

Armenia's main Christmas tree lit in Yerevan



Editorial: Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, Dear Readers!

Thank you for being with us throughout the year! Our editorial board wishes you to have a wonderful and blessed New Year! We look forward to serving you in 2016. In addition, it is our pleasure to inform you that our next issue will be on 18 January 2016.

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Armenian President meets Greek Minister of National Defense

President Serzh Sargsyan met today with the Minister for National Defense of the Hellenic Republic Panos Kammenos. The President welcomed the guest and expressed hope that the Greek Minister will have constructive and productive meetings in Yerevan, giving a new impetus to the cooperation of the two friendly states in the area of defense, which has traditionally been one of the cornerstones of the Armenian-Greek interstate relations.

Underlining that warm relations between Armenia and Greece were formed on a strong historical basis, Serzh Sargsyan stressed the importance of common approaches towards different issues of international agenda, as well as the role of Greece in the context of Armenia-EU and RA-NATO relations, cooperation in the area of peacekeeping.

The President highly valued regular reciprocal visits between the Defense Ministries of the two countries, which allow to dis-

cuss prospects of cooperation in bilateral as well as multilateral formats, and welcomed agreements reached during Minister Kammenos's visit aimed at deepening and invigorating the bilateral cooperation.

The Minister for National Defense of Greece thanked the President for the warm welcome he received in Armenia and for the mutual readiness to develop cooperation in the area of defense. He assured the President of Armenia that excellent cooperation has already been established with the Ministry of Defense of Armenia and that the Armenian-Greek military and technical cooperation will continue to grow through the mutual efforts, including areas of military education and peacekeeping.

At the meeting, the parties spoke also about the regional as well as international security issues and challenges, and the current stage of the NK peace process.

Fighting escalates ahead of Armenian-Azeri summit

One Azerbaijani and three Armenian soldiers were killed near Nagorno-Karabakh on December 17 and 18 in a further escalation of violence which both warring sides linked with the upcoming Armenian-Azerbaijani summit in Switzerland.

Karabakh's Defense Army said two of its soldiers, Aghasi Grigoryan and Ruben Aleksanyan, died "in close combat" while repelling Azerbaijani commando attacks early on Friday. Military investigators said the third serviceman, Lieutenant Gor Ohanyan, fatally wounded himself after firing a rocket-propelled grenade late on Thursday.

Citing information obtained by its reconnaissance units, the Armenian-backed army claimed to have killed at least five Azerbaijani soldiers in the overnight firefights.

A separate statement by Armenia's Defense Ministry said that Azerbaijani special forces attacked Karabakh Armenian positions at six different sections of "the line of contact" north and east of Karabakh. It said that "these actions will not remain without consequences."

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry insisted that only one of its servicemen, identified as Taleh Kerimov, has been killed in action since Thursday. It reported three Azerbaijani combat casualties in previous days.

A ministry statement cited by Azerbaijani news agencies said that the

Armenians themselves launched incursions along the Karabakh frontline and that the Azerbaijani army will take "even tougher measures" against them. "The Armenian side will suffer casualties until it realizes that it must leave our lands," said the statement.

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian was quick to accuse Baku resorting to an "unprecedented escalation of the situation" in the conflict zone ahead of Saturday's meeting in Switzerland's capital Bern of the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents.

"On the eve of every high-level [Armenian-Azerbaijani] meeting, a rise in tensions in the conflict zone as a result of Azerbaijani provocations has become the norm," Nalbandian said in comments to RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am). "Baku is under the illusion that it can negotiate at the gunpoint."

Nalbandian added that the latest outbreak of deadly fighting underscores the need Azerbaijan to accept concrete safeguards against ceasefire violations that have long been sought by the U.S., Russian and French co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. "We expect that the co-chair countries will take practical steps in this direction," he said.

The mediating powers specifically want the warring sides to withdraw their snipers from the frontlines and work out a mechanism for international investigations of armed incidents. These confidence-

building measures have been backed by Yerevan side but rejected by Baku until now.

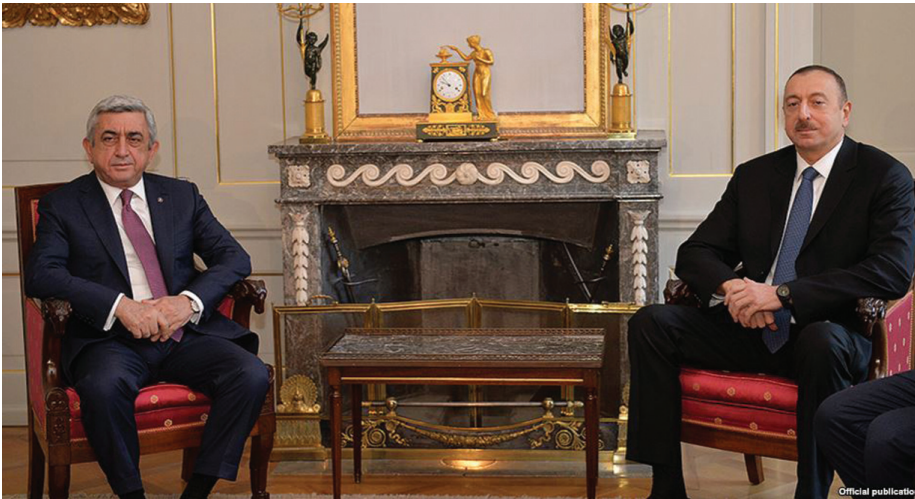
The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry claimed, meanwhile, that it is the Armenian side that is heightening tension ahead of the Bern summit with attempted incursions and other "provocative actions." The APA news agency quoted a ministry spokesman as saying that this "deliberate escalation of the situation" is aimed at torpedoing the Karabakh peace process and cementing the status quo in the conflict.

Later on Friday, President Serzh Sargsyan held a meeting at the Defense Ministry in Yerevan with the Armenian army top brass, Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamian, Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian and other senior government officials. Sargsyan's office said they discussed a wide range of issues related to defense and security. Those included "ways and methods of conducting possible hostilities" and a new five-year plan to strengthen the Armenian armed forces.

A statement by the presidential press office made no mention of the latest deadly fighting in Karabakh.

The U.S., Russian and French mediators hope that Sarkisian and Azerbaijan's Ilham Aliyev will agree to boost the ceasefire regime and revive the protracted search for a compromise peace deal. James Warlick, the chief U.S. negotiator, tweeted on Friday that they expect the two leaders to have "substantive discussions" in Bern.

No progress reported in Aliyev-Sargsyan talks



The presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan appear have made no progress during their latest face-to-face negotiations that were held in Switzerland on Saturday following a fresh upsurge of fighting around Nagorno-Karabakh.

"I can again conclude that unfortunately the approaches of the parties are not close to each other or do not converge," Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian told reporters after the two-hour talks. He said Baku has no "intention to push this process forward."

Serzh Sarkisian and Ilham Aliyev talked *tete-a-tete* in the Swiss capital Bern for more than an hour before being joined by their foreign ministers and the U.S., Russian and French mediators co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group. Neither president made any public statements afterwards.

"The Presidents discussed recent violence and expressed particular concern about casualties, including civilians, caused by the use of heavy weapons," the co-chairs said in an ensuing joint statement. "The Presidents supported the Co-Chairs' ongoing work on proposals regarding measures to reduce the risk of violence along the Line of Contact and Armenia-Azerbaijan border, including an investi-

gation mechanism."

"The Presidents confirmed their readiness to continue engagement on proposals regarding a settlement currently under negotiation," they added vaguely.

James Warlick, the U.S. co-chair, tweeted separately that the Armenian-Azerbaijani summit "concluded with a toast to 2016 to work towards a negotiated settlement."

"The presidents did not raise toasts," countered Nalbandian. "They conducted serious negotiations."

Nalbandian indicated that Azerbaijan continues to oppose the idea of international investigations of ceasefire violations in the Karabakh conflict zone, which is advanced by the mediators and backed by the Armenian side. He linked Baku's stance with recent days' sharp escalation of fighting along the Armenian-Azerbaijani "line of contact" which has left several soldiers dead on both sides.

The Armenian military suffered its latest combat casualty, a soldier named Sidar Aloyan, just a few hours before the start of the Bern summit. Underlining the heightened tensions, Armenia's Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian travelled to the Karabakh frontline and inspected it overnight together with the commander of the Karabakh Armenian army, General Levon Mnatsakanyan. A statement by the army said Ohanian discussed its ongoing efforts to "counter the enemy's assaults in a more targeted manner."

Nalbandian stood by Yerevan's and Stepanakert's claims that Baku deliberately heightened tensions on the frontline on the eve of the latest Aliyev-Sargsyan meeting in a bid to clinch major concessions from the Armenians and the international mediators. "Azerbaijan is not giving up its illusion that it can exploit the use of force, the escalation of the situation as a negotiating tool," he said in Bern.

"This policy has not given and will not give Azerbaijan any advantage," added the Armenian minister.

Aliyev's aides and other Azerbaijani officials did not comment on the Bern talks by the end of the day. The Foreign Ministry in Baku claimed on Friday that the Armenians themselves are violating the ceasefire in order to undermine the peace process and cement the status quo.

Emil Danielyan

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Armenia, Greece Decry 'Turkish Support' For ISIS

Armenia's and Greece's defense ministers accused Turkey of aiding Islamic State (ISIS) militants in Syria and condemned it for shooting down a Russian warplane near the Turkish-Syrian border after holding talks in Yerevan on December 16.

Seyran Ohanyan and his visiting Greek counterpart, Panos Kammenos, openly sided with Moscow in its continuing war of words with Ankara over the November 24 downing of the Russian Su-24 bomber by a Turkish fighter jet.

"Turkey has failed to prove that its airspace was violated. In fact, the Russian warplane was shot down in Syria's airspace," Kammenos said in remarks sharply contrasting with NATO's endorsement of the Turkish version of events.

"Turkey continues to resort to provocations in the region. It does not respect international law and violates Greece's airspace," he told a joint news conference with Ohanian.

"I agree with the Armenian defense minister's assertion that Turkey supports the Islamic State. It is evident that there is illegal trafficking of oil, weapons, drugs and people going via Turkey and that the resulting money flows to terrorists," charged Kammenos.



"There are countries in the region, notably Turkey, that help the Islamic State accomplish its objectives," Ohanian said, for his part, echoing Russian allegations vehemently denied by Ankara.

"We condemn all that. We condemn it also in the sense that it is directed against our strategic partners," he added in a clear reference to the November 24 incident.

Ohanian already condemned the shoot-down on November 25 as a blow to international efforts to defeat terrorist groups operating in Syria.

Armenia relies heavily on Russia for defense and security not least because of a perceived threat from Turkey. Greece like-

wise has an uneasy relationship with Turkey despite the fact that both nations are members of NATO.

This seems to have been a key factor behind Greek-Armenian military cooperation underlined by Kammenos's visit to Armenia. In particular, the Greek military has trained hundreds of Armenian officers and provided assistance to an Armenian army brigade that contributes troops to multinational peacekeeping missions abroad. A statement by the Armenian Defense Ministry said Ohanian and Kammenos agreed to give "new impetus" bilateral military-technical cooperation. It did not give details.

U.S. Embassy statement on Constitutional referendum in Armenia



The U.S. Embassy continues to monitor the recount proceedings of the constitutional referendum held on December 6. We have previously noted our serious concern about credible allegations of irregularities in the referendum reported by non-partisan observers and various Armenian political parties. We welcome the public commitment of Armenian Government officials,

including the Prosecutor General and the Ombudsman for Human Rights, to fully report and investigate credible allegations.

We reiterate that the results of the investigations and prosecutions of those responsible for any irregularities must be transparent and public in order for the Armenian people to have confidence in the integrity of the electoral process. Full and transparent investigations, as well as the resulting public reports, even if they do not lead to criminal prosecutions, can help the Electoral Commission, the National Assembly, and civil society identify possible improvements to current electoral procedures.

In accordance with the U.S. commitment to fight corruption worldwide, the U.S. Embassy can also draw upon the information contained in such reports to help assess whether any individuals who directly interfered in the integrity of the December 6 electoral process can participate in Embassy programs or activities. Looking ahead, we renew our call for the Armenian government and Parliament to adopt a new electoral code in line with OSCE/ODIHR's recommendations, and urge that reform of the new code be carried out in accordance with international standards, in order to increase the integrity of electoral processes in Armenia.

Helsinki Commission Chair introduces bill on Baku sanctions

Asbarez - Following years of systematic efforts by the Government of Azerbaijan to eliminate the voices of independent journalists, opposition politicians, and civil society groups, Helsinki Commission Chair Rep. Chris Smith (NJ-04) Wednesday introduced H.R. 4264, the Azerbaijan Democracy Act of 2015, a landmark bill that will deny U.S. visas to senior members of the Azerbaijani government. "We recognize that there are important national security and economic ties that exist between our two countries, but the United States can no longer remain blind to the appalling human rights violations that are taking place in Azerbaijan," said Rep. Smith. "Journalists and activists are routinely arrested and imprisoned; opposition politicians are in jail and elections are not free and fair; human rights lawyers have been harassed and disbarred; and religious freedom is under attack. The Azerbaijan Democracy Act demonstrates that the United States takes human rights and fundamental freedoms seriously, and that we will not compromise when faced by a government that represses the political opposition, the media, and religious minorities."

In addition to denying U.S. visas to senior leaders of the Government of Azerbaijan, those who derive significant financial benefit from business dealings with senior leadership, and members of the security or judicial branches, the Azerbaijan Democracy Act also expresses the sense of Congress that financial penalties should be considered. Sanctions could be lifted when the Azerbaijani government shows substantial progress toward releasing political prisoners, ending its harassment of civil society, and holding free and fair elections.

"It is unacceptable that senior members of the Azerbaijani government are free to visit the United States while courageous women and men like investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova, attorney Intigam Aliyev, opposition politician Ilgar Mammadov, and activist Anar Mammadli are locked away in prisons with inadequate access to legal or even medical assistance," Rep. Smith said. "If they can pay the price for standing up for human rights, the least we can do is to stand with them."

Rep. Smith is a long-standing advocate for human rights in Azerbaijan. Following the introduction of today's legislation he



will chair a 2PM hearing to examine Azerbaijan's persecution of Ms. Ismayilova, who was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison in early September.

"We welcome Congressman Smith's leadership in introducing the Azerbaijan Democracy Act," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "This measure, aimed first and foremost at protecting the rights of Azerbaijani citizens, can, in a broader sense, also potentially contribute to prospects for regional peace, by requiring that the United States - and our international partners - hold Ilham Aliyev and his regime accountable. The fact is that Azerbaijan's domestic repression mirrors its regional aggression. We need to challenge both."

Armenian contingent begins new rotation in Kosovo

The 22nd Armenian armed forces contingent, assigned to Multinational Battle Group-East's Southern Command Post, said farewell to their multinational partners and welcomed the 23rd Armenian contingent to Kosovo during a transfer of authority ceremony, Dec. 12 at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, according to DVIDS.

The 22nd Armenian contingent completed a six-month deployment in support of NATO's Kosovo Force peace support mission, which maintains a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement for the citizens of Kosovo.

U.S. Army Maj. Stephan Nowakowski, the executive officer for MNBG-E's SCP and the Connecticut National Guard's 1st Battalion, 169th Aviation Regiment, spoke to the incoming and outgoing contingents during the ceremony.

"Thank you for all the hard work you've done on this rotation," said Nowakowski, in reference to the missions the contingent conducted to support KFOR

and Kosovo's law enforcement institutions. "This contingent has performed exceptionally well during your assignment here, and you have helped strengthen the entire MNBG-E by performing perimeter reaction force missions."

"The outgoing contingent has been an important part of the SCP team," Nowakowski said. "For those that have arrived in Kosovo, I welcome you to the KFOR mission and I know you will do extremely well."

In their final remarks, senior leaders from the 22nd Armenian contingent thanked the MNBG-E command for their support throughout the deployment. "It was a great experience working with our multinational partners. We learned a lot working with the multinational forces here, and most of all we admire and respect the professionalism presented here," said Maj. Karen Davtyan, commander of the outgoing Armenian contingent.

U.S. Army Col. Vernon Simpson, com-

mander of the North Carolina National Guard's 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team, and MNBG-E, was present at the ceremony, where he praised the outgoing contingent's hard work and welcomed their replacements to the KFOR mission.

"Today marks the culmination of a very successful deployment for the 22nd Armenian contingent," Simpson said. "Your presence as the perimeter reaction force at Camp Bondsteel has given me comfort and allowed me to focus in other areas." The soldiers in this unit were well-trained, prepared for the mission, and led by top-quality officers and noncommissioned officers, Simpson said.

Simpson welcomed the new contingent to MNBG-E at the close of his remarks by saying they have arrived in Kosovo at a critical point in history, and that he is confident that MNBG-E will continue to carry out its mission successfully with the help of Armenia's 23rd contingent and all of KFOR's multinational forces.

EU-funded Organic Agriculture Support Initiative (OASI) Project launched in Armenia

15 December marked the start of a new EU-funded project in Armenia. The Organic Agriculture Support Initiative (OASI) will help to develop the potential of the Armenian organic agriculture sector over the next three years. The project is co-funded and implemented by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the operational unit of the Austrian Development Cooperation.

Agriculture is a major source for employment in Armenia and contributes to almost 20% of its GDP. The country has high potential for organic agricultural production, which is believed to contribute significantly to improve rural livelihoods in a sustainable manner in the future. "Organic agriculture development is a priority defined in the Sustainable Agriculture Development Strategy of the RA Ministry of Agriculture. It aims to support farmers and agribusinesses to invest in organic agriculture; increase production; explore new international markets and ensure availability of organic products locally," said RA Deputy Minister of Agriculture Mr. Armen Harutyunyan.

"We are happy to support the Organic Agriculture Support Initiative. It confirms our commitment to the rural sector in Armenia, and will be complement support that is already being provided through the EU funded ENPARD Programme, where we also cooperate very successfully with the Austrian Development Agency," said the Head of EU Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador H.E. Piotr Antoni Witaliski.

This project specifically aims at increasing local value-added of Armenian



organic products as well as assisting higher efficiency of relevant public and private institutions. It will support the RA Ministry of Agriculture with creating a clear and enabling legal environment for organic producers and processors in line with international standards. OASI will also strengthen extension services for the promotion of organic technologies and support educational institutions through curricula development. The project has a budget of € 3.3 million and will be implemented over the course of three years.

A big portion of the project support will be rolled out directly to Armenian producers and processors through a call for grant applications. Small grants are available for smallholder farmers seeking to start, diversify or expand organic production, while bigger grants will be available to already established organic farmers, co-operatives and processors for enhancing productivity and market access.

To convince Armenian farmers and

consumers about the benefits and value-added of organic agriculture, an awareness raising campaign will be carried out. "Austria has a long standing history of organic agriculture and today almost 20% of agricultural crop land is cultivated organically. We strive to contribute with this experience to our projects that support small-scale farmers in enhancing agricultural production and marketing. Organic agriculture allows for an optimal use of natural resources while preserving the environment and biodiversity at the same time", said Robert Zeiner, Director Programmes and Projects International of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

EU assistance to Armenia has reached over € 500 million since 1992, with annual support growing progressively over the years. The Austrian Development Agency has been supporting Armenia since 2011 as a priority country for development cooperation with a specific focus on improving the agricultural sector.

Kuwait, Armenia strengthen economic relations

Deputy Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh stressed the importance of boosting economic and technical relations with the Armenian Republic, especially in the fields of transportation and tourism, Kuwaiti News Agency reports.

Al-Saleh said on December 17, as he headed the Kuwaiti side at the second edition of the Kuwaiti-Armenian joint ministerial committee for economic and technical cooperation, that all meetings between the two countries were "successful." He added that the success of

these discussions will lead to strengthen bilateral relations and develop cooperation.

On his part, Minister of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations of Republic of Armenia Armen Yeritsyan said that his country is looking forward for a "fruitful" cooperation in all domains with Kuwait, stressing that the joint committee meeting helped in converging of views in many economic and technical issues.

Yeritsyan called for establishing a direct air line between Armenia and

Kuwait for a better closeness of ties.

In addition, he invited officials from Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) to visit Armenia to explore investment opportunities and to form strategic partnerships in several emerging economic sectors.

At the end of the meeting, the two parties signed two Memorandums of Understanding: the first, concerns cooperation in public health and medical sciences, and the second, focuses on cooperation in high education and scientific research for the years 2016-2020.

EU provides €30 million to support reform efforts in Armenia



The European Commission has adopted a new support programme of €30 million to enhance reform efforts in Armenia in the areas of quality employment, fiscal governance and civil society participation in the democratic decision making process.

The European Commission has announced a new support programme of EUR 30 million to help Armenia provide better work opportunities to its citizens, strengthen the country's fiscal gover-

nance, and improve the participation of Armenia's civil society in the democratic decision making processes.

Announcing the package, Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, said: "This renewed support to our eastern neighbor will allow crucial reforms to take place. This is good news for Armenian citizens as these reforms, be it through better public services or increased job opportunities will benefit them directly."

The action, "Better Qualifications for Better jobs" (€15 million) will seek to improve the efficiency of Armenia's labor market and the employability of its workforce, with a particular emphasis on agricultural employment.

The "Public Finance Policy Reform Programme" (€10 million) will address the accountability, transparency and effectiveness of public spending in Armenia in line with international standards and practices. This should also help prevent corruption.

The "Civil Society Facility" (€5 million) will strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations to effectively contribute to democratic decision making processes. The project will improve the organizational capacity of CSOs as well as their capacity to engage in policy formulation/monitoring.

Armenian Central Bank again cuts key rate



Citing a continuing fall in inflation, the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) on December 22 cut its benchmark interest rate, raised sharply after last year's depreciation of the Armenian dram, for a third time in four months.

The CBA's governing board set the refinancing rate at 8.75 percent, down by 1 percentage point from previous level set on November 10.

In a statement, it argued that annual consumer price inflation in the country fell to 1.2 percent at the end of November owing to weak domestic consumer demand and the decreased cost of major imported commodities. "The CBA board reckons that inflation will remain at a low level in the months to come," read the statement.

It is already firmly within the Armenian authorities' inflation target band of 4 percent (± 1.5 percentage points) set for this year.

The refinancing rate stood at 6.75 percent a year ago. The CBA raised it to 8.5 percent in December 2014 in response to a

roughly 17 percent depreciation of the dram caused by falling cash remittances from Armenian migrant workers in Russia. The bank also raised other lending rates as well as minimum reserve requirements for Armenian commercial banks.

The refinancing rate reached 9.5 percent in January and 10.5 percent in February, with the CBA citing "high inflationary expectations." The dram's value against the U.S. dollar has barely changed this year, leading the Central Bank to cut the rate by 0.25 percentage points in August.

The Armenian currency has essentially avoided further depreciation since then, despite a further drop in oil prices resulting in a renewed weakening of the Russian ruble. The latest rate cut suggests that the CBA does not expect the dram to come under strong pressure or intend to prevent its possible weakening in the coming weeks. The Central Bank said on Tuesday that it might again lower the minimum cost of borrowing in Armenia soon "in case of the absence of additional external and internal risks."

The easing of the bank's monetary policy is supported by the International Monetary Fund. "Gradual normalization of monetary conditions through unwinding of the emergency measures introduced in 2014 would also help support a resumption of bank lending and growth," Mitsuhiro Furusawa, the IMF's deputy managing director, said in early November.

Furusawa also urged the authorities in Yerevan to allow "greater exchange rate flexibility" and "limit interventions" in the local currency market.

As recently as in April, the IMF expected Armenia to fall into recession in 2015 due to the spillover effects of Russia's economic troubles. But the fund revised its outlook in the following months, saying that the country will post modest growth. Late last month, the CBA forecast a growth rate of at least 3.2 percent.



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1 ROOM

- 1696.**Tumanyan str.**, 5/4, stone bld, 1 bedroom, h-3m, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: 160.000 USD.
- 1440.**Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 3rd floor, 110 sq.m., 1 bedroom, h-3m, euro repaired, heating system, furnished, parking. Price: 350.000 USD.
- 1715-**Sayat Nova Ave.**, 5/4, 70sq.m, stone bld, h-4m, 1 bedroom, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: 110.000 USD
- 1680-**Mashtots Ave.**, 5/4, 68sq.m, 1 bedroom, old repair, possibility of gas. Price: 86.000 USD.
- 1674-**Abovyan str.**, 2nd floor, 70sq.m., 1 bedroom, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: 135.000 USD
- 1698-**Aram str.**, Newly built, 14/5, 62sq.m, 1 bedroom, capitally repaired, AC, security system, parking. Price: 120.000 USD.

2 ROOMS

- 3003.**Sayat-Nova str.**, 5/3, 105sq.m, 2bedrooms, stone building, capitally repaired. Price: Negotiable
- 1560.**Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 10/3, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, parking. Price: 400.000 USD.
- 2818.**Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 3rd floor, 120sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, furnished. Price: 400.000USD
- 1156.**Komitas Ave.**, Hambarzumyan str. 5/3, 110sq.m, 2 bedrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, kitchen is furnished. Price: 150.000 USD negotiable.
- 2949.**Aram str.**, Newly built, 1st floor, 143 sq.m, 2 bedrooms, zero state. Price: 2000 USD per sq.m.
- 2300.**Northern ave.**, Newly built, 6/2, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, parking. Price: 400.000 USD.

3 ROOMS

- 3090 **Dzorap Newly built**, 190sq.m, 2 bedrooms, study, 2 bathrooms, capitally renovated, parking. Price: 460.000 USD
- 3090. **Busand str./Near Republic Square/**, Newly built, /6th floor, 116sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms one in master bedroom, capitally renovated, open balcony. Price: 350.000 USD negotiable
- 3046.**Amiryan str.**, Newly built, 9/9, 81sq.m., without divisions. Price: Negotiable.
- 3012.**Aram str.**, Newly built, /7th floor, 136sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, parking, facing to bulvar. Price: 300.000 USD negotiable.
- 2998.**North Ave**, Newly built, 9/6, 181sq.m, 3bedrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, parking. Price: 700.000 USD
- 2682.**Aram Str.**, Newly built, 13/6 187sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 2 open balconies, capitally repaired, heating system, 2AC, 2 garages, view to garden. Price: 550.000 USD negotiable.
- 2958.**Pushkin str.**, 5/2, 140 sq.m., stone building, 4 bedrooms, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: Negotiable.
- 2895.**Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 3rd floor, 300sq.m, 3bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, AC. Price: negotiable
- 2802.**Amiryan str.**, Newly built, 8/4, 166sq.m, 3bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, central heating, AC, security system. Price: 320.000 USD.
- 1104.**Komitas Ave.**, **Aram Khachatryan str.**, 5/2, 125sq.m., stone bld, h-2.75m., 3 bedrooms, office, 2 bathrooms, old repair, gas, garage. Price:

130.000 USD

•2836.**Pushkin str.**, 4/4,5, 400sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC. Price: 460.000 USD.

•2990.**North Ave.**, Newly built, 11th floor, 295sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, parking. Price: Negotiable.

PREMISES

- 1789.**Charents str.** Land-1270sq.m, 5 storied building, each floor-400sq.m., basement, capitally repaired, parkings. Price: 4.000.000 USD negotiable
- 1598.**Komitas, Nairy Zaryan str.**, 1000 sq.m., working restaurant, 1st line, capitally repaired. Price: negotiable.
- 1603.**Northern Ave.**, Ground floor of the building, 160 sq.m., zero level, window glasses. Price: 2.600.000 USD.

•2035.**Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 220sq.m., 1st line, facade-55m., capitally repaired, h-5m., cellar. Price: Negotiable

•2013.**Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 265sq.m., 1st line, capitally repaired, heating system, cellar. Price: 1.300.000\$ negotiable

•2012.**Mashtots Ave.**, 5/1,2, 140sq.m., window glasses, capitally repaired, AC. Price: 1.100.000\$ negotiable

•2155.**Mashtots ave.**, 3storied building, 540sq.m., each floor-180sq.m., window glasses, parking. Price: 3.600.000 USD

•2020.**Hr. Kochar str.**, Land-300sq.m, 1st line, 4storied building, 1080sq.m., each floor-270sq.m, h-3.6m., without divisions, parkings, 3 access. Price: 1.400.000 USD negotiable

•1986.**Cascade**, Land 1000sq.m. 3storied building 1200sq.m., unfinished, parking. Price: 1.000.000 USD.

•2167.**Sayat Nova str.**, newly built, 38sq. m, capitally repaired. Price: 200.000 USD

•2175.**Tumanyan str.**, Ground and 1st floor of the building, 600sq.m, ground floor 300sq.m, 1st floor-220sq.m, basement-80sq.m., - 1st line, zero level, 2 entrances, facade-15m, 4 window glasses, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, Price: 3500 USD per sq.m,

•2172. **Isahakyan str.**, 92sq.m, 1st line, 7 degrees above zero level, facade-9m, 2 window glasses, h-3.20m, 2 halls, cabinet, bathroom, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: 450.000 USD

LANDS

•2122.**Davitashen**, 1800 sq.m., water, gas, electricity, possible to sell separately 600 sq.m., and 1200 sq.m. Price: 150 USD per sq.m.

•2121.**Demirchyan str.**, 1338 sq.m., building permits. Price: 2million USD.

•2013.**Cascade**. 1000 sq.m. building permits, first line, gas, water and electricity possibilities. Price 460.000USD

•1402.**Hr. Kochar Str.**, 1100 sq. m., facade -25 m. Price negotiable.

•2090.**Lori region**, close to Stepanavan, Gyargyar village, 6 hectares, forest 2 hectare has building permits, 3 water source, electricity. Price: 100.000USD.

•2406.**Avan**, Mher Mkrtchyan block, 1000 sq.m.,

electricity, gas, water, the district is inhabited. Price: 30USD per sq.m

•2107.**Monument**, 2400sq.m, building permits, building project. Price: 400 USD per sq.m.

•2413.**Ashtarak roadway**, 1000sq.m, building permits, building project. Price: Negotiable

•2414.**Demirchyan str.** land-750sq.m., building permits. Price: 750.000 USD.

PRIVATE HOUSES

•3739.**Nork Marash** Land- 2000sq.m, two separate houses, total bld-600sq.m, capitally repaired, swimming pool, sauna, guard house. 2 car parking, garden. Price: 950.000 USD

•3348.**Blur, Barbyus str.** Land - 800 sq.m, 3 storied bld.-700 sq.m, 4bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control. Price: 1.2 million USD

•3146.**Aygestan**, Land-500 sq.m., 5 storied bld-765 sq.m., each floor-180 sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, heating system, elevator. Price: 2.300.000 USD.

•3583.**Nork-Marash**, Land-1100sq.m, 2 storied bld-520sq.m, 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, swimming pool, garden. Price: 1.350.000 USD.

•3432.**Aygedzor**, Land - 1021 sq m, 3 storied bld.-501 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, central heating, AC, boiler room garden, swimming pool, sauna, garage, security system. Price: 1.000.000 USD

•3606.**Avan**, Tsarav Akhbyur/near Botanical garden/, Land-1000sq.m., 3 storied building-750sq.m., 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, 2 kitchens, capitally repaired, heating system swimming pool, garden, sauna, 2 car parking. Price-1.500.000 USD

•3574.**Blur**, Land-779sq.m., 2 storied building-720sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, heating system, sauna swimming pool, garden. Price: 2.000.000 USD

•3590 **Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-450 sq.m., 4 storied building-470sq.m., 3bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: 680.000 USD

•3651.**Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-900sq.m., 5 storied building-800sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: 1.700.000 USD.

•3401.**Antarayan str**, Newly built, land-700sq.m, 3 storied bld-690sq.m, 5 bedrooms, capitally repaired. Price: 1.300.000 USD

•3712 **Cascade** Newly built, land-450sq.m, 4 storied bld-600sq.m, zero state. Price: 550.000 USD

NEWLY BUILT RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

•142. **Verin Antarayan str.**, 14 floors, 65-133sq.m, capitally renovated, parking. Price: 900-1300 USD

•74.**Cascade**, Verin Antarayan. 136-315 sq m., walls plastered, electricity, water, gas, euro windows, no exploitation fees. Price: 1200 USD per sq.m, parking -15.000 USD.

•107.**Monument**, Verin Antarayan. inhabited, 8 floors, gas, windows, street view -1000 USD per sq.m., city looking -1500 USD per sq.m., parking -4 million USD preliminary.

•87.**Sayat-Nova str.**, 21 floors, 3 bedrooms -188 sq.m., 199 sq.m., Price 1900 USD per sq.m., 2 bedrooms have a beautiful sight - 117 sq.m., 120 sq.m., 124 sq.m., Price: 1700 USD per sq.m., climate control, gas.

•93.**Kievyan str.**, Given to the operation in October 2011, 16 floors, walls plastered, windows, exterior doors, h -3, 15 m, gas, parking. Price: 1500-1600USD per sq.m, parking-12 000 USD. Possible with mortgage, for 13 years term.

•94.**Masiv**. 3floors, 8 flats, each flat has 3 bedrooms, 210 sq.m., parking. Price: negotiable.

•130.**Antarayan str.**, 34 flats, 110-275 sq.m., 4 penthouses-200-275sq.m, available services-car wash, cleaning service, garbage removal service, parking. Price: Negotiable

•131.**Busand str.**, commercial, office and residential areas, penthouse, available services-car wash, cleaning service, garbage removal service, parking. Price: Negotiable



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1 ROOM

- 2037. **Baghramyan str.**, 5/2, 60sqm, 1 bedroom, euro repaired, gas, heating system, AC, modern furnished, equipped. Price: negotiable
- 2189. **Vardanants str.**, Newly built, 24/12, 90 sqm, 1 bedroom, capially repaired, furnished, equipped. Price: 1000 USD.
- 2099. **Sayat-Nova Ave.**, 12/6, 1 bedroom, capially repaired, gas, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: 600 USD.
- 1972. **Northern ave.**, 8/4, 80sq.m., 1 bedroom, 2 bathrooms, open kitchen, capially repaired, climate control. Price: 1200 USD
- 2171. **Tumanyan str.**, Newly built, 5th floor, 94 sq.m., 1 bedroom, 1 bathroom, capially repaired, central heating, furnished, equipped. Price: 1000 USD
- 2367. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 9th floor, 98 sq.m., capially repaired, heating system, furnished equipped. Price: Negotiable.

2 ROOMS

- 2302 **North Ave**, Newly built, 11/4, 137sq.m, 2bedrooms, 2bathrooms, capially repaired, furnished, parking. Price: 2000 USD
- 1780. **Amiryan str**, Newly built, /13th floor, 82 sq.m, 2 bedrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: 1700 USD negotiable.
- 942. **Teryan str.** 4/3, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, capially repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped. Price: 1500 USD.
- 1950. **Buzand/Mashtots area**. Newly built, 8th floor, 163 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, climate control, furnished, open balcony. Price: 2500 USD.
- 1681. **Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 6/2, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, parking. Price: 2000 USD.
- 1535. **Busand str.**, Newly built, 7/4, 82sq.m, 2bedrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, parking, furnished, equipped. Price: Negotiable.
- 1738. **Amiryan str.**, 8/8, 159sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, parking. Price: Negotiable
- 1951. **Busand str.**, Newly built, 13th floor, 122sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, climate control. Price: 2500 USD
- 1406. **Sayat Nova ave.**, 7/3, 110sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped. Price: Negotiable
- 2109. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 10/4, 137sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, central heating, furnished, equipped, parking. Price: 2000 USD.
- 2243. **Buzand str**, Newly built, 17/4, 125sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: 2000 USD
- **Amiryan str.**, Newly built, 14/5, 120sqm, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, partly furnished. Price 2000 USD

3 ROOMS AND MORE

- 2358 **V. Sargsyan str**, Newly Built, 7/4, 145sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, one guest toilet, capially renovated, furnished, underground parking. Price: 3000 USD negotiable
- 2353 **V. Sargsyan str.** 8/5, Newly built, 98sq.m, 2bedrooms, capially renovated, furnished, Price 1500 USD
- 2347 **Teryan str.** Newly built, 10/8, 320sq.m, 3bedrooms, office, 3 bathrooms, capially repaired, furnished. Price: Negotiable
- 2277. **Kievyan str.** duplex, 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capially repaired, with or without furniture. Price: Negotiable.
- 2310 **Busand str.**, Newly built, 190sq.m, 3bedrooms, 3bathrooms, capially repaired, furnished, parking. Price: 2500 USD
- 2316 **Northern Ave**, Newly built, 6th floor,

- 227sq.m., 4bedrooms, 2bathrooms, guest toilet, capially repaired, furnished, parking. Price: 2500 USD
- 2303 **Hanrapetutyan str** Newly built, 9/5, 165sq.m, 3bedrooms, 1bathroom, 1 guest toilet. capially repaired, furnished, parking. Price: 2000 USD
- 2257. **Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 17/16, 160 sq.m., 3 bedrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, parking. Price: Negotiable
- 2005. **Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 8/8, 130 sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, parking. Price: 2200 USD.
- 1723. **Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 8/4., 170 sq.m 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, open kitchen, capially repaired, furnished, equipped. Price: 2000 USD.
- 1981. **Vardanants Str.**, Newly built, 14/14, 140 sq m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, 3 open balconies, furnished, equipped, parking. Price: 2000 USD.
- 1793. **Teryan str.**, Newly built, 8th floor, 260 sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, study, capially repaired, climate control, parking, unfurnished (possible to furnish), Price: 3500 USD.
- 1720. **Amiryan str.**, Newly built, 16/10, 179 sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, central heating, AC, cellar- 25sq.m, with or without furniture, parking, Price 3000 USD negotiable
- 2195. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 3rd floor, 300sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, 2 kitchens, cap-



- itally repaired, climate control, AC, parking. Price: 5000 USD
- 2261. **Hin Yerevantsi**, /North Avenue/, Newly built, 10/3, 124sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped, parking. Price: 1700 USD
- 2084. **Tumanyan str.**, 4th floor, 200sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, climate control, parking. Price: 5000 USD
- 2252. **Northern ave**, 7th floor, 350 sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, open balconies, capially repaired, climate control, parking. Price Negotiable.

PRIVATE HOUSES

- 1335 **Baghramyan str.**, Land-200sq.m, 3storied bld-300sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3bathrooms, capially repaired, furnished. Price: 3000 USD
- 1336 **Aygedzor**, Land-1000sq.m, 2 storied bld-240sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, furnished. Price: 2000 USD
- 1337 **Davtashen** Land-406sq.m, 3 storied bld-306sq.m, 4bedrooms, 2bathrooms, capially repaired, furnished. Price: 3900 USD
- 1323. **Monument, Babayan str**, Land-400sq.m, 3storied bld-300sq.m, 4bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capially repaired. Price: Negotiable
- 1248. **Aygedzor**, Land - 1021 sq m, 3 storied bld. - 501 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, capially repaired, central heating, AC, sauna, boiler room garden, swimming pool, garage, alarming system, security system. Price: 8000 USD.
- 999. **Aygedzor**, Land -1000 sqm, basement + 2 floors- 310 sqm, capially repaired, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, newly furnished, equipped, sauna, swimming-pool. Starting Price: 5000 USD.
- 1094. **Noy block**, Land-450sqm, 2 storied building - 220sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped, swimming pool, garden. Price: 2000USD.

- 1195. **Nork, Armenakyan str.**, Land - 2000 sq.m, 4 storied bld.-520 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, sauna, gym, furnished, swimming-pool, garden. Price: 4.000 USD negotiable.
- 1142. **Djrevej**, Bagrevand community. Land-1000 sq.m., 3 storied bld.-700 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, pantry, playing room, capially repaired, no furniture/ can be furnished, if necessary /garage for 2 cars. Price: 4 000 USD.
- 1293. **Nork-Marash**, Land-1100sq.m, 2 storied bld-520 sq.m, 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, swimming pool, garden. Price: 7.000 USD
- 327. **Nork-Marash**, Land-500sq.m., 4 storied building-600 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped, swimming pool, garden, sauna, 2 car parking. Price-4000 USD
- 1306. **Tsarav Akhbyur** /near Botanical garden/, Land-1000sq.m., 3 storied building-750sq.m., 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, 2 kitchens, capially repaired, heating system swimming pool, garden, sauna, 2 car parking, with or without furniture. Price: 6000-8000 USD negotiable
- 1288. **Tsarav Akhbyur** /near Botanical garden/, Land-560sq.m., 4 storied building-560 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4bathrooms, a kitchen, office, capially repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped, swimming pool, garden, 2 car parking. Price: 5000 USD
- 1197. **Blur**, Land-779sq.m., 2 storied building-720sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, study, capially repaired, heating system, sauna swimming pool, garden. Price: 8000 USD
- 1312. **Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-450sq.m., 4 storied building-470sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: Negotiable
- 1317. **Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-900sq.m., 5 storied building-800sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: Negotiable.
- 1323. **Monument, Babayan str**, Land - 400 sq.m, 3 storied bld-300sq.m, each floor-100sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: Negotiable

PREMISES

- 2049. **Teryan str**, ground floor+basement, 1st line, 200sq.m, repaired. Price: 6.000 USD
- 1693. **Malatia-Sebastia** 4 storied building, 1200sq.m, each floor-300sq.m, 2 separate entrances, climate control, 2 elevators, basement, parking. Price: 15USD per sq.m.
- 1526. **Byuzand str.**, 5/semi-basement, 170 sqm., 4-5 degrees below zero level, window glasses, cellar - 50 sq.m., 6 rooms, the largest is 30 sq.m., 2 entrances, 2 lavatories. Price 2000 USD per month, negotiable.
- 1408. **Zarobyan str.**, /parallel to Baghramyan str./, 2 storied building, 600 sqm. ground floor- hall and kitchen, 1st floor 5 rooms, bathroom, open balcony, capially repaired, gas, heating system, parking. Price: Negotiable.
- 1462. **Teryan str.**, 3 storied building, 800 sq.m., capially repaired, AC, parking. Price: 10.000 USD.
- 1945. **Mashtots Ave.**, 5/1, 2, 140sq.m., window glasses, capially repaired, AC. Price: 8000 USD
- 1943. **Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 265sq.m., 1st line, capially repaired, heating system, cellar. Price: 7000 USD
- 1868. **Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 220sq.m., 1st line, facade-55m., capially repaired, h-5m., cellar. Price: 15.000 USD.
- 2087. **Northern ave.**, Ground floor of the building, 100sq.m, 1st line, zero level, capially repaired, window glasses. Price: Negotiable.
- 2033. **Abovyan str**, 388sq.m, Ground floor of the building, 3 degrees above zero level, window glasses, h-3m., basement-235sq.m, capially repaired, heating system, AC. Price: 15.000 USD
- 2031. **Vardanants str**, 500sq.m, ground floor of the building, 2 entrances, facade-20m, window glasses, without divisions, ,basement-250sq.m, Price: 8000 USD
- 2027. **Sayat Nova str**, 95sq.m, ground floor of the building, 2 entrances, 7 degrees above zero level, 4 window glasses, capially repaired. Price: 4.000 USD

Dr Vahan Chakarian: "We Work to Reveal and Support Our Young Talents Who Believe in Armenia's Future..."

"Virtual Reality Challenge": an unprecedented IT contest to encourage creation of innovative solutions/applications by young professionals

By **Gourgen James Khazhakian**
Chief Correspondent

A really unprecedented competition named "Virtual Reality Challenge" that is initiated and funded by Technology and Science Dynamics (TSD) company in partnership with New Technology Education Fund (NTEF) to be held in Armenia in the sphere of innovation technologies aims at encouraging beginner scientists and programmers to create virtual reality programs, applications and simulation games with use of cutting-edge equipment and technologies.

The Highlights' note: *Technology & Science Dynamics Inc. (TSD) is a Research and Development corporation located in Santa Barbara, CA, USA and Yerevan, Armenia with links to more than fifteen international research & development centers. The company was founded in 1998 and later renamed to TSD in 2013. The Armenian office of TSD was established in 2013 in a Free Economic Zone. TSD is well-known mostly due to creation of the first Armenian gadget "ArmTab".*

Dr **Vahan Chakarian**, CEO and President of TSD, told mass media at a news conference held on Friday 18 December at TSD high tech manufacturing plant the following: *"We've been stressing for many times that our state has powerful and smart young specialists who realize that the IT is our future...So the main goal of this competition is to reveal those youngsters and involve them in a number of projects aimed at development of the Republic of Armenia. So we expect special, and even a bit "strange" projects presented"*.

TSD Founder also stated that the contest was a unique one in terms of jury members geography: *"Outstanding reps of IT sphere from Massachusetts, Stanford, Harvard, George Washington Universities and USCB will judge the works of the contestants."* According to him, in future there will be good chances to set many contacts and so funding from Silicon Valley in case Armenian young specialists' projects rise interest of the jury members.

According to the organizers of the competition, during the contest the uniqueness of the scientific concept as well as the way of the idea presentation/implementation by an individual or team will be evaluated. The competition will be conducted in five areas: education, emergency situations, health-care, military and virtual labs, and in three phases, in each of which the first three winners will receive cash prizes, and the best

work submitted by a participant is to qualify for the 8 million Armenian drams-worth Grand Prix. *"In addition to those Prizes, the contest winner or one participant from each team will receive the right to participate in two major international events to be held in Los Angeles in 2017, «Consumer Electronics Show 2017» and in Barcelona, in February 2017, «World Mobile Congress 2017",* Dr. Chakarian said. The contest is open to all 15-35 year old specialists both individuals and the teams.

Notably, until the last day of the contest – when its results announced, the participants will not know who the jury members are, and vice versa - the jury will not be aware of the name of a participant when assessing this or that work.



From right to left: Levon Galstyan, Vahan Chakarian, Vahan Hovsepyan, Shushanik Vardanyan

"New Technology Education Fund" charity foundation attaches great importance to such projects implementation for the young specialists having innovative ideas and eager to fulfill them. According to the Fund Executive Director **Vahan Hovsepyan**, this competition is unlike the others by the fact that in addition to the financial support to participants, they will be provided with the necessary equipment and training courses. *"We are also pursuing the development of ideas and the start-ups,"* V. Hovsepyan said.

"Special attention will be focused on the development of ideas, programs and apps for using the virtual reality in the military field that could enable our Army to confront the enemy's challenges," Mr Hovsepyan pointed out. He added that the best educational applications will be used in "ArmTabs" and "ArmPhones".

TSD Deputy Director **Levon Galstyan** noted that another feature of this contest was its core idea to combine scientific work with technology, and that the areas of the contest have not been selected by chance: they want the programs/applications to be worked out to be applied in the areas important for Armenia. Mr Galstyan pointed out that even after the Contest's end they will

work with the interesting individuals/teams, support their ideas.

One of successful projects of a kind is "Mergelyan Club" of young researchers, where young people of various professions are gathered, new ideas and projects are presented and actively discussed, working groups formed and the start-ups created.

In this competition, we expect to see intelligent, knowledgeable people, individuals and teams having innovative ideas and solutions, said Vahan Hovsepyan. Importantly, contest participants could not be employees of a company working for several years in the area of virtual reality, but only of a start-up.

According to the Project Manager of the "Mergelyan Club" **Shushanik Vardanyan**, the first round of the applications registration (18 December – 15 February 2016) will be followed by examination of those applications within a week and personal meetings with participants.

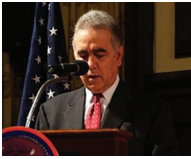
"The same process will be organized in the following two phases of the contest, and the summary of the final results of the competition and the awarding ceremony will be held on September 9, 2016," she said.

Asked by your author to outline main directions of the TSD activities such as, for instance, Armenian ICT European expedition, or the "Mergelyan Club", the Company's CEO and President Dr Vahan Chakarian said in particular: *"TSD works in forensic science area, R&D, produces, besides ArmTab and ArmPhone, other hi-tech products/instruments for R&D, forensic science, army, police, medicine, other areas. In our staff we have not only IT/hi-tech specialists, but also professionals in physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, - because forensic science needs cooperation of all these areas...And so we create also programs and devices for various experiments, tests."*

As to things such as ICT European Expedition held in October-November, a project aimed at Armenia's branding, or "Mergelyan Club", where twice a week young professionals have been discussing various projects for a year already, the most interesting of which are developed later here, - in start-ups created with financial assistance from TSD, - all this is indication of our corporate social responsibility as we strongly believe that it is not enough to create jobs, pay salary, etc...Via supporting our young gifted specialists we support our country, Armenia's development".

Photo courtesy TSD
Acknowledgement: Anna Voskanyan

Azerbaijan's guns must be silenced: Can't negotiate under fire



*By Harut
Sassounian*

*Publisher, The
California Courier*

For over two decades, the international community, led by OSCE Minsk Group mediators representing the United States, France and Russia, has been trying to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the Artsakh (Karabagh) conflict.

The main obstacle is Azerbaijan's persistence in shooting while negotiating, and intensifying its attacks on the eve of every crucial meeting for settlement of the conflict. Such unconstructive behavior is totally unacceptable for everyone involved in the peace process. Azerbaijan intentionally escalates the violence on such occasions in order to pressure the international community to force Armenia into making unfair concessions on Artsakh.

To make matters worse, every time Azerbaijani forces launch attacks on Artsakh or Armenia, the Minsk Group mediators issue a routine statement urging both sides to stop firing, thereby equating the violator with the victim. In addition, the mediators cover up their irresponsible statement by claiming that they are not certain which side initiated the shooting.

In October, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Democrat Eliot Engel of New York, initiated a letter signed by 85 House members, to U.S. co-chair, Amb. James Warlick, urging him to take all necessary steps to withdraw snipers from the border, deploy gunfire locator systems along the Line of Contact, and increase the number of field monitors. These measures were accepted by Armenia, Artsakh, the US Congress, and the Minsk Group co-chairs, but rejected by Azerbaijan because of its intent to conceal and continue its warmongering initiatives. Under these untenable circumstances, the three mediators may consider placing gunfire locators on the Artsakh side of the border to record the

source of incoming fire. If the mediators are unwilling to take such action, Armenia should go ahead and purchase gunfire locators from US manufacturer Raytheon and recruit independent NGOs to monitor and report the results to the international community.

Once the source of the shooting is identified, the mediators would then be obligated to condemn the perpetrator; otherwise, they would be encouraging Azerbaijan to escalate the attacks on Armenia and Artsakh.

Meanwhile, the mediators must warn Azerbaijan's autocratic President Ilham Aliyev that should he not cease and desist from making threats and shelling Armenia and Artsakh, they will be forced to submit Azerbaijan's violations to the United Nations Security Council, to mandate economic sanctions against his country.

The mediators could also temporarily suspend their peacemaking activities by announcing that they are prevented from seeking a negotiated settlement to the conflict, while Azerbaijan keeps on shooting. Surely, it is not possible to fight and talk at the same time!

Since Azerbaijan is not ready to go to war - if it were, it would have started it already instead of merely threatening - it has no choice but to heed the call of the mediators to cease firing and start negotiating in earnest. Freezing the negotiations would be a serious setback for Azerbaijan because that is the only way it can hope to reach some accommodation with Armenia and Artsakh. Armenians, on the other hand, have already accomplished their objective of liberating Artsakh from Azeri occupation and have nothing to gain from further negotiations.

Should the mediators decide not to freeze the peace talks, the Armenian government may decide to suspend its participation in these unproductive negotiations, thus sending a clear message to Baku that shelling Armenia and Artsakh undermines Azerbaijan's own interests.

If the negotiations are not suspended

and Azerbaijan continues its attacks, the Armenian government may eventually respond with a "massive and asymmetrical retaliation," as it has repeatedly warned. While some may be concerned that such an action would further escalate the violence, in fact it would diminish, if not halt the endless border skirmishes, once Azeri leaders realize that they have more to lose by fighting than talking. It is unfortunate that Pres. Aliyev is exploiting the deaths of young Azeri soldiers on the frontlines to distract his people's attention away from massive violations of civil rights, corruption at the highest echelons of his government, and abysmal economic conditions due to diminishing oil revenues.

I had the opportunity to discuss some of these issues last week with various officials in Washington, D.C., while Artsakh's Foreign Minister Garen Mirzoyan was in town to meet with members of Congress and US mediator Amb. Warlick. Two receptions were held to honor the visiting Foreign Minister at the Armenian Embassy and on Capitol Hill, the latter co-hosted by the U.S. Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, Armenian National Committee of America, Armenian Assembly of America, and the U.S. Office of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic. Several House members, Amb. Warlick, and other dignitaries attended the congressional reception to the chagrin of Azerbaijan's Embassy which had dispatched a small group of Azeris to protest the event. Chairman Royce announced during the reception that he had asked Amb. Warlick to come to the House of Representatives this week for a briefing on the Artsakh conflict.

A large number of ANCA activists from throughout the USA, including this writer, joined Foreign Minister Mirzoyan in Washington last week, to share a message of peace and democracy for Artsakh with dozens of House and Senate members, urging them to recognize its independence from Azerbaijan.

Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator Investing in Our Future – The Kids...

VivaCell-MTS continues supporting the child day care and rehabilitation center

It is already the third year of operation of **Armenak** and **Ann Tadevossian's** child day care and rehabilitation center in Kosh community of Aragatsotn region founded with VivaCell-MTS support and fully equipped with necessary medical devices.



In the last two years, VivaCell-MTS has supported the organization of treatment programs for 20 children with limited mental and physical abilities from disadvantaged families that attend the center.

"Good deeds help get closer to the ultimate common objective of all humans: better life for everyone. Can there be more important feeling for parents than to see their children healthy and happy? Helping them realize this dream will make the world a little bit human. By engaging in this project we derive from the very principle that caring for children that deviate from their peers in their development should not be left to their parents alone. All that we are required to do is to act in a way as to help these extremely dedicated and loving parents in their daily striving for attaining progress in their children's development. Giving these strong moms and daddies, who live up their way of hope and despair; chances for parental happiness, is worth the effort," VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said.

The transfer of the children from their houses to the rehabilitation center and back is organized in vehicles adapted for children with special needs. Here children receive rehabilitation services, nutritious

meals twice a day and enjoy their leisure under the care of specialists. The day care stationary works from 09:00 till 18:00 five days a week.

Besides receiving rehabilitation and specialized care, the children participate in group games and enjoy their leisure in specially refurbished bedrooms. The program benefits to the development of children's mental abilities, rehabilitation of their physical abilities, integration into the society and acquisition of self-care skills.

Armenak and Ann Tadevossian's child day care and rehabilitation center provides services to children with limited abilities not only from Aragatsotn region but also from other cities of Armenia (in particular, from Yerevan and Gyumri) who have been left out of secondary school or preschool education programs because of

Yirikian, FPWC team, the governor of Aragatsotn region, head of Ujan community, community residents.

"It's sad to see that one of the most beautiful seasons - the winter, does not delight children but only causes concerns and worries, especially for families living in the regions. Providing heating and hot water through solar energy to the kindergarten was the best solution, because now the community will be able to reduce electricity expenses and spend the saved money for other important issues. The environmental benefits of the program - reduced air pollution, rational use of natural resources - should also be noted. And, of course, the issue of keeping children busy during winter time is settled with this. We hope that from now on winter will be for these children time for expecting miracles, magic beauty and warmth," VivaCell-MTS General Manager **Ralph Yirikian** said.

With approximately 2.700 inhabitants

Ujan community's kindergarten currently houses 60 children. The kindergarten hasn't had regular heating in winter since the collapse of the Soviet Union, while the means applied haven't provided enough heating for children to attend kindergarten in cold weather as well. Due to the project kindergarten will be open during the whole year regardless of the weather.

Due to the system implemented within



healthcare needs.

2013 through 2015 VivaCell-MTS has allocated over AMD 43 million to the Child day care and rehabilitation center.

Ujan kindergarten will be heated through solar energy

The Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets and its General Partner VivaCell-MTS will mark the completion and present the outcomes of a project implemented in Ujan community of Aragatsotn region within the framework of the joint "Alternative Energy" Project. The initiative included the installation of a heating system equipped with solar water heaters in the village.

The launch of the system was done by VivaCell-MTS General Manager Ralph



the "Alternative Energy" Project the kindergarten will be able to receive heat free of cost during the day in winters. Solar heater will provide hot water throughout the year. Given that the kindergarten only works during daytime and at night only heating needs to be provided so that the system does not freeze, there is up to 60% saving on gas consumption.

Students Back Teacher Fired After Armenian Referendum



Students of a secondary school in Yerevan have expressed solidarity with one of their teachers who claims to have been forced to quit his job after refusing to promote President Serzh Sargsyan's constitutional changes.

The 24-year-old history teacher, Karpis Pashoyan, resigned from the public School No. 145 just days after a disputed referendum on those changes held on December 6. The official reason for his de facto dismissal is absenteeism and repeated failure to turn up to classes on time.

Speaking to RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am), Pashoyan admitted having failed to report for work for "three or four times" without informing the school administration beforehand. He said that on one of those occasions he was in police custody after being detained during an opposition rally in Yerevan.

Pashoyan insisted that the real reason for his ouster is his refusal to obey the school principal Rimma Davtyan's orders to urge the parents of his students to vote for the proposed amendments to the Armenian constitution. He said Davtyan had previously warned him against attending anti-government gatherings.

"I refused to do that," he said. "What is more, I told parents outside the school to vote 'No' [in the referendum.] The teaching staff did not want to see me anymore."

A member of the ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK), Davtyan headed a precinct election commission that organized voting and counted ballots in

the school premises turned into a polling station on December 6. She has refused to comment on the controversy, leaving it to her deputy, Susanna Hambaryan, to deny any political reasons for Pashoyan's sacking.

Many of the school's students aged between 12 and 14 were quick to voice support for the young teacher and demand his reinstatement through social media. "They told us to delete those comments from our [Facebook] pages but we won't do that," one of them told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am) on Tuesday.

"No matter how much they pressure us, we're not going to remove those statuses," said another teenage boy.

They and their classmates said they want Pashoyan to regain his job because they hold him in high regard. "When Mr. Pashoyan came to our school, he completely changed our mindsets," one of

them explained. "Everyone started studying history in earnest."

"The most important thing we've learned from him is to be decent human beings and to defend our rights," said another student. "Nobody can violate our rights," he added. "We have the right to free speech and will speak up as much as it will be necessary."

School principals in Armenia have long been assigned by the government or the ruling party to run electoral bodies in communities encompassing their schools. Opposition activists and media have accused many of them of pressurizing teachers and student parents to back pro-government candidates in elections or vote for constitutional changes initiated by the authorities.

The independent and pro-opposition Armenian press was rife with reports about these and other abuses of government resources by the HHK in the run-up to the recent referendum. The ruling party strongly denied them.

As well as defending Pashoyan's dismissal, Hambaryan, the vice-principal, expressed hope that the scandal in her school will lead the government, the HHK and other parties to stop relying on school personnel in the conduct of electoral processes.

"Maybe this will make them think about not getting schools and teachers involved in such things," she said. "Because when a school principal is also an election commission chairperson everyone thinks that he or she definitely engages in political activities within the school."



US Senator Mark Kirk applauds Armenian commitment to Karabakh peace

Senate Appropriations Committee Member Mark Kirk (R-IL) warmly welcomed Armenian Americans to Congress last week for the annual Capitol Hill celebration of Nagorno Karabakh's commitment to peace and freedom, meeting both with top Karabakh officials and his own Illinois constituents who traveled to Washington for the program, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

"What better meeting place to celebrate Nagorno Karabakh's commitment to freedom and democracy than the United States' Capitol, which, like Stepanakert, stands as a symbol of independence and self-determination," wrote Sen. Kirk, in a personal message to all those who gathered for the annual Armenian Caucus celebration, held on December 9th.

Sen. Kirk used the opportunity to spotlight Azerbaijan's escalating aggression against Armenia and Artsakh, stating, "as you know all too well, the people of Nagorno Karabakh do not currently enjoy the same feeling of peace and security in their capitol, as we do here in the United States. The Karabakh Armenians are faced with a daily struggle to protect themselves from the dangerous aggression of their neighbor, Azerbaijan."

Sen. Kirk praised the leadership of House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Democrat Eliot Engel (D-NY) and over 80 of their Congressional colleagues

in advancing concrete steps to bring about regional peace, including the withdrawal of snipers from the line of contact, the deployment of additional OSCE monitors and the placement of gunfire locators to clearly identify the origination of each cross-border attack. "Both Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh have expressed support for these pro-peace initiatives. Azerbaijan has not," pointed out the Senator.

Earlier in the day, Sen. Kirk met with Republic of Nagorno Karabakh (NKR) Foreign Minister Karen Mirzoyan and NKR Representative in the U.S. Robert Avetisyan as well as ANCA Chairman Ken Hachikian, Government Affairs Director Kate Nahapetian and Illinois constituent Haik Ter-Nersesyan to discuss Karabakh's democratic and economic progress in the face of Azerbaijani aggression. Talks also focused on expanding U.S. assistance to Nagorno Karabakh to build on the ongoing demining efforts and meet increasing humanitarian needs.

"We deeply value Senator Kirk's principled support for peace and his determined defense of the right of the people of the independent Republic of Nagorno Karabakh to security and democratic self-determination," said ANCA Chairman Ken Hachikian, an Illinois constituent of Senator Kirk's. "We look forward to working with Senator Kirk to ensure that the Royce-Engel peace proposals are implemented at the very first opportunity."

Armenian government presents Morgenthau Medal to William Parsons

Earlier this year, the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia's Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute awarded William S. Parsons with the Ambassador Henry Morgenthau Medal on behalf of the government of Armenia, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).

In a formal ceremony at the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia on the evening of December 10, Armenian Ambassador to the U.S. Tigran Sargsyan presented the award to Parsons for his exceptional service to humankind through education on the Armenian Genocide and the defense of human rights.

William S. Parsons worked at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) for 25 years where he served as chief of staff and director of education. Prior to joining USHMM, he co-founded Facing History and Ourselves, an organization that specializes in training teachers in human rights education in order to help students confront the lessons of genocide and the Holocaust, and learn the value of tolerance. Facing History and Ourselves developed the first national curriculum on the Armenian Genocide in the U.S., which serves as the template for all educators today.

"It was my great honor to participate in the awarding of a longtime friend of the Armenian people," stated Armenian National Institute (ANI) Director Dr. Rouben Adalian. "Perhaps no other person in the United States has done more and achieved more as a human rights educator than William Parsons," added Dr. Adalian.

Parsons has reached thousands of teachers across the United States and around the globe. He co-authored the teachers'

resource book Facing History and Ourselves: The Holocaust and Human Behavior. He also co-edited, along with other significant educators, Centuries of Genocide: Essays and Eyewitness Accounts, which has gone into its fourth edition and sold tens of thousands of copies, making it the most popular college textbook on human rights and genocide.

The Secretary of the Republic of Armenia State Commission for the Centennial sent a letter accompanying the award.

"I am very pleased that William Parsons has received this significant award and recognition from the Armenian government for his pioneering efforts in Armenian Genocide and Holocaust education," stated Assembly Board of Trustees Vice Chairman and Counselor Aram Kaloosdian. "I had the pleasure of serving with him on the ANI Academic Council and will always remember his dedication and perseverance in the fight against denial of the Armenian Genocide," Kaloosdian said.

At the Armenian Embassy reception, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the U.S. Tigran Sargsyan also honored Maryland entrepreneur Boris Ghazaryan with the Prime Minister's Medal.

In addition to the award ceremony, Ambassador Sargsyan welcomed the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR) Foreign Minister Karen Mirzoyan to the United States. Mirzoyan was visiting Washington as part of a 3-day working trip where he spoke at the annual Nagorno Karabakh/Artsakh independence celebration on Capitol Hill and met with U.S. government officials, Members of Congress, and the Armenian Assembly of America.

Serzh Sargsyan: A shot against Armenia is a shot against CSTO

"Every time Azerbaijani Armed Forces use automatic guns, mortars and artillery equipment against the Republic of Armenia, they shoot in the direction of Astana, Dushanbe and Bishkek, Moscow and Minsk," Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan said, addressing the CSTO Collective Security Council.

"Remind that we have a corresponding paragraph in our Charter. If we not only fail to apply that article, to discuss the current situation, if we don't consider it proper to pick up the phone and call to know what's happening in allied Armenia, at the same time voting against each other's interests within the framework of international organizations and adopting bilateral statements with third countries with their texts contradicting the interests of a CSTO partner, we put under fire the whole Organization, its reputation and capacity," President Sargsyan stated.

"Azerbaijan's policy is targeted at the aggravation of the conflict. Unfortunately, the situation has not only failed to stabilize, but has even worsened. The Azerbaijani side does not suffice



with the use of heavy artillery, including ones of Turkish production. On December 8 they fired from a tank for the first time since the establishment of the ceasefire regime in 1994, and this raises the tension to a new and very dangerous

level," the President added.

Taking into consideration the recent tense atmosphere in the region, we should not rule out that Azerbaijan has been guided or supported by outer forces," the Armenian President concluded.

Artsrun Hovhannisyan: Azerbaijan exhausting its 'golden fund'



"The situation was relatively calm at the border last night," Spokesman for the Minister of Defense Artsrun Hovhannisyan told a press conference on December 22. He said the final data on the losses of the Azerbaijan side would be published by the end of the year. According to different estimates, the number of losses exceeds 210.

The Spokesman said since the beginning of the year Azerbaijan has used weapons that had not been used after the

conclusion of the ceasefire, including tanks, howitzers, anti-aircraft units.

Artsrun Hovhannisyan urges not to use the term "ceasefire violation," when speaking about the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, since we have long not had ceasefire and peace, we have a "relatively calm ceasefire."

He said "the rival has tried to conquer military strongholds on several occasions over the past years, but has always faced a worthy response."

"The adversary has used different means, but has never succeeded. Therefore, we can say Azerbaijan is moving along the path of exhausting its important forces, i.e. exhausting its 'golden fund'," Artsrun Hovhannisyan said.

The Spokesman avoided speaking about CSTO response to the border tensions and referred to President Serzh Sargsyan's speech at the CSTO Collective Security Council yesterday.

President Sargsyan said that "every time Azerbaijani Armed Forces use automatic guns, mortars and artillery equipment against the Republic of Armenia, they shoot in the direction of Astana, Dushanbe and Bishkek, Moscow and Minsk."

"Taking into consideration the recent tense atmosphere in the region, we should not rule out that Azerbaijan has been guided or supported by outer forces," the Armenian President stated.

Georgian "Solitaire" of Chinese dragon

The significant historical event, that will determine the layout of the new regional "solitaire" in the coming years, even decades, has passed somehow unnoticed for the new Armenian elite, busy with its mouse-cat daily fuss. The new geopolitical player, China has quickly entered into the Transcaucasus through Georgia.

The official opening ceremony of "Silk Railway" took place in December 13, when the first cargo train departed from Lianyungang port in China has arrived in Tbilisi in the framework of the PRC global project "New Silk Road".

Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili said at the official ceremony that thanks to the Silk Road, Georgia would become a multiregional centre and in the framework of that project the cargo would be delivered from China through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and arrived in Turkey and European countries after passing through Georgia.

"I am pleased that our train was symbolically decorated with the flags of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Kazakhstan and the EU. We can in an unprecedentedly short period of time, for 8-10 days, take cargo of Georgia, then in 3-5 days - in different European countries. The 'Silk Road' is the cheapest and shortest route, it has reduced the journey time from Asia to Europe by 80%. Our country is part of the shortest route, and the route gives us an additional chance to become one of the most important participants in global economic events. The 'Silk Road' is an additional momentum for accommodation in one zone of the partner countries to deepen political, cultural and economic relations. I believe that this project will bring our country more investment, greater employment and prosperity. I believe that through the 'Silk Road' project Georgia will become a multiregional center that will connect Europe, East Asia, India, Central Asia and the Middle East," Georgia Online quotes Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili. (<http://www.apsny.ge/2015/eco/1450034694.php>).

We would like to remind that Georgian-Chinese bilateral relations are developing very dynamically and Chinese are very active in Georgia

already for a long time. If Georgian trade turnover was \$4,1mln in 2000, in January-May 2015 only the volume of exports from Georgia to China amounted to about 47.1 million, which is 5.3% of total exports of Georgia according to National Statistics Office. It is increased by 113% compare to the same period of 2014. (<http://www.chinapro.ru/rubrics/1/12749/>).

At present, China is involved in many large-scale Georgian projects, for example in infrastructure modernization project of the Georgian railway, reconstruction of Rikoti Tunnel (which connects the eastern Georgia with the western), the construction of a railway bypassing Tbilisi. China participates in energy projects as well, among them - the construction of Khador hydroelectric power station with the capacity of 24 MW in Pankisi gorge, etc.

Already for several years, the direct flight from Tbilisi to Urumqi / China / has been successfully operated. This flight is also widely used by Armenian businessmen and traders. There are two free economic zones for Chinese business in Georgia, a free industrial zone in Kutaisi and trading center in Tbilisi named "Tbilisi Sea Plaza" / Industrial and Trade Company China Xinjiang Hualing Group / which is the largest not only in Georgia, but in Transcaucasus as well, etc.

Recently Tbilisi has hosted the International Investment Forum "Tbilisi Silk Road", which took place on October 15-16, 2015 under the patronage of the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili. It was an unprecedented event for the region. About 800 representatives from 31 countries attended the event, including participants from China (there were about 500 participants from China, including officials, businessmen, heads of major corporations), UAE, USA, Turkey, South Korea, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Slovenia, Hungary, Italy, Armenia, Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, etc., among them the vice-prime ministers and ministers, the heads of 20 international financial and donor organizations, as well as businessmen.

The major outcomes of that international forum were several agreements, reached between the Georgian and

Chinese sides. In particular, China's Dongfang Electric Corporation will finance the construction of thermal power plant in Tkibuli / Western Georgia/, in the framework of the forum in Tbilisi the "Georgian International Energy Corporation" has signed a number of agreements with Dongfang Electric Corporation.

In addition, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili announced that Georgian side has reached the preliminary agreement with the Chinese companies concerning the construction of the largest deep-water seaport on the Black Sea. (http://russian.news.cn/2015-10/17/c_134721820.htm).

But the most noticeable for the new geopolitical situation of the region is the announcement of China and Georgia to launch the feasibility study on a possible free trade agreement and visa-free regime, which should be signed till the end of 2015/ beginning 2016.

Taking into account the "weight" of both countries, we can state the sharp increase of Chinese presence in Georgia - emergence of many small and large projects with the participation of Chinese capital, the growth of Chinese community in Georgia, which already has thousands of people.

Note that after the "shocking political and economic reforms" of Saakashvili and Russian-Georgian war of 2008, Georgia is still in a difficult economic situation and heavily depends on Western, and even more on Turkish-Azerbaijani projects.

The conflict with Russia has limited Georgia's potential in terms of transfers and investment inflow, and despite the steps towards improvements (Georgian government has started negotiations for gas delivery with Gazprom, for the change of the visa regime and so on) the relationships between these two countries are still far from being normal.

Although seems strange at the first sight, but the greatest emphasis in China's Georgian "solitaire" is placed on the geopolitical component. China has been actively promoting peaceful "economic" expansion tied to its geopolitical interests. China is interested in creation (restoration) of transcommunication link-

ages to ensure the smooth trade flows with the world, and especially with Europe.

The new doctrine of China (Fall 2013) announced by the President Xi Jinping during his visits to the countries of Central and South-East Asia is actually built on that idea. He proposed the historic initiative on jointly building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road - "One belt and one road." But on the way to creation the global Eurasian corridor, China has overcome various difficulties, the main of which (in geopolitics spheres) is determined by the Turkic factor.

The western part of China - Xinjiang is a small homeland of Turks, so China historically has been one of the main centers of the fight against the aggressive ideology of Panturkism and successfully continued this fight in its country and the countries of Central Asia against Turkic terrorism, officially supported by the Republic of Turkey.

Here the interests of Georgia and China (as well as Armenia, Russia and Iran) are the same. Understanding of the process of turanisation of economy became the concern of Georgian political elite and what is more important, the Georgian society as well. (<http://www.iarex.ru/articles/52179.html>, <http://onkavkaz.com/news/395-turcija-mozhet-otobrat-adzhariyu-u-gruzii-po-primeru-kryma.html>).

First of all, there are serious concerns in Georgia connected with the possibly loss of Adjara by 2021. Moreover, these

concerns in the Georgian society were so serious that Turkish Ambassador to Georgia responded to them assuring on 04.12.2015 that Georgia is a friendly state for Turkey and they do not pretend for Adjara. (<http://www.apsny.ge/2015/pol/1449294333.php>).

Second, the Georgian elite has come to the understanding of Panturkism problem, which failed in Armenia but evolved in Georgia (for example, today Georgian airports in Tbilisi and Batumi TAV- are managed by the turks, the Turkish Airlines are served with 50% discount as domestic - Georgian airlines, the registration to flights from Batumi to Turkey is partly done in Turkish cities near the border and passengers are delivered by closed buses from Turkey to Georgia without any customs and border inspection from the Georgian side, etc.).

In addition to Chinese factor, the refusal of Georgia to fully accept Meskhetian Turks (about 14 thousand people according to Georgian media) is also could be considered as an attempt of Georgia to escape from the Turkish double trap. (http://www.for.ge/view.php?for_id=27597&cat=3).

Despite the strong lobbying and financial grants from Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Georgian side accepted only 1053 applications and by proposing them non-compact accommodation, has stopped the process of active resettlement of Meskhetian Turks to south Georgia – to Samtskhe-Javakheti (Armenian populated) area along the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line, which began during the peri-

od of Saakashvili.

Georgia, guided by Garibashvili Cabinet is seriously working toward the expansion of Georgian-Chinese alliance, designed to balance the diversification of investments to Georgia and make an additional point for economic and geopolitical support. The experts are writing about it, indicating rather the geopolitical component of the new railway line, not its economic potential (<http://www.poltionline.ru/interpretation/22884546.html>).

So, is noteworthy that the first Georgian-Chinese agreements was the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the municipality of Dalian and the Autonomous Republic of Ajara.

Taking into account the new regional layout, the coming years will be difficult for the Georgian-Turkic relations - they will show the carrot and stick to Georgians, but now there is a serious possibility of Georgians maneuvers (additionally in the context of deterioration of Russian-Turkish relations). And soon, the Chinese Dragon will soar over the sky of Georgia – repressor of the Panturkism aggressive ideas and additional guarantee of peace and stability in the region, protecting the roads and gold of their investments ...

Izabella Muradyan,

*Director of the Chinese Center
for Science and Culture,
Delegates at the
International Investment Forum
"Great Silk Road", Tbilisi 2015*



Ragip Zarakolu receives PL Foundation Peace Prize, criticizes radical intolerance in Turkey



On December 10 Turkish publisher, human rights defender Ragip Zarakolu was awarded PL Foundation Peace Prize for his extraordinary efforts in the areas of freedom of thought and expression. Zarakolu is an author of a number of works on

Armenian Genocide.

The prize amounting to 100 thousand Danish krone is awarded to organizations and people who struggle for democracy without resorting to violence within the scope of United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

President of the PL Foundation Paul Sogaard noted in his opening remarks that Ragip Zarakolu was chosen as a recipient of the prize for his long struggle for the freedom of thought and human rights, as well as for his efforts targeted at raising awareness about the Armenian Genocide committed at the hands of the Ottoman Empire 100 years ago. Zarakolu has been persecuted and arrested several times for his activity.

Zarakolu said, in turn, he dedicates the award to the memory of Hrant Dink, the slain editor-in-chief of the Turkish Armenian Agos weekly, and Armenian linguist and architect Sevan Nisanyan, who's currently serving a term in Turkey.

He urged to do the utmost to speak out against and condemn the radical intolerance in Turkey and contribute to the release of detained intellectuals.

The event was attended by First Secretary of the Armenian Embassy in Denmark, a number of Turkish intellectuals and human rights defenders living in different countries, who have been exiled from Turkey for their activity.

100 LIVES announces the 'Amal Clooney Scholarship'



100 LIVES has announced the launch of a new annual scholarship established in partnership with esteemed international human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, PRNewswire reports.

The new 'Amal Clooney Scholarship' is part of an ongoing effort by 100 LIVES - the organization behind the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity - to strengthen cross-cultural education and understanding through collaborative social and philanthropic projects.

"As a leading human rights barrister and campaigner, Amal Clooney is an inspirational role model for young women around the world. She exemplifies integrity, compassion and dedication - and typifies what it means to be a global citizen across all cultures," said Ruben Vardanyan, co-founder of 100 LIVES and UWC Dilijan College, an international co-educational boarding school hosting students from 64 countries. "100 LIVES recognizes the need for future generations to have greater cross-cultural understanding. The college strives to make education a force for peace by bringing together aspiring young leaders from all over

the world."

Through this new scholarship, 100 LIVES will send one female student from Lebanon to Dilijan each year to enroll in a two-year international baccalaureate program. Recipients of the Amal Clooney Scholarship will be chosen annually based on their exemplary academic performance and demonstrable interest in the promotion of human rights and international issues. The first Amal Clooney Scholarship will be awarded to Pamela Tebchrany - a dedicated Lebanese student who graduated top of her class and is fluent in Arabic, French and English. She will be using the scholarship to pursue her interests in human rights and women's equality.

"This scholarship will give young women from Lebanon the opportunity of a lifetime," Amal Clooney said. "Cross-cultural learning and studying abroad can be transformative. I am grateful to 100 LIVES for helping to open doors for these bright and talented young women."

Beyond this scholarship, both Mrs. Clooney and her husband, George, have philanthropic ties to 100 LIVES. Mr. Clooney is co-chair of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity - a new \$1 million global humanitarian prize recognizing those who put themselves at risk to enable others to survive. He will present at the inaugural Prize at a ceremony in Yerevan, Armenia on April 24, 2016. Mr. Clooney's Not On Our Watch foundation is also a partner of 100 LIVES - the two organizations share a commitment to focus public attention on the impact of genocide and work to prevent mass atrocities around the world.

The annual selection process is managed by a dedicated UWC National Committee in Lebanon and based on the UWC entry requirements and Amal Clooney Scholarship criteria.

'1915' earns Special Jury Prize at Lake Van International Film Festival



The closing night film at the Lake Van International Film Festival, the psychological thriller *1915* received a resounding ovation from the Kurdish and Turkish audience in attendance and earned the Special Jury Prize at a ceremony in downtown Van on December 11, 2015. The film, co-directed by Garin Hovannisian and Alec Mouhibian, had

been at the center of much controversy in the lead-up to the screening, as local anti-Armenian groups condemned the festival and threatened the festival organizer for inviting such a film to what is considered Eastern Turkey.

Executive produced by Armenia's first foreign minister, Raffi Hovannisian, starring Simon Abkarian and Angela

Sarafyan, and featuring an original score by Serj Tankian, the film is a tribute to the legacy of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

Representing the film in Van, Garin Hovannisian took on Turkey's century of denial and spoke out forcefully about the Armenian Genocide-at the same time recognizing the courage of those intellectuals and organizers who have initiated such a discussion 100 years later. In an interview with Van TV at the Holy Cross Church on Akhtamar Island, Hovannisian said: "This is the spiritual and symbolic heart of the Armenian kingdom. We do not feel like strangers in this land. We feel that we have come home."

The Kurdish interviewers, in their turn, apologized to the Armenian people on behalf of the Kurdish and Turkish peoples. Even on national television, they did not mince words about "the genocide" and added: "We hope that we can have a common life here. We wish the past did not exist." Similar sentiments were conveyed all through the week in Van, where a movement to recognize the Armenian connection to this land is well under way.

1915 was produced in partnership with the Armenian Center for National and International Studies and the RVVZ/IDeA Foundation.

Evgeny Kissin says will not perform in Turkey until Ankara recognizes Armenian Genocide



World-known pianist Evgeny Kissin said in an interview with The New York Times that he would not perform in Turkey until its government acknowledges that the mass murder of Armenians in 1915 was a genocide.

"I personally believe that if people in such countries learn that some musicians refuse to play there because they are dismayed by what their rulers do, that will make intelligent-thinking people more aware," he said.

He hastened to add that he does "not judge or condemn colleagues who perform in totalitarian countries. - it's a personal choice."

Key concepts in interpreting proposals for formulating nation's five-year plan

The Communist Party of China (CPC) recently issued the full text of proposal for China's development over the next five years.

The next five-year period is described as decisive for building China into a moderately prosperous society by 2020 in the proposal.

The eight-chapter, 22,000-character-plus document, the CPC Central Committee's Proposal on Formulating the Thirteenth Five-year Plan (2016-2020) on National Economic and Social Development, covers every aspect of economic and social life of Chinese people.

The document analyzes the decisive stage and sets guidelines and targets for the next five years. It highlights innovation, coordination, green development, opening up and sharing.

Target for "Thirteenth Five-year Plan"

According to the proposal, China aims to double its 2010 GDP and the 2010 per capita income of both urban and rural residents by 2020.

Ensuring a "moderately prosperous society" by 2020 requires medium-high economic growth, higher living standards and a better quality environment.

Innovation

The concept of innovation is at the core of the proposal on formulating the next five-year plan. According to statistics, the word has been mentioned 27 times at the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee.

Startup incubators and crowd-funding will be promoted, angel investment and venture capital invest-

ment encouraged; government intervention in private companies will be restricted, approvals streamlined, and administrative fees cut. A ubiquitous, fast, mobile information network will balance improvements to the transportation and mail delivery networks.

Green technology, biotechnology, information technology, smart manufacturing, high-end equipment and new energy will be generously supported. The Internet Plus action plan will integrate the Internet with traditional sectors of the economy, and China will lead the world in developing the next generation of Internet. Support for research in fundamental sciences will lead to breakthroughs in sectors such as information technology and aerospace science.

Universities and research institutes will have the liberty to become innovation leaders with greater powers in making decisions on research and funding.

The manufacturing sector will become more flexible, smarter and more sophisticated.

Excess capacity in certain industries will be digested through economic and legal means to improve the market exit mechanism.

China will continue to encourage mass entrepreneurship through major scientific and technological projects, and by building a number of national laboratories, in the hope that it will lead to new technology. The government plans better allocation of resources including labor, capital, land, technology and management.

Coordination

China will give priority to the coordinated development of regions,

urban-rural areas, material progress and spiritual civilization, as well as national defense construction in the next five-year plan, the proposal says.

One of the tasks in the five-year plan is to increase the urbanization ratio based on the number of registered residents. That ratio is expected to reach around 45 percent by 2020. Reform to the household registration system will also be on the government's agenda.

Material progress and spiritual civilization are given equal importance. The cultivation of cultural talents and creation of cultural products should be encouraged. Reform of cultural administrative system should be deepened.

China will also speed up reform of the military, aiming to reach its reform target by 2020.

"Green" development

China will embrace a "green" development model in the next five years, implementing a more exacting environmental protection system to reduce carbon emissions.

The country will continue to develop wind, solar, biomass, water, geothermal and nuclear energy, as well as explore deposits natural, shale and coal bed gases.

Energy-intensive industries, such as power, steel, chemical and architectural material will be subject to carbon emission control regulations.

Cycling and new energy vehicles will also be promoted to encourage a "green" and sustainable lifestyle.

Meanwhile, China will establish the Green Development Fund to promote clean production mode and sustainable growth.

The proposal also calls for a system to control consumption of energy, water and construction land. It promises an "energy revolution" with clean, safe resources replacing fossil fuels, including wind, solar, biomass, water, geothermal and nuclear energy, as well as exploring deposits of natural, shale and coal bed gas. Energy-intense industries, such as power, steel, chemical and building materials will be subject to carbon emission control regulations.

Opening up

China will continue to open up its economy to attract foreign investment and encourage Chinese firms to make overseas investment.

China will further open up sectors with natural monopoly features for investment over the next five years. Efforts will be accelerated to open up competitive businesses of sectors such as oil, natural gas, electricity, telecommunications, transportation and utilities.

Coastal areas will be given support to participate in global economic cooperation, advanced manufacturing bases and economic zones will be established, and border and cross-border economic cooperation zones will continue to be improved.

In the next five years, China will optimize foreign trade and open wider to the global economy. More will be done to explore innovative models of foreign trade, equipment manufacturing and services.

There will be more official moves to upgrade the economy into a global manufacturing power, cultivate strategic industries and modernize the agricultural and service sectors.

The government will intervene less in price formation, deregulating pricing products and services in competitive sectors.

China will continue to support RMB's bid for inclusion in the IMF Special Drawing Right (SDR) basket and push ahead with capital account liberalization and the internationalization of RMB, according to the document.

China will accelerate reforms in its financial system to establish a transparent and healthy capital market.

Sharing

The proposal promises a "healthy China" by reforming the health system, and promotes the balanced development of its population through the two-child policy. The proposal calls for retaining family planning as a basic state policy, allowing all couples to have two children, while improving public services for reproductive health, maternal and child health, nurseries and kindergartens.

For education, in the proposed plan, the CPC is moving to improve the quality of education and bridge the urban-rural gap, vowing subsidized education for all poor students for the duration of their nine years of compulsory education.

The document also said the government will remove senior high school education tuition fees for poor students and gradually waive tuition fees for vocational education.

While ensuring nine years of compulsory education is available nationwide, more schools will be built in urban and rural areas and better teachers will recruited to rural schools, according to the document.

The nation will encourage colleges to become application oriented should their conditions suit this, the document said.

For health system reform, the Party proposed advancing the comprehensive reform of public-owned hospitals, breaking their mechanisms for seeking

profits and building a personnel and remuneration system appropriate for the health industry.

It called for optimizing distribution of health resources, improving basic health service, promoting health resources to rural and grassroots level, and developing telemedicine. General practitioners, family doctors and electronic health records should be promoted.

The proposal encouraged private sectors to run health services and vowed to give them the same status as public-owned institutions.

In addition, it vowed to strengthen monitoring of health care quality, improving mechanisms to mediate medical disputes in a bid to build harmonious doctor-patient relations.

For poverty relief project, the proposal vows to lift more people out of poverty, saying that alleviating poverty in rural areas is the most difficult aspect of building a well-off society.

The CPC reiterated its determination to fight against poverty, pledging to step up financial support to impoverished areas in the next five years. The document said ridding the rural population of poverty is the most arduous task for China's ambition to build a moderately prosperous society.

China had 70.17 million impoverished people in rural areas as of the end of 2014, and the government plans to lift all of them out of poverty by 2020.

Besides, the government also aims to narrow the income gap and raise the proportion of middle-income population in the next five years.

The proposal also allows all couples to have two children, but demands improved public services for reproductive health, maternal and child health, and more nurseries and kindergartens. Families which have followed the one-child policy but are now in difficulties should be helped.

Zodiac Weekly Forecast**Aries****(March 20-April 19)**

Sometimes we are pressed to see the flaws, even in those things and people we love the most. You are not at fault in this situation, though you may be looking for what you "could-a/ would-a/, should-a/" done. You did the best you could at the time.

Taurus**(April 20 -- May 20)**

The next couple of weeks are especially good for discussing important subjects with partners. You each are in a cooperative frame of mind and communications flow well. You can give and receive mutual help at this time and improve the overall energy in the relationship.

Gemini**(May 20-June 20)**

News comes that may take your breath away for a while. It isn't as though you didn't know it already. It has been in the background for some time now. Somehow you managed to avoid "knowing" that this could really happen. You do not have to stay on top of the circumstances right now. Give yourself some days to breathe.

Cancer**(June 21-July 21)**

You may feel out of sorts this week. Your feelings are in conflict with your ideal self and your values. You want to put your best foot forward, but circumstances do not feel quite right. If the conflict is deep, it is usually best to wait and not yield to whatever pressure is around you. Take your time. Don't allow others to push you before you are ready.

Leo**(July 22-August 21)**

This is the time of year in which you try to do too much, take care of everyone, and often forget to include yourself in the equation. Now is the time to check with your internal sensors. Is it truly necessary to handle every last detail? If your energy level is low, give yourself a break from the usual routine. Your body will reward you for the sacrifice.

Virgo**(August 22-September 22)**

Challenging news comes your way concerning children, a love affair, or creative ventures. It may be sudden so brace yourself. Take deep breaths and calm yourself so that you can have your wits about you to think issues through. Rise above the appearance of things so you can envision a larger picture. You will need to access your ability to think outside the box.

Libra**(Sep. 23-Oct. 22)**

Take every precaution not to abuse your body during this period. Drugs or alcohol could have peculiar side effects that you don't understand. You are in a low physical cycle and will be unable to push yourself as hard as normal on any physical task. If you are affected emotionally, try not to worry about it. Your body/feelings will right themselves within a week.

Scorpio**(October 23-November 21)**

This is a very good time to communicate with family members and those close to you. The environment and circumstances each contribute to allowing things to be said honestly, without fear of rebuke or attack in any form. New agreements and understandings can be created.

Sagittarius**(November 22-December 20)**

This week there are no new aspects involving your planetary ruler. You may find that you can take it easy and relax a bit. Consider this time of quiet a gift from the cosmos. You can catch up on the threads of unfinished projects and maybe even get some extra sleep.

Capricorn**(December 21-January 19)**

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. Make an effort to avoid worry over what might happen in the future and/or some past experience.

Aquarius**(January 20-February 17)**

You are always concerned about the multitudes that don't have enough food, clothing or shelter. It is possible that you may have overcommitted your time on behalf of the needy. Give where you genuinely want to help, but don't allow your volunteerism to soak you dry of energy.

Pisces**(February 18-March 19)**

You may very well feel disappointed and angry, but there seems to be nowhere to really direct those feelings. The best solution is to identify where you find solace and deliberately connect with the person, place or thing that will offer reassurance and comfort. This is a powerful time to consider your spiritual purposes.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS
& HAPPY NEW YEAR



ZVARTNOTS

ARMENIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS

Baroness Caroline Cox organizes concert in London featuring Armenian Komitas Choir

On December 9, in London, at St Cuthbert's Church, the annual "Christmas Carol Concert" was organized by Baroness Caroline Cox in support of Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART). The concert featured the Armenian Komitas Choir, the Ugandan Acholi London Choir and St Martin singers, Gibrahayer E-Magazine informs.

The Komitas Choir was founded in 2013 by the Tekeyan Trust London, a registered charity since 1979, the backbone of the London TCA and the Tekeyan Centre Fund Armenia. The TTL has always been dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the national identity as well as to furthering links between Armenia and the Diaspora through various cultural, educational, community life activities.

The performance of the Komitas Choir at "Christmas Carol Concert" was

the highlight of the programme, since 2015 is the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide, and December 9 has been announced the "International Day of Commemoration of Victims of Genocide and of its Prevention".

Once again to commemorate the victims of the Armenian Genocide and to raise the awareness of the British audience, honourable Baroness Caroline Cox delivered her impressive speech. She condemned the Genocide denial policy of the Turkish government and mentioned historical injustice and deprivations of the Armenian nation.



At the concert, the Komitas Choir, conducted by Sipan Hakobyan and accompanied by pianist Ella Babayan, performed "Hymn of the Nativity" by Komitas, "Arpa-Sevan" by Edgar Hovhannisyian and "New Armenia" by Stepan Lusikyan.

The Choir Conductor and artistic director Sipan Hakobyan, as a soloist, performed Hymn of "Christ's Baptism" by Grigor Pahlavuni and Hymn of the "Blessing the Water" by Hovhannes Yerznkatsi.

Garen Arevian of the TCA London recited "The Sorrow of Armenians" by Z. Boyajyan.

At the concert, among the audience present were representatives of a number of organizations, politicians and clergymen.





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