

Large-scale war unlikely, Armenia's Defense Minister says



Armenia - Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan at a news conference in Yerevan, 28Jun2017.

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Sargsyan reaffirms support for Armenian PM

President Serzh Sargsyan insisted on June 29 that he continues to fully support Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan amid lingering media speculation about friction between them.

But he again declined to clarify who will be Armenia's prime minister after he completes his second and final presidential term next April.

"Our team will act in a unified way in the executive and legislative branches as well as local government bodies," Sargsyan said, opening a weekly cabinet meeting in Yerevan. "The current government headed by Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan enjoys the full trust of myself and our entire political team."

Serzh Sargsyan expressed confidence that Karapetyan's cabinet can successfully meet challenges facing Armenia. He said its five-year policy program approved by the Armenian parliament last week contains ambitious socioeconomic targets reflecting his own vision for the country's development.

A number of Armenian media outlets and commentators have speculated in recent weeks that Sargsyan plans to become prime minister or replace Karapetyan by someone else in April 2018. Some of them have claimed that Karapetyan will be sacked before that time because of his worsening relationship



with the president.

Sargsyan dismissed those rumors as "untrue" on June 6. "The Prime Minister has no reason to resign," he said in rare comments to Armenian journalists.

Karapetyan likewise denied a rift with the president on June 12, saying that their relationship remains "very good, respectful and businesslike." Speaking in the parliament on June 21, the premier stood by his previous statements indicating that he would like to retain his post next year.

Sargsyan, whose Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) won the April 2 parliamentary elections, has so far shed little light on his political plans for 2018. He

did not comment on them on Thursday.

Sargsyan appointed Karapetyan as Prime Minister in September last year with the stated aim of improving the socioeconomic situation in Armenia through more radical reforms.

The 53-year-old former business executive has since repeatedly pledged to create a level playing field for all businesses, combat corruption and tax evasion, and attract large-scale investments in the Armenian economy. His action plan approved by the HHK-controlled legislature commits the government to speeding up economic growth and reducing poverty.

Armenia should rely on itself when it comes to security issues – Deputy FM



Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister says atmosphere conducive to negotiations is needed for progress in Karabakh talks.

"Proper atmosphere is needed for negotiation process. Progress in the talks is impossible without relevant atmosphere,"

Shavarsh Kocharyan said.

"It's impossible to achieve progress at the negotiating table, when there is shooting and provocations," the Deputy Foreign Minister stated. He emphasized that Azerbaijan should meet the commitments assumed in Vienna and St. Petersburg.

Asked to comment on the possibility of large-scale war, the Deputy Foreign Minister said he trusts the Defense Minister. "The Defense Minister is better informed about the processes and possesses necessary information."

Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan told reporters Wednesday that "large-scale war is unlikely," but did not rule out provocations on the part of Azerbaijan.

In any case, Shavarsh Kocharyan said "we have to rely on ourselves, when it comes to security issues." Second, he said, "we should not have extra expectations."

"Russia is our partner, but we have to build our foreign policy with both Russia and others on the basis of the existing realities," the Deputy Foreign Minister said, when asked to comment on the supply of Russian arms to Azerbaijan.

Karabakh conflict settlement one of the most important issues in the region – Ara Babloyan



Membership in one integration framework does not restrict the cooperation opportunities of a country, if such cooperation does not contradict agreements reached earlier, Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Ara Babloyan said, addressing the 2nd Meeting of Speakers of Eurasian Countries' Parliaments.

"In 2016 Armenia was granted a dialogue partner status at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2016. The project of creation of a Silk Road Trade Zone is of great interest to us," the Speaker said.

"This year we are going to sign the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, which will form the new legal basis for Armenia-EU relations," he added.

Ara Babloyan said "development of economic cooperation is possible only in a secure environment, but there are conflicting regions in Eurasia, where restoring peace requires huge efforts."

"The settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict remains one of the most important issues in our region. The only format for the resolution of the conflict is the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship, comprising Russia, France and the United States. According to the statements of the Co-Chairs, the issue should be solved on the basis of principles of international law, namely non-use of force or the threat of force, the right of peoples to self-determination and territorial integrity, which, together with elements of settlement, are presented as an integrity," Ara Babloyan said.

"The proposal of the Co-Chairs envisages establishing the final legal status of Nagorno Karabakh through the expression of will of the people of Nagorno Karabakh in a legally binding referendum. Azerbaijan consistently avoids the peace process, refusing to recognize the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination. In response to the Co-Chairs' criticism of the use of force or the threat of force, the Azerbaijani leadership keeps stating that the international law is ineffective, and force is the only solution to the issue," the Armenian parliament Speaker stated.

He stressed that "the aggression Azerbaijan unleashed against Artsakh law April is yet another testament to the fact that there is no alternative to the realization of the right of its people to self-determination."

"Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, together with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, have always stood for a peaceful resolution of the conflict," Mr. Babloyan said. He called on his Azerbaijani counterpart to contribute to a peaceful settlement of the issue.



Large-scale war unlikely, Armenia's Defense Minister says

Azerbaijan is unlikely to initiate any full scale war in Artsakh because of the heavy losses the country would suffer, said Armenian Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan as he criticized the latest delivery of Russian weapons to Azerbaijan at a news conference.

Vigen Sargsyan told reporters that a war will not solve the Artsakh conflict, especially with all the damage it would inflict economically to Azerbaijan. He instead suggested that Azerbaijan will continue to act how it has in the past, by provoking smaller scale violations of the ceasefire.

On June 16, three soldiers of the Artsakh Defense Forces were killed by an Azeri at-

tack while a fourth was killed the following morning. The Armenian Armed Forces then took the necessary measures to retaliate Azerbaijan's offensive.

Meanwhile, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry reported that one of its soldiers had been killed by the Armenian side also on June 16. The Co-Chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group were visiting the region during this attack.

On June 22, the Artsakh Defense Army reported to have killed four Azerbaijani soldiers as it refuted an overnight incursion attempt by Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani military denied the claim.

"I view very negatively any arms delivery to Azerbaijan, first of all, because Azerbaijan is an unpredictable country lacking mechanisms for democratic control," said Sargsyan when asked about the new batch of anti-tank missile systems, which Russia delivered to Azerbaijan as part of an arms deal.

"In that regard, any supply of weapons [to Azerbaijan]—be it Russian weapons, Israeli weapons, or Turkish weapons—creates new risks because it's hard to predict who will be making decisions in that country," he added.

Vigen Sargsyan also stressed that Armenia has also been acquiring Russian weapons at a discounted price thanks to its military alliance with the country.

Arrested oppositionists “beaten up in court”

Five arrested members of an armed Armenian opposition claimed to have been brutally attacked by police on June 28 immediately after the latest court hearing in their ongoing trial in Yerevan.

The presiding judge told law-enforcement officers to remove three of them – Areg Kyureghyan, Mkhitar Avetisyan and Smbat Barseghyan – from the courtroom moments before cutting short the hearing. They as well as two other defendants – Arayik Khandoyan and Gagik Yeghiazaryan – told their lawyers afterwards that they were beaten up in the court building’s basement before being transported back to their prisons.

The lawyers submitted on Thursday a written “crime report” to the Office of the Prosecutor-General, demanding the immediate launch of an investigation. Some of them visited their clients at the Nubarashen prison in the morning.

“Arayik Khandoyan was really subjected to violence and tortured in the most brutal fashion,” Khandoyan’s lawyer, Arayik Papikyan, told reporters outside the prison compound. Papikyan claimed that his client was beaten up by the policemen after protesting against the ill-treatment of Kyureghyan and Avetisyan.

“I have no doubts that he at least suffered a concussion because his condition is very bad. He was hit particularly hard in the head and kidneys. His feet were also injured,” Pa-



pikyan said, adding that Khandoyan has still not received adequate medical aid.

Papikyan and other lawyers also said that the Nubarashen prison administration inspected the men and documented the injuries suffered by them. They demanded a copy of corresponding medical report which they said was drawn up by the administration.

Representatives of the office of Armenia’s human rights ombudsman, Arman Tatoyan, visited Khandoyan, Avetisyan and Yeghiazaryan earlier on Thursday and confirmed various injuries sustained by them. In a written statement, the office demanded an immediate investigation into “apparent elements of a crime” committed against the suspects.

As of late afternoon, neither the prosecutors nor a Justice Ministry division managing Ar-

menia’s prisons clarified whether the torture allegations are being formally investigated. The Armenian police, for their part, said that they are not in a position to investigate such incidents.

The high-profile trial stems from the July 2016 attack on a police base in Yerevan’s Erebuni district that was launched by armed members of Founding Parliament, a radical opposition group. The gunmen demanded President Serzh Sargsyan’s resignation. They laid down their arms after a two-week standoff with security forces which left three police officers dead.

More than 60 persons are prosecuted in connection with the Erebuni standoff. The trial of the 14 leading members of the armed group began on June 8.

Foreign Ministers of Armenia, Azerbaijan to meet in Austria on July 11

The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan will meet in Mauerbach, Austria on July 11, RIA Novosti reports, quoting diplomatic sources.

“The Foreign Ministers of the two countries have been offered to meet on the sidelines of the non-official meeting of the OSCE Foreign Ministers, which will be held in Mauerbach, Austria, on July 11. The mediators are also expected to take part in the meeting,” the source said.

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said earlier that a meeting with his Azerbaijani counterpart was possible.

Official Representative of the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry Hikmet Hajiyev has confirmed Baku’s willingness to participate in the meeting.



Armenia, EU to sign new deal in November, Foreign Minister confirms



Negotiations on the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between Armenia and the European Union have been completed, Armenian

Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian says.

“Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and President of the European Council

Donald Tusk declared about the completion of talks at a meeting in Brussels, after which the parties initialed the document in Armenia,” the Foreign Minister said during budgetary discussions at the National Assembly.

“We have reached an agreement that we can sign a new comprehensive agreement, taking note of Armenia’s commitments in other integration frameworks,” Minister Nalbandian said. He added that the document will serve as a framework for further expansion of relations.

The Foreign Minister confirmed that the deal will be signed within the framework of the Eastern Partnership summit in Brussels in November.

Edward Nalbandian played down the concerns that the signing of the agreement could fail as it was the case back in 2013.

Nalbandian said “the document had not been initialed then.”

Israeli political scientist Avigdor Eskin visits Artsakh



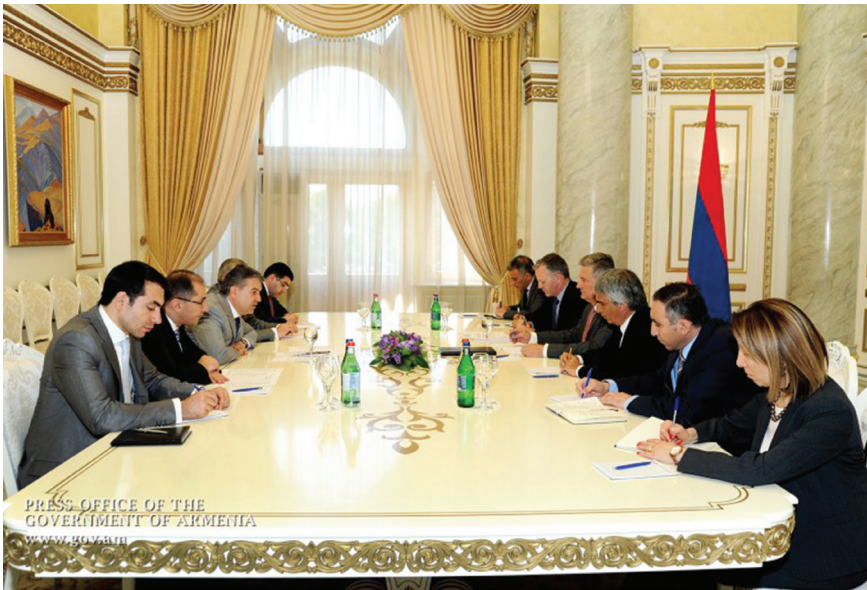
Well-known Israeli political scientist and public figure Avigdor Eskin was hosted in the National Assembly of the Republic of Artsakh on June 27.

Addressing the lawmakers, Mr. Eskin attached importance to his friendly relations with the Armenian people and said he had come to Artsakh to get to know the country and its people and to share the impressions with his compatriots.

“I’ve come here to learn rather than tell anything. The Armenian nation that has born a number of famed people, deserves great attitude and respect,” the political scientist said.

In a Q&A session with Artsakh MPs Avigdor Eskin referred to his stance on the Karabakh issue, the perspectives of development of Armenian-Israeli relations, the need to implement the Jews’ successful experience of repatriation in Armenia and Artsakh, etc.

Armenia, ADB interested in expansion of cooperation



Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan received on June 23 the delegation of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) led by

Sean O'Sullivan, ADB Director General for Central and West Asia. The Prime Minister said the coopera-

tion with ADB is 'impressive' and noted that 25 programs with a total value of 1 billion 190 million USD have been implemented in Armenia within that framework.

Karen Karapetyan assured of the Armenian government's willingness to implement projects in the fields of communication, energy, capital market development and others, and its interested in the expansion of ADB's cooperation with the private sector.

Sean O'Sullivan, in turn, hailed the process of infrastructure improvement in Armenia and noted that they're working towards implementation of new programs. He added that "the ADB is ready to cooperate in the fields of education, digitization of governance and others.

A wide range of issues related to bilateral cooperation was discussed at the meeting.

IMF approves \$21.6 million loan disbursement to Armenia



The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed today the fifth and final review of Armenia's economic performance under a three-year arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The completion of the review allows the authorities to draw the equivalent of SDR 15.69 million (about US\$21.6 million). Armenia's three-year extended arrangement for SDR 82.21 million (about US\$111.57 million at the time of approval of the arrangement) was approved on March 7, 2014.

The Executive Board today also concluded the 2017 Article IV Consultation with Armenia. A respective press release will be issued separately.

Following the Executive Board discussion on Armenia, Mr. Tao Zhang, Deputy Managing Director and Acting Chair, said:

"Armenia has been facing challenging external conditions which have contributed to subdued domestic demand, weak fiscal revenues,

and deflationary conditions. Nonetheless, program performance has been satisfactory. All end-December 2016 quantitative performance criteria, indicative targets, and structural benchmarks were met. Economic activity is expected to pick up in 2017 and over the medium term, however, downside risks and significant structural challenges remain.

"Given the fragile growth, the cyclical position of the economy, and a projected revenue overperformance, an increase in growth-friendly foreign-financed capital spending relative to the 2017 budget is justified. At the same time, the authorities remain committed to maintaining a prudent medium-term fiscal path by enhancing revenue mobilization and increasing efficiency in spending. The new Tax Code should be rigorously implemented by resisting pressures to water down its provisions. It is also essential to modernize the medium-term fiscal framework, given that the current fiscal rule lacks flexibility and consideration for cyclical conditions.

"The central bank's monetary policy easing over the past two years has helped reduce market interest rates and supported a nascent recovery in bank lending. Going forward, monetary policy should remain focused on bringing inflation back to its medium-term target. The central bank should monitor the impact of recent policy actions and assess the need for further easing. Also, the flexible exchange rate should continue to act as a shock absorber, helping support external adjustment and maintain policy buffers.

"Pursuing structural reforms remains essential for fostering sustainable and inclusive growth. Strengthening domestic competition and regulatory reforms are pivotal to promoting private sector development and diversifying the economy. In this context, the authorities' growth-promoting initiatives are welcome."

Armenia, Georgia looking to boost economic ties

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan received a delegation led by Georgian Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Giorgi Gakharia who has arrived in Armenia to attend the Georgia Business Days. An agreement to that effect was reached between the Prime Ministers of Armenia and Georgia in February, 2017 on the margins of Karen Karapetyan's official visit to Georgia.

The Head of the Armenian government welcomed the holding of Georgia Business Days in Armenia, which may boost bilateral trade and economic ties and create new opportunities for full realization of the existing potential. The Prime Minister highlighted the implementation of specific programs aimed at promoting economic and business ties within the framework of free economic zones on both bilateral and multilateral platforms, and for the development of cooperation in the fields of information technology, tourism and transport.

In turn, Giorgi Gakharia noted that given the current high level of political dialogue between Armenia and Georgia, efforts need to be made to intensify trade and economic exchanges, and that the Georgian side is fully supportive of the proposal to develop cooperation in those areas indicated by



the Prime Minister of Armenia.

In this context, the Georgian Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development briefed Prime Minister Karapetyan on the results of today's discussions with the Armenian Minister of Economic Development and Investments.

Karen Karapetyan and Giorgi Gakharia took the opportunity to stress the need for strengthening bilateral cultural ties, implementing tourism-oriented projects and joint programs aimed at raising awareness of each other among young people.

First solar panel producing plant opens in Armenia



Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan attended on June 29 the official opening of Profpanel company specialized in the production of solar panels. The Prime Minister was briefed on the programs and development perspectives of the plant.

The plant producing SolrOn solar panels has an annual capacity of 10 MW and provides job to 50 people.

The initial investment amounted to \$2 million. The plant intends to supply solar panels to the domestic market and later organize exports to the countries of the region and beyond.

The mini solar station with a capacity of 1.5 KW, which is able to produce about 200 KWh of electricity, will cost \$1.5-1.7 thousand.

Having worked in test mode since spring 2017, the company has installed a number of solar stations in residential areas.



Embassy celebrates U.S. Independence Day in Armenia

On June 30, the U.S. Embassy celebrated the 241st anniversary of the independence of the United States at the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan with a summer evening of jazz, food, and fireworks. During the event, U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Richard Mills, Jr. and guest of honor Armenian Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan praised the close partnership between Armenia and the United States.

In his remarks, Ambassador Mills noted that this year the Embassy was celebrating two anniversaries: the 241st anniversary of American independence and the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Armenia and the United States.

“As I reflect on the privilege and great prize of independence, my thoughts turn not just to the United States, but also to Armenia, which has accomplished so much since gaining independence in 1991,” said Ambassador Mills.

“And while I can only imagine, via historical records, what it must have been like when our founding fathers declared American independence, I had the unforgettable honor of experiencing first-hand the birth and first steps of the independent Republic of Armenia.” Ambassador Mills shared anecdotes with guests about his time 25 years ago as the first Armenian Desk officer at the U.S. State Department, in charge of relations with the newly independent state, and reflected on the enduring partnership and sincere friendship between our two countries.

“Together we have forged strong diplomatic, development, military, commercial, and people-to-people ties over the past 25 years. Those ties form the bedrock of our relationship as we look to further deepen our partnership in the years to come.”

The Armenian State Jazz Band performed American and Armenian pieces during the party, accompanied by the American jazz vocalist Michael Mayo.

Over the next two weeks, the Armenian State Jazz Band will perform in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Ijevan, Meghri, Kapan, Goris, and Sisian as part of our “America on the Road” tour, the centerpiece of our year-long celebration of 25 years of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the United States.

In addition to a cultural program of jazz concerts and master classes, American film screenings, and book readings, all open to the public, we will also visit people, sites, and communities that have partnered with USAID, Peace Corps, and the Embassy over the last 25 years, celebrating the achievements and the very real difference they made in the lives of countless Armenians in support of our shared goal of a prosperous and democratic Armenia.



Azerbaijan Employs Four Lobbying and PR firms



*Harut
Sassounian*

After identifying the lobbying and PR firms hired by the government of Turkey, we now report on four similar firms hired by Azerbaijan.

By observing Azerbaijan's devious approach to foreign relations, I have noticed the following pattern:

1. Whatever actions Armenian-Americans take for their causes, Azerbaijan seeks to emulate and counter them in the United States through its hired companies. Pres. Aliyev in a 2013 speech stated that Azerbaijan's "main enemy is the Armenian lobby." He also stated: "the Armenian lobby day and night is trying to slander Azerbaijan, to undermine its authority. They have broad financial resources. They are closely connected with the authorities of their countries where they donate to the legislators under the name of 'lobbying.' But, in fact, it is a bribe. Thus the Armenian lobby is at the forefront of an organized campaign against us." In his lengthy diatribe, Pres. Aliyev falsely ascribes to Armenians the persistent bribing campaign carried out by his own government around the world.

2. Azerbaijan follows the footsteps of Turkey's more experienced officials in its policies on Armenia and Armenian issues, including the denial of the Armenian Genocide and accusing Armenians for the crimes committed by Azerbaijan and Turkey. Regrettably, Azerbaijan has been also emulating Turkey in the repression of its own citizens, making it difficult to determine which of the two countries is more autocratic.

3. The government of Azerbaijan, realizing its tarnished image in the West due to widespread human rights violations, has hired PR and lobbying firms to whitewash its negative reputation. One would expect a regime that is so concerned about its poor image overseas that it would improve its human rights record at home, so it does not need to waste millions of dollars on American firms to carry out the impossible task of cleansing its image. In his 2013 speech, Pres. Aliyev wishfully described Azerbaijan as a "modern, progressive, open, tolerant country." Who can be fooled by such outright lies?

The government of Azerbaijan has hired dozens of PR and lobbying firms over the years. However, at this time, it em-

ploys only four such firms.

1. Podesta Group, Inc., is paid \$45,000 a month by Azerbaijan to "research and analyze issues of concern to [Azerbaijan]; counsel [Azerbaijan] on U.S. policies of concern, activities in Congress and the executive branch, and developments on the U.S. political scene generally; and maintain contact, if necessary, with members of Congress and their staff and executive branch officials, media and non-governmental organizations."

2. SOCAR USA (U.S. subsidiary of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan) pays Roberti White LLC \$125,000 to "research and analyze issues of concern to [Azerbaijan]; counsel [Azerbaijan] on U.S. policies of concern, activities in Congress and the Executive branch, and developments on the U.S. political scene generally; and maintain contact, as necessary, with members of Congress and their staff, executive branch officials, members of the press, and non-governmental organizations." It is not surprising that the description of the functions performed by Roberti White for SOCAR USA is identical to the ones performed by Podesta Group, Inc., for the government of Azerbaijan.

3. BGR Government Affairs, LLC is paid \$50,000 a month by the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Washington, D.C., to provide "strategic guidance and counsel with regard to government affairs and public relations activity within the U.S. This may include relevant outreach to U.S. government officials, non-government organizations, members of the media and other individuals within the U.S."

4. The Tool Shed Group LLC, originally headquartered in Woodland Hills, California, now relocated to Parker, Colorado, was hired by the Consulate of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles in 2009 for a period of four months for a flat fee of \$35,000. The Tool Shed Group now also represents the Republic of Azerbaijan. Since then the contract has been renewed every six months. Tool Shed is led by Jason Katz, former Director of Public Relations and Public Affairs for the American Jewish Committee. Tool Shed provides "consulting services to the Consulate, including organizing briefings/lectures; facilitating meetings with community members, elected and appointed officials, and business leaders; write and disseminate op-eds."

Recently, the Consulate General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles disseminated to all Consulates in Los Angeles, and probably many others, a color brochure entitled, "Nagorno-Karabakh: Background and Facts." This 16-page propaganda piece, full of misrepresentations about Artsakh, most likely was prepared by The Tool Shed Group, Azerbaijan's and its consulate's PR and lobbying firm. At the end of page 16, there is a note which states: "Published by the Consulate General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles." It is interesting that this sentence does not indicate who prepared the brochure, but simply who published it!

Noravank Monastery: “Gold in the Amaghu Valley”



By
**Gourgen James
Khazhakian**

Chief
Correspondent

This time The Highlights presents its readers another pearl of Armenian medieval architecture, legendary Monastery of Noravank.

Let's start with the following extract from the traveltoarmenia.am:

“...They say whatever the human hand touches, it eventually destroys it. But considering the fact that the man was created in the image of God, then he surely inherited things that can make him appear God-like. One such thing is his ability to create. The general truth

other's Idol and left the Monastery.

After a peace treaty between Agha Khan and the **Orbelyan** Family (Princes residing in Syunik Province of Armenia) was signed, Noravank, under the aegis of Orbelyans, was rebuilt, turned into important religious, educational and cultural center of medieval Armenia, but, alas, it lasted until the invasion of Lenk Timur hordes in the late 14th century.

Noravank (that means “New Monastery” in Armenian) Monastery that stands out not only due to its complex of beautiful churches and khachkars (cross-stones), but also surrounding natural beauty. The monastic complex is located 122km from Yerevan in a canyon made by the Amaghu river, near the city of Yeghegnadzor, having tall, sheer, brick-red cliffs, directly across from the monastery.

Why “new”? Probably because of the

fact that Noravank was built in 12th century at the place of two other churches erected much before.

Besides, the Complex is famous due to unique reliefs and khachkars created by Momik (1250-1339), a legendary artist, sculptor and architect invited to move from Cilicia to Armenia by Stepanos Orbelyan. **Momik** was buried at the Monastery site, and there is a khachkar there in his memory.

The complex of Noravank Monastery includes Saint Astvatsatsin Sepulcher-Church, Saint Karapet Church, Saint Stepanos Nakhavka Church and a gavit (entrance hall), Saint Grigor Church (the Sepulcher of the Prince Stepanos Orbelyan), ruined medieval chapels and the newly built rectory. The fortress walls surrounding the complex were built in the 17th –18th centuries.

Noravank was founded in 1105 by



is, the human imagination recognizes no limits and boundaries, but even knowing that very often when you see the reflection of it right in front, you are still being unable not to question that general truth because sometimes those creations appear too unreal to be true.

Such creations, particularly in regard to monasteries and churches, can be found scattered all around the world, among them the church of Sagrada Familia in Spain or the Chapel of Saint Michel d'Aiguilhe in France. In Armenia, it's the outstanding monastery of Noravank, which can also be referred to as a masterpiece with its unique architectural solutions and design”.

...Saying “legendary” reminds about a legend (that seems a very truth-like one): when the Mongols invaded Armenia in the 13th century, they crumbled many churches/other historic monuments. Noravank, fortunately, escaped from sharing their fate thanks to a relief of the God himself depicted with big eyes on it as the invaders were “scared” by the



www.alamy.com - DGGAT1

Bishop **Hovannes**, fmr Abbot of Vahanavank Monastery (at the outskirts of the City of Kapan) who succeeded to get papers from Seljuk Turks (who occupied Armenia in those times) on the pontifical status of the Monastery.

And, as it was mentioned above, those centuries was a “Golden Age” for Noravank, - mostly due to patronage of the Orbelyan Princes.

Saint Astvatsatsin Church

The Church of Saint Astvatsatsin (Holy Mother) was built as a family sepulcher for the Orbelyan Princes in 1339 by Prince Burtegh, that's why it's called “Burteghashen”. The architect of the church was Momik.

On the first floor of the church there is the sepulcher with khachkars and small carvings of the evangelists. Also, on the western wall there are two khachkars out of which the one on the left is attributed to Momik. Narrow and small stairs found at the western entrance take

to the second floor, where the prayer hall is. To the east of the prayer hall there is the semicircular sanctuary above which the carving of Jesus Christ with angels around Him can be seen, while right above the window to the east of it there is the carving of a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit.

The church's dome is supported by a rotunda. The latter comprises 12 columns on which there are bird carvings as well as the portrait of Prince Burtegh with the church's miniature in his hand.

The facades of the church feature bas relief sculptures.

Saint Karapet Church

Saint Karapet Church that currently lies in ruins, is the oldest church of the complex, which was possibly built in the place of a pre-Christian sacred site. Traces of three arches, a three-story platform and a southern front room have been preserved. It's also probable that the walls of the church came with frescoes, which, however, have not been preserved.

The arches are made of multi-colored tufa stone. The use of arches was firstly typical of secular buildings. Gradually, the style was adopted into the church architecture of the Middle East and Byzantine. Later on Armenian churches also included the arches.

There was so little room inside the church that it could accommodate only very few people. It is supposed that the church was meant only for the clergy and used to serve as a pilgrimage site.

Saint Stepanos Nakhavka Church

Being the main church of the complex, cruciform Saint Stepanos Nakhavka Church was built in 1216-1223 by Prince Liparit Orbelyan. It represents a domed building with two-story annexes in the four corners. Note that the dome was destroyed during the 1840 earthquake and is currently restored. The church has only one entrance and it is in the western side. Priests used to reside on the second floors of the annexes. It's where they used to pray and create manuscripts. In contrast, the first floors were meant for candle lighting.

Saint Grigor Chapel-Sepulcher

The chapel-sepulcher of Saint Grigor



built in 1275 for the family of Orbelyans is sometimes called Smbat's Sepulcher because the latter's buried there. The architect was Siranes. Notably, ten members of the Orbelyan family are buried in the sepulcher. The tombstone of Elikum III Orbelyan who was one of the most popular political figures, with depicted sleeping lion, is among them.

The chapel has a rectangular layout with a small semi-circular sanctuary to the east and a vaulted roof.

Khachkars

Among khachkars of Noravank are the ones dedicated to the Holy Mother, Saint Sargis, Saint Gevorg, Saint Poghos, Saint Petros, Saint Stepanos, Saint Hovhannes, Saint Grigor and so on.

Traditionally, the khachkars depicting Holy Mother were believed to protect the families and mothers, those depicting Saint Grigor were thought to give strength and courage to the warriors, and the stones with the image of the All-Savior were considered to cure of diseases.

And, finally, a couple of reviews from TripAdvisor:

cwf
Brasschaat, Belgium

Gold in the Amaghu valley

So beautiful situated in a valley surrounded by high cliffs.

Several churches and chapels all dating back to the 13th and 14th century. A church (reachable by a very narrow steep stair) atop a burial vault: unique building and very nicely sculptured. Several khachkars (cross-stones).

Timothy T
Texas

Exquisite visit!

This beautiful monastery has so much to offer. There is an incredible restaurant next door which you must not miss. The architecture of the monasteries melds beautifully with the background making for some incredible pictures. The place has been renovated but still some buildings remain in ruins. Some of the incredible aspects of this monastery are the only depiction of God and the tombs of Armenian kings from the 12th century. Highly recommend!

Traveltoarmenia.am materials used in this story
Photos by Rachel Doyle, Shaun Dunphy

Recent News from Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator

Ranger Campus will serve as an environmental science and education hub

VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph Yirikian, The Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC) founder Ruben Khachatryan and IUCN NL Nature Conservation Senior Expert, Land Acquisition Program Coordinator Marc Hoogeslag have attended the opening of the Ranger Campus in the Caucasus Wildlife Refuge (CWR). The aim of the Campus is the promotion of educational-scientific research in environmental sphere. It will contribute to biodiversity conservation, development of natural sciences and to the welfare of community as well.

water, and electricity.

The Ranger Campus will serve as a scientific and educational hub, as well as a second station for the CWR rangers. This highly important area has been purchased for conservation purpose with the support of our partners VivaCell-MTS and IUCN NL, to shape a buffer zone and an eco-corridor connecting the CWR to the Khosrov State Reserve," said FPWC founder Ruben Khachatryan.

"The root of all problems is indifference. Careless attitude to environmental protection may have serious consequences. The society that suffers those irreversible consequences is the very same society that created them in the first place. Sometimes indifference comes from lack of awareness. Creation of Campuses of this kind will allow making eco-ed-

serve its purpose," noted VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph Yirikian.

"FPWC has proved that with passion, commitment and tireless effort real conservation results can be achieved. The Ranger Campus will foster their efforts and make the CWR a showcase example of passion-driven conservation success," said IUCN NL Nature Conservation Senior Expert, Land Acquisition Program Coordinator Marc Hoogeslag.

The Caucasus Wildlife Refuge with the territory of 10 000 hectares is the first privately protected area in the South Caucasus. The CWR and its adjacent lands have vital importance for the South Caucasus biodiversity and its exceptional fauna.

The evidence of the project efficiency is the significant growth of the territory's biodiversity, including a number of species listed in the Red Data Book of Armenia, particularly the quantitative growth of the Bezoar goat, Golden eagle, Bearded vulture, Brown bear and the existence of the Caucasian leopard.

The Caucasus Wildlife Refuge is located in Ararat region. The targets of its activity are biodiversity conservation, community development and environmental education.

The CWR with its rich unique biodiversity is adjacent to "Khosrov Forest" State Reserve and is managed by the FPWC. This project, aimed at conservation of the endangered wild species' most important migration corridors, has been implemented since 2011.

4G+ (LTE Advanced) Network to become available to 80-90% of the population

Armenia's leader in terms of mobile network coverage and bandwidth Viva-



The Ranger Campus is entirely constructed with eco-friendly materials and equipped with state-of-the-art "green" technologies. It will serve as the second ranger station for the CWR, as well as a research, scientific and educational center. It will be a space to connect with nature and get all the necessary means for the accomplishment of scientific research projects. The construction of the CWR's Ranger Campus has been financed by the Netherlands Committee of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN NL) and VivaCell-MTS in frames of "Strengthening the Caucasus Wildlife Refuge" project.

"The more urbanized our environment gets, and the more we try to adjust the nature to our demands, the more important it becomes to create such shelters where one can re-connect with nature, away from noise, away from artificial lights that distort the starlight, closer to wildlife. The Ranger Campus introduced today is a self-sufficient system equipped with state-of-the-art eco-friendly technologies for heating, hot



education available to more people and translating the message that it is easier to prevent problems, than find solutions to them. I am convinced that the Ranger Campus will

Cell-MTS continues implementing network expansion and upgrade activities. The purpose of these activities is to add new capacities to VivaCell-MTS powerful network

in order to ensure even higher rates of data transfer and higher quality of voice services throughout Yerevan and the regions, taking into account the steady increase in the consumption volume of the abovementioned services. Network upgrades will allow the introduction of innovative technology solutions to further provide the population with the best in class and comfortable services.

According to VivaCell-MTS Strategy for 2018-2020, the company plans to put into operation a new batch of base stations, as well as to increase the capacity of the existing network by upgrading the network infrastructure and equipment. Thus, by the end of 2018, the company plans to make 4G+ (LTE Advanced) network available to 64% of the population, instead of the current 52.4%. It is planned that in 2019 the 4G+ network will be rolled out not only in all towns of Armenia, but also in large villages and on transit highways. According to the strategy, it is expected that by 2020 4G+ technology will be available to 80-90% of the population.

Upon the completion of modernization activities, VivaCell-MTS network will be fully ready for the latest developments in the telecommunication sphere.

"Taking into account the global trends in technology development, VivaCell-MTS regularly implements complex modernization of the mobile network, including a large-scale infrastructure upgrade. 2018 will be marked by the launch of a new stage of modernization, through which we will have a qualitatively new mobile network ready to provide higher volumes of voice and data transfer services, as well as an opportunity to deploy the most innovative solutions in the market. A new phase of technological upgrades is conducted in VivaCell-MTS every 3-4 years. We have the determination, capacity and the strong team to bring technical and ICT systems to a whole new level," said VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph Yirikian.

"VivaStart" - an educational program that shapes service culture

The first graduates of this year's "VivaStart" program have received certificates of completion. Considering high-level service as an important indicator of the quality, the company has provided an opportunity to just another group of students from different universities to get hands-on experience in sales and customer service. First, 21 students

took part in theoretical trainings, then in a two-month period they strengthened their professional skills and attained practical knowledge in Yerevan and regional service centers.

"VivaStart" educational program has been conducted since 2015. Acknowledging the importance of customer satisfaction, VivaCell-MTS has equipped 124 students with professional knowledge and practical skills through this educational program. The participants have acquired effective communication skills for customer service, studied the products and services offered by the company and learned how to use marketing techniques for promoting those products and services. The uniqueness of this program is conditioned by its outreach not only to Yerevan, but also to regions.

"Regardless of one's workplace or position, everyone should remember that



communication is the key to human relations. The more civilized those relations are, the more the parties involved will benefit. This is the governance model of VivaCell-MTS: respect and readiness to support are our key values. The knowledge and experience you have gained during this period should guide you also in the future," said VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph Yirikian.

During their meeting with the General Manager Ralph Yirikian, "VivaStart" graduates shared their impressions and opinions about the program, and emphasized the importance of the knowledge they had received.

Guided by a responsible business culture, VivaCell-MTS has been cooperating with universities in Armenia for over 12 years, by readily sharing its experience with students and giving them the best opportunities for development. So far, 12 graduates of "VivaStart" program have been hired by VivaCell-MTS.

Master class in the frames of "Basics of Telecommunication" subject

Students of Yerevan "Quantum" college and the high school under National Polytechnic University of Armenia (NPUA) have visited VivaCell-MTS Headquarters. Specialists of the Company, that has maintained leading positions in the telecommunication sphere for nearly 12 years, have held a master class for students of the ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) pilot educational project. The students had the opportunity to strengthen the acquired theoretical knowledge with practical skills. Topics related to radio networks and interconnection subsystems were thoroughly covered by the employee of the Technical Department leading the master class. In the course of discussions and Q&A session, the students gained a deeper understanding of the topics introduced by the "Basics of Telecommunication" subject last semester.

VivaCell-MTS specialists have recently held a similar master class for students of Gyumri "Photon" college on the territories of two solar base stations located near the Yerevan-Gyumri section of the interstate highway. The students of Vanadzor Mathematics and Natural Sciences School have had the opportunity to visit one of the base-transceiver stations in Lori region.

"The most reliable and stable path to success is knowledge. Coupled with years of experience, it becomes a valuable asset. In this respect, VivaCell-MTS has considerable assets as the long-time leader in Armenia's telecommunication sphere: years of experience fueled by the continuous learning and professional development of its employees. As a responsible company, we do not limit ourselves to the goal of maintaining the leading positions in the market. We also aspire to support the youth to unveil its potential," said VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph Yirikian.

According to the four-partite memorandum, signed between the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Synopsys Armenia, VivaCell-MTS and Unicom companies, the "Basics of Communication" subject has been included in the curricula of Gyumri "Photon", Yerevan "Quantum" colleges, physics and mathematics school after Artashes Shahinyan, mathematics and natural sciences school in Vanadzor, and of the high school under NPUA in Yerevan.

PACE adopts resolution that could pave the way for Agramunt's dismissal



The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has adopted a resolution that could pave the way for dismissal of its President Pedro Agramunt.

During its sitting on June 27 the Assembly voted 154 to 30 (with 13 abstentions) to adopt a resolution authored by Liliane Maury Pasquier of Switzerland on Recognition and implementation of the principle of accountability in the Parliamentary Assembly.

"The members of the Parliamentary Assembly are required to act in compliance with the duties and obligations by which they are bound, in particular ethical rules in force. The Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs considers that this requirement shall be more stringent in respect of the Presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly and other high elective offices. In order to ensure the democratic functioning of the Assembly, the holders of

elective offices, i.e. the Presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly, the vice-presidencies of the Assembly, as well as the chairmanships and vice-chairmanships of committees, shall account for their actions to those who have elected them to those offices," the resolution reads.

"The committee wishes to reiterate the importance of the principle of accountability, which includes a duty of transparency and an obligation to account for one's acts, without which the Assembly cannot have any confidence in those it has elected to office," the document says.

The resolution outlines the procedure for dismissing the President and Vice-Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly.

Under the document, "the Assembly may terminate the functions of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly or a Vice-President of the Assembly on the ground that he or she no longer enjoys the confidence of the Assembly, be it that he or she no longer fulfills the conditions required for the exercise of that office or is guilty of serious misconduct by seriously or repeatedly violating the provisions of the Code of Conduct for members of the Parliamentary Assembly."

According to the resolution, A President of the Parliamentary Assembly who has been dismissed may not rely on the provisions of Rule 20.3. He or she shall not be eligible for re-election to the office of President or for election to the offices of Vice-President of the Assembly, or of chairperson or vice-chairperson of a committee.

The issue of PACE President Pedro Agramunt's dismissal has been widely discussed after his visit to Syria earlier this year.

Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer backs resolution calling for Turkish acknowledgement of Armenian Genocide

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (NY), a decades-long outspoken advocate of justice for the Armenian Genocide, has co-sponsored bipartisan Senate legislation condemning that crime and calling for an end to international complicity in Turkish government denials, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

"All countries should recognize the horrific genocide that occurred 102 years ago to the Armenian people," said Senator Schumer. "It is my sacred duty to speak out against the terrors of the past and against those who cannot speak of it themselves and that's why I am a proud co-sponsor of this Senate resolution. I stand with the worldwide Armenian community in labeling the atrocities against the Armenian people as genocide."

S.Res.136 was introduced by Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) with the bipartisan support of Senators Ted Cruz (R-TX), Ed Markey (D-MA), and Tom Udall (D-NM) earlier this year on April 24th, the international day of commemoration of the Ottoman Turkish Government's murder of over 1.5 million Armenians from 1915-1923. The resolution calls on the President to "work toward an equitable, constructive, stable, and durable Armenian-Turkish relationship that includes the full acknowledgment by the Government of the Republic of Turkey of the facts about the Armenian Genocide." It goes on to urge that "the foreign policy of the United States reflects appropriate understanding and sensitivity concerning issues related to human rights, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide documented in the United States record relating to the Armenian Genocide."

Other cosponsors of the measure include Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Cory Gardner (R-CO), Gary Peters (D-MI), Jack Reed (D-RI), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).



"Since before he joined Congress, during his tenure representing Brooklyn as a U.S. Representative, while a rank and file Senator from New York, and now as Minority Leader of the world's greatest deliberative body, Chuck Schumer has remained true to his principles – consistently commemorating the Armenian Genocide, relentlessly seeking official American remembrance of this atrocity, and openly challenging Turkey's efforts to obstruct justice for this crime," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "We join with friends of Armenia and anti-genocide advocates from across New York and around America in thanking Senator Schumer for his support, and in encouraging the Senate leadership to move this measure to a vote."

Each year, Senator Schumer joins with Armenian Americans from across the East Coast in commemorating the Armenian Genocide at a rally in Times Square.

Federal Australia-Armenia Parliamentary Group launches at Parliament House in Canberra

The official launch of an Inter-Parliamentary Union called the Australia-Armenia Parliamentary Group took place on June 13th at Parliament House, with representatives of the Armenian-Australian community organisations, religious leaders and a number of high-profile parliamentarians in attendance, representing all political parties.

The Australia-Armenia Parliamentary Group, which is part of the international Inter-Parliamentary Union, is an initiative of the Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU) and key Federal politicians, including Trent Zimmerman MP – Member for North Sydney (who is Chair of the Parliamentary Group) and the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP – Member for Hunter, Shadow Minister for Agriculture (Co-Chair).

The Inter-Parliamentary Union Australia-Armenia Parliamentary Group aims, among other things, to foster closer political, cultural, trade and educational relations between Australia and Armenia, in particular, through the respective Parliaments.

The official launch showcased Armenian culture, trade, technology and historical ties between Armenia and Australia, while Armenian wine and brandy was served to the guests. The leaders of the Parliamentary Group, as well as Australia's Treasurer, Scott Morrison stressed the significance and importance of the Parliamentary Group when addressing the attendees.

Zimmerman said: "I hope that we do strengthen relations between the two countries, particularly at a parliamentary level. Armenia is a country with an extraordinary history that has been home of the world's most resilient people. Armenia is a nation from which Australia can learn a great deal."

Vache Kahramanian, Managing Director of ANC-AU, in welcoming the guests to the special occasion noted: "Last year, Armenia and Australia celebrated 25 years of formal diplomatic relations. But the history between our two countries and the bond between our two countries can probably be best summarised by a photo which is front of us [referring to the reproductions of the covers of the book "Armenia, Australia and the Great War" by Vicken Babkenian and Professor Peter Stanley] of Armenian Genocide orphans saluting the Australian flag. It is a vote thanks for what Australians did to save the victims of the Armenian Genocide."

New South Wales Premier, Gladys Berejiklian also addressed the event and its attendees through a recorded video message. Berejiklian expressed her pride and congratulated Inter-Parliamentary Union Australia-Armenia Parliamentary Group members on the launch.

The Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP, in giving his vote of thanks and proposing a toast to the official launch as Co-Chair of the Group, highlighted the importance of the



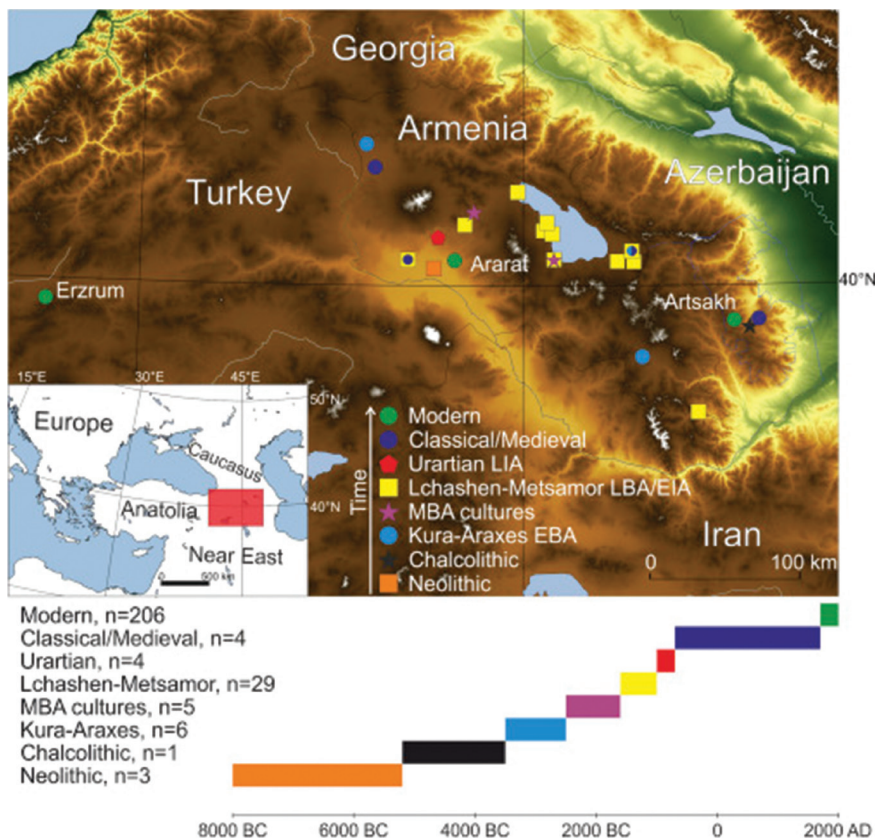
more formal and official "parliament-to-parliament" relations created by the establishment of such an Inter-Parliamentary Union Country Group.

Many of the nearly 50 current members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Australia-Armenia Parliamentary Group were present at the official launch, including The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP (Federal Member for Grayndler, Shadow Minister for Transport & Infrastructure, Shadow Minister for Cities), The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP (Member for Bradfield, Minister for Urban Infrastructure), Senator Sam Dastyari (NSW), Jason Falinski MP (Member for Mackellar), Tim Hammond MP (Member for Perth, Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs), Cathy McGowan MP (Member for Indi), Tim Wilson MP (Member for Goldstein), Susan Templeman MP (Member for Macquarie), Senator Claire Moore (QLD), Senator Brian Burston (NSW), Senator The Hon. Don Farrell (South Australia – Deputy Opposition Leader in the Senate), Jane Prentice MP (Member for Ryna, Assistant Minister for Disability Services), Andrew Wallace MP (Member for Fisher), Mike Freeland MP (Member for Macarthur), Julian Leeser MP (Member for Berowra), as well as Mr Kaylar Michaelian (Representative to Australia for the Republic of Artsakh), and Mrs Hanriet Andriasian (Advisor to the Minister for the Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia).

Commenting on the launch of the Parliamentary Group Vache Kahramanian, Managing Director of ANC-AU said: "The Inter-Parliamentary Union Australia-Armenia Parliamentary Group is a major step towards the future of vital and important connections between Armenia and Australia, and strengthens our already present ties with the countries. It is a positive step towards closer political, cultural, trade and educational relations between the two countries."

He added: "The Armenian National Committee of Australia looks forward to working closely with the Inter-Parliamentary Union Australia-Armenia Parliamentary Group to help further strengthen those important ties between Australia and Armenia."

Study reveals 8,000 years of genetic continuity in Armenia and Artsakh



The South Caucasus, situated between the Black and Caspian Seas, geographically links Europe with the Near East and has served as a crossroad for human migrations for many millennia. However, ancient mitochondrial DNA evidence finds no upheaval over the last 8,000 years.

A new study published in the *Current Biology* sheds light on maternal genetic history of the South Caucasus region. Scholars have analyzed the complete mitochondrial genomes of 52 ancient skeletons from present-day Armenia and Artsakh spanning 7,800 years and combined this dataset with 206 mitochondrial genomes of modern Armenians.

Researchers have also included previously published data of seven neighboring populations. Coalescence-based analyses suggest that the population size in this region rapidly increased after the Last Glacial Maximum ca. 18 kya. The lowest genetic distance in this dataset is between modern Armenians and the ancient individuals, as also reflected in both network analyses and discriminant analysis of principal components.

In the study scholars present 206 mitochondrial genome sequences from three sub-populations of modern Armenians and 44

mtDNA genomes from ancient individuals excavated in Armenia and Artsakh. The calibrated radiocarbon dates of the ancient samples ranged between 300 and 7,811 years BP, with the majority being Bronze Age individuals, 3,000 to 4,000 years old.

Using genetic data of modern Armenians, researchers suggest that the Armenian gene pool was formed as a result of admixture events happening ca. 4,500 years BP. “Our ancient DNA (aDNA) data suggest that at least the maternal gene pool in the South

Caucasus has been very stable and was largely formed before these events. A scenario of genetic continuity is supported by two previous studies that included low-coverage genomic data from a few ancient individuals from the South Caucasus: Allentoft et al. observed genetic similarities between Bronze Age individuals (ca. 3,500 years BP) and modern Armenians [26], and Lazaridis et al. showed similarity between Chalcolithic (ca. 6,000 years BP) and Bronze Age (ca. 3,500 years BP) individuals excavated in Armenia [7],” scholars say.

The results have implications for how the known cultural shifts in the South Caucasus are interpreted. It appears that during the last eight millennia, there were no major genetic turnovers in the female gene pool in the South Caucasus, despite multiple well-documented cultural changes in the region. This is in contrast to the dramatic shifts of mtDNA lineages occurring in Central Europe during the same time period, which suggests either a different mode of cultural change in the two regions or that the genetic turnovers simply occurred later in Europe compared to the South Caucasus. More data from earlier Mesolithic cultures in the South Caucasus are needed to clarify this.

Due to the lack of available ancient and modern mtDNA genomes from other regions of the South Caucasus, the scholars used Armenians as a representative group of the region. Considering the low and in many cases non-significant genetic differences observed between populations of the South Caucasus, one would expect to observe a somewhat similar pattern of matrilineal genetic continuity in other parts of this region, i.e., Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenian Highland (partially modern day Eastern Turkey and North-West Iran).



47 films to be vying for awards at 14th Golden Apricot Film Festival in Yerevan

Forty-seven films will be vying for honors in three main competition sections of the Golden Apricot 14th International Film Festival in Yerevan.

The films have been chosen from a total of 1,100 submissions from 96 countries.

Twelve films will compete in the International Feature Competition, 16 and 19 films will be presented in the International Documentary Competition and Armenian Panorama National Competition respectively.

The Golden Apricot 14th International Film Festival will be held in Yerevan from 9th to 16th of July.



IDeA supports restoration of Upper Mosque in Shushi

Within the framework of cooperation between the Initiatives for Development of Armenia (IDeA) Foundation, the government of the Republic of Artsakh and Revival of Oriental Historical Heritage Foundation, the restoration program of Gohar Agha (Upper Juma) Mosque is already underway.

The restoration program of Gohar Agha (Upper Juma) Mosque in Shushi kicked off in 2015 when a donor of the IDeA Foundation, entrepreneur Kairat Boranbaev expressed a wish on visit to Armenia and Artsakh to support and have his input in the restoration of the Mosque and made

a substantial donation to this end.

Within the framework of the restoration program, the IDeA Foundation acts as a platform between the government of the Republic of Artsakh, the Revival of Oriental Historical Heritage Foundation and the donor.

The program aims to fundamentally restore the Gohar Agha Mosque by securing its original appearance, renovating the adjacent area and carrying out works aimed at capital strengthening of the madrasa building located close to the Mosque in order to prevent collapse of the building in the future. The program will enable to

preserve this architectural monument and use it as a cultural and tourist destination in the future. Currently, construction works are underway in the territory of the Upper Mosque. Earlier geological and geodesic studies were completed, archaeological excavations were conducted, projecting works were brought to an end and preliminary calculations were made.

“Shushi is one of the unique places in Artsakh and the Upper Mosque forms an integral part of the ancient city’s history and culture. We are happy to see that one of our donors has expressed a wish to make a donation for the restoration of this unique monument. The program will not only enable to present the historical and cultural heritage of the region and Shushi, but also establish a new hub on Artsakh’s touristic map,” said Suren Amirbekyan, Manager of Artsakh Development Program at the IDeA Foundation.

Since the Upper Mosque represents the history and culture of Iran, Part Saman Jahan architectural firm and specialists from the Islamic Republic of Iran have been engaged in the monument’s restoration works. ICOMOS Armenia (International Council on Monuments and Sites of Armenia), the partner of the program, conducted an examination to make sure the design works comply with international standards.

Restoration works in the territory of the Upper Mosque in Shushi are scheduled to be completed by fall, 2018.



Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

Tension is high. The Powers that Be in your career life are definitely in charge. Progress can be made only through persuasion and even that may not help. Don't succumb

to anger or you will have lost your case entirely. You could be tempted to displace your anger onto others. You know that is not fair or productive. Peel yourself off the wall and wait for a better moment.



Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

During this period you may be struggling with two images of relatedness. One is the nurturing, mothering type and the other is more sexual and/or intellectual. Or this might be symbolized by home/family versus partners. Somehow it is a

challenge for us to be conscious of both at the same time. Set aside decisions on this until you find a "right" solution.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

Your mind is restless and easily bored this week, so find a variety of interesting things to read. You are feeling independent and you may want more alone time than is the norm. Sometimes we just need to

see different surroundings. If you have these symptoms, try a brief weekend trip. Ground your energy by exercising your body to avoid the jitters.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

Use extreme caution when dealing with any situation that is potentially volatile. Do not use force to accomplish your means now or it will be used against you. Be wary of parking places that might change charac-

ter after dark. The energy in your field is best used in clean and honest competition, whether with yourself or someone else.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

It's important that you be aware that your thinking is not as objective as you believe. Listen when others tell you their attitudes and opinions. You do not have to adopt them, but don't reject what they say out of hand. Try to think carefully before

assuming you are the only one who knows the right answers.



Virgo (August 22–September 22)

You want answers and you may insist on having them right now, in spite of the fact that you are irritating the person who has the answer. Alternatively, you may be brooding over a child or a lover. Be aware that

aspects are causing this to happen and try to let go.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

You may be feeling at odds with yourself or others in your daily life. Don't rush yourself into action here. Perhaps it is better if you discuss this issue with a trusted person. You

may need an alternative perspective. Remain conservative with your money. You are tempted to overspend.



Scorpio

(October 23–November 21)

You could become embroiled in a battle of wills over who is right. In order to steer clear of a war, remain aware that the subject matter is merely what you think, not who you

are. You have the controlling word in any battle. Use it ethically and don't blow away your opponent. Drive Carefully.



Sagittarius

(November 22–December 20)

This is not your best week. Matters of timing and forward motion have interference that you cannot control. You are pressured to "hurry

up and wait". These things happen every now and then in life. It is easier to calm yourself and accept the situation.



Capricorn

(December 21–January 19)

You may be so bent on accomplishing something or getting your needs met that you roll over everyone around you. This is a sample of Pluto's power in your sign. Con-

centrate on the issues at hand and do not set up a battleground over egos or no one will win. You have a hot topic there. It may be more workable later when you are less identified with what you think.



Aquarius

(January 20–February 17)

You may feel trapped by a variety of circumstances over which you have no control. At times like these, we can only move forward in baby

steps. You are not at fault here. Avoid the blame game, even if you are only talking to yourself. How were you supposed to know how things would develop?



Pisces (February 18–March 19)

It is possible that you are not feeling well this week. You may be subject to allergy symptoms that keep you subdued. Your self-talk is likely to be on the dark side and mainly due to your fears for the future. The In-

ner Critic is not in touch with the whole truth even though it feels real enough. It mainly has a loud voice which you can choose to ignore.

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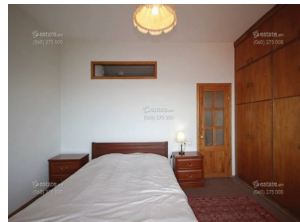
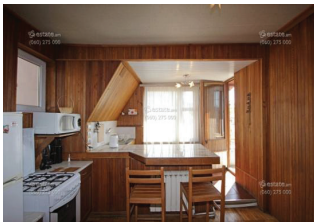
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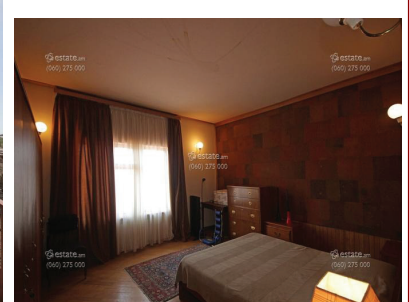
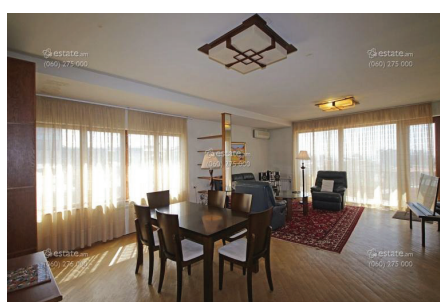
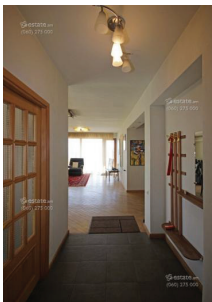
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