

## Dear Readers and Viewers



As this year gently comes to a close, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for your trust, your time, and your continued engagement with Noyan Tapan Highlights.

Your loyalty and support inspire us every day — and mean more to us than words can fully express.

May this holiday season fill your homes with warmth, peace, and hope, and may the New Year bring new dreams, fresh beginnings, and moments that truly matter.

Exciting changes are coming!

With the arrival of the New Year, Noyan Tapan Highlights is opening a bright and

colorful new chapter. ***Beginning January 2026, our printed version will transition to a PDF format.***

This decision allows us to deliver ***full-color pages, faster access, and greater flexibility***, while continuing to provide the same trusted journalism and in-depth content you value — now in a more convenient and accessible digital form.

We are also introducing exclusive content you won't find anywhere else — ***bringing Noyan Tapan TV debates and interviews straight to our readers in an exclusive text format.***

In addition, starting January 2026,

we are launching a brand-new section titled ***"Diplomats' Opinion", featuring interviews and insights from diplomats serving in Armenia.***

***As part of these updates, our subscription policy will be as follows:***

***Annual PDF subscription — 10,000 AMD***

***Thank you for your trust, loyalty, and continued readership.***

***Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!***

***With sincere appreciation,  
The Noyan Tapan Team***

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## Armenia, UK discuss expansion of security and defense cooperation



Secretary of the Security Council of

Armenia, Armen Grigoryan, met with UK Minister of State for Defense Vernon Coaker during his visit to London.

In a statement on social media, Grigoryan said he discussed with Coaker the expansion of cooperation in the fields of security and defense, emphasizing the importance of exchanging defense attachés and conducting high-level reciprocal visits in the future.

"We also touched upon the significance of continuously deepening economic cooperation and business ties," Secretary Grigoryan added.

The officials also discussed the peace in the South Caucasus established after the U.S.-brokered Armenian-Azerbaijani peace summit on August 8 in Washington, D.C., as well as emerging broad economic opportunities.

## Georgian Defense Ministry delegation visits Armenia

Within the framework of the cooperation program between the Ministries of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and Georgia, representatives of the Strategic Communications and Public Relations Department of Georgia's Ministry of Defense paid a visit to the Armenian Ministry of Defense on December 15–16.

On December 16, the Georgian delegation was received at the administrative complex of the Armenian Ministry of Defense by the press secretary of the Armenian defense minister.

During the meeting, the sides discussed issues related to the further expansion of bilateral cooperation and interaction, as well as opportunities for exchanging experience in the fields of public relations and public awareness. Both parties emphasized the importance of deepening professional ties and



implementing joint programs.

As part of the visit, the Georgian delegation also visited the Vazgen Sargsyan Military Academy of the Ministry of

Defense of Armenia, where they toured the facilities and familiarized themselves with the academy's educational programs and classrooms.

## Armenia important for the EU, says Romanian Foreign Minister

There are broad opportunities for expanding cooperation with Armenia aimed at strengthening the country's stability and vitality, Romanian Foreign Minister Oana-Silvia Țoiu said in a post on X.

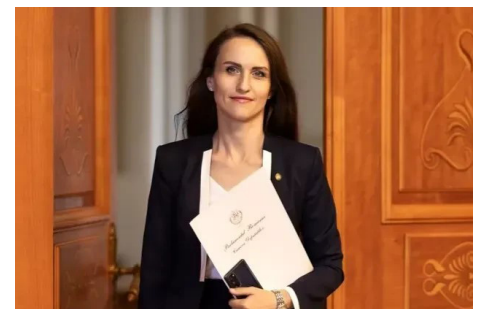
She noted that on the sidelines of the EU Foreign Ministers' Council meeting, she held a detailed exchange of views with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, as well as with other EU foreign ministers.

The Romanian Foreign Minister emphasized that Armenia is important for the European Union.

"There are broad opportunities for expanding cooperation to strengthen Armenia's stability and vitality. We expressed support for all efforts aimed at establishing sustainable peace and prosperity in the South Caucasus," Țoiu said.

She added that at the bilateral level,

Romania will continue working to further develop relations with Armenia.



## Armenian PM says has asked Russia to fast-track restoration of key railway sections



Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan has asked Russia to urgently engage in the full restoration of several strategic railway sections, including the line from Yeraskh to the border with Nakhijevan and the Akhuryk section to the border with Turkey.

Pashinyan made the remarks at a

briefing with journalists following a Cabinet meeting.

Commenting on a question regarding Russia's possible involvement in the TRIPP project, the Prime Minister stressed that the declaration clearly defines the initiative as a bilateral Armenia–United States project.

“The declaration explicitly states that this is an Armenia–United States bilateral project, and the involvement of third countries can only be discussed within a bilateral framework. This is clearly formulated,” Pashinyan said.

He added that he did not consider it appropriate to provide interpretations beyond this framework.

At the same time, the Prime Minister noted that he had personally asked Russia's partners to urgently address the complete restoration of the railway infrastructure, particularly the Yeraskh–Nakhijevan border section and the Akhuryk–Turkey border section.

Pashinyan also indicated that he plans to raise the issue of restoring the Ijevan–Gazakh railway section in the near future, emphasizing that this route also needs to be rehabilitated as quickly as possible.

The Prime Minister expressed hope that Russia's partners would implement the request at the maximum possible speed.

## Armenia, NATO review partnership and regional security issues

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received NATO Deputy Secretary General Radmila Šekerinska on Thursday, discussing the development of Armenia–NATO partnership and cooperation.

During the meeting, Prime Minister Pashinyan underlined that Armenia attaches importance to cooperation with international partners, including NATO, in advancing the regional agenda of security and stability.

For her part, the NATO Deputy Secretary General highly appreciated the partnership with Armenia and thanked the Prime Minister for previously receiving ambassadors accredited to NATO, noting the constructive and productive nature of those discussions.

The interlocutors also referred to the Washington Declaration signed between Armenia and Azerbaijan on August 8, as well as the developments that followed.



Views were exchanged on steps aimed at unblocking regional communications, with particular attention to the TRIPP initiative and the “Crossroads of Peace” project.

A number of other issues of mutual interest were also discussed during the meeting.

## Armenia, Luxembourg establish strategic partnership



On December 16, in Luxembourg, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan had a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Grand Duchy of Luxembourg Xavier Bettel.

The interlocutors reaffirmed the high level of political dialogue between Armenia and Luxembourg, emphasizing that it is developing on the basis of mutual trust, shared values, and common interests. Both sides underlined that relations between Armenia and Luxembourg are of a strategic nature, as reflected in the joint programs being implemented, as well as in Luxembourg's support for the development of Armenia's democracy and resilience.

Issues on the Armenia-EU partnership were touched upon, in particular the effective use of mechanisms aimed at implementing the new, more ambitious

strategic agenda.

An agreement was reached to continue developing cooperation in various formats.

Views were also exchanged on regional developments.

Ararat Mirzoyan and Xavier Bettel signed the [Joint Declaration](#) on a Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Armenia and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

By establishing a strategic partnership, the Republic of Armenia and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg have reaffirmed their determination to deepen their relations in the areas of politics, economy, defense, security, justice, culture, education, environment, and explore their expansion to new areas.

Armenia and Luxembourg reaffirm the fundamental values underlying their partnership, including the commitment

to strengthen democracy and the rule of law, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the promotion of multilateralism and a rules-based international order.

The two countries reaffirm Armenia's aspiration to strengthen its political, economic, security, cultural and social ties with the European Union and the broader community of democratic states.

Highlighting the importance of deepening Armenia-EU partnership, Armenia and Luxembourg will encourage the establishment of regular bilateral thematic consultations focusing on supporting Armenia's approximation with EU standards, advancing the full and effective implementation of the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and Strategic Agenda for the Armenia-EU Partnership, enhancing sovereignty and resilience, strengthening democratic institutions and safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Armenia and Luxembourg reaffirm their commitment to develop and expand, whenever possible, economic and trade relations, prioritizing sectors of mutual interest. Recognizing the multifaceted challenges faced by Armenia, being a landlocked country with limited access to global trade markets, the Parties will enhance cooperation to promote regional and international trade and transport connectivity, including through support to each other's projects, such as Armenia's "Crossroads of Peace" initiative.

## Ex-servicemember's claims about 'incursion attempt' are fake news, says defense ministry

The Armenian Defense Ministry has denied a claim made by a former servicemember regarding an "incursion attempt" that allegedly occurred on 7-8 December in the direction of a military base in Meghri, Syunik province. The claim was made by former Armenian servicemember and reserve colonel Naira Gevorgyan, who also stated in an interview that Armenian troops were "ordered not to open fire" during the alleged "incursion attempt".

Defense Ministry spokesperson Aram

Torosyan denied the claim and described it as an "information attack" in the context of hybrid threats.

"The statement made by an individual who, to put it mildly, has 'distinguished herself' through an inglorious record of service in the armed forces is not only disinformation, but also yet another unsuccessful and failed attempt at an information attack directed against the Republic of Armenia, its state institutions, and the military.

We call on our media partners to refrain from republishing such fabrications and not to become involved in the reprehensible process of creating hybrid threats around the Republic of Armenia.

At the same time, we believe that the relevant authorities will also examine this statement and consider the possibility of giving it a legal assessment," Torosyan said.

## Armenia–France strategic defense consultations held in Paris

Strategic defense consultations between Armenia and France took place in Paris on December 15–16, with the Armenian delegation led by Levon Ayvazyan, Head of the Defense Policy and International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia.

During the consultations, Levon Ayvazyan met with Guillaume Ollagnier, the newly appointed Director of International Relations and Strategy at the French Ministry of the Armed Forces. This was followed by expanded-format discussions with the participation of the delegations,



led by Deputy Director, Lieutenant General Éric Peltier.

The sides reviewed the activities carried out in 2025 within the framework of bilateral cooperation and outlined plans

for the coming year. Both parties emphasized the importance of giving bilateral defense cooperation a strategic substance and an institutional character.

As a result of the consultations, the Armenia–France Defense Cooperation Program for 2026 was signed. The document includes several dozen activities covering nearly all areas of the functioning and development of the armed forces.

It was also agreed that the next round of strategic defense consultations will be held in Yerevan.

## UK supports Armenia's security and economic development – Ambassador delivers New Year message in Armenian

UK Ambassador to Armenia Alexandra Cole has released a congratulatory video message on the occasion of the New Year.

In the message, the ambassador reaffirmed the United Kingdom's support for Armenia's security and economic development. The video was published by the British Embassy in the Republic of Armenia.

"Happy New Year. At this time of year, we usually take a moment to reflect on what we have achieved and what we would like to continue together in the year ahead," the Ambassador noted.

She noted that in 2025, Armenia and the United Kingdom took an important step by agreeing to raise the relationship to the level of a Strategic Partnership.

"We also opened the UK Defence Section in Yerevan and welcomed ministerial visits, helping us deepen our cooperation.

We continue to support Armenia's security, economic development and capacity-building including through education, business, cybersecurity and human rights. The UK is working with the Armenian Government to help prepare for key moments next year, including the European Political

Community meeting, parliamentary elections and COP17," said Alexandra Cole in her video message.

According to the ambassador, 2026 will be a very busy year, and the UK stands ready to work with Armenia in support of peace, stability and prosperity.

"I wish you peaceful and joyful holidays and a New Year full of success," concluded the UK ambassador.

On August 26 of this year, Armenia and the UK agreed to elevate their relations to the level of a Strategic Partnership.

## Russia says it is ready to discuss possible participation in Armenia's TRIPP project

A Russian official said that Moscow is ready to discuss with Armenia its possible participation in the TRIPP project.

Mikhail Kalugin, director of the 4th CIS Department at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that while the details of the "Armenian-American project have yet to be studied, Russia is ready to consult with its Armenian partners to discuss the parameters of the initiative, as well as Russia's possible participation", according to the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti.

He added that "there are sufficient grounds for Russian participation" in the project.

"Our company, South Caucasian

Railways, which is a subsidiary of Russian Railways, holds the management concession for Armenia's railway network. The region uses Russian railway lines," the official said.

According to the Russian official, the Trump Route would mostly pass through territory that falls under the area of responsibility of Russian border guards.

"We must also take into account Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union. It is obvious that our partners cannot do without Russia," the Russian Foreign Ministry official said.

The Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) is a

connectivity project in Armenia envisaged under the U.S.-brokered Armenian-Azerbaijani joint declaration signed in Washington, D.C. The project is expected to unlock strategic economic opportunities, create long-term benefits by promoting infrastructure investment, and enhance regional connectivity. TRIPP is part of the Crossroads of Peace project, and an Armenian-American joint enterprise is expected to develop the route.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has said that construction of the route is expected to begin in the second half of 2026, while the parameters and details are to be finalized by the end of 2025.

## Armenia imports 1,300 tons of Azerbaijani gasoline via Georgia



A shipment of Azerbaijani-origin A95 gasoline has crossed the Armenia–Georgia border at the Ayrum railway station, marking a significant development in regional trade, Armenian Economy Minister Gevorg Papoyan announced.

According to the minister, 22 railway wagons carrying a total of 1,300 tons of A95 gasoline entered Armenia via the Azerbaijan–Georgia–Armenia railway

route.

Papoyan noted in a Facebook post that this delivery is likely the first trade and economic transaction between Armenia and Azerbaijan not only since the establishment of peace between the two countries, but also since Armenia gained independence.

The import of petroleum products from Azerbaijan to Armenia is expected to contribute to a reduction in fuel prices by diversifying supply sources and strengthening competition in the market, MegaTrade told Armenpress.

According to the company, the imports will be carried out within the framework of agreements reached between the relevant authorities of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, in line with established procedures.

MegaTrade said the initiative represents the launch of an alternative supply route aimed at diversifying the fuel market, enhancing competition, and offering consumers more affordable prices, while fully complying with quality and safety requirements.

The imported petroleum products will be sold through the RanOil network of gas stations. The company noted that this is expected to promote more transparent pricing in the sector and contribute to lower fuel prices.

MegaTrade also emphasized the importance of stable and predictable supplies, expressing confidence that the involvement of new sources will help balance the fuel market and strengthen Armenia's energy and economic resilience.

## Armenia, Germany sign memorandum of cooperation in civil aviation security

The Aviation Accident and Serious Incident Investigation Division of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia and the Federal Bureau of Aircraft Accident Investigation (BFU) of the Federal Republic of Germany have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the investigation of aviation accidents and incidents.

According to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of



Armenia, the goal of the cooperation is to enhance the level of civil aviation safety and prevent aviation accidents.

Under the memorandum, the Federal

Bureau of Aircraft Accident Investigation of Germany, if necessary and within its capabilities, will provide support and assistance to Armenia in the use of equipment required for aviation investigations, the decoding and analysis of flight data and onboard recordings, access to technical laboratory services, as well as professional assistance in areas related to airworthiness, air navigation services, and aerodromes.

## World Bank to support promotion of competition in Armenia

An expanded meeting was held under the leadership of Armenian Minister of Finance Vahe Hovhannisyan with the World Bank's Development Policy Operation (DPO) preparatory mission team and representatives of state government bodies, the Ministry of Finance said in a statement.

According to the statement, the meeting focused on discussing the reforms,

priorities, expected outcomes, and key implementation steps within the framework of developing a new DPO program for Armenia.

The new program aims to promote competition, improve the investment environment, ensure economic growth, and support the implementation of reforms aimed at job creation.

In this context, Minister Hovhannisyan

emphasized the importance of conducting in-depth and comprehensive studies.



## Armenia's Central Bank cuts refinancing rate to 6.50%



At its meeting on December 16, the Board of the Central Bank of Armenia decided to decrease the key policy rate (refinancing rate) by 25 basis points, setting it at 6.50%.

Annual CPI inflation decreased in Q4 2025, standing at 3.1% in November. Meanwhile, core inflation edged up, standing at 3.8% Y-o-Y in November.

In Q4 2025, risks of a further slowdown in demand conditions globally and in Armenia's key partner economies persist, while inflationary pressures in the US have intensified. Consumption in the US continues to drive relatively high economic growth and an elevated inflationary environment. However, risks of a correction in asset prices and labor market weakening could negatively impact the medium-term growth outlook. Uncertainty regarding the medium-term implications of US fiscal policy, including the impact of rising public debt on long-term interest rates, persists. At the same time, in Armenia's other trading partner economies, risks of weakening growth and demand conditions persist, even as

some uptick has been observed in recent months.

According to the Central Bank, oil prices, and in recent months food prices as well, have declined. However, geopolitical uncertainty and tensions in international trade relations remain a key source of global inflation volatility. In this context, considering weakening demand conditions on the one hand and persistent inflationary risks on the other, central banks in major economies would be expected to either maintain or gradually ease their tight monetary stance.

In the fourth quarter of 2025, economic activity in Armenia continued to remain high. Growth continues to be driven by the construction and services sectors as well as the impacts of certain short-term, non-structural growth drivers. External demand for domestic goods and services has remained high in Q3 and Q4. At the same time, uncertainty remains elevated regarding the future outlook for domestic demand. In this context, demand continues to have a neutral impact on inflation, while recent increases in headline and core inflation have been driven by supply-side factors. Wage growth, non-traded sticky price inflation, and inflation expectations continue to stabilize. At the same time, risks for short- and medium-term demand pressures from fiscal policy have weakened.

In the context of current macroeconomic developments, financial markets

in Armenia generally expect the Central Bank of Armenia to gradually lower the refinancing rate over the next twelve months to approximately 6.25%. Amid high uncertainty, the Board discussed, on the one hand, Case A-type scenarios where possible underlying developments would require a higher path for the policy rate relative to current market expectations. This includes scenarios related to risks of a rising US neutral rate in the context of fiscal policies, as well as risks of expanding demand conditions.

On the other hand, the Board also discussed Case B-type scenarios where potential economic developments imply a more rapid and aggressive downward path for the policy rate than what is currently priced in markets. These scenarios include concerns regarding overall concerns about a weakening growth outlook in key trading partner economies, risks of softening domestic demand conditions, as well as a weak demand environment forming and deepening in the economy due to a potential gradual adjustment of real estate prices. Balancing the aforementioned risks in both directions, the Board finds it appropriate to decrease the policy rate in line with market expectations.

The Board resolutely affirms its commitment to adopting the appropriate policy actions and strategy to ensure the price stability objective of 3% inflation in the medium term.

## Armenia expects the UN to consistently support peace efforts in the South Caucasus

Mr. Zhirayr Ananyan, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations, delivered a statement at the UN Security Council Open Debate titled "*Leadership for Peace*", held under the presidency of Slovenia on 15 December 2025.

In his remarks, Mr. Ananyan underscored that unresolved challenges of the past, present threats, and future uncertainties serve as a clear reminder of the

indispensability of multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core. At a time of heightened geopolitical turbulence and alarming polarization, he emphasized that the United Nations is more relevant than ever in leading international efforts to prevent conflicts, strengthen the global peace and security architecture, promote sustainable development, and uphold human rights and human dignity.

Addressing recent regional

developments, the Deputy Permanent Representative stressed that Armenia expects the 10th Secretary-General of the United Nations to consistently support efforts aimed at sustaining and reinforcing peace in the South Caucasus. He underlined that these efforts must be firmly anchored in the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and international law, particularly the principles of sovereign equality and territorial integrity of states.

## Yerevan has taken Iran's vital interests into account regarding Washington Agreements: Armenian Ambassador's interview to Tasnim



**In an interview with Iran's *Tasnim News Agency*, Armenia's Ambassador to Iran speaks about the deepening strategic partnership between Yerevan and Tehran, the latest developments in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process following the Washington agreement, regional transport initiatives, and progress in the normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations.**

**How would you assess bilateral Iran-Armenia relations? What steps have you taken during your mission to further develop these ties?**

Armenia-Iran relations have always been characterized by mutual respect, trust, and a level of good-neighborliness that holds particular value in our region. Our two peoples are united by millennia-old historical ties, which today have evolved into dynamic and mutually beneficial cooperation covering a wide range of fields. It is important to emphasize that these relations are not driven by situational motives, but by a clear strategic vision. And what does this strategic vision entail? As Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Masoud Pezeshkian affirmed in Yerevan this August, it

envisions elevating relations between our countries to a strategic level. I hope that these relations, which are already strategic in substance, will soon acquire a formal legal framework, opening new horizons for cooperation.

For nearly a year now, I have had the great honor and responsibility, as Armenia's Ambassador to friendly Iran, to contribute to the deepening of our bilateral relations. This year was undoubtedly marked by the official visit of the President of Iran to Armenia, the adoption of a joint statement, and the signing of more than a dozen documents covering almost all areas of bilateral cooperation. At the same time, 2025 stood out for active bilateral engagement in the political, economic, and security spheres. Two visits by the Secretary of Armenia's Security Council to Tehran, political consultations at the level of deputy foreign ministers, as well as visits to Armenia by Iran's Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Forces Support, and Justice, testify to a sustained high-level political dialogue.

It was also important to give new impetus to educational and cultural cooperation. This year saw the visit of Armenia's Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports to Iran, during which several important documents were signed. An Armenian corner was opened at the National Library and Archives of Iran, and the highlight of the visit was an exceptional concert by the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra at Persepolis, dedicated to its 100th anniversary. Such initiatives not only strengthen ties between our peoples but also deepen cultural understanding.

The year was also marked by intensified trade, economic, and infrastructure cooperation. During President Pezeshkian's visit to Armenia, a business forum was held, and throughout the year several initiatives were implemented aimed at expanding trade turnover. Although final economic figures for 2025 have not yet been summarized, we already see that trade turnover has maintained its stable growth trend. I am convinced that joint initiatives, including major transport and energy projects, will bring our cooperation to a qualitatively new level in the coming years.

In summary, I can confidently state that Armenia-Iran relations have not only maintained their strong momentum but are also moving forward on a deeper and more strategic foundation. Our work is aimed at transforming these positive trends into long-term, predictable, and mutually beneficial cooperation, creating new opportunities for prosperity for both peoples.

**What is the current state of the peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan?**

It can be confidently stated that extremely important developments have taken place in recent

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months in the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan. As you know, on August 8, 2025, the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan initialed the “Agreement on Peace and the Establishment of Interstate Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan” in Washington. Through this document, the parties reaffirmed their mutual recognition of sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, and political independence, based on the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration. It was also clearly stipulated that the parties have no territorial claims against each other and will not advance any such claims in the future.

On the same day, a joint declaration by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the United States was signed, welcoming the initialing of the peace agreement. In addition, Yerevan and Baku jointly submitted a request to the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office regarding the dissolution of the Minsk Process structures, which has become the highest-level official confirmation of the end of the conflict.

In the context of forming bilateral legal relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, it is important to recall the regulations on the joint activities of the state border delimitation commissions, signed on August 30, 2024. Through this document, the parties committed to be guided by the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration, under which Armenia and Azerbaijan recognized and respected each other’s territorial integrity and the inviolability of existing borders. As a result of the 12th meeting held in Gabala, Azerbaijan, it was agreed to hold the next meeting in Armenia and to proceed with comprehensive border delimitation work starting from the northern section—at the tripoint of the borders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia—and then moving southward, from north to south, up to the Armenia–Azerbaijan border with the Islamic

Republic of Iran.

One of the key areas of the trilateral agreements is the unblocking of regional transport communications, which we will have the opportunity to address separately. However, even today we can state that the meeting of the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the United States in Washington, and the resulting initialing of the peace agreement, have ensured a serious positive shift in the peace agenda, significantly reducing security risks and creating a de facto environment of peace in our region.

In this context, Armenia highly appreciates the active support and efforts of international partners, including friendly Iran, toward the institutionalization of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We remain convinced that the international community will continue to encourage Azerbaijan to demonstrate the necessary political will and take the final step—signing the peace agreement.

### **Transit of goods between Armenia and Azerbaijan through respective territories**

Thus, we can conclude that the “TRIPP Route” project offers Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the entire region a new model of connectivity, reinforced by international support and based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, reciprocity, and jurisdiction. I am confident that its implementation will not only stimulate economic cooperation but also strengthen peace and stability throughout the region.

### **On the normalization process of Armenia–Turkey relations**

Recently, we have indeed witnessed an intensification of Armenia–Turkey contacts. These interactions are taking place at almost all levels, including between the leaders of the two countries, foreign ministers and special envoys, as well as foreign policy and relevant sectoral agencies. Armenia consistently

continues its constructive engagement in the normalization process, aiming to establish diplomatic relations, open the border, and unblock all infrastructures.

This year, another meeting of the special representatives of Armenia and Turkey took place in Yerevan, during which the full implementation of the agreements already reached within the dialogue framework was discussed. These agreements include the operation of the Margara–Alican border crossing, as well as work toward the restoration of the Gyumri–Kars railway and the Armenia–Turkey power transmission line.

From the perspective of regional connectivity, the reopening of the Gyumri–Kars railway is of key importance. Together with the “TRIPP Route” project, it will form an integrated railway network linking the three South Caucasus countries with neighboring regions. I am pleased to note that just days ago, representatives of the relevant institutions of the two countries held the second round of technical discussions on the restoration and operation of this railway, which testifies to the continuity and practical nature of the process.

We are hopeful that the principles for unblocking infrastructure enshrined in the trilateral declaration signed in Washington, along with the swift implementation of the “TRIPP Route” project, will create a favorable environment that will make it possible to reach the next crucial step—the establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey and the full opening of infrastructure.

In conclusion, I can state that significant progress is visible in the process of normalizing relations with Turkey, and if this dynamic is maintained, it will be possible to form a new, more integrated and predictable regional environment, which will be of exceptional importance for both Armenia and the entire region.

## Armenia, UN sign cooperation framework on sustainable development for 2026–2030



Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Mher Grigoryan and United Nations Resident Coordinator in Armenia Françoise Jacob have signed a framework document on bilateral cooperation in the field of sustainable development for

2026–2030, the Armenian government said in a statement.

The signing ceremony was attended by the heads of UN agency representations in Armenia as well as representatives of Armenian state departments.

Deputy Prime Minister Grigoryan emphasized the importance of approving the document and implementing further joint programs within its framework. He underlined that the Government of Armenia remains committed to continuing reforms in the mentioned areas and expressed readiness to pursue this path together with the country's development partners.

Grigoryan noted that the new

cooperation framework fully aligns with the Armenian government's priorities and creates opportunities to combine development policy with Armenia's peace agenda.

UN Resident Coordinator Françoise Jacob presented the main content of the document and outlined the scope of cooperation. She stated that the signing takes place at a crucial stage for Armenia's development, stressing that the shared goal is to serve the people of Armenia, particularly the most vulnerable.

Jacob added that 2026 is expected to be a people-centered year, marked by developments aimed at strengthening trust inclusiveness and social cohesion.

## Prime Minister meets tech, science and education representatives

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held an informal meeting with representatives of the technology, science and education sectors.

During the meeting, the participants discussed a wide range of issues related to Armenia's development, economic promotion, investment opportunities, progress in the capital market, the development of human potential and other issues.

The Prime Minister also touched upon the Government of the Republic of



Armenia's programs and tools in the fields of technology, education and science. He answered participants' questions. A number of proposals were put forward in the mentioned areas, which will be discussed within the Government.

Pashinyan suggested involving representatives of private sector who have put forward initiatives in the working discussions.

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## Ambassador Mkrtchyan briefs Greek youth on Armenia's 2025 foreign policy achievements



Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Greece Tigran Mkrtchyan met with representatives of a number of reputable youth and civil society organizations operating in Greece and delivered a lecture, the Embassy of Armenia in Greece said in a statement.

According to the statement, during the meeting Ambassador Mkrtchyan summarized Armenia's foreign policy achievements in 2025, with particular attention to progress recorded in three key areas.

First, he presented the documents signed in Washington in August, including the Washington Declaration. He referred to the "Trump Route for Peace and Prosperity" in the context of the "Crossroads of Peace" project, its legal consolidation and support by the United States. The prospects for establishing peace with Azerbaijan and the resulting opportunities for regional development were also discussed.

Ambassador Mkrtchyan also referred to the strategic partnership document approved between Armenia and the United States in January 2025, noting that the institutional nature of the strategic relationship has been reaffirmed by the new US administration, both by the US President and through bilateral documents signed in Washington.

The unprecedented progress in relations with the European Union was presented in detail as well. The most

important component was the document on the strategic agenda of the Armenia-EU partnership signed in Brussels in December. The multifaceted cooperation with the EU, based on common values and mutual interests, was highlighted.

In addition, the ambassador touched upon multi-sectoral cooperation between Armenia and Greece, the process of normalizing relations between Armenia and Turkey, Armenia-Russia relations, and Armenia-Iran relations, and answered questions from those present.

More than fifty representatives of the Student Association for International Affairs (SAFIA), the Association for International and European Affairs (ODETH), JEF Greece, EU Youth Hub, Synergia Institute for Public Policy, Debate House youth organization, and the Greek National Youth Council attended the meeting.

## Karekin II decrees removal of dissenting clerics from Supreme Spiritual Council

Catholicos Karekin II has decreed the removal of three senior clergymen from the Supreme Spiritual Council, the advisory body of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The decision was announced by Priest Isaiah Artenyan, head of the Information Center of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

The three clergymen—Archbishop Abraham Mkrtchyan, Prelate of the Diocese of Vayots Dzor; Archbishop Vazgen Mirzakhanyan, Prelate of the Diocese of the Baltic Countries; and Bishop Gevorg Saroyan, Prelate of the Diocese of Masyatsothn—were among the ten clergymen who called for Karekin II's resignation.

They will be replaced on the council by Bishop Makar Hakobyan, Prelate of the Diocese of Syunik; Bishop Kirakos



Davtyan, Prelate of the Diocese of Georgia; and Bishop Vahan Hovhannisyan, Director of the Karekin I Educational Center of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

Earlier, ten senior clergymen of the Armenian Apostolic Church issued a statement calling on followers to gather at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin—the

Church's headquarters in the city of Vagharshapat—on Thursday and demand the resignation of Catholicos Karekin II, who has faced accusations of holding office illegitimately. The Catholicos has denied wrongdoing.

The clergymen submitted their letter calling for Karekin II's resignation to the Church headquarters, where they were met by other clergymen and supporters of Karekin II. Armenian police [warned](#) against any attempts to escalate the situation and deployed a significant presence to ensure order and safety.

In a joint statement, the ten clergymen accused Karekin II of a "unilateral, arbitrary, and flawed course of governance" of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

## Fundraising launched for reconstruction of Spandaryan Canal



The 2025 fundraising campaign of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund has now been successfully launched. Representatives of Armenia's financial, banking and business communities are also joining this patriotic initiative.

The campaign aims to support the reconstruction of the Spandaryan Canal, as a result of which the settlements of Sarnakunq, Ishkhanasar, Tsghuk, Spandaryan, Angeghakot and Shaki will have access to irrigation water. The Spandaryan Canal in the Syunik province begins at an altitude of 2,280 metres. It is currently up to 70% damaged, leaving several settlements without irrigation water. Reconstruction will enable the effective irrigation of 2,800 hectares of land, and 730 families (4,320 residents) will become direct beneficiaries. The project will also contribute to water security, improved food security, as well as economic stability and climate resilience.

"When we restore this canal with its internal networks, which are very important, we should be able to irrigate around 3,000 hectares of additional land. A huge leap should take place in agriculture. This is a programme of great importance for the restoration of agriculture in Syunik, and thousands of people should be able to benefit from it. This is a programme of economic and strategic importance, and business leaders understand its value. We are currently working with French specialists and hope that, in the end, we will have not only water, but also a complete programme — new developments and a new model of agriculture," said Petros Terzian, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund and Chairman of the French local body.

In addition to the expected target results, the reconstruction of the Spandaryan Canal will also have long-term and continuous impact. In line with the government's strategic priorities, support will be directed towards the sustainable development of agriculture in Syunik, ensuring a stable increase in the income of rural residents.

The Fund continuously identifies the most urgent issues requiring solutions, initiating programmes that help improve the quality of life in Armenia. To date, the

Fund has united more than 1.5 million Armenians, investing more than USD 500 million in over 1,500 projects. Starting from 2024, the Fund is implementing programme-based fundraising to ensure maximum efficiency, transparency and accountability. This year's fundraising campaign will last for one month, and a report on its results will be presented after completion.

Since Armenia's independence, the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund has been the first organisation uniting the homeland and the diaspora. Every November, it brings together Armenians around the world to support the reconstruction, preservation and development of the homeland. The Fund identifies urgent challenges and initiates targeted programmes that contribute to improving the quality of life in Armenia.

To date, the Fund has united more than 1.5 million Armenians, investing more than USD 500 million in over 1,500 projects. From 2024 onward, the Fund is applying programme-based fundraising to ensure greater efficiency, transparency and accountability. This year's fundraising campaign will run for one month, and a summary report will be presented after its conclusion.

## Armenia, Egypt discuss agricultural cooperation

Armenian Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan, during a visit to Egypt, met with Minister of Agriculture Alaa Farouk.

According to a readout issued by the ministry, they discussed prospects for cooperation in the fields of agriculture and agro-industry, with a particular focus on

investment opportunities aimed at expanding food and beverage production capacities in Armenia, using local raw materials and exporting to the markets of Egypt and other countries.

As another promising area of cooperation, the development of agriculture

under conditions of water scarcity and non-irrigated farming was highlighted.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Minister Papoyan invited Alaa Farouk to participate in the Crossroads of Peace Investment Summit scheduled for 2026 in Armenia

## Armenian Ambassador, U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman discuss strategic cooperation

Armenian Ambassador to the United States Narek Mkrtchyan met with House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Brian Mast.

A wide range of issues related to Armenia-U.S. strategic cooperation was discussed, the embassy said in a press

release.

The meeting also addressed the implementation of the agreements reached in Washington on August 8, the emerging regional realities resulting from those agreements, and the advancement of future cooperation initiatives.

On August 8, 2025, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a joint peace declaration and initialed a peace treaty at a U.S.-brokered summit in Washington. On the same day, Armenia and the United States signed three memoranda of understanding on partnership.

## Historic return after 25 years: Giovanni Nodari Serapian visits Armenia

Giovanni Nodari Serapian, a representative of the world-renowned luxury brand *Serapian*, has visited Armenia, marking a historic and deeply symbolic return to his homeland after nearly 25 years.

The visit holds both personal and historical significance for Giovanni Nodari Serapian, representing a reconnection with his Armenian roots and heritage. His arrival in Armenia was described as an emotional journey back to the origins of a family legacy that has left a lasting mark on the global luxury fashion industry.

Founded in 1928 in Milan by Armenian immigrant Stefano Serapian, the Serapian brand is one of the most prestigious names in the world of luxury craftsmanship. Stefano Serapian moved to Italy in the 1920s together with his brother Aramais, where



he established his first workshop in Milan. From the very beginning, the brand combined traditional Armenian artisanal techniques with refined Milanese elegance, creating a distinctive identity that continues to define Serapian today.

Throughout decades of growth and international recognition, Serapian has

preserved its family-centered structure, passing down craftsmanship, values, and traditions from generation to generation. Today, third-generation representatives Giovanni Nodari Serapian and Artavazd Serapian continue to safeguard the brand's spiritual and cultural heritage, while adapting it to contemporary demands of the global luxury market.

Giovanni Nodari Serapian's visit to Armenia once again underscores the importance of the brand's Armenian roots and is expected to open new opportunities for cultural cooperation, joint initiatives, and heritage-preservation projects connecting Armenia with the international fashion and cultural landscape.

## Armenia to restrict single-use plastic products from 2027



Starting January 1, 2027, the use of single-use plastic products will be significantly reduced in Armenia, according to the Ministry of Environment.

Under the new regulations, the presence and circulation of certain plastic items will be prohibited. These include polyethylene bags and plastic shopping sacks, with the exception of bags used for weighing and packaging goods, as well as garbage bags produced from recycled materials.

The ban will also cover single-use plastic and foam plastic containers and tableware, such as plates, cups, spoons, forks, knives, and plastic sticks intended

for drinking or stirring.

The initiative is part of Armenia's broader efforts to reduce plastic pollution and promote environmentally friendly practices.

As alternatives, the Ministry encourages the use of reusable bags made from paper, fabric, and other sustainable materials. In addition, tableware made from paper or wood, as well as containers produced from paper or foil, will be permitted and promoted.

## Trump suspends green card lottery program

President Donald Trump suspended the green card lottery program on December 18 that allowed the suspect in the Brown University and MIT shootings to come to the United States, AP reports.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said in a post on the social platform X that, at Trump's direction, she is ordering the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to pause the program.

"This heinous individual should never have been allowed in our country," she

said of the suspect, Portuguese national Claudio Neves Valente.

Neves Valente, 48, is suspected in the shootings at Brown University that killed two students and wounded nine others, and the killing of an MIT professor. He was found dead Thursday evening from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, officials said.

Neves Valente had studied at Brown on a student visa beginning in 2000, according to an affidavit from a Providence police detective. In 2017, he was issued a diversity immigrant visa and months

later obtained legal permanent residence status, according to the affidavit. It was not immediately clear where he was between taking a leave of absence from the school in 2001 and getting the visa in 2017.

The diversity visa program makes up to 50,000 green cards available each year by lottery to people from countries that are little represented in the U.S., many of them in Africa. The lottery was created by Congress, and the move is almost certain to invite legal challenges.

## NVIDIA Vice President Rev Lebedian joins TUMO Board of Trustees

On December 18, Rev Lebedian, Vice President of Omniverse and Simulation Technology at NVIDIA, joined the Board of Trustees of the TUMO Foundation.

Lebedian has been an active member of TUMO's advisory council since 2018, playing a significant role in shaping the organization's technology vision, strategic development, and educational content. By joining the Board of Trustees, he deepens his long-term commitment to TUMO's mission and will oversee the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into TUMO's educational programs and learning management systems, supporting the organization's purposeful expansion.

With more than three decades of experience in computer graphics, Rev Lebedian brings a unique combination of industrial, research, and technological leadership. Throughout his career, he has worked at Warner Bros. Digital and Disney Dream Quest Images, and later founded



his own company, Steamboat Software.

Lebedian joined NVIDIA in 2002, where he has been involved in the development of cutting-edge technologies and AI solutions. Today, he leads the NVIDIA Omniverse teams across software, engineering, and research divisions. Technologies developed under his leadership have been widely used by leading visual effects studios in major motion pictures, including Stuart Little and X-Men 2.

In 2023, Rev Lebedian and his wife, Rachel Lebedian, founded the Rev and Rachel Foundation, which supports philanthropic initiatives focused on education

and innovation.

Commenting on his involvement with TUMO, Lebedian said that the center is a unique phenomenon with no equivalent anywhere in the world. He noted that TUMO prepares young people from an early age to live and create in a rapidly evolving world, enabling them to develop technologies and engage in creative work driven by passion rather than necessity. He added that having seen TUMO graduates intern at NVIDIA, he came to view TUMO as a "factory of brains" from which companies like NVIDIA can only benefit.

Rev Lebedian becomes the sixth member of the TUMO Board of Trustees, joining Board Chair Sam Simonian, Mozilla Chief Technology Officer Raffi Krikorian, Figma Chief Communications Officer Nairi Tashjian Hourdajian, ServiceTitan co-founder and President Vahe Kuzoyan, and KingsIsle founder Eli Akilian.

## TUMO launches Armenian Cultural Heritage Institute with open-access platform



The Armenian Cultural Heritage Institute, created by TUMO Center for Creative Technologies, has officially launched, marking a major step in documenting, preserving, and creatively activating Armenian cultural heritage.

Founded by TUMO CEO Marie Lou Papazian, the Institute grew out of the

Armenian Heritage Scanning Project, launched by TUMO in 2020.

The Institute will actively leverage Armenian heritage as a living resource and transform it into accessible materials not only to preserve the past, but also to inspire new cultural expressions. It is led by Hul  Kechichian as its general director.

A key milestone for the Institute is the launch of its [open-access platform](#).

Starting today, the public can explore Armenia's and Artsakh's heritage sites through freely accessible 3D models, uncover their histories, and examine every detail for research, learning, and creative inspiration.

Alongside its digital documentation efforts, the Institute is building a broader ecosystem of heritage initiatives: collecting oral histories linked to cultural sites and communities, recording traditions, and preserving acoustic and musical heritage, while training the next generation to protect and engage with their heritage.

With its mission of ensuring that cultural memory remains active, relevant, and open to new forms of expression, the Armenian Cultural Heritage Institute aims to reimagine how heritage is preserved and revitalized, ensuring it remains a shared resource, a cultural right, and a foundation for new creation.

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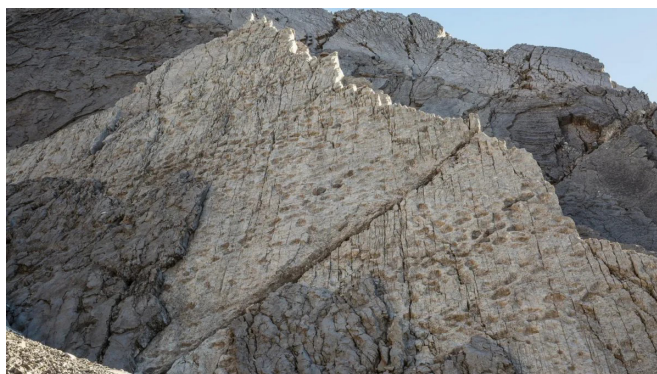
## Thousands of dinosaur footprints found on Italian mountain

Thousands of dinosaur footprints dating back 210 million years have been found in a national park in northern Italy, the [BBC](#) reports.

The footprints – some of which are up to 40cm in diameter – are aligned in parallel rows, and many show clear traces of toes and claws.

It is thought the dinosaurs were prosauropods – herbivores with long necks, small heads and sharp claws.

"I never would have imagined I'd come across such a spectacular discovery in



the region where I live," said Milan-based paleontologist Cristiano Dal Sasso.

Last September a photographer spotted the footprints stretching hundreds of

metres on a vertical mountain wall in the Stelvio national park, north-east of Milan.

In the Triassic period – between about 250 and 201 million years ago – the wall was a tidal flat, which later became part of the Alpine chain.

"This place was full of dinosaurs; it's an immense scientific treasure," Mr Dal Sasso said.

The herds moved in harmony, he added, "and there are also traces of more complex behaviours, like groups of animals gathering in a circle, perhaps for the purposes of defense."

## Dragon carpet for children: New playground opens in Yerevan

Under a memorandum of understanding signed between Yerevan's Kentron Administrative District and the Keron Development Foundation, plans were announced to establish three new public playgrounds in the capital.

The second inclusive and free playground under this initiative has now been officially put into operation. The project was implemented through a joint partnership between the Yerevan Kentron Administrative District, the Keron



Development Foundation, and Armbrok Investment Company.

Covering an area of 800 square meters, the playground, named "Vishapagorg" (Dragon Carpet), is designed for children up to the age of seven. It is located in the Khachkars Park, adjacent to Republic Square. The playground's design is inspired by the ornamental patterns of traditional Armenian carpets, blending cultural heritage with a modern, child-friendly public space.



## Subscribe and watch Noyan Tapan programs on Noyan Tapan TV, and Noyan Tapan YouTube Channels.



Noyan Tapan introduces: "Discussions" welcoming an Associate Professor-in-Residence of Political Science at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Dr. Nerses Kopalyan



<https://www.youtube.com/@Noyan-TapanTV> (in Armenian)



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