

New EU-Armenia deal initialed In Yerevan



Armenia - Armenian and EU officials initial the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement in Yerevan, 21Mar2017.

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Sargsyan calls for closer Armenian-Israeli ties



President Serzh Sargsyan has expressed readiness to improve Armenia's uneasy relationship with Israel adversely affected by the Jewish state's military ties with Azerbaijan.

Sargsyan noted "centuries-old historical dealings" between the Armenian and Jewish peoples on March 23 after receiving the credentials of Israel's new Jerusalem-based ambassador to Armenia, Eliyahu Yerushalmi. He said these ties "oblige" the two nations to "intensify and give a new quality to inter-state relations."

"The president attached importance to a certain intensification of [Armenian-Israeli] inter-parliamentary and civic contacts observed of late," Sargsyan's press office said in a statement.

It added that Sargsyan and Yerushalmi discussed "possibilities and prospects for expanding Armenian-Israeli cooperation in various fields."

Relations between Armenia and Israel have been less than cordial ever since the Soviet collapse, reflecting their conflicting geopolitical priorities. Armenia has maintained a warm rapport with Iran to ease its geographic isolation, while Israel has pursued strategic cooperation with Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Armenia has been particularly worried about Israel's large-scale arms deals with its arch-foe, Azerbaijan. In 2012, Israeli defense officials confirmed a reported deal to provide the Azerbaijani military with more weapons worth a combined \$1.6 billion. The Azerbaijani army used some of these Israeli-made weapons, notably sophisticated anti-tank rockets, during April 2016 hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Israel's current Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman is a staunch backer of close ties with Baku. According to Azerbaijani media reports, Lieberman reaffirmed last December his strong support for Azerbaijan's "territorial integrity and inviolability of borders" in the Karabakh conflict. He also declared that Azerbaijan "can teach a lesson of multiculturalism and tolerance to most countries in the world."

In February 2016, a left-wing Israeli lawmaker claimed that Lieberman's party has been paid by the Azerbaijani government to promote Baku's political and financial interests in Israel. Lieberman denied the allegations.

In February 2015, the Armenian Foreign Ministry criticized Lieberman, who was Israel's foreign minister at the time, for speaking at a ceremony organized by an Azerbaijani government-linked group in the Israeli city of Acre. The event was dedicated to the 23rd anniversary of the deaths of several hundred Azerbaijani residents of Khojaly, a small town in Nagorno-Karabakh. It was part of the group's efforts to have the international community condemn the 1992 killings as a genocide committed by the Armenians.

Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian did not meet with Lieberman or any other Israeli cabinet member when he visited Israel in March 2015 to attend a concert by the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

Nalbandian again flew to Jerusalem earlier this week to take part in official ceremonies marking the completion of restoration works at the Church of Holy Sepulcher. He held no talks with Israeli leaders.

Delegation of Serbia's University of Defense visits Armenian National Defense Research University

On March 22, the Delegation of the University of Defense of the Republic of Serbia headed by its Rector, Dr., Professor, Major General Mladen Vuruna visited the National Defense Research University, MoD, RA.

The Head of the NDRU, Doctor of Political Science, Professor, Lieutenant General Hayk Kotanjian received the guests. He presented the NDRU's establishment process, its mission, goals and main tasks. The guests were also welcomed by the Deputy Head for Research of the NDRU, Head of the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS), PhD in History Benyamin Poghosyan, who briefly presented the research activities of the University. The Head of the Center for National Security Policy and Information-Communication Technology of the NDRU, INSS Arman Grigoryan in detail presented the studies conducted in the NDRU on the areas of cybersecurity,



information-communication technologies, as well as cyber-digital resource management.

The Head of the NDRU, Lieutenant General Hayk Kotanjian mentioned that based on the research conducted in the NDRU strategic assessments and recommendations are presented to the military-political leadership of Armenia.

The guests highly appreciated the NDRU's activities and expressed satisfaction with the familiarization visit. They also expressed hope that the visit of the Delegation of the University of Defense of the Republic of Serbia to the NDRU will initiate cooperation between the two institutions.



Abu Dhabi hosts Armenia-UAE investment forum

President Serzh Sargsyan attended on March 22 the Armenia-UAE investment forum in Abu Dhabi. The forum has been organized under the auspices of Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan and Vice President of the UAE, Minister of presidential affairs Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The event organized by the Development Foundation of Armenia and the Abu Dhabi Trade Chamber aims to boost the development of economic ties between Armenia and Arab countries, promote contacts between businessmen, present Armenia's investment environment and mutually beneficial investment projects.

Attending the events are 300 state officials, foundation leaders, representatives of supranational companies, international organizations, foreign firms with successful experience of investing in Armenia.

"The friendship of Armenian and Arab peoples has passed the test of time and shaped a solid ground for interstate relations with a number of Arab countries," President Sargsyan said in his opening remarks.

President Sargsyan's full speech is provided below:

Distinguished Mr. Minister,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely delighted, and it is also of symbolic significance that only four months after my previous official visit I am hosted once again at this friendly land. I salute you



cordially in this wonderful hall: such an exceptionally representative event comes to attest to the mutual desire and commitment of the highest authorities of our countries to elevate to a qualitatively new level the economic relations between Armenia and UAE. Only months ago, this was merely an idea, whereas today it has become a reality, of which we expect a lot. I would like to express my particular gratitude to the authorities of the United Arab Emirates and especially to the Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, His Highness Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for bringing this idea to life.

Dear Colleagues,

The Armenian-Arab friendship withstood the test of time and, in our days it has

become a solid foundation for the relations between Armenia and many Arab states.

It was on this foundation, during the reign of the blessed memory Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of the United Emirates, that the official cooperation between the Armenia and the United Arab Emirates took root. And today it is our wish and also our duty to strengthen and deepen the precious legacy we received.

Throughout its history Armenia, was at the crossroads of the East and the West, and because of that the Armenian people were recognizable in both these worlds. At the same time the East and the West had mingled on our soil which is reflected in the mindset and lifestyle of our nation.

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New EU-Armenia deal initialed In Yerevan

Armenia and the European Union formally initialed on March 21 the text of a new agreement on deepening their political and economic links.

Their negotiations on the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) were concluded ahead of President Serzh Sargsyan's visit to Brussels late last month.

"The Agreement will be an important step to broaden the scope of bilateral relations between Republic of Armenia and the European Union," the two sides said in a joint statement issued after their senior negotiators initialed the deal at a ceremony in Yerevan.

Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said at the ceremony that the CEPA will "open a new page" in EU-Armenia ties. According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, Nalbandian

also expressed confidence that it will be signed "in the course of this year."

The CEPA is meant to serve as a less ambitious substitute for an Association Agreement negotiated by Armenian and EU officials in the summer of 2013. Sarkisian scuttled that agreement with his unexpected decision in September 2013 to make Armenia part of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). The U-turn was widely attributed to strong Russian pressure.

The alternative deal, which has not been publicized yet, apparently contains the main political and some economic provisions of the cancelled Association Agreement. But it has no free trade-related component due to Armenia's membership in the EEU.

"Strong commitments to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, underpin

the new agreement and Armenia-EU future cooperation," read the joint statement. It said the CEPA will also pave the way for closer EU-Armenia in the areas of energy, transport and environment protection as well as "new opportunities in trade and investments."

"Our people regard themselves as Europeans," Sargsyan declared during his trip to Brussels. He said "shared values" are at the heart of the CEPA. In that context, he reaffirmed his administration's pledges to ensure that Armenia's upcoming parliamentary elections meet democratic standards.

Earlier this year, the EU provided Armenia with over \$7 million in funding for the purchase of special electronic equipment designed to prevent some forms of electoral fraud.

Prominent Opposition Figure Arrested

(Yerevan - RFE/RL) Samvel Babayan, Nagorno-Karabakh's former top military commander close to an Armenian opposition alliance, and two other people were arrested on March 22 on suspicion of smuggling weapons to Armenia.

Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) confirmed the arrests just hours after announcing that it confiscated a shoulder-fired surface-to-air rocket system which it said was smuggled from neighboring Georgia.

The NSS said it has "credible information" suggesting that the Russian-made Igla system was commissioned by Babayan. NSS investigators are now trying to ascertain the purpose of the acquisition and the source of funding for it, the security agency added in a statement.

The NSS statement did not identify the two other suspects. Babayan's family members refused to comment on his arrest when they were contacted by RFE/RL correspondents.

Babayan, 52, commanded Karabakh's Armenian-backed army from 1993-1999 and was one of the unrecognized republic's most powerful men at that time. He was arrested in 2000 and subsequently sentenced to 14 years in prison for allegedly masterminding a botched attempt on the life of the then Karabakh president.

Immediately after being set free in 2004, Babayan relocated to Yerevan where he set up a political party that fared poorly in 2007 Armenian parliamentary elections. He emigrated to Russia in 2011 for still unclear reasons.

The once powerful general returned to Armenia in May 2016, citing the increased risk of renewed war with Azerbaijan. He has repeatedly criticized Armenia's and Karabakh's current governments since then.

Babayan has openly backed the ORO opposition alliance co-headed by former Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian and former Foreign Ministers Raffi Hovannisian and Vartan Oskanian, a major contender in Armenia's parliamentary elections slated for April 2. But he has denied any involvement in the bloc's election campaign.



Ohanian suggested that Babayan's arrest may be related to ORO's pre-election activities. "Samvel Babayan is our ideological comrade and supporter," he told reporters.

Another senior ORO figure, Armen Martirosyan, was more categorical, saying that Babayan's arrest is politically motivated and "directed against" the opposition bloc. "Since there is growing public trust towards us, the authorities resorted to yet another repressive and illegal action," he charged.

Ohanian, Oskanian and Hovannisian condemned Babayan's arrest as politically motivated in a joint statement issued later in the day. They accused the Armenian authorities of seeking to "create an atmosphere of fear in the country and influence the election results with illegal methods."

"The Ohanian-Raffi-Oskanian alliance is continuing its normal activities," said the statement. "We will not succumb to provocations. Our structures, election candidates and supporters will redouble their efforts."

The three opposition leaders also urged foreign diplomatic missions and international election monitors to closely follow the case brought against Babayan.

EU envoy urges "transparent" probe after oppositionist's arrest

A senior European Union diplomat reacted on March 24 with caution to the controversial arrest of an Armenian opposition figure, Samvel Babayan, urging the authorities in Yerevan to conduct a "transparent" investigation.

Piotr Switalski, the head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, also stressed the importance of "preventing violence" in Armenia.

Babayan, who is close to the ORO opposition alliance, was arrested by the National Security Service (NSS) on March 22 on suspicion of smuggling a shoulder-fired surface-to-air rocket system to Armenia. The NSS has still not commented on the purpose of the alleged weapons acquisition denied by Babayan.

Babayan was not formally charged as of Friday evening. The ORO leaders, among them former Defense Minister Seyran

Ohanian, have condemned his arrest as politically motivated and linked it with the upcoming parliamentary elections.

"We believe that all disputes, all complaints, all conflicts should be settled in courts and should be settled peacefully," Switalski said, commenting on the high-profile case. "Therefore, for the European Union, the question of preventing violence is very important. We believe that the primary responsibility for preventing violence and reacting to possible disturbance of public peace lies with the law-enforcement authorities."

"Therefore, all these procedures should be very transparent," Switalski went on. "If there is a suspicion that something wrong is being prepared or happening, we believe that the law-enforcement agencies should act in full transparency so that the population, the voters have the

confidence that it is not done for political purposes, that it is not done to intimidate other voters but it is done in accordance with the rule of law."

Switalski sounded more optimistic about the conduct of the elections. "The European Union is working on the basis of a positive scenario," said the EU envoy. "We want very much these elections to mark a new quality in democratic practices in Armenia and we are preparing our support activities on the basis that these elections will open a new chapter."

He again indicated that Yerevan should expect more EU aid if the polls meet democratic standards.

Earlier this year, the EU provided Armenia with over \$7 million in funding for the purchase of special electronic equipment designed to prevent some forms of electoral fraud.

Ter-Petrosian again calls for compromise deal on Karabakh



Former President Levon Ter-Petrosian has reaffirmed his strong support for a compromise solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that has been proposed by the United States, Russia and France for the past decade.

"There can be no other [realistic] solution," Ter-Petrosian said in a rare interview with Armenian Public Television aired on March 22. The opposition leader referred to the Basic Principles of the conflict's resolution that were first put forward by the U.S., Russian and French co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in Madrid in 2007. The framework accord calls for a phased settlement that would start with Armenian withdrawal from virtually all districts around Karabakh. It would end with a referendum in which Karabakh's predominantly Armenian population would determine the disputed territory's internationally recognized status.

Ter-Petrosian described the proposed referendum as a "great victory and achievement" for the Armenian side. "We could only

dream about that in 1988," he told the state-run broadcaster.

"The people elected [this government] and they must demand one thing." Solve this problem, end our suffering and everyday deaths of our sons." The peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan must force their governments to opt for peace," declared the 72-year-old politician.

Ter-Petrosian, who served as Armenia's first president from 1991-1998, stressed that only his Congress-HZhK alliance and President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party (HHK) support this peace formula in one way or another. He slammed other major contenders in Armenia's upcoming parliamentary elections, saying that their tougher positions on the Karabakh issue are "fairy tales that have nothing to do with reality."

The HHK spokesman, Eduard Sharmazanov, welcomed the ex-president's remarks on March 22. "It is very important that the first president of the republic acknowledges that the current authorities were elected and are taking no steps in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that go against our national interests," he told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutjun.am).

"Furthermore, he pointed out that the Madrid document ... adopted by our government as a basis [for further negotiations] is not a sellout," added Sharmazanov.

Ter-Petrosian already expressed readiness to help the Sargsyan administration reach a peace deal with Azerbaijan along these lines in a speech delivered last December. He stood by his view that peace with Azerbaijan is vital for Armenia's security and prosperity. A Karabakh settlement is the central theme of his bloc's election campaign.

The December speech drew criticism from other opposition groups and the HHK. In particular, representatives of the ruling party said that the Azerbaijani leadership is currently not prepared to reciprocate Armenian concessions.

In his latest televised remarks, Ter-Petrosian claimed that Yerevan and Baku now disagree on only "two or three issues" relating to the repeatedly modified Basic Principles. He declined to disclose these sticking points, while expressing confidence that the conflicting parties will overcome them soon.

"There are now new circumstances which make me optimistic that this problem will definitely be solved in the near future," he said. "I can't say [whether this will happen] within days, weeks or months, but it will be solved."

Ter-Petrosian added that his optimism is based on his belief that Russia is increasingly keen to end the Karabakh status quo and that Western powers will only back Moscow in this endeavor.

Hundreds attend armenian activist's funeral



Hundreds of people took part on March 22 in the funeral of Artur Sargsyan, an Armenian activist who died last week while being prosecuted on charges of aiding opposition gunmen last summer.

They applauded throughout the funeral procession that ended at a cemetery in Yerevan where he was laid to rest.

Sargsyan, 49, drove his car through a police cordon to deliver food to armed members of a radical opposition group that seized a police base in Yerevan in July. Their two-week standoff with security forces left three police officers dead.

Sargsyan surrendered to law-enforcement on July 31 along with the remaining gunmen holed up in the compound. He was released from custody in late December but was again arrested last month.

Sargsyan, who earned the popular nickname "Bread Bringer," was again set free on bail on March 6 following a 25-day hunger strike that further worsened his health condition. He died at a Yerevan hospital ten days later, hours after undergoing urgent bowel surgery.

His death sparked a series of angry protests staged in Yerevan by hundreds of opposition supporters. They as well as many Armenian opposition politicians say that Sargsyan should not have been kept in custody because he suffered from several chronic illnesses.

Some of those politicians attended a requiem service for Sargsyan held at a Yerevan funeral parlor on Tuesday. One prominent opposition leader, former Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian, paid his respects to the activist just before the start of his funeral.

Armenia's Investigative Committee is conducting an investigation into Sargsyan's death under a Criminal Code article that deals with negligent homicides resulting from inadequate medical aid. The law-enforcement body has not charged anyone yet. Hospital doctors insist that they did their best to save Sargsyan's life.

The deceased activist's supporters say that the authorities should punish instead law-enforcement officials and judges responsible for his arrest.

UAE's Ocean Holding LLC to invest \$100 million in Armenia's solar energy sector



The Armenian Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources and the Ocean Holding LLC have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, the Development Foundation of Armenia reports. The cooperation will work towards developing the renewable energy sector in Armenia and will enable the Ocean Holding to make investments in solar energy projects. Starting this year, Ocean Holding intends to invest 100 million USD in solar photovoltaic power plants in Armenia and operate them using the best technology available to the sector.

In return, the Ministry pledges to create favourable conditions for Ocean Holding. The investments will be made in several phases.

"Armenia has created favorable conditions for renewable energy; the country has invested its entire toolset to boost the sector. The Government continues to seek new opportunities to increase energy security to ensure supply, energy efficiency, new investments, new technologies, regional cooperation and a sustainable infrastructure," Armenia's Deputy Minister of Energy Infrastructure and Natural Resources Hayk Harutyunyan said at the Armenia-UAE investment forum in Abu Dhabi.

International Day of Nowruz celebrated in Yerevan

These days the Iranian-speaking and Turkic peoples celebrate one of the world's oldest holidays Nowruz, which is close to a variety of Eurasian peoples New Year holiday. It also symbolizes the first day of spring and the awakening of nature.

It is believed that this holiday has Iranian origin, the name associated with the sun worship and Zaratushtira prophet.

Nowruz celebration started to feast in the spring equinox after the emergence of a solar calendar.

According to this calendar, the year began on March 20 or 21, when the new farming

season was opened.

It is due to this fact, that during centuries-old celebration of Nowruz the table has been decorated with mainly grain origin dishes.

In addition, a mirror was put on the table and also burning candles which did not allowed to extinguish.

The representatives of some diplomatic missions in Armenia, political and cultural figures also participated in the celebrations of Nowruz in Armenia.

The embassies of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan took the initiative to organize the celebration, which was held in the concert

hall named after Arno Babajanyan. Armenian and Kazakh youngsters have performed national songs.

The holiday, which pays great attention to the peace, friendly relations and good neighborliness, occupies a special place in the history of mankind's cultural development.

In ancient times, Nowruz was celebrated 13 days. This tradition has been preserved in Iran till nowadays.

Eliza Zakharyan, "Noyan Tapan"
Translated by Sarah Melkonyan

Armenian Government, EIB willing to develop cooperation

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan received on March 24 Vazil Hudák, Vice-President of the European Investment Bank (EIB).

The Prime Minister hailed the cooperation with EIB aimed at implementation of projects in the fields of energy, transport, agriculture and tourism. He attached importance to the Bank's cooperation with the private sector and added that "the government has adopted a clear-cut policy of implementing reforms in absolutely all spheres."

"Our steps will be targeted at creating a predictable and transparent field for business," he noted.

Vazil Hudák noted, in turn, that "The European Investment bank is interested in

maintaining cooperation with the Armenian government in all domains."

Karen Karapetyan welcomed the willingness to cooperate and said that "serious re-

forms to be implemented in regional governance will allow to improve the transparency and efficiency, involve private investors in different public services."



International Development meets impact investing at Armenia Summit



Global development practitioners are gathering at the Impact Investment for Development Summit in Yerevan, Armenia to explore opportunities and mechanisms to promote impact investment for development.

The United Nations Development Program and the INSEAD Social En-

trepreneurship Initiative say the event may be the first conference focused on scaling impact ventures from incubation to acceleration and expansion to support development goals.

The Summit is a first of its kind collaborative dialogue that convenes a wide range of impact business leaders,

social venture philanthropists, United Nations officials and other development practitioners, as well as social entrepreneurs, philanthropic organizations, government representatives and leading academics.

The Summit will bring together key stakeholders from the growing impact investment ecosystem, in order to create new models of collaboration between investors, ventures, governments and international development organizations.

The IID Summit includes a set of events, including a series of TEDx talks, showcase-sessions for pioneering impact ventures that present fresh solutions for the SDGs, interactive discussions, a thematic exhibition, and more.

The Summit will take place at the Tumo Center for Creative Technologies – a venue intentionally selected as an example of an innovative impact venture that directly supports development. Several other social enterprises have contributed to the Summit.

Armenia's Transport Minister to run for UNWTO Secretary General

Armenia's Transport Minister Vahan Martirosyan will compete for the position of the UN World Travel Organization (UNWTO).

The UNWTO's current Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai of Jordan, has served in the position since January 2010 and is stepping down at the end of this year. The organization's 33-nation executive board will choose a nominee in May to be voted on by its General Assembly later this year to serve as Secretary-General for the 2018 to 2021 term.

Seven eligible applications have been submitted. Other candidates

are Márcio Favilla, Brazil; Walter Mzembe, Zimbabwe; Zurab Pololikashvili, Georgia; Jaime Alberto Cabal Sanclemente, Colombia; Alain St. Ange, Seychelles; Dho Young-shim, South Korea.

As part of the United Nations, the UNWTO supports many of the United Nations' programs and is one of the largest global tourism organizations that advise member states on how to develop and implement tourism policies. The organization's mission is to, "drive economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offer leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide," according to its website.

UNWTO's membership includes 157 countries, six associate members and 500 affiliate members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

Vahan Martirosyan was appointed as Armenia's Minister of Transport and Communications in September 2016 and in October had a title change to Minister of Transport, Communication and Information Technologies. Martirosyan spent more than 30 years working in electrical engineering posts in Armenia, serving in various board positions of CJSC, one of the country's largest electrical utility companies, for the past 16 years.



Abu Dhabi hosts Armenia-UAE investment forum

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This means that if you come to Armenia, you will not only discover the environment conducive for doing business, but will also find familiar features the most characteristic of which, perhaps, is traditional Armenian hospitality and warmth, so typical for our fraternal Arab people as well.

Naturally, some of you have your own perception of Armenia, though many yet have to discover it, especially as a country with economic potential. But before you do, let me highlight some aspects of doing business in Armenia, some important prerequisites from the perspective of a mutually beneficial partnership.

It is incontestable that perhaps the most crucial factor for the mutually beneficial partnership is trust. In this rapidly changing competitive world, long-term partnerships may be forged and investments may be made only if there exists the atmosphere of trust. This is something we do share in earnest. Our peoples know each other historically, and by virtue of history having lived side by side with the Arab people and being exposed to the Arab civilization, we appreciate the value of trust very well.

Despite the hard time that befell upon us throughout our history, we never gave in, spread all over the world and became successful businessmen. We are not intimidated by constraints imposed upon us, and we do our best to turn them into competitive advantages. Having no fossil fuel, we develop human resources; subjected to a double blockade, we build integration bridges; being a landlocked country, we open up to the world through our Armenian communities spread all over the world, we communicate setting up alternative ways and taking advantage of the state of the art technology.

This is best testified to by the fact that Armenia today has turned into a country offering sophisticated turnkey technological solutions and services, taking up its specific niche on the mainstream global ICT map. You have the opportunity to see for yourself through your own experience that Armenia has created a conducive framework for doing business and a free investment environment protected by law.

This is attested to by the World Bank 2017 Doing Business Report in which Armenia ranks the 38th among 190 countries; moreover, it ranks the 9th with regard to simplicity of starting a business. As for the economic freedom indicator, this year marked unprecedented progress: our country currently is the 33rd, which means we have improved our standing over last year by 21 notches.

Our government has created investment packages which I keep in the focus of my immediate attention. We shall welcome and support investors from the United Arab Emirates in various sectors of the Armenia economy.

There are great opportunities for cooperation in agriculture and food processing. Organic and greenhouse farming is growing in Armenia day by day, the produce of which, I believe, is in great demand in your country as well. Armenia has earned itself a reputation in canning and drying fruits and vegetables, producing juices, and drinking water from our springs has long been the country's showpiece. One of the world's tastiest fruits – sun-drenched apricot, is indigenous to Armenia, in academic taxonomy it is called *Prunus Armeniaca*.

Armenia's free economic zones may serve as an effective platform for cooperation in these sectors. Alliance, geared towards high-tech and innovative production, as well as Meridian for jewelry, precious stones and watchmaking; operation within these zones enjoys an almost total exemption of taxes and duties. Another one is in the pipeline, a free economic zone with a broader scope, to become an effective platform for entry to the markets of the EAEU, EU and the Middle East countries. Armenia offers to the UAE businessmen a continually increasing market as Eurasian integration has expanded Armenia's economic boundaries to nearly 1/7th of the world's mainland.

Along with that recent negotiations between Armenia and the EU on the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership have been completed. It creates a new level of our economic relations with the European Union, new opportunities for trade and investments. Armenia had already been benefitting from the GSP+ re-

gime with the EU, which allows to export to Europe more than 6,400 products made in Armenia on preferential terms.

I am certain that working together we will register substantial accomplishments. This is best witnessed by the unprecedented growth of trade turnover between our countries: almost 2.5 times, as of the end of last year. Whereas this year there has been an exponential increase of more than 8 times, and we intent to keep up the pace.

I have to mention tourism here – the best medium for friendship and people to people contacts, intercultural dialogue and getting acquainted with each other. I will acknowledge with pleasure that the number of tourists visiting Armenia from the United Arab Emirates is growing progressively: it increased by 44% just in 2016. I am certain that this is far from being the limit, especially considering that today, as we speak, a visa free entry regime to Armenia takes effect for the UAE citizens. Services available for tourists improve in Armenia consistently. The service sector in Armenia is the fastest growing sector in general, and our country stands out advantageously in the region in this respect.

Incidentally, I would like to reflect on one more circumstance: within recent years Armenia has received 20,000 people of the Armenian descent, who are equally bearers of the Armenian as well as Arab identity and culture. The presence in Armenia of such a solid cohort of bilingual individuals with remarkable entrepreneurial traditions, may directly and significantly facilitate the activities of the UAE investors in our country.

Dear Colleagues,

I hereby invite every one of you to discover Armenia, with its remarkable mountainous landscape, delicious cuisine, traditional Armenian hospitality, and, certainly, educated, hardworking and knowledgeable workforce, fit for contributing to any long-term project.

Thank you for your attention, and I once again express my gratitude to the leadership of the Emirates for organizing this splendid event.

Thank you.

International Blogger Forum Takes Place in Artsakh



About 30 journalists from 11 different countries gathered in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh) for a forum organized by the Artsakh Union of Journalist in conjunction with Artsakhakertum NGO, Artsakh-based Artsakhpess reported.

Attendees included Anton Nossik (Russia), Anton Merkurov (Russia), Alexander Alimov (Latvia), Tarik Hafed (Algeria), Romain Mielcarek (France), Gilad Halpern (Israel), Aleksandr Hoishyk (Belarus), Irina Kovalchuk (Ukraine), Luciano Trinanz (Italy), and Petruska Sustrova (Czech Republic).

The forum, which was chaired by Artsakhakertum co-president and

Artsakh Prime Minister spokesperson Artak Beglaryan and media expert Samvel Martirosyan, concentrated on presenting conflicts on social media and ensuring the freedom of bloggers and journalists.

During the forum, Hrachya Arzumanyan, the Director of the Ashkharh Center for Strategic Research, provided a background of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict and its recent developments.

“The Azerbaijani society needs to be cured from the illness called ‘Aliyev clan’ with the help of the international court, which will condemn the upbringing that teaches generations to cut the heads and ears of Armenian women and children,” Arzumanyan said.

He reminded participants of the forum that just last April over 100 Armenian soldiers were killed as a result of large scale military operations by Azerbaijan. Arzumanyan stressed that these deaths took place because the superpowers of the world wanted play with the region.

According to the military expert, bloggers and journalists could play a vital role in addressing the issue when superpowers fail to do so.

Then Artsakh Deputy Minister of Economy Sergey Shahverdyan presented the state of tourism in the country, citing that about 15,000 tourists from Russia, Europe, Iran, and European countries visit Artsakh yearly.

“Tourism is a tool of intercultural dialogue, that’s why people must have freedom of movement,” he said. He added that the airport in Stepanakert is not functioning because of Azeri aggression and the lack of support from international organizations.

Participants of the forum were able to ask a serious of questions about Artsakh and its recognition and had the opportunity to provide their overall impressions.

Armenia never restricted freedom of expression during April war: Arman Saghatelyan

Armenia is one of the 14 countries with absolutely no interference in Internet management, Arman Saghatelyan, Executive Director of the Public Radio of Armenia, said at a WCFDavos/Yerevan forum on “From Crisis to Development – Powered by Communication.”

“Under these conditions the fight against fake news is a hard, but thankful task,” he said.

Speaking about the April war, Saghatelyan said “the Armenian information field ensured an apparent privilege over Azerbaijan.”

“Having an open system, we never restricted the free movement of media representatives and the freedom of expression. Instead, we ensured security and allowed international media to the conflict zone, the territory of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, guaranteeing freedom of expression and enabling them to cover the events,” Arman Saghatelyan said.

He noted, however, that the open system and the information liberalism, which Armenia stands for, includes certain risks. These include huge flow of misinformation, abuse of the right to freedom of expression and speech.

“Unlike closed systems, we are more stable, more intellectual and creative, and, therefore, more prepared to respond to new challenges,” Arman Saghatelyan said.

World Communication Forum Association (WCFA) in cooperation with Armenian Public Relations Association (APRA) has organized a two-day WCFDavos/Yerevan forum “From Crisis to Development – Powered by Communication” in Yerevan.



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.

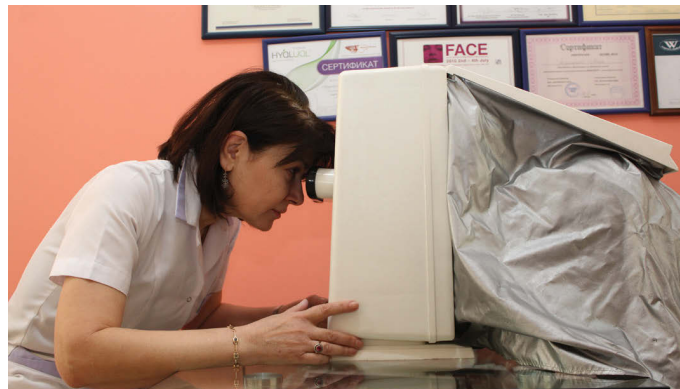
You are welcome to City Spa. The aesthetic doctor's consultations and skin diagnostics with Skin Scanner is fee. The atmosphere in City spa is full of love and peace. The pricing strategy is very flexible and discounts for good long term clients are available during whole year as well as different Gift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



The address:
Baghramyan
1st DL, 2-nd building,
2-nd floor.

Phone: +374 60 536 536

E-mail:
spa.city@yahoo.com

Website:
www.cityspa.am

"Threat for a wide-scale war, different Russian interests, vacuum in NK settlement process"

Interview with Thomas de Waal Senior Fellow Carnegie Europe, European analyst, British journalist.

Diplomatic activeness following the April War and the process of implementation of agreement anticipated from that activeness, and generally negotiations are at a deadlock, the situation on the contact line is rather tense, recently the Azerbaijani side launched another attack, new regional and extra-regional developments are observed. What developments are anticipated both on the contact line and in negotiations taking into consideration stances of the sides?

Many people are awaiting this spring in and around Nagorno Karabakh very nervously, as there has been no political progress since the fighting in April 2016 and there is no evidence that diplomacy is achieving any results. The fear stems from the fact that in both societies there is a mood of aggression which the leaders are not acting to dispel. In Azerbaijan levels of frustration are high as there has been no political progress on the Karabakh issue in the last year.

On the Armenian side, there is still anger and bitterness about last year's violence. Neither Azerbaijani frustration nor Armenian anger are a policy or a strategy, but there is a danger that they could influence decisions and help trigger more conflict. We risk ending up in a "vicious circle" of aggression, which leads to real conflict and loss of life.

In your last article you mentioned that the conflict needs immediate diplomatic efforts to avoid new escalation and war on the conflict zone. How should negotiations be resumed, when agreements reached in Vienna and St. Petersburg remains on the paper?

The agreements achieved last summer should be the basis for negotiations. Indeed, they are the only basis for dialogue at the moment. Essentially, in the Vienna meeting, both sides agreed to compromises that they had previously rejected. In other words, the Azerbaijani side agreed to measures on strengthening the ceasefire regime and the Armenian side agreed to "comprehensive negotiations" on a peace agreement.

Why there is no progress?

It is no wonder that there is so much aggression in the air when diplomacy is seen to have achieved so little. A vacuum has been created which will be filled either by negotiations or by threats and potential military

action. Another problem is that the other two Minsk Group co-chairs, France and the United States, have been seen to be too passive recently and that therefore the impression is created that Russia—and in particular foreign minister Sergei Lavrov—is the sole negotiator. Yet Russia is not fully trusted by either the Armenian or Azerbaijani side. Everyone, including Russia, needs to see Paris and Washington be more active and diplomatic activity needs to be choreographed by all three co-chairs.



After the meeting with President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan, Francois Hollande proposed to "develop a mechanism that will enable to carry out monitoring and prevention. Sanctions are also possible in case of actions against peace." How do you assess the productivity and possibility of this suggestion when even monitoring mechanisms are hard to implement on the contact line?

The issue of establishing mechanisms to better monitor the ceasefire has been discussed for many years. Former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev believed he had set up such a mechanism at a meeting in 2010 with the two presidents in Astrakhan. There was an official call for both sides to remove snipers from the Line of Contact at the Vilnius Summit of 2011. In the last year an agreement was made in principle to increase the size of Ambassador Kasprzyk's monitoring mission. But nothing has changed. Ultimately, this is because a relatively weak ceasefire regime gives Azerbaijan—the side that lost the conflict of the 1990s—leverage and pressure it can use against the Armenians. It is unrealistic to expect that Baku will give up that leverage without getting something in exchange, such as an Armenian commitment to more substantial political negotiations.

What role and interest does Moscow have under current state of affairs? On account of high distrust toward Moscow both in Yerevan and Baku, to which ex-

tent will Moscow succeed to urge its programs to the parties to the conflict?

Russia is in a strange position vis-à-vis the Karabakh conflict, being the most influential outside power, the main mediator and also an interested party, which sells weapons to both sides and thereby fuels the conflict. There are also different Russian interests. I would say that the Russian security establishment and military has an interest in preserving the status quo and preserving the balance of power between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Others, such as the business elites and foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, see opportunities in resolving the conflict, believing that a peace settlement can be constructed which increases Russia's influence in the region and opens up communication networks.

But I think the chief paradox of the "Russia factor" is that Moscow is increasing the likelihood of conflict by selling weapons to both sides, and yet has no interest in a new conflict. That would mean being under great pressure to abandon its balanced approach, honour its military alliance with Armenia and lose its relationship with Azerbaijan. In short, Russia has too many interests to be able to promote a resolution of the conflict on its own. Other international players must be involved.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said at a joint press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin that creating the tripartite union of Turkey, Russia and Azerbaijan, as well as the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were discussed in the sixth meeting of the High-Level Russian-Turkish Cooperation Council. How will this new format impact on the situation in the contact line and on negotiations?

Turkey and Azerbaijan both want an enhanced Turkish role in the Karabakh conflict. But that is impossible so long as it is not a neutral actor—Turkey has no diplomatic relations with Armenia and expresses strong support for Azerbaijan's position. No new formats will change that. And the warming of relations between Moscow and Ankara cannot overcome centuries-old differences on the politics of the Black Sea and the Middle East. It is hard for Russia and Turkey to agree a common position on the Karabakh conflict. Thomas de Waal Senior Fellow Carnegie Europe

By Araks Martirosyan

What's Armenia's role in CSTO?-Serzh Sargsyan clarifies

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is not aimed against anyone. The Treaty signatories were concerned with security in the area of the organization, President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan said in an interview to MIR TV.

"Here we speak about collective benefit which is derived as a result of combination of efforts. This is our position and the sooner the process of adaptation of the CSTO to the present realities takes place the more the Member States of the Organization will benefit," the Armenian President said.

To the question which are the main challenges facing the CSTO and particularly Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan answered, "In the contemporary world challenges and threats arise in different ways. Security threats are multi-layered. For us the situation in the region is a threat.

I speak about Azerbaijan that wants to solve Nagorno Karabakh conflict by military ways. We are the security guarantor of the people of Nagorno Karabakh that is why it is the first threat, the first challenge facing us," President Sargsyan said. He added that only 400 kms separate Armenia from the territories where the "Islamic State" operates.

This means that the developments in the Middle East are indirectly linked with our security. If we take into account that many citizens from the CIS member states are involved in the operations of the "Islamic State" it's clear that sooner or later people with war experience will appear in our region who resort to barbaric methods and can create additional complications in the efforts of ensuring the fragile stability.

Unfortunately we hear conversations in the Arabic language and other unclear voices in the opposite side of the contact line. We think that people who have abandoned the Middle East start to be involved in the conflicts of our region.

This is of course very dangerous and there are also many other threats in the contemporary world, they are very many", Serzh Sargsyan said. Referring to the question about Armenia's role in the CSTO, the Armenian President said, "Armenia is among the founders of the CSTO and this factor brings more responsibilities for Yerevan. We see our role in the implementation of the requirements and obligations put by the Organization. Because I think it's the first thing



all the Member States of the Organization should do.

The world changes. 25 years ago probably no one would think that terrorism would emerge reaching such large scales. That's why our organization has to get adapted and develop. Last year we adopted the strategy of the Collective Security for the period until 2025 during the CSTO Council session in Yerevan.

It had been a priority for us since the beginning of our chairmanship over the Organization and we managed to bring it into life. The key development directions of our Organization are clearly pointed out in that strategy.

I think both Armenia and the other stakeholders are interested in the development of the CSTO," the Armenian President said. Serzh Sargsyan refrained from comparing the CSTO with the NATO, emphasizing that any organization pursues its goals and tasks from the very beginning any organization gets accomplished on its own.

"We must take into account that path experienced organizations have passed. There is nothing shameful in applying the positive experience of others. I think the goals and tasks the Member States put in front of them when creating our Organization are realistic and are in the interest of all the Member States. That's why I reiterate, our goal is to develop the CSTO, we have to develop in order others try to compare us with other organizations," Serzh Sargsyan said.

Westminster attack: Armenia expresses solidarity with UK

Armenia has expressed solidarity with the UK after the attack outside the Parliament.

"Our thoughts are with victims of horrible Westminster attack," the Armenian Foreign Ministry said in a Twitter post. "We stand in solidarity with international efforts to counter terrorism," the Ministry said.

Five people have died and at least 40 were injured after an attacker drove a car along a pavement in Westminster, stabbed a policeman and was shot dead by police in the grounds of Parliament, the BBC reports.

The dead officer has been named as PC Keith Palmer, 48, a husband and father.

PM Theresa May said the attack was "sick and depraved" and struck at values of liberty, democracy and freedom of speech.

The attacker has not been named by police.

Acting Deputy Commissioner and head of counter terrorism at the Metropolitan Police, Mark Rowley, said they think they know who he is and that he was inspired by international and Islamist-related terrorism, but gave no further details.

The attack unfolded at about 14.40 GMT when a single attacker drove a grey Hyundai i40 along a pavement over Westminster Bridge,



near the Houses of Parliament in central London, killing at least two people and injuring many more.

The car then crashed into railings outside the Houses of Parliament.

The attacker, armed with a knife, ran to Parliament where he was confronted by the police. PC Palmer – who was not armed – was then stabbed and killed.

The attacker was shot dead by armed officers.

Reps. Trott and Schiff Spearhead Bipartisan Genocide Prevention Resolution

Legislation aims to apply lessons of the Armenian Genocide in preventing new atrocities across the Middle East

U.S. Representatives David Trott (R-MI) and Adam Schiff (D-CA) on March 22 joined with their Congressional Armenian Caucus colleagues in introducing a bipartisan anti-genocide resolution calling on the United States to apply the lessons of the Armenian Genocide in seeking to prevent modern day atrocities across the Middle East, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

This genocide prevention measure stresses that “proper commemoration and consistent condemnation of the Armenian Genocide will strengthen our international standing in preventing modern day genocides,” and, building upon the 2016 official U.S. designation of an ISIS genocide against Middle East minorities, specifically calls for the following: “[T]he United States, in seeking to prevent war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide against Christians, Yazidis, Muslims, Kurds, and other vulnerable religious and ethnic groups in the Middle East, should draw upon relevant lessons of the United States Government, civil society, and humanitarian response to the Armenian Genocide, Seyfo, and the broader genocidal campaign by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Greeks, Pontians and other Christians upon their biblical era homelands.”

“We thank Congressmen Trott and Schiff, their colleagues in the leadership of the Armenian Caucus, and all the original cosponsors of this resolution – including House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce and Ranking Member Engel – for their commitment to ensuring that the lessons of the U.S. response to the Armenian Genocide are applied to help prevent modern-day atrocities taking place across the Middle East,” said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. “We look forward, in the coming days and weeks, to working with Members of Congress and all our coalition partners to see this genocide-prevention measure adopted by the U.S. House.”

In a letter inviting their House colleagues to co-sponsor this legislation, Reps. Trott and Schiff underscored that: “It is time for the United States government to officially take a stand for the truth, and against genocide denial.”

Joining Representatives Trott and Schiff as original cosponsors of the Genocide Prevention Resolution are House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Member Eliot Engel (D-NY), Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Jackie Speier (D-CA), and David Valadao (R-CA) and Vice-Chair Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), as well as, Representatives Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Judy Chu (D-CA), Katherine Clark (D-MA), Anna Eschoo (D-CA), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), James McGovern (D-MA), and John Sarbanes (D-MD).

The launch of this legislation takes place on the same day as the special Capitol Hill viewing of “The Promise,” the Armenian Genocide-era epic, starring Oscar-winner Christian Bale and directed by Oscar-winner Terry George. Parallel to this legislative initiative, the Armenian Caucus is collecting Congressional signatures on a letter urging President Trump to properly commemorate the Armenian Genocide, as a genocide, this April 24th.

In 2016, the House of Representatives and the Senate both passed legislation concluding that the atrocities perpetrated by ISIL against Christians, Yazidis, and other religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Secretary Kerry subsequently stated that ISIS was “responsible for genocide against Yazidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims.”

The full text of the genocide prevention resolution is provided below:

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding past genocides, and for other purposes.

Whereas the lessons of past genocides should be applied to help prevent future war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide;

Whereas, on March 17, 2016, the Department of State declared that “Da’esh is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yazidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims”, and is “also responsible for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at these same groups and in some cases against Sunni Muslims and Kurds and other minorities”;

Whereas the House of Representatives, on March 14, 2016, passed H.Con.Res.75, which concluded that “the atrocities perpe-

trated by ISIL against Christians, Yazidis, and other religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide”;

Whereas the Senate, on July 7, 2016, passed S.Res.340, which concluded that “the atrocities perpetrated by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) against Christians, Yazidis, Shi’a, and other religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide”;

Whereas the United States has a proud record of protesting and providing relief to Armenian and other Christian survivors of the Ottoman Empire’s genocidal campaign;

Whereas President Woodrow Wilson encouraged the formation of the Near East Relief, chartered by an Act of Congress, which raised \$116,000,000 (over \$2,500,000,000 in 2017 dollars) between 1915 and 1930, the Senate adopted resolutions condemning these massacres, and United States diplomats organized and led protests of these crimes;

Whereas the United States is on record as having officially recognized the Armenian Genocide, in the United States Government’s May 28, 1951, written statement to the International Court of Justice regarding the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, through President Ronald Reagan’s April 22, 1981, Proclamation No. 4838, and by House Joint Resolution 148, adopted on April 8, 1975, and House Joint Resolution 247, adopted on September 10, 1984; and

Whereas the proper commemoration and consistent condemnation of the Armenian Genocide will strengthen our international standing in preventing modern day genocides: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States, in seeking to prevent war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide against Christians, Yazidis, Muslims, Kurds, and other vulnerable religious and ethnic groups in the Middle East, should draw upon relevant lessons of the United States Government, civil society, and humanitarian response to the Armenian Genocide, Seyfo, and the broader genocidal campaign by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Greeks, Pontians and other Christians upon their biblical era homelands.

Armenia becomes 60th country to endorse Safe Schools Declaration



Armenia became the 60th country to endorse the international Safe Schools Declaration on March 22, 2017, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) said.

“We warmly congratulate Armenia for making this commitment to ensure that students and schools are better protected around the world, even during times of conflict,” said Diya Nijhowne, GCPEA director. “Armenia joins a growing community of states that recognize that more can be done, and that more must be done, so that students can study safely in their schools.”

Armenia’s endorsement means that the majority of Council of Europe member states have now endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration.

The Safe Schools Declaration is an inter-governmental political commitment that provides countries with the opportunity to express support for protecting students, teachers, schools, and universities from attack during times of armed conflict. It stresses the importance of continuing education during armed conflict.

By joining the declaration, countries pledge to restore access to education when schools are bombed, burned, and destroyed during armed conflict, and undertake to make it less likely that students, teachers, and schools will be attacked in the first place. They agree to deter such violence by promising to investigate and prosecute war crimes involving schools, and to minimize the use of schools for military purposes so they do not become targets for attack.

This latest endorsement occurs just six days before the Second International Safe Schools Conference, to be co-hosted by the Argentine ministries of foreign affairs and defense in Buenos Aires on March 28-29.

GCPEA is an inter-agency coalition formed in 2010 by organizations working in the fields of education in emergencies and conflict-affected contexts, higher education, protection, and international human rights and humanitarian law that were concerned about ongoing attacks on educational institutions, their students, and staff in countries affected by conflict and insecurity.

GCPEA is a coalition of organizations that includes: The Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA), Human Rights Watch, the Institute of International Education, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC, a program of Education Above All), Save the Children, the Scholars at Risk Network, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem speaks at Jesus tomb reopening ceremony

An Armenian official delegation headed by Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian attended the reopening of the Jesus tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem’s Old City.

Attending the event were Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, high-ranking officials from other countries, Christian church leaders, thousands of pious people.

Earlier the day Minister Nalbandian had visited the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem to meet with Patriarch, Archbishop Nurhan Manukian.

Archbishop Nurhan Manukian delivered a speech at the ceremony along with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of the Greek Orthodox Church, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos II. A message from His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, was read out.

The tomb where Jesus is believed to have been buried was unveiled today following nine months of restoration.

Three main Christian denominations – Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian Churches – jealously guard separate sections of the



church, but they put aside their longstanding religious rivalries to give their blessing for the restoration. Armenian architects were involved in reconstruction works.

Euronews: The Armenian island of Venice

Euronews – The Armenian presence in Europe stretches from London to Larnaca, Lisbon to Lviv; the Armenian Catholic Mkhitarian Congregation is among the most impactful examples of that legacy and this year marks a three-century-long presence in one of Europe's most iconic towns.

The vaporetto leaves from San Zaccaria to one of the most unique corners of Venice, a testament to the centuries of multi-cultural history of that magnificent city. The unique corner is really an island – Isola di San Lazzaro degli Armeni, or the Island of St. Lazarus of the Armenians. This year marks the 300th anniversary of that island becoming home to the Mkhitarian or Mechitarist Congregation.

Mkhitar was born in Sebastia (modern-day Sivas, in central Turkey) in 1676. He joined the Armenian Church at a time when it was facing the challenges of a modernising world. Drawn to Western Christianity and its already-established traditions of education and publishing, Mkhitar ran his own printing house in Constantinople (Istanbul), bringing together other like-minded individuals who longed to rejuvenate and invigorate a community at times struggling in the social and political milieu of the 17th century Ottoman Empire. Facing the resistance of the authorities, Abbot Mkhitar and his followers, who established the congregation named after the founder in 1700, spent some time moving from place to place – first to Greece, then up the Adriatic – before finally establishing themselves on what used to be a leper colony off Venice in 1717.

In the centuries that followed, the Mkhitar-

ian fathers had a profound effect on research, education, and publishing in Europe generally, and for the Armenian world in particular. Still today, the monastery they founded continues to produce books; Venice is one of two cities in the world that can boast having published at least one Armenian book every year for three hundred years or more, with just a few interruptions (the other city being Istanbul). Whether as first-time publications of ancient manuscripts, translations of significant European works, or the other way around, the Armenian legacy has been showcased to the European and broader world through the efforts of these monks, and the doors of Europe have likewise been opened for Armenians thanks to their activities.

“The Mkhitarian Congregation has always served as a bridge,” says Father Serop Jamourlian, “both for tying the Armenian reality to the European world in terms of scholarship and spirituality, and also as a bridge of universal human values: it is a representative of the East in the West and the conveyor of Western ideas to the East.”

Perhaps the most significant impact the Congregation has had involves the development of language and identity. It was the Mkhitarian fathers who first published modern dictionaries of the Armenian language. Modern scientific approaches to research and education also owe much to these Armenian priests in Venice, who once upon a time ran a network of some thirty schools across Europe and the Middle East.

The reputation of San Lazzaro was so strong that Napoleon Bonaparte offered that monastery special permission to continue

functioning even after he shut down other religious institutions in Venice in 1810. A few years later, the island's most famous guest – Lord Byron – spent some months during 1816-1817 studying the Armenian language.

The Mechitarists have suffered some setbacks over the course of their rich history, such as a significant split in the Congregation that led to a second monastery being established in Vienna in 1811. They reunited in 2000. The two had meanwhile carried on Abbot Mkhitar's mission diligently. Both Venice and Vienna are known as centres of learning for the Armenian world.

Although the Mkhitarian Congregation is not as active as it used to be, with a smaller membership and growing challenges within a generally more secular global environment, it continues to run four schools in places reflecting the footprint of the Armenian Diaspora: Beirut, Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, and Istanbul. A school was established in Yerevan, in the Republic of Armenia, in the year 2007 – a good indication of the renewal of Diaspora-Homeland ties since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Special commemorations are planned for September during this 300th anniversary year – celebrations alongside the people of Italy and Venice. Father Serop emphasises that their welcoming and hospitable attitude towards the Armenians is based on the experience of many centuries of deep ties. What lies in store for the Mkhitarian Congregation? Father Serop says that the mission has always been and remains, “Service to the Armenian nation”.



1,237 photos and 184 films submitted for Aurora competitions

The application process of Aurora Short Film and Photo Competitions is over.

1,237 photos have been submitted for the Aurora Photo Competition from 48 countries including Armenia, Russia, United States, Argentina, Columbia, Thailand, Georgia and many others.

184 films from 27 countries have been submitted for the Aurora Short Film Competition.

All photos and short films that meet the technical requirements of the competitions have been presented to the jury. The short film competition jury is chaired by the director Edgar Baghdasaryan, and the photo competition jury is chaired by the photographer John Stanmeyer.

The selected films and photos should express the ideas of humanism as well as the selection criteria of the Aurora Prize for

Awakening Humanity: courage, commitment and impact, according to the rules of two competitions.

The results of the Aurora Photo and Short Film Competitions will be announced in April, 2017. Aurora Humanitarian Initiative will award US\$4000 to the director of the best film. Second and third places will receive US\$2000 and US\$1500 award respectively. The author of the best photo will be awarded US\$2,500 prize. Second and third places will receive awards of US\$1,500 and US\$1,000 respectively. The awards will be presented to the winners in May during a special event. The best films and photos will be screened and exhibited during 2017 Aurora Prize Events.

During the month between April 24 and May 28, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative will organize a global program of ac-



AURORA PRIZE
FOR AWAKENING HUMANITY

tivities to profile the inspirational stories of the 2017 finalists, as well as broader humanitarian endeavors. The 2017 Aurora Prize finalists will be announced on April 24, 2017, the annual day of remembrance for victims of the Armenian Genocide. One of these finalists will then be named as the 2017 Aurora Prize Laureate at a special ceremony on May 28, 2017, in Yerevan, Armenia.

Jerusalem tomb of Jesus restored

The tomb of Jesus has been resurrected to its former glory, the Daily Mail reports.

Just in time for Easter, a Greek restoration team has completed a historic renovation of the Edicule, the shrine that tradition says houses the cave where Jesus was buried and rose to heaven.

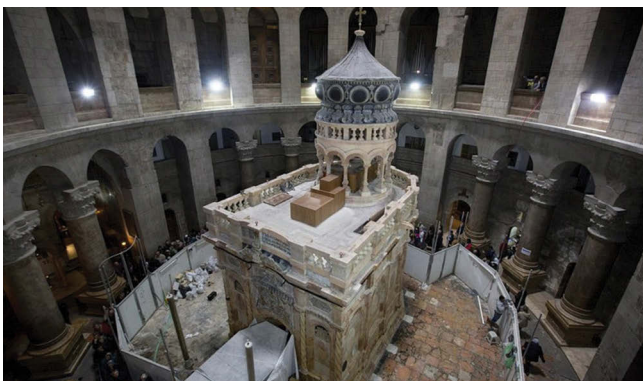
Restorers have now cut a small window from the shrine's marble walls for pilgrims to see – for the first time – the bare stone of the ancient burial cave.

Gone is the unsightly iron cage built around the shrine by British authorities in 1947 to shore up the walls and the black soot on the shrine's stone façade from decades of pilgrims lighting candles.

And gone are fears about the stability of the old shrine, which hadn't been restored in more than 200 years.

'If this intervention hadn't happened now, there is a very great risk that there could have been a collapse,' Bonnie Burnham of the World Monuments Fund said.

'This is a complete transformation of the monument.'



The fund provided an initial \$1.4 million for the \$4 million restoration, thanks to a donation by the widow of the founder of Atlantic Records.

Jordan's King Abdullah II and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas also chipped in about 150,000 euros each, along with other private and church donations, Burnham said.

The limestone and marble structure stands at the center of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, one of the world's oldest churches – a 12th-century building standing on 4th-century remains.

The shrine needed urgent attention after years of exposure to environmental factors like water, humidity and candle smoke.

Three main Christian denominations – Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian Churches – jealously guard separate sections of the church, but they put aside their longstanding religious rivalries to give their blessing for the restoration.

The Culture Trip: Armenia among ten oldest countries in the world

Over the millennia, countless nations and countries have arisen and disappeared into the annals of history, but some have stuck around, Armenia among them.

The Culture Trip presents ten of the oldest countries and nations in the world. Armenia is included in the list along with Greece, China, Portugal, France, Japan, Iran, San Marino, Ethiopia and Egypt.

“Armenia is a nation well known for its great diaspora. Nonetheless, the Armenians have possessed a country for most of the last 2600 years, with the first mentions of Armenia occurring in the 6th century BCE,” the website writes.

“Yerevan, now the capital of Armenia, was founded as far back as 782 BCE. The Armenians were also the first state to offi-

cially accept Christianity as a state religion in 301, and the country still adheres very strongly to their own Armenian Apostolic Church. Besides the diaspora, another unfortunate similarity that the Armenians share with the Jews was a genocide perpetrated against them at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in 1915-16,” The Culture Trip writes.



Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

This is an incredibly busy week with aspects to your sign coming from everywhere! Surprise shifts and changes will be coming out of the woodwork. Beware of an authority figure who may try to undermine you. Think carefully about what is truly important to you now in your life. Don't allow old habits or rules from the past to make your decision for you.

thority figure who may try to undermine you. Think carefully about what is truly important to you now in your life. Don't allow old habits or rules from the past to make your decision for you.



Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Mars, the Warrior planet, is in your sign. You may find that you anger more easily. This started near March 9 and will be relieved after April 21. Take good care of yourself. No risky or potentially harmful activities. Your subconscious mind is trying to

give you a message. Pay attention to "coincidences", and remember your dreams. If you have experienced abuse in the past, memories may surface for resolution.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

Information has been flying your way thick and fast. A surprise concerning a friend or a family member might have you reeling. This is a good week to let yourself be quiet while you absorb the changes that

have come your way. If you feel on edge, transfer that energy to physical exercise.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

This continues to be a period in which you should give yourself every opportunity to be out and about in the social world. New people who come into your life during this time may become teachers or guides

on your next path. Give thought to what you need from your closest relationships for a few weeks and then talk it over later after Venus goes direct.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

Travel and connecting to others may feel healing to you now. Allow those you encounter the opportunity to teach you something. You may literally be experiencing education this month but it does not have to be formal.



Virgo (August 22–September 22)

You may be the recipient of a flood of information. It is unsettling and hard to process. However, it is not a good idea to share any of it with others right now, because you don't know what is fact or fiction. Recognize that you may manifest your thoughts, both positive and negative,

into reality. Avoid brooding.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Partners and significant others may seem to move into retreat mode. If it is not "out there", it may be inside. You may need to retreat into the quiet and have fewer people in your daily activities. Clientele may diminish for a while. It is not permanent, so don't worry about yourself. Examine what you really need from those who are in your life daily and prepare to ask for it.



Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

This is going to be a challenging week. Read the lead paragraph and take very good care of yourself. Machines, tools, and kitchen knives can be weapons if not handled with care.

It is possible that your partner or lover may be of assistance if you get into a tight place. Beware of obsessive thinking about something you cannot change. That just uses your energy.



Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)

Circumstances on the romantic front are favorable with one who shares intellectual interests. Activities involving teaching/learning are

favored, along with good aspects for travel. Stretch your mind and open it for new perspectives.



Capricorn (December 21–January 19)

Stressors related to home, hearth and family members may be an irritation to you this week. If someone disagrees with you, don't run them over with the tank. Open your mind

and listen for the kernel of truth. Follow the advice in the lead paragraph and take care not to attempt more than your body can do.



Aquarius (January 20–February 17)

It will be a challenge to accomplish forward motion this week. Do what you can and let it go for another time. You may experience problems with

broken equipment that distracts your time and energy. Some weeks are like that. Be patient with yourself.



Pisces (February 18–March 19)

Your mind needs a break from tedium. Give it a break with a delicious novel, art work, and music. Pisces worries about everybody and particularly this country, given present circumstances. You do not have

to be "on duty" at all times. This is a good week for a break.

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Paris Office: 34 Avenue des Champs Elysees
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Yerevan Address: 8, Khorenatsi St.

Yerevan Home Care is the first and the only one company launched in 2011 in Yerevan. The company is providing a 24/7 qualified care service to older adults, disabled people, people suffering from chronic diseases or those who need postoperative care, as well as to people with dementia.

Creating the company we concenter to support many families that live abroad and have their elderly family members staying in Armenia. We succeed in supporting these families to have not only a solution of the raised problem but to have a deep feeling of satisfaction that their relatives are in good hands.

The organization's greatest wealth is educated, professional, skilled, experienced staff and people with high values and psychological knowledge.

We treat each patient with a strong sense of responsibility and show an individual approach to the families, at the same time maintaining the accepted norms and using contemporary approaches.

Taking your relative's care on our shoulders, we bring harmony between the different generations.

Apart from the professional knowledge the company pays a great attention to the humanitarian qualities of the serving staff, to their kindness, patience, attention and cour-



home health aides. Home health aides might also provide limited assistance with things such as taking blood pressure or offering medication reminders.

Nursing care is more related for patients after surgery, traumas, different chronic diseases

Rehabilitation service is for people who need professional rehabilitation in their recovery periods after some types of diseases and surgery. Dementia /Alzheimer /special care is for people with dementia in all stages when you worried about their safety or a health problem.

Yerevan Home Care provides all type of medical equipment that will increase the quality of life of your loved ones. (rent of the equipment is acceptable)

Transportation is a key issue for older adults and for people with temporary or permanent disabilities especially in Armenia where the streets and buildings are not adjusted for disabled people. Yerevan Home Care is providing a transportation service for people that are in wheelchairs.

Contacts:

Phone: +37410 546 546, +37491 403 979, +37493 401 982

E-mail: info@yerevanhomecare.am, hripsime.deghdzanyan@gmail.com

Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/YerevanHomeCare

Website: www.yerevanhomecare.am

Address: Yerevan, Baghramyan 1 impasse, 2 Building, 2nd Floor



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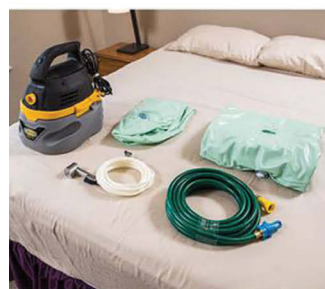
yerevanhomecare.am 010 546 546

teous manner.

We assure that we will be your irreplaceable assistant in helping and surrounding your relative with care and support.

We provide service to all type of patients who needs care assistance.

Personal care is for elderly people who are alone and need support in daily living, such as dressing, bathing, feeding, or meal preparation. This type of care includes personal care aides, home care aides, and



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Tigran Harutyunyan
Editor-in-Chief of the Media Holding:
Gayaneh Arakelyan
Director of the Weekly:
Marina Harutyunyan
Chief Correspondent: **Gourgen Khazhakian**
Proofreader: **Susanna Mkrtchian**
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E-mail: contact@nt.am
URL: www.nt.am

Address in Armenia: 28 Isahakian Str., Yerevan, 0009, RA.
Tel.: (+374 60) 35-11-23
(+374 60) 35-11-22

Address in France: Masion De L' Armenie, Paris 17e - 95
Bld. Gouvion, France.
Tel.: (+33) 01 43 59 66 72

Address in USA: 1146 E. Lexington Dr., #112, Glendale,
CA, USA, 91206.
Tel.: (+1 818) 646 10 72

Հասցի՝ Բաժնիական 28, Երևան, ՀՀ, 0009