

Armenia’s former Security Chief found dead



Armenia - Georgi Kutoyan, the former director of the National Security Service.

Georgi Kutoyan, who headed Armenia’s National Security Service (NSS) in the final years of former President Serzh Sargsyan’s rule, was found shot to death in Yerevan on January 17.

A spokeswoman for the Investigative Committee, Naira Harutyunyan, reported in the afternoon that Kutoyan’s body had a gunshot wound then it was discovered by his wife at his Yerevan apartment “a short while ago.”

Forensic experts and other officers of the law-enforcement agency are already “working at the scene,” Harutyunyan wrote on Facebook.

A high-ranking Investigative Committee official, Artur Melikyan, said later in the day that preliminary indications are that Kutoyan, 38, was killed by a gunshot fired at his head. But investigators also found dozens of bullets in the apartment and forensic experts will determine whether those were fired from the same pistol, he told reporters outside the apartment building cordoned off by police.

Melikyan said that premeditated murder is therefore one of the theories of Kutoyan’s death considered by the investigators.

“We don’t yet have information that anyone heard gunshots,” he said, adding that more residents of the apartment block will be questioned in the coming days.

[page 3](#)

No date set for next Armenian-Azeri talks

p. 2

Former MP Manvel Grigoryan released from jail

p. 4

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

p.7

Armenian pogroms in Baku one of the bloodiest episodes of the Karabakh conflict

p. 5

Nikol Pashinyan congratulates Russia's new Prime Minister

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan sent a congratulatory message to Mikhail Mishustin on the occasion of being appointed Prime Minister of Russia. As ARMENPRESS was informed from the Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia, the message runs as follows,

“Honorable Mikhail Vladimirovich,

Please, accept my sincere congratulations on the occasion of being appointed Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.

The Government of the Republic of Ar-



menia is determined to actively cooperate with the new Government of the Russian Federation for future strengthening of the bilateral and multilateral partnership, in-

cluding in the direction of deepening integration in the sidelines of the Eurasian Economic Union.

I am confident that with mutual efforts we will be able to enrich the agenda of the Armenian-Russian allied partnership and give new impetus to our multilateral cooperation based on the centuries-old friendship between our peoples.

Honorable Mikhail Vladimirovich, I wish you good health, welfare and success in the responsible state position, and I wish peace and prosperity to the brotherly people of Russia”.

No date set for next Armenian-Azeri talks

Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan on January 16 declined to give a possible date for his fresh talks with his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov anticipated by international mediators.

Mnatsakanyan and Mammadyarov have met regularly in the last 18 months, most recently in Slovakia's capital Bratislava on December 4. They appeared to have failed to make major progress towards a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during that meeting which Mammadyarov described as “tough.”

The U.S., Russian and French mediators co-heading the OSCE Minsk Group said afterwards that the two ministers will meet again early next year “to intensify negoti-



ations on the core issues of a peaceful settlement.”

“Ever since our government took office in May 2018 we have not dragged out or delayed the [negotiating] process at any point,” Mnatsakanyan told reporters when asked when that meeting will take place. “As you know, we worked quite actively last year.”

“The process is going on,” he said after meeting with pro-government lawmakers in Yerevan. “You know that we announce

a meeting when we reach agreement on it. We announce it simultaneously with the co-chairs.”

Mnatsakanyan also noted that it is “too early” to talk about fresh talks between Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev.

Mammadyarov claimed later in De-

cember that the Bratislava talks focused on the most recent version of a framework peace accord originally drafted by the U.S., Russian and French mediators in 2007. He said Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov presented it to the conflicting parties two years ago.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry insisted, however, that “no document is being discussed” by the parties at present.

Diaspora-Armenian specialists can participate in Armenia's governance: new project coming soon



The Office of High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs of Armenia is planning to implement a pilot project in 2020 aimed at engaging skilled Diaspora-Armenian specialists to the improvement process of Armenia's various areas.

Karen Avanesyan, head of the Department of Armenian communities of Europe at the High Commissioner's Office, told Armenpress that the program aims at investing the experience and knowledge of Diaspora's competitive specialists for Armenia's development process, promoting Armenia-Diaspora partnership and contributing to "reverse brain drain".

"We have applied to state bodies in advance. They all have a need of various specialists, such as economist, lawyer, IT specialist, sociologist, etc. When we announce the launch of the program, there will be an online registration form where applicants will select the workplace they wish", he said.

Within the framework of the program mainly Diaspora-Armenian specialists will be invited to work at Armenia's state structures to conduct research, implement respective priority programs, develop strat-

egies, etc. Diaspora-Armenian specialists who hold Master's or higher degree can apply.

The project will launch on July 1, 2020 and will last 12 months. The expenditures for the implementation of the program will be covered by the Office of High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, such as tickets, accommodation.

"These specialists will be paid, but this will not be a salary, but for their daily expenditures. Those who want to bring their professional contribution to Armenia's development, this is a good opportunity for them", Karen Avanesyan said, adding that this is a pilot project and is envisaged for a maximum of 20 people.

The selection process of specialists will be carried out at two stages. At the first stage all applications will be summed up and only those applications which meet the program requirements will pass to the second stage. At the second stage the specialists will be selected, but their final selection will be carried out via an interview.

"After that those state structures who presented their vacant positions will select from these specialists as their employee.

page 1

A lawyer by education, Kutoyan had worked as an assistant to Sargsyan from 2011 until his surprise appointment as director of the NSS in February 2016. He was sacked by newly elected Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in May 2018 immediately after the "Velvet Revolution" that toppled the country's former leader. Kutoyan has made no public statements since then. He also kept a low profile during his tenure.

Kutoyan is the second former senior security official found shot dead in the last four months. Hayk Harutiunyan, a former chief of the Armenian police, was found dead in his country house in September.

Harutiunyan reportedly had a gunshot wound to his head. Investigators suggested that he committed suicide.

In the months leading up to his death, Harutiunyan was repeatedly interrogated in an ongoing criminal investigation into the 2008 post-election violence in Yerevan. The Special Investigative Service, which is conducting that inquiry, told the Armenpress news agency that it never questioned Kutoyan as a witness or suspect.

The Investigative Committee and the NSS did not investigate or interrogate Kutoyan either, according to the committee spokeswoman.

This part is mostly left on that particular state structure. I think this is a good opportunity not only to have a professional investment in the homeland, but also to live here a year, get acquainted with the conditions and understand whether they would like to continue their work in Armenia or not", Karen Avanesyan said.

The Office of High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs will soon make an announcement about the project.

Pashinyan in fresh war of words with former Security Chief

(RFE/RL – Yerevan) - A newspaper controlled by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's family has accused Artur Vanetsyan of organizing a smear campaign against it, prompting an angry rebuttal from the former head of Armenia's National Security Service (NSS).

Vanetsyan was an influential member of Pashinyan's entourage until being unexpectedly sacked in September this year for still unclear reasons. He criticized Pashinyan's "impulsive" leadership style immediately after his dismissal, triggering a bitter war of words with the premier.

The "Haykakan Zhamanak" daily, which is still officially run by Pashinyan's wife Anna Hakobyan, reignited their public feud at the weekend with an article which charged that Vanetsyan is behind slanderous reports about the prime minister and his family members spread by anti-government media. It said the main "ideologist" of this campaign is a former senior official linked to Mikael Minasyan, former President Serzh Sarkisian's son-in-law.

The unsigned article also accused Vanet-



syman of having close ties with Aram Vartanyan, a reputed crime figure who was briefly imprisoned after the 2018 "Velvet Revolution" that brought Pashinyan to power.

Pashinyan's 21-year-old daughter Mariam added her voice to the allegations. In a Facebook post, she described the former NSS director as the "coordinator" of the "conspiracy" against her family.

Vanetsyan strongly denied the accusations and said he is considering taking legal action in response to the "ludicrous article."

"For me, family is a sacred thing and attempts to use one's own family to discredit others are unacceptable," he wrote on his Instagram page.

"It is not the first time that the author of that article is trying to discredit me by tying

me to his hidden fears," added Vanetsyan. "But the fact that the 'struggle' was lowered to this level was unexpected even for me. These lies will not go unanswered, and my lawyers are already dealing with the 'report.'"

Armenia's Office of the Prosecutor-General and Special Investigative Service would not say on Monday whether they will launch inquiries in connection with the "Haykakan Zhamanak" allegations.

Arman Boshyan, a parliament deputy from Pashinyan's My Step alliance, said there may well be sufficient grounds for such an investigation. Boshyan said he too sees a systematic effort to discredit Pashinyan's family which is "directed from one center."

Since his sacking Vanetsyan has not ruled out his involvement in active politics and participation in future Armenian elections. The 40-year-old, who oversaw a number of high-profile corruption investigations when he ran the NSS, set up last month a "development fund" which he said will support pro-democracy initiatives in the country.

Former MP Manvel Grigoryan released from jail

Prosecutors agreed on January 15 to the release from prison of Manvel Grigoryan, a retired Armenian army general facing a string of criminal charges, following a reportedly serious deterioration of his health condition.

A Yerevan court judge presiding over the ongoing trial of Grigoryan and his wife Nazik Amiryany ordered him freed during an emergency hearing initiated by the trial prosecutors. A member of an interagency government commission monitoring Grigoryan's health told the court that the once powerful general is now in a "life-threatening condition" which is "not compatible with arrest."

The 63-year-old Grigoryan, who suffers from multiple diseases, has been treated in a Yerevan hospital in recent months. He



was transferred to the hospital's intensive care unit on Tuesday.

Grigoryan's lawyers have repeatedly demanded his release on health grounds. Both the court and the prosecutors rejected those demands until now.

Grigoryan, who had served as Armenia's deputy defense minister from 2000-2008,

stands accused of illegal arms possession, embezzlement, extortion and tax evasion. Some of these charges were also brought against his wife. The couple continued to deny any wrongdoing when it went on trial in May 2019.

Grigoryan was arrested in June 2018 following searches conducted at his properties in and around the town of Echmiadzin. Investigators found there many weapons, ammunition, medication and field rations for soldiers provided by the Defense

Ministry.

They also discovered canned food and several vehicles donated by Armenians at one of Grigoryan's mansions. An official video of the searches conducted by the National Security Service (NSS) caused shock and indignation in the country.

Armenian pogroms in Baku one of the bloodiest episodes of the Karabakh conflict

January 13 marks the 30th anniversary of the Armenian pogroms in Baku, one of the most tragic episodes of the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict. On January 13, 1990, the targeted oppression of the Armenians of Baku turned into a widespread and organized massacre, the Artsakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on the 30th anniversary of Baku Pogroms.

Below is the full text of the statement:

Chanting the slogans “Glory to the heroes of Sumgait!”, “Long live Baku without Armenians!”, a crowd of thousands, having divided into groups led by activists of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan (PFA), embarked upon methodically “cleansing” the city of Armenians house by house. Evidence abounds on atrocities and murders committed with extreme cruelty.

Those who managed to escape death were subjected to forced deportation. Thousands of Armenians were brought to the port of Krasnovodsk city in Turkmen SSR by a ferry across the Caspian Sea, and were later sent to Armenia and Russia by airplanes.

The massacres continued for an entire week in the conditions of complete inactivity of Azerbaijani authorities, internal troops and Baku’s large garrison of the Soviet Army.

On January 18, on the occasion of the massacres of Armenians in Baku, as well as armed attacks on the Armenian villages of Shahumyan region and Getashen, the European Parliament adopted a resolution



titled “On the Situation in Armenia”, which called for the authorities of the USSR to guarantee real protection of the Armenian population living in Azerbaijan by sending forces to intervene in the situation.

Units of the Soviet Army were deployed to the capital of Azerbaijani SSR only in the night of 20 January 1990 that stopped the pogroms, overcoming the fierce resistance of armed units of the PFA.

The Baku pogroms became one of the bloodiest mass crimes against the Armenian population in a series of pogroms, deportations, ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity carried out in Azerbaijan since February 1988. According to various sources, 150 to 300 people died as a result of the massacre.

We condemn the permanent denial by the Azerbaijani authorities of the genocidal acts and the heroization of the performers, which has become an integral part of Baku’s policy of promoting xenophobia and

hatred towards Armenians.

Today, the inculcation of Armenophobia and the promotion of hate crimes against Armenians have been elevated to the rank of state policy in Azerbaijan and penetrated into all spheres of public life in this country, thus causing serious changes in the consciousness of the Azerbaijani society.

The problem of xenophobia towards Armenians in Azerbaijan has reached such dimensions that has become one of the key sources of threats to regional stability and security.

In order to overcome these negative processes and prevent an even greater complication of the problem of xenophobia in Azerbaijan, implementation of a set of measures, with the support of the international community, will be necessary, which will allow Azerbaijani society to get rid of the hate norms and guidelines imposed by the authorities.

An important step in the process of eradicating the negative phenomena caused by the years-long propaganda of hatred towards Armenians could be the recognition by the Azerbaijani authorities of responsibility for the mass crimes committed against the Armenian population, including the Baku pogroms. This will not only improve the situation in Azerbaijan itself, but also create prerequisites for establishing lasting peace in the region.

ANCA calls on Congress to condemn Azerbaijani aggression on 30th anniversary of Baku Pogroms

Members of the U.S. Senate and House are being encouraged to condemn ongoing Azerbaijani aggression against Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) as the world commemorates the 30th anniversary of fatal government-incited anti-Armenian attacks in Baku, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

“After the bloody Baku, Sumgait, Maragha, and Kirovabad pogroms and then Azerbaijan’s failed all-out war against Artsakh – and amid Baku’s ongoing incitement of anti-Armenian hatred, escalating cross-border attacks, and open desecration of Armenian holy sites – there can be no discussion of returning to the past,” said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. “There is no going back, only forward, for the free, secure and prosperous Artsakh



Republic.”

The ANCA has launched an online Congressional outreach campaign – <https://anca.org/baku> – on its March to Justice advocacy platform.

This year marks 30th anniversary of the

Baku pogroms, one of the most violent anti-Armenian massacres orchestrated by Azerbaijan during the early years of Artsakh’s ultimately successful democratic movement for independence.

Over the course of seven days, Azerbaijani mobs killed dozens and forced hundreds of thousands among the centuries-old Armenian population in Azerbaijan to find safe haven in Armenia and countries around the world. Other similarly violent pogroms took place in Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Maragha.

The Sumgait and Baku Pogroms marked the start of three decades of relentless anti-Armenian incitement by the Azerbaijani government, including during Baku’s failed war against Artsakh.

Ryanair's first Milan-Yerevan flight lands at Zvartnots Airport

The first Ryanair flight from Milan has landed at Yerevan's Zvartnots International Airport.

The take-off was delayed for several hours because of a strike of Italian air controllers.

With the entry of low-cost airlines to the Armenian market, the number of routes to Yerevan will increase to 17, Chair of the Civil Aviation Committee Tatevik Revazyan told a briefing on January 14.

"Ryanair has truly put our hidden pearl, Armenia, on the world map! Our government's decision to remove the departure tax for new routes has more than doubled already existing routes to Europe," she added.

Ryanair's Olga Pawlonka said: "We're



delighted to officially launch our Armenia 2020 schedule, with the start of our new routes from Yerevan to Milan Bergamo and Rome Ciampino. Today marks the start of our first ever winter schedule for Yerevan airport which will help deliver 198,000 customers to/from Yerevan and Gyumri airports this year."

To celebrate the start of the flights, the

company is releasing seats for sale from just €18.99 for travel from now until the end of March 2020, which are available for booking until midnight, Thursday 16th January.

Today Ryanair, Europe's No.1 airline, started two new routes from Yerevan to Milan Bergamo and Rome Ciampino.

Two other routes from Yerevan to Berlin Schönefeld and Gyumri to Memmingen will be launched in Summer 2020.

Earlier this month Ryanair announced Greece as its newest direct link with Armenia. Two new, twice weekly routes from Gyumri to Athens and from Yerevan to Thessaloniki will start in May 2020, as part of Ryanair's extended Armenia summer 2020 schedule.

RAEX-Europe confirms the credit rating of Armenia at BB-, outlook positive

Rating-Agentur Expert RA has confirmed the sovereign government credit rating (SGC) of Armenia at 'BB-' (Sufficient level of creditworthiness of the government) in national currency and at 'BB-' (Sufficient level of creditworthiness of the government) in foreign currency.

The rating outlook is positive which means that in the mid-term perspective there is a high probability of upgrading the rating score.

The agency said fiscal underspending, as well as higher than expected budget income, caused the budget deficit to narrow further in 2019. Their estimation stands at 1,5% of GDP, which is 0,3p.p. lower than in 2018 and 0,7p.p. lower than the State Budget projections for the year.

The banking sector remains well-capitalized, with a strong liquidity, stable asset quality and subdued but positive profits.



The economy showed remarkable growth in 2019 with more than 7% real GDP growth in 3Q reported by the national statistical service of Armenia as a result of solid private consumption and investment, the report said.

"The confirmation of sovereign government credit ratings of Armenia at 'BB-' with positive outlook reflects the continued high

economic growth supported by stabilization of the fiscal balance and drop of public debt levels. Furthermore, the quality of the monetary and fiscal policies remains efficient and adequate," clarified Olena Kolokolova, Rating Analyst of Rating-Agentur Expert RA.

"Nevertheless, government debt levels continue to be elevated and exposed to currency risks. In addition, the economy is highly dependent on imports, remittances inflow and main trading partners. Finally, the current account remains negative, making the weak external position one of the key factors constraining the rating," she continued.

Armenian data scientists to continue their education at San Jose State University

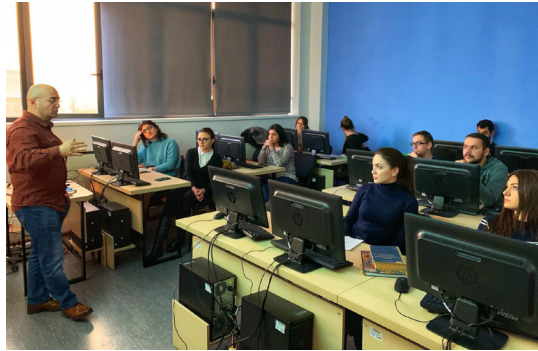
“Data Science in Business” master’s program operated at Yerevan State University’s (YSU) Faculty of Economics and Management and San Jose State University’s Data Analytics (MS) program have announced the launch of cooperation, initiated by Enterprise Incubator Foundation, Innovative Solutions and Technologies Center (ISTC), Yerevan State University, San Jose State University with the support of PMI Science.

The joint program will enable 2-4 selected students of YSU to continue studies at San Jose State University’s Data Analytics (MS) program.

Selected students will be awarded a dual diploma from YSU and the San Jose State University, as well as the opportunity to pursue a paid internship at one of the many Silicon Valley institutions with which San Jose State University has employment contracts. Upon completion of the program, the Armenian students will return to Armenia and be involved in joint research works of YSU and San Jose State University.

The cooperation between the two programs was announced on December 24, 2019 in ISTC.

As one of the key contributors to technological advancement in Armenia, the Enterprise Incubator Foundation has been actively in-



volved throughout all phases of project implementation, viewing it as a strengthening factor for Armenia’s high-tech education through the establishment of close partnerships with international universities.

According to Bagrat Yengibaryan, Director of Enterprise Incubator Foundation, in the modern world, the management of economies and businesses undergo global changes, resulting in new, bold and literate approaches based on data collection and analysis.

“While researching the education programs of San Jose State University and other leading universities, it can be seen that programs of modern economy solve completely different problems, while their successful solutions will contribute to the development of economy and business. The world’s leading universities are also responsive towards changes in business sector programs by updating their educational curriculum. San Jose State University’s Data Analytics (MS) program is a bright example of it,” said Bagrat Yengibaryan.

The best 5 students and the program representatives of YSU “Data Science in Business” master’s program, as well as the representatives of Enterprise Incubator Foundation and ISTC visited San Jose State University in April, 2019.

Every year around 20 master’s degree students receive scholarships from PMI Science.

PicsArt: Armenian photo editor among 20 most downloaded apps in 2019

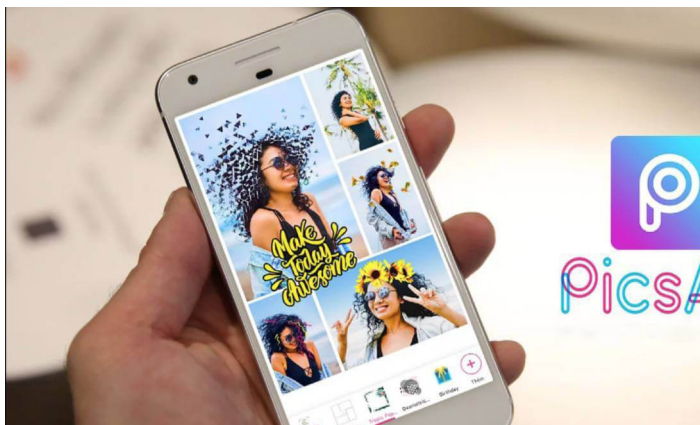
PicsArt, an Armenian all-in-one image editing app, has made it to the top 20 of most downloaded apps worldwide, according to the data released by app intelligence monitor Sensor Tower.

WhatsApp Messenger, a freeware, cross-platform messaging and Voice over IP service owned by Facebook tops the ranking followed by video-sharing social networking service TikTok and

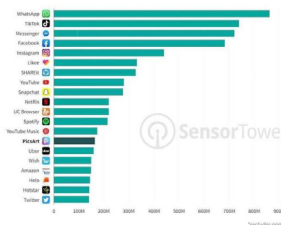
Facebook Messenger.

PicsArt has been downloaded more than 150 million times.

PicsArt enables users to take and edit pictures, draw with layers, and share their images with the PicsArt community and on other networks like Facebook and Instagram. The app is available



Top Apps in 2019 by Worldwide Downloads*



on iOS, Android, and Windows mobile devices. It is also available on PCs running Windows 8.1 or higher

Artsakh FM emphasizes need to restore full trilateral format of negotiations

The cornerstone of Artsakh's foreign policy is the expansion of the scope of Artsakh's international recognition and international cooperation, the strengthening of interaction and friendship between Artsakh and other states, and the expansion of the Republic's involvement in the peace process, Foreign Minister Masis Mayilian told a press conference on January 15.

The Minister said 2019 was quite effective in terms of realization of the goals.

"Not only have efforts continued to strengthen Artsakh's international relations, but steps have been taken to expand the geography of Artsakh's international cooperation. Thus, the working visits of the Artsakh delegation to Uruguay, Argentina, Australia, the United States, Russia, France and Egypt were held, within the framework of which the NKR Foreign Minister met with representatives of the political, public and scientific circles of the respective states.

The Foreign Minister of Artsakh stressed the importance of continuing the efforts on expanding the frameworks of decentralized cooperation between the administrative units of Artsakh and different countries. In this regard, Masis Mayilian noted the adoption of the resolution on establishing friendly relations between Stepanakert and the Australian city of Ryde in the run-up to the working visit of the Artsakh delegation to Australia.

A Circle of Friendship with Artsakh was established in Australia, involving MPs and Senators of the Federal Parliament, Ministers, as well as the Prime Minister of the State of New South Wales, the Speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of the State Parliament, scientists, clergy and culture representatives. The Declaration of Friendship signed between Hadrut region of Artsakh and Isere Department of France in September 2019, as well as the joint Declaration signed by Artsakh's Foreign Minister Masis Mayilian and President of the Regional Council of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes of the French Republic Laurent Wauquiez in October 2019 also testify to the continued strengthening of the friendly relations.

The Foreign Minister stressed the importance of the key political event of the year held in Stepanakert – the Friends of Artsakh Forum "Cooperation for the Sake of Artsakh" – organized jointly



by the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Artsakh and the ARF Dashnaksutyun. Representatives of parliamentary Friendship Groups and Circles, twin cities, as well as the administrative-territorial units, which had recognized the independence of Artsakh or cooperate with Artsakh, in general, over 150 representatives from about 30 states, participated in the Forum.

Following the Forum, the participants adopted a Declaration, in which they called on the international community to take all necessary steps to remove the obstacles to the full-fledged participation of Artsakh in the international cooperation aimed at promoting democracy, as well as strengthening peace and stability in the region. Within the frameworks of the Forum, a decision was also made to create an international network of friends of Artsakh – "ProArtsakh" – with the aim of raising awareness of Artsakh in the international arena, protecting the legitimate interests of its people and promoting the involvement of Artsakh in international processes.

Touching upon the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict settlement, Minister Mayilian said the processes of the international recognition of the Republic of Artsakh, expansion of its international integration and the negotiations on the peaceful settlement of the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict are proceeding in parallel.

At the same time, he stressed that the redoubling of efforts aimed at the international recognition of Artsakh would not only help alleviate Azerbaijan's uncompromising negotiating positions, but would also contribute to raising the level of Artsakh's security and regional stability. Masis Mayilian stressed that in order to make real progress in the peace process and reach a final settlement of the conflict, it is necessary to restore the full trilateral format of the negotiation process with the full-fledged participation of official Stepanakert.

The Foreign Minister also noted that in 2019, the peace process on the settlement of the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict was largely aimed at maintaining stability in the region. It was noted that in general, the ceasefire regime was maintained at the state border between Artsakh and Azerbaijan.

Emphasizing the importance of excluding the prospects of war and ensuring stability in the conflict zone, Masis Mayilian emphasized that the Artsakh authorities continued to support the OSCE mission's regular monitoring of the ceasefire. The Foreign Minister also noted that during the year a number of confidence-building measures were agreed and implemented between the parties to the conflict aimed at creating favorable conditions for the promotion of the peace process. Masis Mayilian also underlined the importance of the meeting with the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak, during which the NKR Foreign Minister presented the Republic's position on the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict settlement.

With the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, head of the Artsakh Union of Armenian Refugees from Azerbaijan Sarasar Saryan had an opportunity to present to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office the situation regarding the refugees in Artsakh. The Minister also noted that during the year the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs visited Stepanakert twice, met with the President of Artsakh, the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Defense.

Masis Mayilian noted that the year of 2019 marked the 25th anniversary of the most important document in the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict settlement process – the Agreement on the full cessation of fire and hostilities, signed by Artsakh, the Republic of Armenia and Azerbaijan, which had allowed to transfer the conflict settlement to the diplomatic realm. In this regard, on May 10, a conference was organized in Stepanakert at the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh, with the participation of political and public figures from Artsakh, Armenia and Russia. Former Co-Chairman of the OSCE Minsk Group Vladimir Kazimirov participated in the conference as an honorable guest.

Armen Sarkissian says keeps dreaming he can be the first President to fly into space

President of the Republic of Armenia Armen Sargsyan, who is in the United Arab Emirates on a working visit, was the key-note speaker at the Youth for Sustainability conference in the framework of the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week forum in the United Arab Emirates.

“For me, this is a journey through time, a journey into the future, because one day, maybe fifty years from today, one of you will be standing here and telling the other generation about his or her life experience, presenting his thoughts about the future. I hope you will remember me on that day and in fifty years you will send me your greetings,” said the President, addressing the youth.

“You are the future. I think time is one of the greatest values in our lives,” the President said.

He said hundreds of years ago people were passing on their profession to their children, but now – at the crossroads of civilizations, new technologies – stability in the ever-changing world first of all implies that you cannot hope that your work will continue forever.”

According to the President, stability in the ever-changing world implies development. “Stability today means more opportunities. And we must take advantage of it,” President Sarkissian said.

“This is much easier nowadays. Today, if you have a bright mind, you are smart, you learn fast, you go to university, you are active, you have a vision, you have great opportunities as the age of success is getting younger and younger. If you said years ago that someone could become a billionaire at the age of 25, people would laugh at you. But today, when I talk to young people, everyone wants to be the future Bill Gates, Steve Jobs. This shows that the world is changing,” the



President stated.

“The one who succeeds in getting the information, studying and using it, has the vision and the ability to process that information and go 30-40 years ago to understand what will happen in the years to come. He has to have the vision, the plan, the strategy, and implement it every day,” he added.

As an example the President cited his dream of flying into space, the President said: “When I was very young, the first man flew into space. His name was Yuri Gagarin. It seemed to be science fiction. How can a man go to space? From that day on, however, I began to dream of flying into space. And all the time in my life I keep thinking whether I can fulfill my dream or not. At first I was a scientist, and to get to the universe one had to be physically strong, trained, and an astronomer, which meant that the young mathematician couldn’t do it. Then I became a diplomat, then a Prime Minister, then I became a free man, a businessman, but my dream remains. When I was very close to fulfilling my dream and had enough money to become a space traveler, I became President. But I continue to dream, and may become the first President to fly into space”

President Sarkissian stated that the world is changing, but it is more or less the same in terms of human values. “We should not be afraid of these changes,” he said. “Everything will change much faster, it will change every

day. If in the 1960s and 1970s there were only two superpowers that could send humans into space, now even private companies are thinking about it. Flying into space will become a commonplace. 30, 40, 50 years ago, everyone was afraid to lose the jobs because of computers. But computers created hundreds of millions of jobs. Now artificial intelligence is coming, but you need not worry, because your natural, human intelligence

is millions of times more powerful than any artificial intelligence. It will help you create robots, multiply your physical strength as you use robots, and make your life more creative. You will be involved in creative work, not physical activities.”

“We have begun to realize how much we benefit from the industrial revolution, but at the same time we have done a great deal of damage to nature and climate. However, using the same technologies that we have been creating for hundreds of years, we will be able to heal the wounds of the world. With new technology and your talent we can clean our world. There are three solutions to healing the world and moving it forward: the first are technologies that have created the genius of mankind. And you will continue that work. The second is the human potential that is not fully utilized; it is the talent of young people, including women. And third, we have to be smart,” Armen Sarkissian stated.

“May God help us be smart enough. We should not be afraid of technology. The only thing we should be afraid of is ourselves, as we can use nuclear energy both for and against. We can use any great idea for the good or the bad. So my message to you is that the most important are your human values, your morality and your humanity. Do not be afraid of anything,” the President concluded.

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Russian Government resigns

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has announced the government is resigning.

The statement comes after President Vladimir Putin's address to the Parliament.

Vladimir Putin thanked members of the government for the joint work, "although not everything worked out."

The Russian leader also said that in the near future he will meet with each member of the Cabinet.

Below are highlights from the Presidential Address:

On Russia's demographic situation

Putin said he was dissatisfied with Russia's birth rate. The Russian president noted that the total fertility rate stood at 1.5 in 2019. "This is not enough for our country," he stressed.

According to Putin, Russia's birth rate in the 1990s was worse than the fertility figures during the Second World War.

Putin said that low incomes of most households with children directly threatened Russia's demographic future and proposed a number of measures to support families.

For instance, the Russian leader suggested providing monthly payments for children between the ages of three and seven years old starting from January 1, 2020. According to the president, families, whose income does not exceed one living wage per person, will receive these payments.

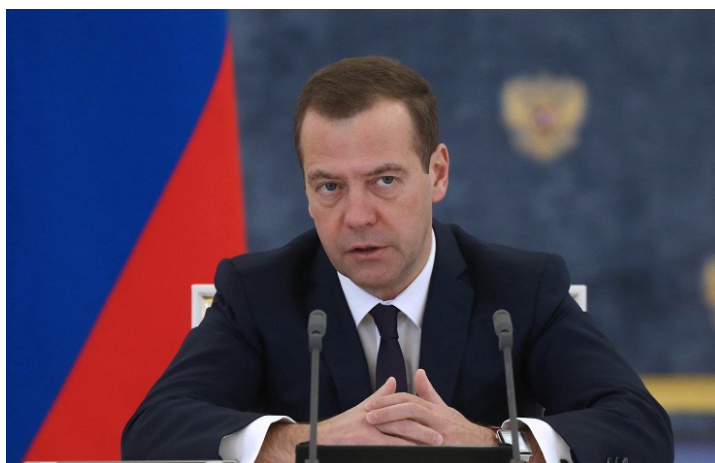
Moreover, the maternity capital program will be extended until the end of 2026 and the payment amount will grow to 616,617 rubles (\$10,028).

On Russia's weaponry

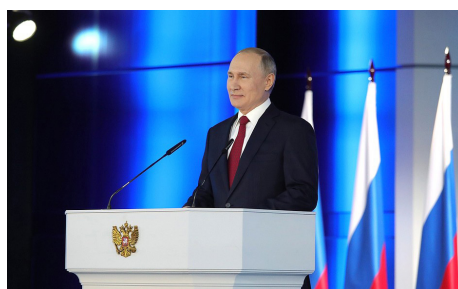
Putin said that Russia has been able for the first time in history to become the world's leader in advanced weapons.

"We are not threatening anyone, nor are we seeking to impose our will. At the same time, I can assure everyone that our steps for strengthening national security were

timely made and in a sufficient volume," the Russian president assured.



Today, Russia is the world's leader in developing advanced weaponry, Putin stressed. "Other leading countries of the world will still have to develop weapons, which Russia already possesses," the head



of state emphasized.

On the supremacy of the Russian Constitution

Putin has suggested a putting up a package of constitutional amendments for a plebiscite. At the same time, the Russian president stated that he sees no grounds to adopt new constitution in Russia.

Putin also suggest stipulating the supremacy of the Russian Constitution over international norms in Russia.

"The time has come to make some changes to the nation's fundamental law that would directly guarantee the priority of the Russian Constitution in our legal space. What does this mean? It means that requirements of international law and decisions of international bodies can only be enforced in Russia to such an extent that

does not violate human and civil rights and freedoms and does not violate our Constitution," Putin emphasized.

On presidency

Putin agrees that the same person should not take the post of the head of state for more than two terms in row.

"I know that our society is discussing the constitutional provision the same person should not take the post of Russia's president for more than two terms in a row. I do not believe that this question is of fundamental importance, but I agree with this," Putin said.

Putin has also suggested complementing Russia's Constitution with a special requirement the candidate for the position of the head state should be a resident of Russia for no less than 25 years and have no foreign citizenship or residence permit – not only at the moment of participation in the election, but ever in the past.

Under the current Constitution any Russian citizen who has lived in the country for no less than ten years can be elected as Russia's president.

On 75th anniversary of Victory

Russia is obliged to protect the historical truth about the victory in the Great Patriotic War, Putin said.

"This year we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War. May 9 in Russia is the greatest and sacrosanct holiday. We are proud of the generation of victors; we remember their heroism. Our memory is not only a token of respect for the heroic past. It serves our future, inspires us and strengthens our unity. We are obliged to protect the truth about the Victory. Otherwise what shall we be able to tell our children if lies spread about the world like an epidemic?" he said.

Putin also said that a network of archive documents on the history of the Second World War accessible to the whole world will be created in Russia.

President reveals plans for first AI-based Disneyland in Armenia

On a visit to the United Arab Emirates, President Armen Sarkissian met with the President of the Republic of Indonesia Joko Widodo.

The President of Indonesia touched upon the Armenian-Indonesian historical ties, particularly mentioning the Sargis family.

Highlighting the continuation of the traditions, President Sarkissian said that his goal is to encourage the expansion of cooperation between the two countries, making full use of the existing potential and opportunities.

The Presidents of the two countries emphasized the importance of expanding cooperation and exchange of experience in the fields of information technologies, creative education and innovation. In this context, President Sarkissian referred to the Presidential ATOM (Advanced Tomorrow) initiative to develop new technologies and science in Armenia and noted that this multi-component program would specifi-



cally include a Museum of the Future or the first Disneyland based on artificial intelligence designed for children in Armenia.

The program also aims to bring representatives of international companies in the field of information and high technologies to Armenia, making our country one of the leading centers of artificial intelligence, large-scale data management and mathematical modeling.

They discussed opportunities for cooperation with Indonesian companies within the framework of the initiative.

The parties also exchanged views on the prospects of cooperation within the EEU.

The Indonesian President said that his country expects Armenia's support in concluding an agreement on a free trade zone with the Eurasian Economic Union. The Armenian President stressed that the bigger and more dynamic the organization, the more beneficial it will be for expanding mutually beneficial cooperation between member states. President Sarkissian presented Armenia's competitive advantages, which will open wide opportunities for Indonesian investors to enter new markets.

The sides also discussed the importance of facilitating mutual visits and contacts between the citizens of the two countries, the importance of promoting tourism.

They also touched upon the possibilities of cooperation in the fields of agriculture and food safety. President Sarkissian said Armenia can export high quality fruits and vegetables, water-based products and products that will be competitive in Indonesia.

Armenian Genocide issue raised at Turkey's High Advisory Board meeting



Turkey fears "some circles" are using the Armenian Genocide issue to create divisions within the Turkish community.

The country's communications director Fahrettin Altun made the

remarks after a meeting of the High Advisory Board under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the capital Ankara, the Hurriyet Daily news reports.

In a statement following the event, Altun said the question was on the agenda of the meeting, adding that some actors were seeking to "use the issue in a bid to damage the harmony of the Turkish people."

He said the officials evaluated national and international opinions on the issue along with the correct diplomatic moves and attempts to hinder acts of disinformation on the case.

"The members of the High Advisory Board once again emphasized their determination to maintain our solidarity and union and the protection of our country's interests," Altun said.

Vatican appoints first woman to senior role in Church

Pope Francis has made an Italian lawyer the first woman to hold a management position in the Vatican's most important office, the BBC reports.

Francesca Di Giovanni, 66, will serve as undersecretary for multilateral affairs in the Secretariat of State.

She will be responsible for coordinating the Holy See's relations with groups including the UN.



Pope Francis has been vocal in his support for women holding greater positions of authority in the Vatican.

"I hope that my being a woman might reflect itself positively in this task, even if they are gifts that I certainly find in my male colleagues as well," she told Vatican media.

Ms Di Giovanni has worked for the Vatican for 27 years and holds a law degree.

She has specialized in areas including migration and refugees, the status of women, intellectual property and tourism.

A journey through history on Armenian Street in Singapore

An in-depth look at Singapore's history reveals a history of civic and commercial involvement by Armenian merchants and entrepreneurs who helped to develop this Asian hub in earlier times. This history is memorialized in part by the existence of Armenian Street in the central district of Singapore, **Gus Gomez** writes in an article for *Asbarez*.

Armenian Street in Singapore first opened as Armenian Church Street sometime after the construction of the Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator. The street is essentially tucked between Coleman Street and Stamford Road near what is



now one of the largest financial districts in the world.

Today, the street serves primarily as a pedestrian mall with store facades featuring galleries, restaurants, and other attractions adjacent to the Singapore Art Museum. Singapore Management University School of Law is located at the northeast end of the street, housed in a modern sleek structure just east of the Singapore River and Fort Canning, famous for Raffles House and Fort Canning lighthouse.

The Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator in Singapore

The Armenian population in Singapore is described as a small community with a significant presence in the early history of

Singapore, numbering about 100 individuals at their peak in the 1920s, according to Wikipedia. They were among the earliest merchants to arrive when Singapore was established as a trading post by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles.

The first Armenian settlers in Singapore were descendants of Armenian people who migrated from Persia to other places including India and the Malay

Peninsula. In the early 1800s, Armenian trading firms like Sarkies and Moses became more prominent in Singapore's economy. Armenian merchants began investing in land by the 1830s.

In the 1880s, the Sarkies brothers—Martin, Tigran, Aviet, and Arshak—founded the Raffles Hotel (named after Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles). The colonial-style hotel is one of the most famous hotels in the world. Today the hotel's main entrance still opens to Beach Road—what used to be a quieter street along the seashore but is now a busy shopping area along with other luxury hotels in Singapore.

Armenian Street is of further cultural significance in Singapore, which includes other thoroughfares representative of the ethnic, cultural, and spiritual diversity of this country. The Sultan Mosque, for example, is located at the end of Arab Street.

Gus Gomez is a former mayor and councilmember in Glendale and is now a Los Angeles Superior Court Judge. He recently visited Singapore and came upon Armenian Street while exploring the city.





Armenian Bar Association

New York

Winter Reception

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6:00-9:00pm

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Members and Non-members:

\$60 (Eventbrite)

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Please join us in recognizing Hon. John P. Colangelo, Justice, Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, Third Department, for his continued support of the Armenian Bar Association

For more information, please contact:

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Yelena Nersesyan at yelena.nersesyan@gmail.com



Young Lawyers Committee

Firm Crawl

- Burbank, CA

Friday, January 31, 2020

6 PM – 9 PM

Hosharian Law

1407 W. Magnolia Blvd., Burbank



Please join the Young Lawyers Committee and Student Affairs Committee of the Armenian Bar Association in conjunction with the National Armenian Law Students Association in resume reviews, mock interview sessions, and social/professional networking!

RSVP by January 27, 2020

<https://ylcfirmcrawl4.eventbrite.com>

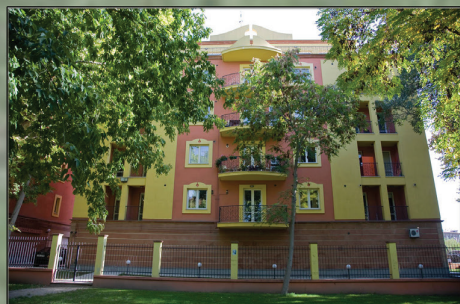
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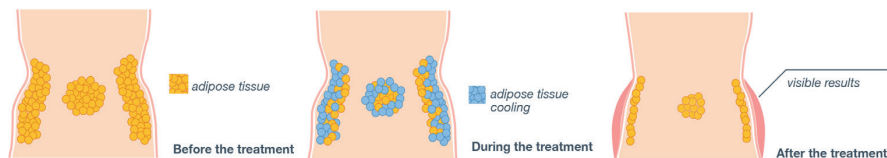
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