

Armenian President attends “World Food India 2017” forum in New Delhi



President Serzh Sargsyan participated in the plenary session of the “World Food India 2017” forum and the solemn opening ceremony of an international food exhibition in New Delhi, featuring over 200 participants from 20 countries.

Addressing the forum, President Sargsyan thanked Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for organizing the “impressive” forum and for the invitation to participate in the event.

“The professional and geographical diversity of the participants is a testament to the India’s solid potential and role on the global

food market,” he noted.

The President said “India, which has a history of millennia, has managed to register impressive results in the fields of political and socio-economic development over the 70 years of independence and secured its role as one of the locomotives of world economy.”

“Procession of agricultural products and export of consumer goods is of great importance for the development of Armenia’s economy,” President Sargsyan said.

“Armenian producers have accumulated a great experience in processing fruit and

vegetables thanks to combination of traditional skills and innovative technologies,” the President said. He stressed the growing demand for Armenian products on the external market and added that “Armenian businessmen are taking steps towards presenting the production on the Indian market, as well.”

President Sargsyan said cooperation between businessmen from the two countries will allow to improve the efficiency of fruit and vegetable processing and open up new markets, but will also open new jobs and boost the production.

Russian FM emphasizes OSCE role in resolving conflicts

p. 2

Armenia’s NPP not to be closed down after EU deal is signed

p.7

Vahe Andonians: Together with Moody’s We Pushed a Boundary...

p.10

Recent News from Armenia’s Leading Telecom Operator

p. 11

Foreign Ministers of Armenia, Azerbaijan not expected to meet in near future



No meeting between the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan is expected in the near future, Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharyan has said.

The Deputy FM was hosted at the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Foreign Relations today to outline the main directions of the Ministry's activity in 2018 within the

framework of budgetary discussions. Political issues were not avoided, either.

Commenting on President Serzh Sargsyan's recent statement that the settlement of the Karabakh issue "requires painful solutions and mutual concessions," Shavarsh Kocharyan said "the solution of any such issue envisages mutual concessions." He added, however, that speaking about concessions at this point is wrong, considering that there has never been any statement from the opposite side on the willingness to make concessions.

As for the plans for next year, the Deputy Foreign Minister said priorities will not change. The Armenian diplomacy will focus efforts on the settlement of the Karabakh conflict, recognition of the Armenian genocide, development of bilateral and multilateral relations.

Armenia is not planning to join any new international organization and is not going to open diplomatic representations anywhere, Mr. Kocharyan said.

Russian FM emphasizes OSCE role in resolving conflicts

It is important to use the potential of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to resolve conflicts in Ukraine, Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a meeting with OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger on November 3.

"We heard about your statements concerning those plans that you want to implement in this capacity," Lavrov said, TASS reported.

"We support them. We especially support your stance in favor of an open and equitable dialogue without preconditions on all issues."

According to Russia's top diplomat, "such an approach would release the OSCE's huge potential in making collective decisions to resolve common problems."

It is important to use this potential to help resolve crises, above all, in Ukraine, Transnistria and in the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement, he noted.

"We appreciate the OSCE's co-chairmanship in the Geneva discussions on stability in the Transcaucasia region and believe it is



important not to weaken the organization's attention in its work in the Balkans," Lavrov said.

"In general, your balanced approach is very relevant in a situation when the OSCE is ripe for changes in its geographical and thematic activities, all three baskets of its

work. We will do our best to contribute to that."

"I hope that we will have a useful conversation from this perspective today, discuss the tasks facing the organization and how Russia can contribute to their implementation," he concluded.

Armenian bill against domestic violence criticized by ruling party

The Armenian government will amend its bill aimed at combatting domestic violence in response to criticism voiced by conservative members of the ruling Republican Party (HHK), Justice Minister Davit Harutyunyan said on November 1.

The bill drafted by Armenia's Justice Ministry would introduce criminal and administrative liability for specific cases defined as domestic violence. It would also obligate the state to protect female victims by providing them with special shelters or banning their violent spouses from approaching them and even their children.

The proposed legislation is strongly backed by women's rights groups campaigning for much tougher government action against the practice. But it has met with fierce resistance from some conservative groups and nationalist public figures. Several senior HHK figures have added their voiced to the criticism.

Eduard Sharmazanov, a deputy parliament speaker and the HHK spokesman, demanded on Wednesday that the Justice Ministry revise provisions of the bill that "contradict traditional Armenian family values." "There are many contentious clauses that require explanations," he told reporters.

Sharmazanov complained that the bill is vague on "psychological violence" and "economic violence" defined by it. "Tell me,



what psychological violence is?" he asked. "If my [underage] daughter or my son says that he or she wants to smoke and I don't let them do that, will they be able to say that 'my dad subjects me to psychological violence?'"

Sharmazanov said the authors of the bill must also clarify who would be running the special shelters financed by the state.

Harutyunyan said, meanwhile, that some provisions of the draft law will be "specified" in order to address concerns voiced by the critics from the HHK and other groups. But he made clear that the amendments will not be significant.

In that regard, the minister stressed the importance of making "psychological violence"

in Armenian families an administrative or criminal offense. "Successful countries are the ones which promptly react to psychological violence so that it does not escalate into physical violence," he said.

A senior representative of the Armenian police called for the passage of the bill when she spoke at parliamentary hearings in Yerevan on October 17.

The police recorded 3,571 cases of domestic violence from 2012-2016. According to the Yerevan-based Women's Resource Center, more than 50 Armenian women have been beaten to death and murdered otherwise by their husbands or other relatives in the last five years.

Russia to supply new batch of weapons to Armenia in coming days – President

Moscow will supply a new batch of weapons to Armenia in the near future under a \$200 million agreement signed in 2015. The implementation of a new \$100 million loan agreement will start after all interstate arrangements are in place, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan said in an interview with RIA Novosti.

"Till the end of the current year we will be implementing the previous agreement. We are waiting for new supplies in the coming days," President Sargsyan said.

"We have signed a new agreement, which has to pass through all instances in Armenia and Russia and then be ratified. After that we'll start working with Russian producers to implement the program," Serzh Sargsyan said. He added that it will take time.

According to the draft agreement, which the Armenian government approved on October 12, the Russian Federation will provide the Armenian side with a state export loan to



finance the supplies of military products of Russian production.

The Armenian side will use the loan to cover up to 90% of the cost of each contract for

the supply of products, calculated in dollars.

The loan will be issued with a maturity of 15 years at 3% per annum. Armenia should use credit funds between 2018 and 2022.

Yerevan reaffirms readiness to sign new deal with EU

A senior diplomat reaffirmed on November 2 the Armenian government's intention to sign later this month an agreement aimed at significantly deepening Armenia's relations with the European Union.

"As the president of the republic has stated, we are ready to sign the agreement in November," said Deputy Foreign Minister Karen Nazarian. "Our colleagues from the European Union assure us that the process is moving forward according to plan."

"I just don't know what else can be said to allay existing concerns related to this issue," Nazarian told lawmakers in Yerevan.

Johannes Hahn, the EU commissioner for European neighborhood policy, confirmed on October 27 that the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) is due to be signed during or on the sidelines of an EU summit in Brussels scheduled for November 24. In an apparent reference to Russia, Hahn suggested that the EU's and Armenia's "neighbors" do not object to the deal.

Nazarian hailed the CEPA as an "ambitious" document that will boost not only political but also economic links between the EU and Armenia. "The agreement also heralds a new period in commercial relations between Armenia and the EU," he said. "It will contribute to closer economic cooperation by improving the business regulatory environment. It will also create opportunities for investments and new jobs."



The 350-page agreement stipulates, among other things, that Armenia will "gradually approximate its economic and financial regulations and policies to those of the European Union, as appropriate." Yerevan will regularly report to Brussels on "the progress made with regard to approximation" specified by several annexes to the agreement. This "regulatory harmonization" would cover business regulation, agriculture, transport, environment, consumer protection and even energy.

Armenia slides in investment climate rankings

The World Bank has downgraded Armenia's position in its annual survey on ease of doing business around the world despite reporting a slight improvement in the country's investment climate.

Armenia ranked 47th in the latest Doing Business survey which assessed economic conditions in 190 nations with a range of specific indicators. It was 38th in last year's global rankings.

The country's overall score has improved over the past year. The authors of the World Bank report believe that the Armenian authorities further simplified property registra-

tion procedures and facilitated businesses' access to electricity supplies.

In a statement, the bank's Yerevan office attributed the worsening of Armenia's position to "significant improvements" of other countries' business environments as well as "methodological adjustments and data revisions." It did not comment further.

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan declined on Wednesday to comment on the latest World Bank assessment released on Tuesday. He said he will talk about it at an upcoming news conference.

Ever since he took office in September

2016 Karapetyan has regularly pledged to improve the domestic investment climate. In its policy program approved by the parliament in June, Karapetyan's government committed itself to placing Armenia among the top 20 countries in the Doing Business rankings "as a result of reforms of the next four or five years." President Serzh Sargsyan set this goal in May.

Earlier this year, the government promised 49 policy measures for that purpose. Those include stronger government support for small and medium-sized businesses, better investor protection, easier access to credit, and more simple rules for obtaining construction permits.

Some government officials claimed in August that this should help Armenia move up to 26th place in Doing Business already this year.

Artak Manukyan, a Yerevan-based economist, downplayed the World Bank report's practical impact on investor confidence. "In Georgia, for example, there has been a real fight against corruption," he said. "Investors see that and that translates into a rise in foreign direct investment. Doing Business is the probably weakest of signals [to investors.] Unless it is backed up by practice, it will remain on paper."



Armenian FM blasts Azerbaijan for hate speech in textbooks



Education, science and search for knowledge have deep roots in the Armenian society, Armenia's Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said at the General Policy Debate of the 39th Session of the UNESCO General Conference.

"In two years the State University of our capital Yerevan will mark its 100th anniversary. However, already 800 years ago the capital of the Cilician Armenian kingdom used to have a secular higher education institute, the University of Sis. Armenians have carried out these traditions throughout the centuries, including by founding schools in many places worldwide," Minister Nalbandian said.

"This year marks the 300th anniversary of the Armenian Mekhitarist Congregation of San Lazzaro in Venice that was recognized as an academy by Emperor Napoleon. More than 200 years ago another famous school – the Lazarian Seminary opened its doors in Moscow and later became one of the two founding institutions of Moscow State Institute of International Relations," the Foreign Minister said.

"Education is a strongest tool for boosting the values that this Organization adheres to. It is regrettable that some states abuse the education for contrary objectives, exploiting it for dissemination of nationalist hatred especially among the youth. There are many such examples in the textbooks of Azerbaijan, one of them teaching the children that Armenians are their genetic enemies. The 2016 report of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance states: "Political leaders,

educational institutions and media have continued using hate speech against Armenians; an entire generation of Azerbaijanis has now grown up listening to this hateful rhetoric". It is rightly described in the Constitution of UNESCO that "wars begin in the minds of men". The societies will not be prepared for reconciliation unless the defense of peace is constructed in their minds," Edward Nalbandian said.

"As great German writer Heinrich Heine wrote "Where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people". The books of the renowned Azerbaijani novelist were burnt on the streets of Baku just for speaking the truth about Armenian massacres and calling for reconciliation. He wrote a story about his home village in Nakhijevan that during his childhood used to have twelve churches. All of them, together with numerous other Armenian sacred sites and cemeteries in Nakhijevan and all over Azerbaijan were wiped out in 1990s and 2000s. In the same manner thousands delicately carved medieval cross-stones of the Armenian cemetery in Jugha were bulldozed under the watchful eyes of the Azerbaijani authorities. The site was transformed to a shooting range," Armenia's top diplomat stated.

"After ethnically cleansing the Armenian population of Azerbaijan, now Baku aims at wiping out even the memory of several millennia old Armenian presence, every traces of the indigenous Armenian culture and history of the region. Baku erases the past merely because it does not fit the present day self-portrayed image of Azerbaijan, probably

following George Orwell's famous words on "who controls the present, controls the past". Those who control Azerbaijan today think they can rewrite the history to legitimize their present xenophobic policies," Minister Nalbandian added.

"Historically being situated on the cross-roads of different civilizations Armenia has cultivated deeply rooted traditions of coexistence and respect towards other cultures and religions. That is why Armenia preserves a rich cultural heritage that includes among others the Hellenistic era temple, some of the oldest churches in the world, medieval Jewish cemetery, 18th century mosque and soon will host the world's largest Yazidi temple," Edward Nalbandian said.

"The cooperation on preservation of the cultural heritage has been among the main pillars proclaimed by UNESCO. It has a very special meaning for the Armenian nation, since we have monuments all over the world built by the Armenians communities in about one hundred countries and particularly many in the countries of the region," he stated.

"Our neighbors have displayed different approaches towards the preservation of Armenian historical heritage. There is a good cooperation with Iran that takes proper care of the Armenian monuments situated on its territory in a sharp contrast with neighboring Azerbaijan, but also Turkey, where numerous cultural monuments that were of universal value, have been lost forever. In this regard I would like to reiterate Armenia's interest for the participation of our experts in the excavation and restoration of archaeological sites in Turkey, in such places as Ani, the Armenian medieval capital," the Foreign Minister said.

"We are also very much concerned of the attacks on the Armenian monuments and sacred sites in war-torn Syria. We strongly believe that the post conflict rehabilitation in Syria should reaffirm the rights of ethnic minorities, including Armenians, on their religious and cultural heritage," the Armenian Foreign Minister added.

Edward Nalbandian stated that Armenia strongly believes in this mission of UNESCO and stands ready to continue its contribution to the realization of these goals.

Elimination of obstacles to trade to boost growth of CIS economies – Armenian PM



Armenian Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan attended on November 3 the sitting of the CIS Heads of State in Tashkent.

Addressing the meeting, PM Karapetyan referred to the Free Trade Zone

Treaty, noting that it forms the framework that opens up broad opportunities for promoting the trade-economic cooperation in the CIS.

Karen Karapetyan underlined that Armenia is ready to continue to build

relations with member states on that platform. He voiced confidence that the elimination of all obstacles to trade and implementation of the provisions of the Treaty on Free Trade Zone would have a positive impact on the growth of CIS economies.

The CIS Heads of Government adopted about 20 documents on cooperation in the economic and other spheres.

The Prime Ministers adopted a statement on the consolidation of the efforts of the world community to efficiently fight international cartels at the summit in Tashkent on 3 October.

The CIS premiers also signed an agreement on sharing information in the fight against terrorism and other violent manifestations of extremism, and their financing.

The Prime Ministers also signed the decision to use provisions to set up and develop the CIS united air defense system and secure the activity of the coordinating committee on air defense at the CIS Defense Ministers Council.

Armenia approves \$40m loan agreement with ADB

The Armenian government on November 2 approved a \$40m loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank.

The Asian Development Bank announced on October 25 that it would give Armenia a \$40m loan to improve its fiscal sustainability and development of financial markets.

The ADB's policy-based loan is aimed at assisting the country's government through a series of reform measures to strengthen public debt management to enhance fiscal discipline and transparency.

It will also improve the government efficiency of its market so Armenia can rely more on domestic borrowing.

Country director Shane Rosenthal said: "Sound public debt management and well-developed financial markets are essential for Armenia's long-run growth and sustainable development.

"We are helping the Government of



Armenia implement a series of reforms to increase transparency, improve governance, and encourage more private investment in the country that will create more jobs."

The development bank has worked with Armenia since 2005 and has approved a total of 26 loans worth \$1.27bn, as well as 26 technical assistance grants totaling \$16.5m.

PM donates his one-year salary to Hayastan All-Armenian Fund

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan visited the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund's headquarters to get familiar with the Fund's 25-year-long activities and programs. In anticipation of the Fund's annual telethon, the Premier donated his one-year salary to the Fund. During the tour, Prime Minister Karapetyan got acquainted with the ongoing activities of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund's subdivisions.

Hayastan All-Armenian Fund Executive Director Ara Vardanyan noted that over 50,000 programs have implemented during the past 25 years for over 500,000 beneficiaries in Armenia and Artsakh to a total cost of USD 330 million. The Fund has some 700,000 donors around the world.

He provided details of the Fund's current plans and annual fundraising activities. The Hayastan All-Armenian Fund Telethon will be held on November 23 this year. The funds donated will be used to build Artsakh's irrigation system and provide opportunities for solar energy application.



Armenia's NPP not to be closed down after EU deal is signed



The Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and Armenia does not provide for the closure of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant, Armenian Pres-

ident Serzh Sargsyan said in an interview with RIA Novosti.

"In the draft agreement this paragraph is formulated by default, taking into consideration the objective lifetime of

the Metsamor NPP," the President said.

"In March 2014 the Armenian government made a decision to extend the lifetime of the NPP. The program will be funded by the Russian state export credit amounting to \$270 million and a \$30 million grant," President Sargsyan said.

"The Armenian side is working jointly with "Rosatom" State Corporation to extend the lifetime of the second power unit of the NPP. It should be noted that the NPP is functioning in full compliance with specialized international institutions. We are taking measures to improve the operational safety and modernization," Serzh Sargsyan said.

Therefore, he noted, that the NPP will work at least until 2027 and added that Armenia will always use atomic energy for security reasons.

The President stated that the plant will not be closed down after Armenia signs a new deal with the European Union.

Armenia is ready to offer favorable conditions for Indian companies – President

As part of his working visit to India, President Serzh Sargsyan met with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

At the beginning of the meeting, Narendra Modi thanked Serzh Sargsyan for accepting his invitation and attending the Conference. He expressed the hope that President Sargsyan's visit would give fresh impetus to Armenian-Indian relations and enhance them to a new qualitative level. The Prime Minister of India noted that Armenia is a reliable and important partner for India in the Eurasian area. In his words, Armenian merchants were among the first to come to India and boost commercial ties between India and different countries.

Premier Modi congratulated President Sargsyan on successful completion of the constitutional reform in Armenia and the transition to the parliamentary system of governance, as well as on the victory of Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party in the parliamentary elections.

The President of Armenia said he had accepted the invitation with gratitude and was glad to be in a wonderful country like India. Serzh Sargsyan presented his impressions of the World Food Conference and the Exhibition that kicked off this morning. The President said he was delighted with the achievements of India, one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, especially in the field of food industry, and went on to assure that Armenia is strongly committed to deepening relations with India in all spheres – political, economic and humanitarian.

Noting that the deeply rooted friendly relations between Armenia and India provide the most solid groundwork for developing interstate relations between the two countries, the



President of Armenia expressed the hope that his visit would give new impetus to the Armenian-Indian centuries-old friendship.

President Sargsyan availed himself of the opportunity to once again congratulate Prime Minister Modi and the friendly people of India on the 70th anniversary of India's Independence. The Head of the Armenian State mentioned that as a friendly country, Armenia is pleased to witness India's steadfast progress and its growing role and reputation in the international arena.

Reminding that Armenia and India have already crossed the 25-year threshold of establishing diplomatic relations, the parties concurred in that this jubilee is the best opportunity to sum up achievements and outline ways of expanding bilateral relations as all the necessary prerequisites are available.

The interlocutors stated that despite the ongoing high-level political dialogue between the two friendly nations, their countries boast greater potential for the development of bilateral relations, and there is still a lot of work

to do in order to achieve tangible progress in this direction. Serzh Sargsyan and Narendra Modi attached importance to the activities of the Armenian-Indian intergovernmental commission, considering that it needed a better targeted agenda.

The President said Armenia is ready to offer favorable conditions for Indian companies. In this context, Serzh Sargsyan called the Indian side's attention to the free economic zone, being established in Meghri on the border with Iran, which can become an effective platform for cooperation. According to President Sargsyan, Armenia's accession to the EAEU may facilitate friendly India's access to the huge Eurasian market.

During the meeting, the sides touched upon the emerging opportunities for closer interaction and exchange of experience in a wide range of areas of mutual interest, such as jewelry, diamond processing, pharmaceuticals, film production information technologies, agriculture, food processing, tourism, education, science and culture.

President Serzh Sargsyan and Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted with satisfaction that the two countries are engaged in active cooperation in the multilateral format, which is best evidenced by the readiness for mutual assistance in international organizations.

Reference was made to the situation and the challenges faced in the South Caucasian region, including the negotiations over a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

At the end of the meeting, President Sargsyan signed in the Book of Honorable Guests, noting that he was grateful for the warm welcome he was enjoying in friendly India, with which Armenia shares the highest universal values, including a common drive for democracy.



\$8000 raised for Artsakh de-mining

The Bay Area Armenian community joined the Armenian National Committee of America San Francisco (ANCA-SF) in supporting the life-saving Artsakh de-mining efforts of The HALO Trust last week, raising over \$8000 at an event organized at PicsArt Headquarters in Downtown San Francisco.

ANCA-SF Board member Knar Kahkajian kicked off the evening with powerful remarks about the importance of Artsakh de-mining, followed by internationally renowned author Scout Tufankjian's presentation of her photos and that of TUMOx-AGBU Stepanakert students, capturing life in landmine impacted communities in Artsakh and the humanitarian work of The HALO Trust to clear these deadly mines.

HALO Trust Director of Development Andrew Moore offered an overview of the organization's efforts and explained that funds raised at the San Francisco event will help clear a ten-acre minefield in Nor Maragha village in the Martakert region, within the vicinity of the main North-South Highway connecting Stepanakert with Martakert, the historical site of Tigranakert, and the iconic mountaintop monastery of Vankasar.



Moore thanked PicsArt, ANCA-SF, and everyone who donated to help make Karabakh Mine Free.

ANCA-SF and The HALO Trust's community fundraising efforts augment the Congressional funding received in support of the initiative, which is restricted to clearance within the Soviet-era boundary.

Most recently, on September 9th, the U.S. House adopted an ANCA-backed amendment by Rep. David Valadao (R-Calif.) which would send \$1.5 million in U.S. assistance as part of the fiscal year 2018 foreign aid bill. The HALO Trust relies on private donations to clear minefields threatening families in Lachin, Martakert and Hadrut regions that lie outside this boundary.

The ANCA has been leading the call for continued U.S. assistance to Artsakh since 1997. U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson recently noted that the "State Department and USAID support the demining program and are currently reviewing information from HALO Trust requesting additional funds." He confirmed that over \$45 million has been provided to victims of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, a larger official figure than has been previously reported.

Over the last 16 years, HALO Trust has destroyed over 8,733 anti-personnel mines, 2,584 anti-tank landmines, 180,858 small arms ammunition, 12,423 cluster bombs and 48,572 other explosive items in Artsakh. The HALO Trust looks to complete Artsakh demining efforts by 2020.

Indiana becomes 48th US State to recognize the Armenian Genocide



Indiana Governor Eric J. Holcomb issued a powerful proclamation memorializing the Ottoman Turkish Empire's centrally-planned and executed annihilation of close to three million Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, and Syrians, making the Hoosier State the 48th U.S. state to properly recognize and condemn the Armenian Genocide, reported the Armenian National Committee of America-Eastern Region (ANCA-ER).

Governor Holcomb also declared Nov. 6-12, 2017 as "Armenia Awareness Week"

and invited the citizens of Indiana to "duly note this occasion."

"We welcome this proclamation by Governor Holcomb, making Indiana the 48th state in the union to officially re-affirm this international crime against humanity," said ANCA-ER Community Outreach and Communications Director Artur Martirosyan. "This proclamation serves as a reminder not only for the citizens of Indiana, but also for the denialist government of Turkey, which—for over a century—has been trying to hold truth

hostage. Such policy is doomed to failure as we stand even stronger today with the people of good conscience in Turkey as well as our coalition partners, who have made this and other similar resolutions and proclamations a reality."

"The Armenian community in Indiana is small, but mighty," said ANC of Indiana Chairperson Seda Arzumanyan. "Armenians have called Indiana home for several generations and have made noteworthy contributions to the development of our great state. We are glad to see the Hoosier State join the rest of the nation in properly memorializing and condemning this horrific atrocity and look forward to celebrating our culture and heritage with our fellow Indianans during the week of November 6-12 and beyond."

Iraqi Christian Relief Council Board Member Denise Bubeck said, "I am so very thankful Indiana has joined in remembering the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, past and present genocide; preserving the historic memory and ensuring that these atrocities will never occur again."

Vahe Andonians: Together with Moody's We Pushed a Boundary...

SCDM Founder talked on artificial intelligence at the recent Moody's Analytics Risk and Finance Practitioner Conference

Recently in Arizona, USA, the **Moody's Analytics Risk and Finance Practitioner Conference (RFPC)** was held in its 12th year that, according to its organizers, *"offers you the chance to exchange ideas and best practices in risk management and regulatory compliance with industry"*.

Traditionally, senior risk management professionals from across the world participate in RFPC. The three-day event features keynote presentations from industry leaders focusing on the latest innovations and more than 40 breakout sessions drilling deep into related topics.

months ago, we demonstrated in a Proof of Concept that the whole task could be entirely automatized in most cases. Since balance sheet information is usually represented in tables, the first process is to extract tables. Then the cell values have to be interpreted and mapped to the desired template. Finally, values are adjusted based on notes that need be classified and understood using Natural Language Processing (NLP). The exciting fact is, while the latter two processes (interpretation of cell values and NLP) are much more challenging for financial analysts than classifying rows and columns of a table, the machine has

and a blueberry muffin. The most widely accepted explanation is that our brains have been trained on the classification of objects through visual impulse for millions of years - even long before humans evolved. All this training has been passed from generation to generation through evolution. Hence, it seems so natural to classify objects that we do not even really "think" about it. Whereas playing Chess or Go is very new to us and requires hard work in the prefrontal cortex. Hence, Moravec's Paradox is not even a paradox but a very natural phenomenon. It seems to be a paradox only because we vastly overestimate the power of our prefrontal cortex. Summarizing, the fascinating part of the spreading product we developed together with Moody's is the AI-based classification of rows and columns in tables. I believe, we pushed a boundary here.

- And what about the event/audience ?

- The conference is visited mainly by risk management specialists, hence the rise of RiskTech was the central theme. As banks adopt new strategies, there are many opportunities for process and technology optimization. By utilizing technology innovations, and refining their existing processes, banks can operate more efficiently and achieve a better bottom line while embracing a more



"The Rise of Risktech" was the theme of RFPC17 oriented around four main topics:

- Applying New Trends in Technology
- Managing the Implementation of CECL and IFRS 9
- Principles and Practices of Credit Risk Management
- New Frontiers in Quantitative Analytics and Data Science

Our compatriot **Vahe Andonians**, Founder of the SCDM, the second largest company residing at the Yerevan Viasphere Technopark who has been a leading way specialist on the artificial intelligence (AI), talked at the Conference.

Below The Highlights readers could find interview with Mr Andonians on his talk there:

- Mr Andonians, you've talked at the RFPC17 on AI. What was it about in detail?

-Yes, together with Mrs. **Cristian Pieretti**, we demonstrated an AI-based product for automated financial spreading. Financial spreading is currently a manual task where balance sheet information in the form of PDF documents is mapped to a specified, mostly industry determined, template. A couple of

difficulties with the first step. This fact is referred to as Moravec's Paradox. In essence, whatever takes no thinking for us humans is extremely difficult for machines, whereas, whatever is difficult for humans and usually involves analysis in the prefrontal cortex, is much easier for computers. In examples, machines can fly planes better than humans or beat the best Chess and Go players but fail in distinguishing between a Chihuahua dog

holistic view of risk measurement. To my knowledge, there were about 220 attendees this year.

- What was reaction/questions from the audience?

- I would say showcasing an automatized solution for spreading was very interesting for the attendees. Especially, Moravec's Paradox and its implication was, I assume based on the questions, new and unexpected.



Recent News from Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator

Just another project aimed at the preservation of national music and art tradition

The "Armenian National Instruments" album created owing to the partnership between VivaCell-MTS, the RA Ministry of Culture, "ProArt" Company, and released by the well-known Austrian company "SONY" DADC, has taken its respectable place in **Hovhannes Sharambeyan** Centre for Popular Creation, one of the oldest buildings in Dilijan. In the 19th century, it served as a summerhouse for Duchess **Mariam Tumanyan**. During the Soviet period the building became a center of folk art, later it acquired the status of the Dilijan branch of the Folk Art Museum. The reorganization of the building into a museum was carried out on the initiative of painter Hovhannes Sharambeyan, who had relocated to Dilijan from Van. He had participated also in the design and planning of old streets of Dilijan. Today the museum is a unique meeting place for artists in Dilijan.



region. The album is not for sale and will be provided to institutions supporting the propagation of folk music.

"Culture is the spirit of a people. While keeping up with the time, we have to keep pure the source that nurtures us. Unexpected as it may sound, regions' role in that is huge. It's not occasional we are here: if you have managed to conserve this 19th century building and turn it into a museum, then this collection of musical pieces for national instruments is in the place it's meant to be."

Important investment with measurable results

Many of the students from socially vulnerable groups, supported by VivaCell-MTS since 2011, have already realized their dream of studying in a higher education institution. In the course of eight years of its implementation, the Tuition Fund Program has proven its efficiency in providing professional education as well as social support by instilling in students determination and persistency in the pursuit of their goals.

In the frames of cooperation with twenty-two higher education institutions, the leading telecommunication's operator in Armenia has allocated over AMD 721 mln. for covering the tuition fee of 750 students. Currently 15 higher education institutions are included in the program. Although admission to the program has been closed for already two years, the Company continues supporting the students, who have already been included in the list of beneficiaries from previous years, until they finish their education.



The "Armenian Folk Instruments" album comprising eight discs is a valuable cultural heritage for future generations. It is a collection of works for duduk, kanon, kamancha, tar, more than 10 national instruments in total. The digital album released in 1000 copies has been created on the basis of recordings of the Armenian Public Radio and private collections. Some of the best designers, translators, sound engineers, musicologists, and artists in Armenia have been engaged in the project, and the works included in the album were performed by famous musicians.

The folk music complements the exhibitions of the museum, while also awakening interest towards Armenian musical instruments, thus enlivening the cultural life in the

"These recordings are truly values, and I hope will serve for preservation of national music and arts," said VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph Yirikian**.

To remind, earlier, with the joint efforts of the partnering organizations, "Golden Collection of the Armenian Public Radio", "Aram Khachaturyan-110", "Komitas-145" albums were published. The set of digital discs comprising the four albums has been added to the collection of the Public Radio of Armenia. By the decision of the collaborating parties, all the above-mentioned albums were donated to the museum.

VivaCell-MTS has allocated AMD 89 mln in social investment, for the implementation of the project.



In summer of 2017, 79 students included in the program have graduated from the university.

A number of graduates of the program have already landed jobs in different spheres. They acknowledge that not only their will and determination, but also the support of VivaCell-MTS as a socially responsible company has played a crucial role in their success. Moreover, many of the students are committed to follow the same responsible value system that helped them achieve their goals.

The mission of the tuition fund program is to address social injustice through providing the opportunity to receive professional education.

City Spa, one of the founders of Aesthetic medicine in Armenia, that was established 14 years ago, is still following the main principles that were implemented since the launch: to use only clinically and scientifically approved, highly effective and safe with FDA approval products and equipments imported mainly from UK and Europe.

Depilation: Last year City Spa launched a very safe, painless and fast acting new machine for permanent hair removal. It is the “Primelase” produced by Cocoon Medical. The machine has an innovative



international leading brands such as ZO Skin health (Beverly Hills US), GLO therapeutics (ColoradoUS). Skin Ceuticals (US) etc.

And that's not the all: pedicure, manicure and massage will make your day.

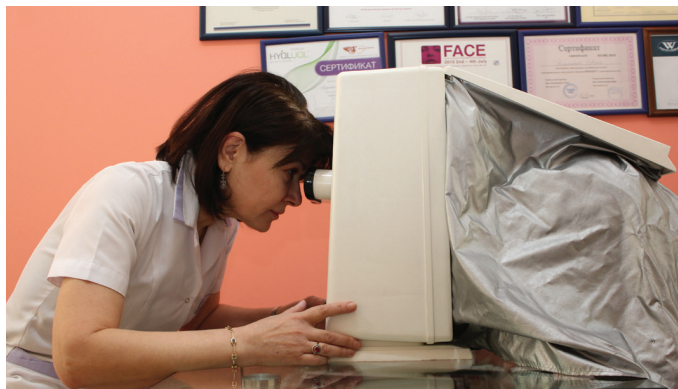
You are welcome to City Spa. The aesthetic doctor's consultations and skin diagnostics with Skin Scanner is fee. The atmosphere in City spa is full of love and peace. The pricing strategy is very flexible and discounts for good long term clients are available during whole year as well as different Gift Cards.

method (dynamic mode) which allows to treat very large areas of the body within few minutes.

Localized fat removal: In Armenia the first cryolipolysis method was implemented by City Spa in 2016. Cooltech is an innovative machine that acts as a none surgical liposuction, with a new method of cryolipolysis for permanent localized fat removal and body reconturing. It is safe, painless and very effective. City Spa is equipped also with the Wellashape machine for anti-cellulite treatment.



Anti aging Facial treatments and Care: City Spa offers the latest scientifically approved anti aging treatments and products for care. The doctors are regularly improving their qualifications in London and Paris, bringing the new inventions to Armenia. The products used in City Spa are only



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'The Big Bang Theory's' Kaley Cuoco to star in series based on Bohjalian's novel

Armenian Weekly

Star of "The Big Bang Theory" Kaley Cuoco will produce and star in the limited series adaptation of bestselling Armenian-American author Chris Bohjalian's upcoming novel *The Flight Attendant*.

"I read *The Flight Attendant* and was hooked immediately," Cuoco told *Deadline.com*. "Warner Bros. Television is my extended family and I'm so excited to work together and bring this amazing book to life with them."

Bohjalian's *The Flight Attendant* is due to be published in March 2018.

Cuoco recently launched a production company, Yes, Norman Productions, which signed an exclusive multi-year pod deal with Warner Bros. Television, which produces the award-winning CBS comedy "The Big Bang Theory."

"Color me grateful," Bohjalian tweeted about the news. He added that he was "so

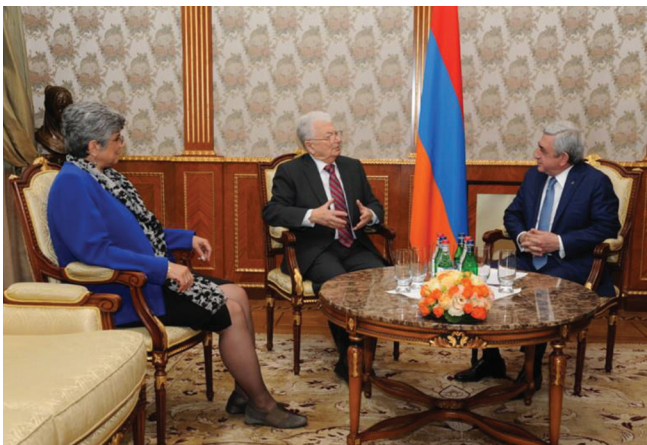


thrilled," and that there is no actor "more perfect" for the flight attendant than Kaley Cuoco.

Bohjalian is the author of 19 books, including the New York Times bestsellers *The Sandcastle Girls*, *The Night Strangers*, *Skeletons at the Feast*, and *The Double Bind*.

His novel *Midwives* was a number one New York Times bestseller and a selection of Oprah's Book Club. His work has been translated into more than 25 languages, and three of his novels have become movies. Bohjalian's most recent novel, *The Sleepwalker*, was published in Jan. 2017.

President Sargsyan receives prominent scientists Yuri Oganessian and Ani Aprahamyan



President Serzh Sargsyan received world-renowned scientists, physicists, foreign members of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences Yuri Oganessian and Ani Aprahamyan who have arrived in Armenia to take part in the Pan-Armenian Conference due to be held on November 6-8 in Yerevan, as well as to discuss issues related to the activities of the Armenian National Research Lab (ANRL) after A. I. Alikhanyan.

In addition to his international commitments, Yuri Oganessian has been appointed by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia to serve as the chairman of the ANRL International Scientific Board. In 2009-2010, he formed an international commission which submitted a proposal to the Government of Armenia on the reorganization of Yerevan Physics Institute into a national research laboratory. In 2011, he was appointed

Chairman of the International Scientific Board of the Foundation. Yuri Oganessian has ever since been providing advice and assistance to the aforementioned scientific organization.

Ani Aprahamyan, who boasts long experience in the management of a number of American and European academic institutions, especially in nuclear physics and isotope production, is actively involved in the International Scientific Board established by Yuri Oganessian. Since 2011, she has been on the ANRL International Scientific Board providing assistance to young Armenian researchers in the frame of international programs.

Welcoming the renowned scientists, the President of the Republic of Armenia appreciated their willingness to support the development of science in Armenia and contribute to the progress in the fields of physics and mathematics and the education of young scientists.

President Sargsyan expressed his efforts of the prominent scientists in the development of the National Center of Excellence of Oncology and especially the National Research Lab after Alikhanyan (Yerevan Physics Institute) Foundation, as well as in the establishment of the ANRL Center for Isotope Production and Diagnostics. The President stressed that the Armenian State will continue to focus on the implementation of the foregoing programs.

The interlocutors highlighted the ongoing cooperation between the Armenian Science and Technology Foundation (FAST), on the one hand, and Ani Aprahamyan and Yuri Oganessian, on the other, taking into consideration the fact that Yuri Oganessian is also a member of the FAST Board of Trustees.

Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

This looks like a week in which uncomfortable circumstances develop that bear a strong kinship to your past. It could go back far enough to trigger family of origin material.

You could be overreacting to a situation in the “now” as though you were a child with no personal resources. Make an effort to stay in the moment.



Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Your attitude about yourself is not altogether accurate right now. You may think way too much of your ideas, or alternately, you may see yourself as lower than scum. Neither is accurate and you should probably not make decisions of any pursuits are given a “go” signal.

importance this week. Spiritual



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

See the lead paragraph on Mercury because this is your avatar. This week Mercury moves into Sagittarius and takes you into the land of “others” in your life. You will be spending quite a long time there, until Jan. 11, 2018. Now is the time to learn lessons about how to be in relationships. If you owe any apologies get them ready now.

relationships. If you owe any apologies get them ready now.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

Issues may surface concerning your home, family or property. (This might include your body.) There is a cost involved which may require a sacrifice rather than spending dollars. This is a small bump,

easily handled and will not ruin your week.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

During the next two weeks you will be contemplating your existence. You are thinking about how you can position yourself to feel more sense of meaning in your work, your family, and your relationships. Some may be pondering on the level of the

spiritual. “What is the ‘best’ that I can become?”



Virgo

(August 22–September 22)

Your focus shifts to matters of home, hearth, and family. Things of the past may float up in your mind for reflection. If this occurs, ask yourself what you learned from the former experience. It probably

would help you now. Family concerns may occupy your attention. It is a good time to allow and encourage serious discussions with those most important to you.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Keep your eyes open and give a wide berth to what you hear. Someone may be deceitful and you would rather believe than challenge it. Either you or others in your life are behaving erratically. It is difficult to make firm plans or sustain a solid conversation. This can generate a rift between you and another because one of you needs to be alone. Don't make a big thing of it.



Scorpio

(October 23–November 21)

An abandonment issue from the past may be re-enacted in the present, only in different clothing. The symbolism points toward early issues with elementary education

peers. Perhaps you were bullied, embarrassed or harassed. This issue started in mid-October. Focus on healing the adolescent from the past.



Sagittarius

(November 22–December 20)

You have been and continue to be challenged by the need to mature. Allowing old emotional wounds to run your life and your feelings is not

the way to go. The lessons started last year and will continue through 2017. By now you may be feeling much stronger and more able to surmount the old fears. If so, you deserve a pat on the back.



Capricorn

(December 21–January 19)

Please study the lead paragraph. At this time Saturn and Pluto are both representing you and your needs. Give special attention to your need to control others. Rule by ex-

ample is always better than ruling by force. If a situation in your life seems to be crumbling, let it go, so it can evolve into something better.



Aquarius

(January 20–February 17)

You are concerned about matters that are beyond your scope of power. Take a breath and come to the surface if you can. Don't allow anyone

to imply that you are responsible or that you fix the problems that are beyond your ability. Make an effort to stay above the fray and observe from a distance.



Pisces (February 18–March 19)

Communication with those from a distance will be favorable and supportive to your soul self. The time is auspicious for activities related to travel, the internet, publishing, teaching, higher education, and the law.

You have a poetic turn of mind at this time. You likely will enjoy reading spiritual or philosophical material that appeals to your soul.

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Armenia issues two stamps on 200th anniversary of Hovhannes Aivazovsky

A souvenir sheet with five stamps dedicated to the theme “World famous Armenians: 200th anniversary of Hovhannes Aivazovsky” was cancelled and put into circulation today by “HayPost” CJSC in the premises of Yerevan History Museum within the framework of the philatelic exhibition dedicated to the 200th anniversary of Hovhannes Aivazovsky.

The postage stamps with nominal values of 170, 220, 230, 380 and 450 AMD depict five paintings of the world famous painter. The postage stamps are depicted against the background of three-dimensional exhibition hall.

The souvenir sheet with five stamps is printed in “Cartor” printing house in France with the print run of 30 000 pcs. The concept of the souvenir sheet belongs to the Managing Director of “HayPost Trust Management” B.V. Juan Pablo Gechidjian. The authors of the souvenir sheet’s design are the designers Anna Abgaryan and Harutyun Samuelyan.

The souvenir sheet with five stamps was cancelled by Armenian Minister of Culture Armen Amiryan, Deputy Minister of Transport, Communication and Information Technologies Arman Khachatryan, Mayor of Yerevan Taron Margaryan, Managing Director of “HayPost Trust Management” B.V. Juan Pablo Gechidjian, President of the Union of Philatelists of Armenia Hovik Musayelyan.



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