to 10, clearing the path for approval by the full Senate.

As genocide denialists are calling upon President Trump and his team to guarantee that the Armenian Genocide will not be recognized by his administration, Trump's cabinet nominees are taking a considered view of this important human rights issues, the Armenian Assembly of America reports.

Responding to a question for the record posed by New Jersey's senior Senator, Bob Menendez (D-NJ), the Secretary of State nominee, for his part, said: "The tragic atrocities of 1915 remain a painful issue in the relationship between Armenia and Turkey, and it is in the U.S. interest to ensure peaceful and stable relations between the two countries. If confirmed, I will support a full accounting of the historical events and an open dialogue between Armenia and Turkey in the interest of regional stability."

Additionally, President Trump's U.S. Representative to the United Nations nominee Nikki Haley responded to Senator Menendez's question about supporting a U.S. declaration calling the Armenian Genocide as such and whether the failure to do so hereto speaks ill of our values and encourages the continuation of such crimes. She promised: "I will never shy away from calling out other countries for actions taken in conflict with U.S. values and in violation of human rights and international norms."

Focusing on Turkey's violations of basic freedoms, Tillerson made it clear that he is "very concerned about many of the measures recently taken by the Turkish government." He stat-



ed: "Religious freedom is a core American principle and an important aspect of international peace and stability. If confirmed, I will work with Turkey to safeguard religious minorities and promote respect for their cultural heritages, including the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Halki Seminary."

"The Armenian Assembly greatly appreciates Senator Menendez's long-standing commitment and leadership on Armenian issues and the questions he raised for the nominee," stated Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. As Tillerson awaits a final vote by the full Senate, more responses to questions regarding U.S.-Armenia relations and the region are anticipated.

"We look forward to working with the new Administration and Congress to further strengthen the permanent bonds between the United States and Armenia as well as expand economic opportunities for Armenia," Ardouny said.

## The Banker: Armenia PM targets public-friendly reform

*Armenian Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan wants his government to create an environment that welcomes creative and entrepreneurial minds. But, as he tells The Banker, he is also determined to ensure that the country's population is on board with whatever changes lie ahead.*

**Q: What are the immediate priorities that you want to address as prime minister?**

A: Frankly, the work of the prime minister assumes that everything is a priority. Economic growth, social issues, healthcare and the fight against corruption: one could not say that this area is a priority and the other one is secondary. Perhaps the difference between the actions and the job of the prime

minister and a businessman is that you do not have the luxury of prioritising and focusing only on the most important issues. Here's what I think is our first major task – we need to establish contact with society so that our nation understands, believes and responds to the signals that we send. This relates to the businesses and larger public. It will be much easier for us to improve the situation, when our nation is our ally and supports the programmes that we propose.

**Q: What economic initiatives or plans do you have?**

A: We have already presented a government programme where we have outlined what we are going to do. There are a few major topics I want to highlight. Number

one, we need to create a truly free, competitive and fair business environment. We are confident that our nation's potential for creativeness and business acumen would allow our businesses to grow really fast in such an environment. In addition, if we send clear signals, then foreign investors would respond to that as well and would enter our market if they are comfortable with the rules of the game.

Second, considering our current economic condition, we will stimulate the businesses, perhaps not in a very conventional way for the government. We are going to create funds that will be providing financing to different sectors, for example, the agriculture sector, IT, SMEs and so on.

Third, we will create a centre for strategic initiatives, where, with the involvement of



talented private and public sector representatives, we will be discussing and developing long-term strategies, programmes and reforms and, ultimately, deciding in which direction Armenia will be moving.

To summarize, we will create the most favourable and comfortable conditions for creative and hard-working individuals and we will demonstrate to them the horizons of our future, so that everyone engages in building that future. We want to show everyone the country of our dreams.

**Q: Where does FDI fit into your economic plans and are you planning any privatizations of any industries?**

A: FDI is extremely important to us, not only because it will affect economic growth and bring in more investments, but also because it will bring in a new management culture, and demonstrate the openness of our country, which will certainly have a positive multiplying effect on other areas of our life, such as tourism.

When it comes to privatization, I think Armenia is one of the most liberal countries among the post-Soviet countries. There is really very little state property. However, I am confident that private management is always better than public. It reduces corruption risks, increases efficiency, etc. Therefore, our intention is to transfer everything that has business logic, except for very specific areas such as security and defense, either through privatization or submission for management.

I think our IT/hi-tech industry is very interesting and attractive – it has fantastic potential and opportunities. Our agriculture, jewellery, mining, light industry, energy and tourism sectors also have big potential of attracting foreign investment.

**Q: The geopolitics of the region are tricky. How are you dealing with this delicate situation and how can you increase economic integration despite this?**

A: When it comes to our foreign policy, we will definitely send a signal, through our actions and policies that we are very honest and frank with our partners. We are not going to be co-operating with one country to the detriment of other countries. The size of our country and our neighboring countries brings us to the idea that we really need to focus on stimulating regional co-operation.

From that perspective, I think that regional co-operation will open new opportunities for our businesses.

We also need to convince everyone that we are a very tolerant nation, though everyone knows us as a party to a conflict [a border dispute with Azerbaijan]. I think our lifestyle is proof of that, since about three-quarters of our nation is living abroad and serve as law-abiding citizens of other countries. We have suffered enough from wars to be very sensitive about the value of peace and we are very concerned about our security.

**Q: What would you like foreign citizens**

**and companies to know about Armenia that they might not already know?**

A: We know the value of peace and we are very thankful to our friends.

We are one of the few oldest nations having a statehood. Yerevan is 50 years older than Rome. An area very close to Yerevan, Shengavit, is 6000 years old – a civilization that is 1000 years older than Egypt pyramids. We are the first Christian nation and we were one of the first nations to start typography. We say to [businesspeople and tourists] to come to Armenia, be our guest and become our friend.

EUROPE | ARMENIA

Q&A

## KAREN KARAPETYAN

### Q&A

*Armenia's prime minister wants his government to create an environment that welcomes creative and entrepreneurial minds. But, as he tells Courtney Fingar, he is also determined to ensure that the country's population is on board with whatever changes lie ahead.*

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## Armenian-Americans protest Belarus/Azerbaijan crackdown on journalist reporting on Artsakh

On January 29, 2017, the Armenian National Committees of Greater Washington (ANC of GW) and New York (ANC of New York) held simultaneous protests in front of Belarus' diplomatic missions in Washington, DC and New York City demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the Russian-Israeli blogger Alexandr Lapshin.

Mr. Lapshin currently faces extradition from Belarus to Azerbaijan for traveling and reporting from Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) and speaking critically of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's dictatorial regime. The gathered voiced their discontent and outrage over Azerbaijan's continuous assault against free media and journalists over the past several years, with Mr. Lapshin being the latest victim.

"We condemn in the strongest terms any attempt to silence or intimidate journalists and individuals who travel to the free and independent Republic of Artsakh," said ANCA Eastern Region Chairman Steve Mesrobian.

"Azerbaijan and Belarus are two of Europe's last remaining dictatorships and for us it is absolutely unacceptable to silence journalists for speaking up about human rights offences or for expressing their support for the free and democratic Republic of Artsakh. We also call upon the United States government to take a strong stance on this issue in solidarity with the people of Nagorno Karabakh Republic, our democratic and reliable ally in the region."

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called on Belorussian authorities to unconditionally release Aleksandr Lapshin. "We call on Belorussian authorities to release the travel blogger without condition and allow him to return home," stated CPJ Europe and Central Asia Program Coordinator Nina Ognianova.

The Washington DC protest was organized in coordination with the ARF Sebouh Committee and the AYF Ani Chapter. Similar protests have taken place at Belarus Embassies around the world.

"We have gathered here today in solidarity with Mr. Lapshin and with hundreds of other journalists who have been silenced by President Aliyev's dictatorial regime," said AYF Ani Chapter Chairman Aram Tramblian. "Media freedom is one of the cornerstones of any democracy. With Mr. Lapshin's extradition, the Azerbaijani government hopes to quash future free and unfettered reporting about Artsakh – a dangerous precedent which we simply cannot allow."

On December 15, 2016, police in Belarus detained Mr. Lapshin,



a popular travel blogger based in Moscow, for his prior visits to the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) and for his criticism of the Aliyev regime. In his postings, Mr. Lapshin had expressed support for the right to self-determination of the people of Artsakh.

In 2016, he had also visited Baku and subsequently wrote blogs criticizing the poverty in certain areas of the oil-rich capital Baku, as well as the dictatorial rule of Aliyev. On 20 January 2017, at President Aliyev's request, the General Prosecutor's Office of Belarus decided to have Mr. Lapshin extradited to Azerbaijan. An appeal to the ruling was recently denied.

Both Israeli and Russian diplomatic missions have made representations calling for Lapshin's release and opposing the extradition. An Israeli consular official met with the blogger on January 12. The blogger's wife, Yekaterina Kopilova, told Ha'aretz that the diplomat told her that Lapshin was "in poor mental health," "depressed," and under pressure from Belorussian officials to agree to voluntary extradition. "There is no good news," the newspaper quoted Kopilova as saying.

Azerbaijan is ranked 160th out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders 'Press Freedom Index', and President Aliyev listed as one of the top 'Predators of Press Freedom', who has eliminated almost all pluralism in his country.

Azerbaijan has declared 180 journalists' personae non grata – meaning they cannot enter the country – because of prior visits to the Republic of Artsakh.





## Armenian Ambassador visits Fresno State



It was an afternoon of remembrance and solidarity as Fresno State welcomed Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia, Grigor Hovhannissian, to campus Saturday, The Collegian reports.

The ambassador was accompanied by Fresno State President Dr. Joseph Castro and honorary consul for the Republic of Armenia Barj K. Apkarian for a tour of the Armenian Genocide Monument, which was unveiled in 2015.

"This monument is a powerful pride point for us because it's the only one of its kind on a university campus in the United States," Castro said. "I think it says to our Armenian community and to all communities that we stand with them, that we support them."

Castro said the monument also honors the memories of those who paid a heavy price for people to be here today.

"To have one of the finest universities in the state of California dedicate a place to erect this amazing monument, this [is a] powerful symbol that contains symbolism that we feel radiates solidarity," said Hovhannissian.

The visit took place on the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Armenian Armed Forces. The ambassador noted how significant the republic's rebirth was to the Armenian people.

"[The anniversary] is a very symbolic day for us," said Hovhannissian. "I wanted to spend it with a powerful dynamic, a beautiful community that I like so much."

Following a moment of siouvenilence for those lost to the genocide 100 years ago, Castro gave the ambassador an official Fresno State sr. The two shook hands.

Castro said the ambassador's visit as an important representation of the growth in Fresno State's relationships with universities in Armenia.

"I think that is very important for our students to be able to have the opportunity to go abroad to study and for students outside of the United States to come and study," Castro said. "It enriches the educational opportunities for everyone. So we're honored to have the ambassador here today."

Among those in attendance was Congressman Jim Costa, who paid respect to the Armenian community and honored the ongoing relation between the Armenian presence in the San Joaquin Valley and Armenia.

Costa said, "I'm very proud of the Armenian families that have made this Valley what it is today. Truly, generations after generations of Armenians have come to our country and have come to this Valley to have a better opportunity for themselves and their families. Their success has been our success."

*Photo:*

*Khone Saysamongdy/The Collegian*

## Rakel Dink to keynote Sydney commemoration of Hrant Dink

The Armenian Missionary Association of Australia (AMAA) and the Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU) have announced an event to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the assassination of Turkish-Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink, which will feature a keynote address by his widow, Rakel Dink, Armenia Online reports.

Hrant Dink, the former Editor-In-Chief of Agos, was murdered on 19th January, 2007 in front of the Istanbul office of his Armenian-language newspaper after being singled out as "insulting Turkishness" by authorities. While charges for the murder have been laid, investigations into involvement by police officials and public authorities remains ongoing, with honourable testimonies existing that the killing was "deliberately not prevented".

Rakel Dink has dedicated her life to honouring her late husband's memory and con-



tinuing his legacy. She is the President of the Hrant Dink Foundation, which "carries out various programs dedicated to protecting human rights in Turkey, to preserving the culture of minorities in the country, to researching hate speech and to normalising Armenian-Turkish relations".

Rakel Dink will be the guest of the AMAA and ANC-AU in Sydney this March for a

Commemoration Evening honouring Hrant Dink, 10 years after his assassination.

ANC-AU Managing Director, Vache Kahramanian said: "We all remember when the funeral of Hrant Dink saw many tens of thousands of Turkish people march in Istanbul, chanting 'We are all Hrant! We are all Armenian!'. This heralded hope in a country that has trouble dealing with its Armenian past, and proved that Hrant did not die in vain."

Kahramanian added: "Armenian-Australians will have the opportunity to share an audience in Sydney with Mrs. Rakel Dink, as we honour her husband's life. We as Armenians are very lucky to have the likes of Mrs Rakel Dink, Garo Paylan and others continuing the foundations set by Hrant Dink."

The event will take place on Sunday, 19th March 2017, 6pm at The Concourse Theatre in Chatswood.

## Armenia deeply concerned by refugee crisis developments: Zohrab Mnatsakanyan

Ambassador Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Permanent Representative of Armenia to United Nations participated in the high-level dialogue on “Building Sustainable Peace for all: Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace”

*Remarks by Ambassador  
Zohrab Mnatsakanyan,  
Permanent Representative of Armenia  
to United Nations*

Mr. President,

I would like to join other delegates and extend words of appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level dialogue. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development set out an ambitious plan of action to benefit millions of people towards a better and more sustainable future in the years ahead.

By adopting the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community has reaffirmed the inter-linkages between development and peace, good governance, human rights and rule of law. Yet, in the midst of turbulence in so many parts of the world, Goal 16 still remains brittle and without much weight to it.

Protracted emergencies, the rise of violent extremism, unresolved and active conflicts consume significant resources and considerably strain international efforts to promote the global agenda, including within the UN system. The adaptability of the system is a matter of priority and requires collective response against the backdrop of a detrimental decrease resources and the unprecedented rise of humanitarian challenges.

The global displacement crisis continues to pose a large number of risks and instabilities, which require a collective response on a global level, including through better cooperation in areas such as border management, migration and fight against trafficking. Armenia is deeply concerned and is closely following the ongoing refugee crisis developments. In last few years, over 20,000 displaced persons have sought protection in Armenia making our country the third largest recipient of Syrian refugees per capita in Europe. This new influx adds to existing challenges faced by Armenia, already hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as well as another wave of displacement not so long ago from Iraq.

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The Government of Armenia continues to implement facilitated integration and settlement programs for the displaced people, and, in this regard, it is important to give due acknowledgements to the invaluable role of international institutions, non-governmental sector and Diaspora organizations for having supported our country in alleviating the needs of refugees over years. In Armenia, we have been privileged to work with a vibrant and ever-stronger civil society, which is an integral part of our public life, and we see merit in continuously supporting the efforts of the civil society, also on a global level, as an important contribution to humanitarian and development response.

As a consistent supporter and promoter of the concept and practice of prevention, Armenia particularly welcomes the focus on the early action to prevent situations, which, if not addressed, result in conflicts, crises and, not least, atrocity crimes. To improve the quality of response, it remains a priority for the UN system to advance its normative and operational capacity aimed at strengthening and adapting its prevention function and build greater resilience. We believe over years the UN and its member states have achieved a reasonable conceptual consensus that conflict situations are detectable at a considerably early phase, because conflicts are more often than not a reaction to persistent injustice, discrimination and denial of rights, which forcefully represent root causes of a conflict. We speak from experience.

Armenia also believes in the efficiency of regional mechanisms and we think it will be critical to sustain focus on the role that can be played by the regional and sub-regional organizations in promoting the synergies between peace and sustainable development. These often have a better understanding of local circumstances, tailored approaches and effective tools, as well as own resources and financing. Coherence, coordination and non-duplication of efforts and activities are the building blocks of effective utilisation of the capacity of regional organisations in conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

In our national context, Armenia welcomes the unwavering and continued support of the UN system and the Secretary General to the internationally agreed format

of negotiations for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. This format by far is the most effective one for our particular case on several accounts, not least due to its capacity to sustain focus on a compromise solution, to defuse tensions and to prevent escalation. Consolidated support to these negotiations by the international community, including this body and the UN Secretary General is critical in deflecting attempts to pursue mediation shopping and lopsided, often highly biased interpretations of the causes and consequences of the conflict.

Mr. President,

We have also consistently promoted and supported regional and sub-regional co-operation, including on environmental issues. Such co-operation is a basis not only for addressing and advancing mutual interests between neighbouring nations, but also represents an important confidence building measure in situations of unresolved conflicts. We underline the potential of such co-operation in the broader context of promoting regional peace and security as well as economic growth.

Discussions on the 2030 Agenda should focus on the most effective ways of bringing change at the local level, including through an improved and consolidated field presence and flexibility that allows for country-specific needs. Careful adaptation of the new global development agenda to a national context is an important priority, whereby enhancing the potential to implement new schemes and solutions will be critical to meet the ambitious agenda we have embarked upon.

In conclusion, Mr President, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs reaffirm that, despite a decrease of extreme poverty levels around the globe, inequalities continue to grow, while external resources for development co-operation are decreasing. This is particularly important and relevant as far as the needs and challenges of the middle-income countries are concerned. The MICs have the potential to nurture more complex institutions, yet, still need longer time and more focused efforts to do it without help. Armenia remains committed to strengthening support and deepening regional and global partnership to advance the objectives of sustainable peace and prosperous future.

I thank you, Mr. President.



## Urartu-era artifacts unearthed in Armenia's Gavar



Artifacts dating back to the period of the Kingdom of Van (Urartu) have recently been found in Armenia's Gegharkunik province. The items are currently being cleaned and restored at the labs of the Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Museum Reservations.

Professor Ashot Piliposyan, Director of the Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Museum Reservations non-commercial state organization, says the archaeological material is really exceptional and dates back to the 8th century B.C.

"We were informed from the Gavar Geological Museum that villagers had acciden-

tally uncovered archaeological material during construction work," he said.

According to Ashot Piliposyan, a mausoleum dating back to the Urartian times was found, when digging a grave in Gavar's Hatsarat district.

After being cleaned and restored at labs, the artifacts will be added to the Urartu exhibition at "Metsamor" historical-archeological museum-reserve.

"There are clay pots, pieces of crockery we had never found before," Piliposyan said. Besides, he added, human and animal remains were unearthed. The studies reveal that five people had been buried in the mausoleum.



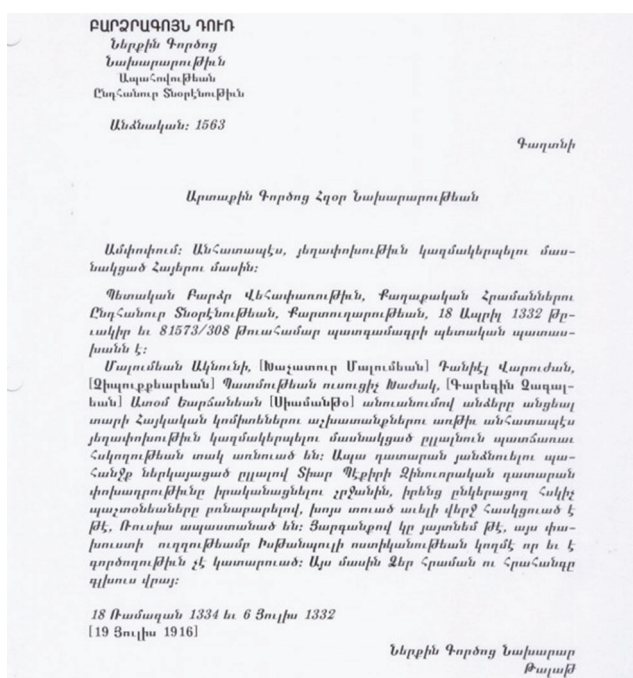
## The King of Spain tried to save Armenian intellectuals in 1915

The King of Spain Alfonso XIII tried to save the outstanding Armenian intellectuals detained in April 1915. Archives reveal the King sent a letter to the Ottoman Government at the time, Akunq.net reports.

In a response letter to the King, the Ottoman leadership falsely said the Armenian intellectuals had been launching a revolutionary activity and said outstanding figures like Aknuni, Daniel Varuzhan and Siamanto had escaped to Russia.

However, as it is known, they all were brutally killed in the Ottoman Empire shortly after the letter dated July 1915.

The documents have been found from the Ottoman archives and translated by US-based researcher Gevorg B. Hakobyan.



## Zodiac Weekly Forecast



### Aries (March 20–April 19)

Mars, the warrior, enters your sign this week and will be traveling with you for seven weeks. This energy is especially helpful in defining our boundaries. Periodically we need

to examine who we are and also who we are not. Often something is eliminated. In general, it increases your courage and physical strength.



### Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

You may be taking a sober look at one or more relationships. Even the very closest friends cannot know each other from the inside. Sometimes we forget this fact and need to remember that we are actually separate beings, helping when we can.

Sometimes our energy is too low to be there for one another.



### Gemini (May 20–June 20)

You are experiencing a change in the areas of shared resources, investments, alimony, debts or inheritance. At this time you are mentally quarreling with yourself or with others over finding a solution to the problem.

You want things as they were and that is not possible. Ask your Supervising Self for a perspective change, one that can see all sides of the issue.



### Cancer (June 21–July 21)

Your good judgment is in one place while your heart is in another. It could be highly distracting. Concentrate while driving or handling tools. If possible, don't force a decision just now. You might benefit by

writing a note to yourself from the voice of logic and a separate letter that speaks for the soul so you can gain a bit of clarity.



### Leo (July 22–August 21)

You and a partner may have a tiff over how to manage joint resources, debt, and shared income. At this time the issue is relatively minor. Don't gloss over it or you encounter a bigger conversation and disagreement later. Small fires are easier to

extinguish.



### Virgo

### (August 22–September 22)

This is a week in which you will tend to be thinking obsessively. It is an opportunity to learn how to better control your mind. Shift your attention to something less dramatic, such as whatever is happening this

moment, rather than worrying over what will happen in the future. It prevents head and neck aches.



### Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

For any number of reasons, circumstances may leave you out of the social loop this week. It's possible that you do not feel well. Astrologically this is a time for self-reflection and not self-condemnation. Having a quiet week is appropriate at this time. Don't turn this into a negative belief about yourself. Enjoy the time to be still and enjoy the quiet.



### Scorpio

### (October 23–November 21)

You have a choice about whether to serve or suffer. To "serve" is to give oneself wholly to a task that will help one or more others. To "suffer" generally refers to emotional or physical ailments. If you are feeling blue, look for the nearest person who needs help and offer it. If your issue is physical, have compassion for your body and rest.



### Sagittarius

### (November 22–December 20)

Circumstances involving love life and money may feel a bit tight. You may experience an emotional droop near Jan. 27, in which you perceive

yourself to be alone in the world. This is a temporary mood, so don't take it seriously. All is not lost. Focus instead on the immediate present and don't project way down the track.



### Capricorn

### (December 21–January 19)

You occasionally confuse what you think with who you are. There are those who will disagree with you this week. Just don't let it become a battle to the death. Your identity is

not at stake in this situation. You may not like what is happening, but you do not have to become a virtual freight train.



### Aquarius

### (January 20–February 17)

Necessary expenses (those not of the "fun" type) may develop this week. If not that, you could be just having a little loved one. It is one

of those times when we become aware that our loved ones can never know or understand fully what is inside of us. This is an existential dilemma that everyone encounters now and then. It will pass quickly.



### Pisces (February 18–March 19)

This is a week of "nose to the grindstone". You are in a serious frame of mind and feel a strong need to get things accomplished that began earlier in the year. At this point, if you are to accomplish the task,

you must pour on considerable energy and resources. It is a creation with its own spirit, so allow it to grow in the way it "wants" to evolve.



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## Spanish city of Sabadell recognizes Armenian Genocide

The city of Sabadell in Catalonia, Spain, has officially recognized the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian Embassy in Spain informs on its Facebook page.

The heads of all political forces represented in the Sabadell City Hall have signed a joint statement, describing the events of 1915 as “genocide and crime against humanity.”

The statement reads: “Any crime against humanity must be condemned to prevent reoccurrence of similar developments at any part of the world, again representatives of any nation, race or religion. The municipal authorities of Sabadell officially recognize the Armenian Genocide.”

The document was authored by the Ciudadanos party. Party Speaker Adrian Emandes welcomed the support of partner parties “as it allows Sabadell to join the ranks of the Spanish cities that have officially acknowledged and condemned the Armenian Genocide.”



## Denmark's Parliament adopts Armenian Genocide Resolution

The Parliament of Denmark voted 89 to 9 with 11 abstentions on January 26 to adopt an Armenian Genocide resolution, according

to the website of the Danish Parliament.

On January 19 the Parliament had 2.5 hours of discussion on the document brought

to the agenda by Nick Hækkerup (S), Søren Espersen (DF), Michael Aastrup Jensen (V), Henrik Dahl (LA), Martin Lidegaard (RV), Naser Khader (KF).

The document reads, in part: “The Parliament confirms its decision no. V 54 of 19 May 2015 on the tragic and bloody events that took place in eastern Anatolia in the period 1915-1923. The Danish Parliament finds that the best path to reconciliation will be an open dialogue about the story on the basis of a free and uncensored history research, including the release of all official documents from the period. The Parliament regrets that Turkish law prohibits citizens and media to use the term “genocide” about the events, and considers this to be an unreasonable restriction of both academic freedom as freedom of expression relates to the use of this term. Parliament maintains its parliamentary tradition not to issue judgments about historical events.



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