

Armenia, Georgia “agree” on new trade routes to Russia



Georgia - Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili (L) greets his Armenian counterpart Karen Karapetian in Tbilisi
see page 6

In This Issue

**Artsakh Referendum 2017: 76.52% say
yes to Constitutional reform** p.5

**Armenia Finance Minister seeks to
move on from macro stability** p.8

**Donation raised due to SCDM
Founder's participation in
intl marathons for those
suffering from oncology** p.p.12-13

Noyan Tapan Press-Center

Noyan Tapan Press Center holds different discussions, press conferences, round tables, teleconferences, seminars each week which are broadcast live on the Internet. We invite you to take advantage of the Center, as well as to place your banner in our Press Room. **Tel: 060 35 11 22.**
Address: Isahakyan 28, 3rd floor, Yerevan, 0009

Noyan Tapan Printing House

is offering coloured and black and white offset and digital printing of books, brochures, booklets, journals, etc with high quality and low prices **Tel: 060 35 11 22**
Address: Isahakyan 28, 3rd floor, Yerevan 0009

Constitutional Refedendum a proof of Artsakh's commitment to democratic processes



"The referendum held on February 20 is yet another evidence of the determination of the people of Artsakh to organise their public life by democratic processes," Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said in a statement.

"The current Constitutional Referendum is aimed at choosing the

system of governance that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh consider more relevant to their needs," he added.

"It is commendable that more than hundred international observers representing three dozen countries assessed the Referendum as well organized, transparent and in line with international standards," Minister Nalbandian said.

"The exercise of fundamental freedoms is a universal right that cannot be subject to limitations. For quarter of a century Nagorno-Karabakh has been conducting processes inherent to democratic societies and there is no doubt that the people of Artsakh have certainly gained the right to live according to the same universal values that the free democratic world enjoys," the Foreign Minister added.

"Once again the people of Artsakh demonstrated that their will to build democratic society is irreversible notwithstanding all odds of continuous use of force and threat of force, economic blockade and other hostile actions perpetrated by Azerbaijan. It does not come as a surprise that the ongoing democratic processes in Artsakh are met with such an extreme discontent in Azerbaijan – a country notorious with its human rights violations," Minister Nalbandian concluded.

Armenian Defense Minister meets representatives of OSCE Austrian Chairmanship



Armenian Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan received on February 23 Ambassador Günther Bächler, Special Representative of the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship for the South Caucasus.

The Defense Minister expressed support for the priorities of the Austrian presidency targeted at the settlement of conflicts, easing of tensions and establishment of an atmosphere of trust.

Presenting the worrisome situation at the Armenian-Azerbaijani line of contact, Vigen Sargsyan attached importance to the efforts towards implementation of an investigation mechanism and stressed the importance of condemnation of the breach of all arm control commitments by Azerbaijan.

Referring to the situation around the OSCE Yerevan Office, Vigen Sargsyan valued the role of the Office and the OSCE at large in

the development of democratic institutions in Armenia, modernization of electoral systems and improvement of human rights.

Noting that Armenia's cooperation with

the OSCE is based on common values and principles, the Defense Minister deemed the Azerbaijani policy of hindering the activity of the Yerevan Office and defaming the initiatives of the OSCE unacceptable.

Ambassador Günther Bächler reiterated the importance of intensification of the OSCE efforts towards settlement of the Karabakh conflict and easing of tensions. He voiced hope that the situation around the Yerevan Office would be solved in compliance with the interests of Armenia and the OSCE.

The interlocutors exchanged views on the mechanisms of cooperation during the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Armenia.



Deadly Fighting Reported In Karabakh



Ceasefire violations around Nagorno-Karabakh dramatically intensified on February 25, with Karabakh's Armenian-backed military saying that it repelled major Azerbaijani attacks at two sections of the frontline.

Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry confirmed deadly fighting along the Karabakh "line of contact" but claimed that it is the Armenians who attacked its frontline positions.

The Karabakh Defense Army said Azerbaijani forces used demining machines and other "special means" when they attempted to seize its positions at frontline sections east and southeast of Karabakh early in the morning. They were pushed back, suffering significant casualties in the process, the army claimed in a statement.

"Several [Azerbaijani] corpses are lying in no man's land," said the statement. "Nobody was killed or wounded on the Armenian side."

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry, for its part, said Armenian troops "tried to penetrate our positions." It reported a "heavy combat clash" in an area near southeastern Karabakh where "the enemy attempted to capture beneficial positions" but was forced to retreat.

"As a result of the combat clash, our armed forces suffered casualties," ministry added, according to the APA news agency. It did not give any numbers.

The Karabakh Armenian army was quick to deny the Azerbaijani claims. "How can a defending side suffer casualties in no man's land?" read an army statement released later in the morning.

Armenia's Defense Ministry similarly accused Baku of seek-

ing to "mislead its own people and the international community." "Azerbaijan's military-political leadership has been escalating the situation along the Line of Contact and spreading disinformation for several days," the ministry spokesman, Artsrun Hovannisyan, wrote on his Facebook page.

"The Armenian side is observing the ceasefire regime and calling on the Azerbaijani side to refrain from steps aimed at further escalating the situation," he added.

Azerbaijan's Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov and army chief of staff, General Nejmeddin Sadiqov, visited the demarcation line around Karabakh just two days before the latest escalation. News reports said they instructed Azerbaijani frontline troops to take "tougher and more resolute measures" in response to what they called growing Armenian "provocations."

U.S., Russian and French mediators urged the parties to the Karabakh conflict to "adhere strictly" to ceasefire agreements immediately after hosting a meeting between the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in Munich on February 16. The three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group warned that "war is not an option."

The mediators also renewed their calls for the warring sides to implement confidence-building agreements that were reached by the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents last year. The agreements envisage international investigations of truce violations and deployment of more OSCE observers in the conflict zone. Armenia says that Azerbaijan has been dragging its feet over these safeguards.

Such violations have steadily intensified in recent weeks after several months of relative calm that followed four-day hostilities around Karabakh in April 2016. The two sides have accused each other of using mortars and rocket-propelled grenades on a virtually daily basis.

On February 18, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan warned Azerbaijan against launching large-scale military operations in the run-up to Armenia's parliamentary elections scheduled for April 2. "Today some in Azerbaijan still have illusions that an Armenia focused on elections will be very distracted and therefore vulnerable ... Any [armed] provocation would receive a worthy response," he said.

MEPs not on Interpol's "wanted list," Armenia's Ombudsman says

Azerbaijan will achieve nothing with senseless and false statements, Armenia's Human Rights Defender has said.

"The Members of the European Parliament are not wanted by the Interpol, and this has already been confirmed by RA Police," Ombudsman Arman Tatoyan said, commenting on the information that a criminal case has been instigated against MEPs Frank Engel, Eleni Theocharous and Jaromir Stetina for visiting Artsakh and observing the Constitutional Referendum.

Arman Tatoyan is confident that Azerbaijani's steps will make the visits of journalists and politicians more frequent.



"A vivid evidence of this was the visit of 104 foreign observers from 30 countries during the Constitutional referendum in Artsakh. All of them, including Frank En-

gel, Eleni Theocharous and Jaromir Stetina, are carriers of democratic values. The visits of foreign guests and their activity in Artsakh have always and will always be lawful."

"We have to do our best to reach the recognition of Artsakh with its democratic institutions," the Ombudsman said.

Arman Tatoyan reiterated his commitment to work to ensure the democratic recognition of Artsakh.

He believes "it's high time to eliminate the so-called 'black list.'" "No vicious step by Azerbaijan will ever hamper the development of democracy in Artsakh," the Human Rights Defender concluded.

Russian Military presence still vital for Armenia, says Defense Chief

Russian military presence in Armenia remains a “very important” element of the country’s national security strategy, Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan said in an interview published on February 22.

Sargsyan also told the RIA Novosti that Armenia stands ready to further deepen its broader military cooperation with Russia.

“Russia is our strategic ally,” he said. “This is how we view the ongoing cooperation with Russia in terms of training of military personnel, in the military-technical sphere and in the military-political dialogue. We think that it’s an inseparable complex. We are open to and ready for a further intensification of this dialogue.”

As part of that alliance, up to 5,000 Russian troops have been stationed in Armenia ever since the Soviet breakup. Sargsyan called the Russian military base headquartered in Gyumri “an important factor of deterrence.”

“We consider its presence in Armenia to be a very important component of the security system of our country,” he added.

The Russian base also has hundreds of tanks, armored vehicles, and artillery systems as well as around two dozen MiG-29 fighter jets. Moscow has bolstered it with helicopter gunships and other military hardware since a 2010 Russian-Armenian agreement extended its basing rights in Armenia to 2044.

Sargsyan did not deny reports that the Russian military has also deployed its newly developed Nebo-M radar systems to the Gyumri base recently.

Armenian leaders have long said that Armenia hosts Russian troops on its territory primarily because of a perceived security threat from Turkey, rather than Azerbaijan. From Yerevan’s perspective, the Russian military presence precludes Turkey’s direct military intervention on Azerbaijan’s side in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Some of the Russian troops in Armenia and an Armenian army unit make up a Russian-Armenian military force set up in 2000. Sargsyan and Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu signed an agreement in November last year on reinforcing “the united group of troops.” It is still not clear whether the joint contingent will be enlarged as a result.



The military alliance with Russia has also enabled Armenia to receive Russian weapons at discounted prices or even for free. Sargsyan emphasized the fact that Yerevan is using a \$200 million loan extended by Moscow in 2015 for buying various Russian weapons at Russia’s “internal prices.” Some of that military hardware has already been delivered to Armenia ahead of schedule, he said without elaborating.

“We will continue the dialogue with the Russian side on the possibility of acquiring weapons in the Russian market,” Sargsyan told RIA Novosti.

The \$200 million loan reportedly does not cover Russian state-of-the-art Iskander missiles that were supplied to the Armenian army and first demonstrated by it at a military parade in Yerevan in September. Sargsyan refused to disclose financial terms of that acquisition.

The 41-year-old minister insisted that the missile systems belong to Armenia and are operated by Armenian army officers. He described them as a “weapon of deterrence,” in a clear reference to the Karabakh dispute.

President Serzh Sarkisian likewise said in November that the Iskander missiles are an “antidote” against Azerbaijan’s possible attempts to achieve a military solution to the dispute.

With a firing range of at least 300 kilometers, Iskander is known for their precision and ability to overcome modern missile defense shields.

No alternative to Minsk Group co-chairmanship format: Sergey Lavrov

“There is no alternative to the Minsk Group co-chairmanship format for the settlement of the Karabakh conflict, if we are really committed to seeking a mutually acceptable solution,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a joint press conference with visiting Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian.

The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs do not stay idle. Lavrov said the Minsk Group Co-Chairs have spoken about the need to accelerate the negotiation process on many

occasions.

“The latest statement adopted in Munich underscores the unacceptability of the use of force and military rhetoric and stresses the necessity to implement the agreements reached at the summits in Vienna and St. Petersburg,” Lavrov said.

“We’ll continue to work in cooperation with our French and American counterparts to create an atmosphere conducive to a constructive dialogue that will allow to consider concrete offers on the Karabakh

settlement,” the Russian Foreign Minister noted.

Speaking about the future of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, Sergey Lavrov said “we cannot be indifferent towards the issue, especially considering that the Office is headed by a Russian citizen.”

“The German and Austrian chairmanships of the OSCE have worked hard to settle the issue with Azerbaijani colleagues,” Lavrov said. He voiced hope that the latest offer will help solve the question.

OSCE/ODIHR opens observation mission for parliamentary elections in Armenia



A 14-member group of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has already arrived in Armenia to carry out an observation mission at the parliamentary elections scheduled for April 2.

Another 28 long-term observers are expected to arrive in Armenia next week, Ambassador Jan Petersen, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission, told

reporters in Yerevan.

Amb. Petersen said 250 short-term observers will follow the voting on Election Day.

The mission's deployment follows an invitation from the Armenian authorities.

The OSCE/ODIHR EOM will assess the elections for compliance with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as with national legislation. Observers will closely monitor voter registration, candidate registration, campaign activities, the work of the election administration and relevant governmental bodies, election-related legislation and its implementation, the media environment and the resolution of election-related disputes. As part of the observation, the mission will also monitor the media coverage of the campaign.

In the course of its observation, the mission will meet with representatives of relevant

authorities and of political parties, as well as with representatives of civil society, the media and the international community.

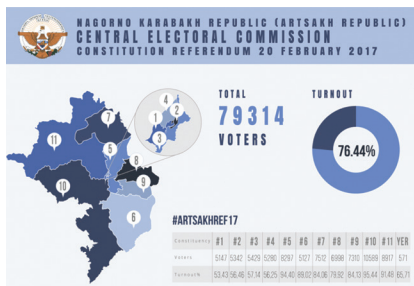
On Election Day, observers will monitor the opening of polling stations, voting, the counting of ballots and the tabulation of results. For Election Day, the mission will join efforts with delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

A statement of preliminary findings and conclusions will be issued on the day after the election. A final report on the observation of the entire election process, including recommendations, will be published approximately two months after the completion of the election process.

"It's up to the Armenian authorities, government and political parties to decide whether or not to take note of the proposals included in the report," Jan Petersen said.

Artsakh Referendum 2017:

76.52% say yes to Constitutional reform



The NKR Central Electoral Commission has provided final data on the results of voting at the Constitutional Referendum held on February 20.

Thus, 79 428 citizens or 76.52% of the eligible voters participated in the referendum.

According to the CEC, 69 540 citizens or 87, 55 % voted in favor of constitutional reform; 7 686 citizens or 9.7 % of the voters cast their vote against the new Constitution. The number of invalid ballots was 2 202 (2.8 %).

Arrest Warrant for Visiting Artsakh 'Part of Baku's Campaign' says EU Observer

European Parliamentarian Jaromír Štětina of Czech Republic spoke on February 25 about the arrest warrants issued by the Azerbaijani court toward him - and his two fellow European parliamentarians - for visiting Artsakh to monitor the February 20 constitutional referendum.

Alongside Štětina, warrants were issued for Frank Engel of Luxembourg and Eleni Theocharous of Cyprus, who were among more than 100 monitors from 30 countries to visit Artsakh for Monday's vote.

The fact is that Azerbaijani laws do not function in this territory, Štětina said during an interview with Czech news agency Aktualne.

"As a journalist, I visited Karabakh in the [19]90s; during the years of that terrible war. The position of Azerbaijan, which considers Karabakh to be its own, is based on the policy of Stalin, who had annexed this Armenian territory to Azerbaijan, with the rule of 'divide and conquer.'"

Štětina noted that he and his two colleagues visited the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) Republic at the invitation of

the Artsakh parliament.

The parliamentarian knew of the possibility of Azerbaijani authorities ordering for his arrest.

"This is a part of Baku's campaign," he said, "which began about a month ago when Russian [Israeli] blogger [Alexander] Lapshin was arrested in [the Belarusian capital city of] Minsk; this is a part of the intimidation policy of Azerbaijan.

When asked if he fears extradition to Baku - similar to that of Russian-Israeli blogger Alexander Lapshin - Štětina replied "I will not go to Minsk."

Štětina said that as a member of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, as Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee on Security and Defense, "the essence of my work is to visit regions of conflicts, to form my own sense about them."

Referring to Azerbaijan's arrest warrants, European Parliamentarian Soraya Post during an interview with Armenpress said "This is not how mature countries conduct their business," adding that the parliament will have a thorough discussion on how to proceed.

"This will not stand," she concluded.

Armenia, Georgia “agree” on new trade routes to Russia

Georgia has agreed to open new transport corridors that will be used by Armenia for commercial cargo shipments to and from Russia, Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan said during an official visit to Tbilisi on February 24.

The bulk of trade between Russia and Armenia is currently carried out through the sole Russian-Georgian border crossing at Upper Lars. Traffic along that mountainous road is frequently blocked by blizzards in winter months.

Hundreds of Armenian trucks were left stranded there for over two weeks due to heavy snowfalls in December. The Upper Lars road was also closed for more than a month this summer following a massive mudslide.

In addition, Armenian truck drivers frequently complain about long lines and slow service on the Russian side of the border.

Shortly after visiting Moscow late last month, Karapetyan instructed the Armenian Ministry of Transport and Communications to submit by March 1 proposals on alternative Russian-Armenian trade routes passing through Georgia.

Senior Russian and Georgian diplomats reported significant progress towards the launch of such transport links after a fresh round of talks held in Prague on February 7. They said Russia and Georgia are close to reviving a 2011 agreement meant to enable them to maintain commercial ties in the absence of diplomatic relations.

The Russian negotiator, Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin, told the Moscow daily “Kommersant” that Georgia is now ready to reopen two highways that connect it to Russia via the breakaway Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He said the two sides will hire a Swiss company to operate customs

checkpoints to be set up on the administrative boundaries of the two territories that have been recognized by Russia as independent states.

“Kommersant” said the compromise arrangement would allow Moscow to avoid formally recognizing Georgian sovereignty over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. “As soon as we solve all remaining issues, we will start the implementation [of the agreement,]” it quoted Karasin as saying. “We only need to take the final, most difficult step.”

The issue was reportedly high on the agenda of Karapetyan’s talks with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili held on Thursday. Speaking to reporters the following day, the Armenian premier said: “If you are interested in whether there will be an alternative to the Lars road, then I can assure you that yes, there will be.”

“We will talk about other things later on, I won’t go into details for now,” he added, according to the Sputnik news agency. “We reached agreements on both the Lars issue and the energy corridor.”

Neither Prime Minister made explicit mention of the matter at a news briefing that followed their talks in Tbilisi. Kvirikashvili said Karapetyan presented him with “very interesting proposals” on expanding Georgian-Armenian economic ties.

Despite the disruptions at Upper Lars, Russian-Armenian trade rose by 15 percent to almost \$1.4 billion last year, solidifying Russia’s status as Armenia’s number one trading partner. According to official Armenian statistics, that growth was driven by a 51 percent surge in Armenian exports to Russia.

By Emil Danielyan

Armenian government interested in cooperation with European business community

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan attended on February 21 the annual meeting of the European Business Association. Attending the event were the Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador Piotr Switalski, Ambassadors of EU member states and companies represented in the Association.

Greeting the participants of the meeting, PM Karen Karapetyan noted that “the Armenian Government is interested in the expansion of relations with the European business.

“We want all of you to feel safe in Armenia, make investments, create jobs, pay taxes and get wealthier. We are ready to discuss all issues of concern to you, listen to your proposals and initiatives,” the Prime Minister said.

The Head of the EU delegation to Armenia Piotr Switalski thanked the Prime



Minister for his open policy and for being open to business. The Ambassador stressed that the Armenian Government has adopted different decisions that will

help attract investments.

According to him, the European Union and the business community are willing to maintain cooperation with Armenia.

Armenia's cooperation with NATO 'not against strategic alliance with Russia'



Armenia's defense minister told Sputnik that Yerevan's cooperation with NATO does not threaten its relations with Russia.

Armenia's cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is not directed against its strategic alliance with Russia, Armenian Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan told Sputnik.

"Our relations with NATO were always build completely openly for our allied countries and partners. We have never made a secret of this, and this cooperation could never and never will be directed against the interests of our strategic alliance with Russia," Sargsyan said.

Armenia takes part in the NATO Resolute

Support mission to train, advice and assist Afghan security forces launched on January 1, 2015 as a follow-up on the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) combat mission, which completed at the end of 2014. Armenia also participated in ISAF mission sending up to 131 soldiers to Afghanistan.

Armenia will continue arms procurement dialogue with Russia, Sargsyan told Sputnik.

"Contracts have been implemented in advance on a range of [orders], which is also pleasing. We will continue dialogue with Russia about the possibility of acquiring weapons on the Russian market," Sargsyan said.

He expressed "deep respect and a desire to increasingly develop this cooperation," lauding Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) membership allowing Yerevan to buy weapons at the same price as the Russian Armed Forces.

Armenia's PM to visit Tehran in near future

Armenia's Ambassador to Iran Artashes Toumanian and the Head of Trade, Industries, and Mines Chamber of Tehran Khansari met on February 21 to exchange views on the best results from upcoming visit of Armenian PM to Tehran, Mehr News Agency reports.

"All the preparations are checked to host the trade delegation accompanying Armenian Prime Minister who intends to visit Tehran by mid-March," said Masoud Khansari, the Head of Trade, Industries, and Mines Chamber of Tehran on Tuesday during his meeting with Armenia's Ambassador to Iran Artashes Toumanian and the Armenian trade activists residing in Tehran, according to the public relations of the Chamber.

"As soon as the PM's visit to Tehran is finalized, the Trade, Industries, and Mines Chamber of Tehran will arrange for the bilateral meetings between Iranian and Armenian businesspeople," reassured the Iranian man of business and trade.

Saying that the Chamber has had good interaction with giants of ICT in Tehran, the head of the Chamber recounted that the Iranian companies of the field have achieved

breakthrough accomplishments in the technology and the Armenian counterpart will have great chances to establish ties with Iranian companies of the field.

During the same meeting, the Armenian diplomat referred to the visit of President Rouhani to Armenian capital city of Yerevan in two months ago and recounted that it was part of the agreements between Iran

and Armenian Presidents to have the Armenian PM visit Tehran and continue the efforts for having constructive dialogues aimed at expansion of bilateral ties.

"The visit will be in near future, and even the situation ripe, it can be made before New Year holidays in Iran which starts on March 21," said the Armenia envoy to Tehran.



Armenia Finance Minister seeks to move on from macro stability

Armenia has had to contend with currency depreciation, tumbling remittances and the impact of tensions between Russia and Europe. Finance Minister Vardan Aramyan tells Courtney Fingar of the fDi Magazine that now the country has achieved macro stability, it is planning micro-level reforms.

Q: What is your overall assessment of the Armenian economy, and what are your forecasts?

A: Over the past two years we have been faced with external shocks, which have not been unique to Armenia. One was continuing decline in commodity prices since 2012, which affected us as Armenia is an exporter of metals.

This was compounded by the strengthening dollar, which put pressure on local currency exchange rates. In the middle of 2014, there was a second negative shock: the economic sanction war between Russia and Europe and the US, which impacted the whole region. It affected Armenian economy through three transmission channels. First, Russia is the major host country for our remitters and due to the deterioration of Russia's economic conditions, the inflow of remittances began to decline dramatically. Second, the Armenian dram bilateral exchange rate with Russian rouble appreciated, harming our exports to Russia. Third, direct investment inflows from Russia also began to step back. However, as a result the Armenian dram depreciated vis a vis the US dollar by 17%.

To cope with these externalities and to absorb these shocks, in 2014 we made a decision to keep fiscal policy flexible and pursue a fiscal countercyclical expansionary policy. With regards to monetary policy, we tried to be more conservative in order to anchor the speculative expectations of the agents in the foreign exchange markets, as the behaviour of some countries' local currencies vis a vis the US dollar in the region created fear of a continued depreciation of the Armenian dram.

Now we do not see any discrepancies between the real equilibrium exchange rate and real actual exchange rate; all our analyses show that we are in equilibrium and there is no major issue with our macro-economic environment. It means that we are now graduating this phase, and upcoming news for economic conditions is much more promising, although still there are uncertainties in the world.

For two consecutive years we were obliged to keep our fiscal policy expansionary – and, of course, this has its costs, it's a debt. With expansionary policy you need to increase your deficit in order to compensate the negative effect on aggregate demand and smooth the fluctuation of the foreign exchange rate. There is no free lunch in life; sometimes you need to make a sacrifice for gaining something else. At the end of the day we gained a stable macro environment without major shocks in the local financial markets.

Let's compare with other countries. Even for 2016, I think almost all countries in the Eurasian Economic Union are going to end up with negative economic growth. But our economic growth is positive because we followed prudent macro policy. Now it's time to reverse, as you cannot move forward by only increasing your debt; somehow you need to have an exit strategy – and this is precisely what we are going to do in 2017, i.e. embark upon a strong fiscal consolidation, while keeping monetary policy expansionary as inflation conditions are very modest.

In the short term, I think we are going to end up with positive



economic growth for the year 2016 and later on see an acceleration of this important indicator... Our economic growth is modest but we think that, due to our prudent policy, we can achieve 3.2% growth in 2017 and then plan much higher growth in coming years.

Q: What are your most immediate continuing economic challenges, given where you are in the recovery phase?

A: The most important aspect is economic growth, but then you have to think about what type of economic growth you want. We target 'supply-push' economic growth because, if you look to the history of Armenia until the year 2008, we have had 'demand-pull' economic growth, which was not sustainable. There was a strong foreign exchange inflow, because of the positive terms of the trade shock and the increase in remittances, so the non-tradable sector reacted positively, stealing factors of production from the tradable sector. Sustainable economic growth comes from the tradable sector through productivity upgrades. And for productivity upgrades you need reforms. We as a government need to do something to have an influence on the private sector firms' cost curve pushing them to remain productive and competitive.

But as a rule of thumb, long-term macro stability must be in a high priority as a major precondition for economic growth. The experience of many countries shows that even if you have a well-designed reform agenda, you are going to fail if there is no macro stability in your country. You need to also signal to the private sector that the government is in good shape to undertake necessary actions in case an additional wave of idiosyncratic shocks again intervenes into a local economy and that everything is under control.

For permanent economic growth, macro stability alone is not enough. You need to do something more, which is the micro-level policy. [And this involves] what we call, using my favourite piece of terminology, 'competitiveness'. What does it mean? There are three major pillars for competitiveness: economic competitiveness (business environment), human capital competitiveness and strength of institutions (institutional competitiveness). And these three major pillars that enhance competitiveness are in line with each other and you need to target them all.

In these three fields, you need to take bold actions, and what we have incorporated in our government programme are bold actions that will support competitiveness in each of these areas.

Karabakh conflict a struggle for self-defence and physical survival: Zohrab Mnatsakanyan



Ambassador Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the UN Security Council addressed the UN Security Council open debate on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Conflicts in Europe."

The Ambassador's full speech is provided below:

Mr. President,

I thank the Secretary General and the other briefers for their contribution to this debate. We share the concern reflected in the concept paper for this debate that despite high expectations for Europe to become a strategically stable continent following the end of the Cold War, new challenges and threats emerged on the continent in the 1990s. However, apart from the broader geopolitical processes or religious, ethnic and territorial disputes, the causes of these challenges stemmed also from the blatant and violent denial to peoples the right to pursue their aspirations for freedom and self-determination.

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict is a point in case. It is a conflict, which in effect has been a struggle of the people of Nagorno Karabakh for freedom and self-determination, a struggle against historical injustice of the 1920s and persistent discrimination throughout 70 years of Azerbaijani rule over them. It is a struggle, which witnessed barbaric pogroms at the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s against

Armenians in Baku, Sumgait, Kirovabad and other parts of Azerbaijan as a reaction to the legitimate aspirations of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to freely determine their future. It is a struggle for self-defence and physical survival of the people of Nagorno Karabakh as a result of an outright aggression, war and ethnic cleansing unleashed against them by the newly independent Azerbaijan at the beginning of the 1990s.

Mr President,

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict is about a struggle of the people of Nagorno Karabakh against the claim of sovereignty over them by a despotic regime in Azerbaijan with a shocking human rights record, which suppresses and suffocates any dissent, any aspiration for freedoms and rights within its own jurisdiction. It is a struggle against barbarity of a regime, which ruthlessly glorifies Ramil Safarov, a murderer, who in 2004 axes to death an Armenian officer while asleep, during a military training course. It is a struggle against a claim of jurisdiction by a regime, which persistently cultivates and inspires Armenophobia, hatred and intolerance against Armenians. It is a struggle for freedom and survival. It is a struggle of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. It is, in other words, a struggle for the right to self-determination.

Mr. President,

The renewed attempt of aggression by Azerbaijan against Nagorno Karabakh at the beginning of April 2016 and ensuing perpetration of atrocities and outright barbarity, of which this delegation has consistently informed the Council, has been a stark reminder about the urgency of supporting the peace process under the auspices of the internationally agreed format of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship. There is no alternative to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The war is not an option. The international community should forcefully reject the use of force and any pursuit of a military solution to this conflict. The 1994/95 cease-fire agreements, signed by Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijan and Armenia constitute the foundation of the cessation of hostilities. Armenia urges Azerbaijan to undertake immediate and genuine steps towards the implementation of the agreements reached at the summits in Vienna and St. Petersburg in May and June 2016 respectively in order to create conditions conducive to the advancement of the peace process. Azerbaijan should bring to an end without delay the persistent war mongering and cultivation of hatred and intolerance against Armenians and instead invest genuine efforts in promoting a culture of peace, as well as respect for human rights. Armenia urges Azerbaijan to demonstrate genuine political will and effort in advancing the peace process on the basis of the principles and elements put forward by France, Russia and the United States, the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and reiterated in their numerous statements at all levels, including the heads of states of the Co-Chairing states.

Finally, Armenia expresses its deep appreciation to the international community, to this Council and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for their continued and unwavering support to the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, the only internationally agreed format of negotiations for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, to reach a lasting settlement as soon as possible.

Thank you.

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 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 implement-



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 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 price



ed 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



ing strategy is very flexible and discounts for good long term clients are available during whole year as well as different Gift Cards.

**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**

EU Expects “Good Elections” In Armenia

The European Union expects the Armenian authorities to hold free and fair parliamentary elections on April 2, having provided them with over \$7 million in assistance for that purpose, a senior EU diplomat said on February 24.

“We are really looking forward to good elections in Armenia,” said Piotr Switalski, the head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan.

“The EU has done a lot to help the government; the Central Election Commission and the civil society seek higher standards. And we have done that in an unprecedented way,” he told reporters.

Switalski pointed to 7 million euros (\$7.4 million) in EU funding that was allocated late last year in support of the Armenian government’s landmark agreement with the opposition aimed at preventing serious fraud in the 2017 elections.

Most of that money, 4 million euros, is to be spent on the purchase of special elec-



tronic devices that will be used for verifying voters’ identity and thereby preventing multiple voting. Another 2 million euros will go to pay for web cameras to be installed in the vast majority of Armenia’s 2,000 or so polling stations. Voting and ballot counting there will be broadcast live online on Election Day.

Switalski stressed that no other EU neighbor has ever received so much funding and

“political support” for the conduct of democratic elections. “So Armenia, in a way, is in a privileged position,” said the envoy.

Announcing this aid in a December statement, the EU Delegation cautioned that these anti-fraud measures alone will not guarantee a clean vote. It said the authorities in Yerevan should also have the “political will” to ensure a “fair electoral process.”

Switalski expressed hope earlier in 2016 that the parliamentary elections will be “an important launching pad for the democratic future of Armenia.”

With Armenia due to switch to the parliamentary system of government in 2018, the polls will determine who will govern the country after President Serzh Sargsyan serves out his final term. Sargsyan and his Republican Party (HHK) say that they are committed to ensuring that the polls are free and fair. Their political opponents are skeptical about these pledges.

Aurora announces Creative Contest Jury

Aurora Humanitarian Initiative has announced the jury of Aurora Creative Contest launched on January, 2017. The jury comprised of artists and art professionals in Armenia will select the best artworks presented by children aged 7-14.

Aurora Creative Contest Jury has 6 members chaired by animator Gayane Martirosyan.

“This contest is a good opportunity for people and especially for children to gather around the idea of humanism. It is very important that Aurora invites everyone to take part in this contest regardless where they live. I believe that the artworks will brighter illustrate what humanism is because children better perceive the world than we do,” said Gayane Martirosyan.

The other members of Jury are Marine Ales, composer, member of the Aurora Prize Creative Council; Eleonora Malkhasyan, journalist and theatric critic, manager of cultural projects at IDeA Foundation; Tigran Matulyan, artist; Arev Petrosyan, artist; and Hrant Vardanyan, film director. The detailed bios of the jury members are presented below.

The results of the contest will be announced in April 2017. The authors of the best three entries will be awarded by Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and the best five will have a unique opportunity to attend the Aurora Prize Award Ceremony on May 28, 2017, in Yerevan, Armenia. The deadline to submit the entries is March 31, 2017.

Contest Jury

Gayane Martirosyan – Gayane Martirosyan

is animation film director. She is a professor at the Yerevan State Institute Theatre and Cinema leading the class of animation film directing. Gayane Martirosyan is the founder of massive animation at HayFilm studio. She is the author of a number of animations including The secrets of Dragon Carpets series (2008-2013), Three bells (2002), The War in our Street (1989) among others. She is a laureate of various national and international awards.

Marine Ales – Marine Ales is a composer and theatre critic. She is the author of 300 songs in Armenian and Russian. Her songs were released in 5 albums: I’ll Leave You (1999), My Poplars (2001), Thoughts (2003), With and Without You (2007), Barefoot in the Sky (2010). She was jury member of the 2016 Golden Apricot International Film Festival. Marine Ales is co-founder of Gift of Life Foundation. She is the laureate of numerous awards for life-time achievements. In 2010, Marine Ales published the collection of her poetry Shards. Marine Ales is the member of the Aurora Prize Creative Council.

Eleonora Malkhasian – Eleonora Malkhasian is a journalist and theatre critic. She is the manager of cultural projects of the Initiatives for Development of Armenia (IDeA) Foundation. Eleonora Malkhasian has worked for many cultural journals including Muse journal published in Los Angeles, CA. She taught History of Art and Theatre in various art universities and institutions in Armenia. Eleonora is the co-author of Museums of Armenia book

published in 2002.

Tigran Matulyan – Tigran Matulyan is contemporary artist. He is a member of Artist Union of Armenia. His works were exhibited in many solo and group exhibitions around the world. Matulyan’s artworks are part of the collection and permanent exhibition of the Armenian Museum of Contemporary Art, Arame Art Gallery, Armenian National Gallery, Khrimian Museum of the Holy See Echmiadzin, The Museum of the History of Yerevan. He holds the title of Honorable artist of Armenia.

Arev Petrosyan – Arev Petrosyan is the founder of Arev Art Gallery in Armenia. Arev is the author of the stained glass picture The Power of Unity put on display in the Assembly Hall of Council of Europe. She was presented in many national and international art exhibitions and galleries. She has designed TV studios for various TV shows. The artist is also known for her charity and social activities aimed at the solution problems and healthcare issues of socially vulnerable people, namely the poor, orphans, the elderly, women and children with disabilities.

Hrant Vardanyan – Hrant Vardanyan is a film director. He made his first short “Silence” in 1995. Since then Hrant Vardanyan has made a number of short and feature films. He directed music videos for well-known Armenian musicians. In 2011 Hrant Vardanyan founded Arev Film Studio in Armenia. He is the laureate of national Hayak film award for his The dream of sheep film(2014).

Vahe Andonians: "We are Happy that Our Small Contribution Helps People in Their Personal Fight against One of the Most Vicious Groups of Diseases"

Donation raised due to SCDM Founder's participation in intl marathons helps purchase cutting-edge equipment for oncology dept



By
**Gourgen
Khazhakian**

**Chief
Correspondent**

As The Highlights has written already in its 3 October '16 issue # 33-34, **Vahe Andonians**, 40, Founder of the SCDM Financial, the second largest company resided at the Viasphere Technopark in Yerevan that provides risk management services for banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions worldwide, participated last year in several international sports competitions such as *Half Ironman Zell Am See* (28.08.2016), a triathlon (swim, bike, run) being held in Austria, *Berlin Marathon* (25.09.2016) and *Athens Mar-*

athons (13.11.2016) pledges to **double** that amount and it will all be donated to an Oncology hospital in Armenia..."

All at all, 5,000 Euros was raised, and it was decided to transfer this amount for needs of newly opened Oncology Department at the Yerevan Erebouni Medical Center (Hospital) headed by **Haykuhi Geokchyan**, M.D., PhD.

And recently Vahe Andonians, **Ivana Medo** of SCDM, and **Gus Harris**, Executive Director, Moody's Analytics that works together with SCDM on various business projects, visited Erebouni MC. (The Highlights correspondent accompanied them).

As Dr H.Geokchyan (who is also a Chief Oncologist of Yerevan) told the guests and your author, during her career, she always was in fact dreaming to have cutting-edge

Minasyan, a well-known TV anchor of medical programs at the various channels.

According to Dr Geokchyan, today their Department meets international standards in general, and, as she said, "due to some parameters it is unique for Armenia". For instance, at the Dept they have the so-called oxygen rooms that is a rare thing for chemotherapy in Armenia.

Another novelty in Armenia is the *Paxman cool sculp* that is instrumental in preventing hair loss that, in turn, is a serious psychological problem, first of all for women, especially in Armenia.

At the Oncology Department, they can treat at once up to 130 patients.

Naturally, the Head of the Dept informed the donator how the donated money was spent:

"Your donation has become a seed mon-



thon (13.11.2016)

As a post from Mr Andonians' FB page said, "...The reason for going out is to raise money for a good cause..."

He announced also that for every competition his FB friends can donate money and after the last marathon the raised money will be donated for treatment of people suffering from oncology in Armenia.

As Vahe Andonians wrote, "...I have over 700 friends on Facebook, if each of you donates at least 3 Euro that will make more than 2100 Euro. #SCDMFinancial

equipment/technologies for treatment that fatal disease, and she decided to appeal with such a proposal to the Erebouni Medical Center. And its leadership - first Armenia's and Nagorno-Karabakh Republic's Health Minister Prof. **Haroutyun Qushk-yan** who, in her words, is "a very creative man", gave ok for her idea and soon (some 8-9 months ago) Oncology Dept at the Erebouni MC was opened.

As Dr **Sargis Abovyan** of the Dept informed yours truly, contact between them and SCDM was provided by Dr **Vahe Ter-**

ey for purchase of special chairs for chemotherapy; they are very comfortable, - thanks to remote control unit a patient can control chair's position", - Dr Geokchyan said.

Dr Geokchyan called this donation "extremely helpful and timely" for their Department further development, and this is a bright example of "the Armenian Diaspora's sparing no effort for the Homeland Armenia's prosperity".

She thanked wholeheartedly Vahe Andonians and asked to pass "deep gratitude"

to all who participated in the fundraising.

Then the guests toured in the Oncology Department.

By the end of the visit your correspondent talked to Vahe Andonians:

- Please tell The Highlights readers about your impressions on what you have seen in the hospital.

- A couple of years ago, I was at that hospital for personal reasons and I have to say I am impressed by the progress the hospital has made. Without being able to judge the quality of service the hospital provides, it starts to feel like a Western European hospital. I do think there is still a long way to go to reach the high levels common in Germany, but the progress is very visible.



- As far as I remember, you were going to participate in other marathons as well, for instance, the Skechers Performance Los Angeles Marathon to be held on 18-19 March 2017. The same fundraising will be organized as well?

- We are looking into ways to continue to support the hospital as part of our corporate social responsibility efforts. I am not sure if I can run the LA marathon this year, but we will come up with something different for sure.

-What else would you add?

- We are happy that our small contribution helps people in their personal fight against one of the most vicious groups of diseases.

ANCC: Axe murderer still considered a hero in Azerbaijan

Asbarez – The Armenian National Committee of Canada (ANCC) calls upon the international community to pressure Azerbaijan to respect its international promise and imprison Ramil Safarov, the Azeri lieutenant responsible for the horrific murder of Armenian lieutenant Gurgen Margaryan.

The ANCC condemns the pardoning and rewarding of this convicted killer by the government of Azerbaijan.

On February 18, 2004, while both men were participating in a NATO-sponsored course in Hungary, Azerbaijani lieutenant Ramil Safarov axed to death Armenian lieutenant Gurgen Margaryan, when the latter was sleeping. Safarov subsequently admitted to the murder, and was convicted by a Hungarian court and sentenced to life in prison for his heinous act. Hungary had consistently refused extradition until August 2012, when it allowed Safarov to return to Azerbaijan, under assurances and promises by Azerbaijani officials that he would serve out his full prison term. However, upon his arrival in Azerbaijan, Safarov was welcomed as a hero, received a full presidential pardon by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and was promoted to a Major rank in addition to receiving various

compensations.

Commenting on the issue, ANCC president, Shahan Mirakian said “With a track record of complete disregard for international law, and continuous abuse of human rights, Azerbaijan cannot be trusted as a credible partner to the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) peace process brought forth by the OSCE Minsk Group.

“By not calling on Azerbaijan to imprison Safarov, the international community sends a message that it will not uphold Azerbaijan’s obligations in respect to the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) peace process,” said Mirakian.

Since the internationally brokered ceasefire of the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) conflict, Azerbaijani forces have repeatedly attacked the Republic of Artsakh’s border on multiple occasions, targeting ordinary civilians, women and children.

These ongoing violations of the ceasefire in the Artsakh conflict represent an escalation of the ongoing disregard by Azerbaijan for the efforts of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, co-chaired by the United States, Russia and France, to solve the conflict peacefully.

“Azerbaijan’s latest actions are another clear example of how the Aliyev regime continues to incite ethnic hatred and violence, and threaten peace in the region; all in an effort to deflect focus away from its own corrupt practices” said Mirakian.

The extradition and pardoning of Safarov in 2012 raised concerns in the OSCE Minsk Group’s co-chairmanship countries of Russia, France and the United States (where both the White House and Congressional leaders strongly expressed their concerns regarding Azerbaijan’s actions) and the Canadian parliament. Despite international calls on Azerbaijan to abide by its promise to the Hungarian authorities and imprison Safarov, the axe murderer continues to live freely in Baku today.



9 INCREDIBLE COUNTRIES WHERE YOU CAN LIVE FOR UNDER \$1,000 A MONTH

BY BRUCE NORTHAM

Travel widely enough, and you'll notice something about the Americans you encounter abroad. While the people I know in the States are too often shackled to dull jobs or unrewarding relationships, the entrenched expats I've met while visiting more than 100 countries never show evidence of boredom, worry, or regret. Nearly all seem to embody what a quintessential Outback man -- twice my age and hitching in the opposite direction on an Australian backroad -- yelled across the pavement: "Don't spend time; enjoy it."

If you're thinking of starting up somewhere else for the YOLO of it, don't let cost stand in your way. The US government pegs the poverty line at about \$12,000 a year for a childless person. That won't take you far in Oakland (or even Omaha), but it'll buy you a full year of wonders in one of these nine countries. In any of these, \$1,000 a month covers housing and food, as well as access to adventures that chumps with much fatter salaries can only imagine. The price of a beer, I've found, works as a pretty reliable stand-in for almost any cost-of-living survey you care to enlist; those are included here.

This list could dig deeper into hardcore country steals. Unless voluntourism is your goal, risky places like Nigeria and Pakistan aren't wise choices. And a note on budgeting: If you're working abroad, you'll blow less money, simply because you'll stumble into fewer budget-wrecking hedonistic binges while on the clock. If you're earning even a few American dollars a month, you can stretch a trip to any of these spots indefinitely. (If you need a handbook for these sorts of life-changing jaunts, *A Better Life for Half the Price* by Tim Leffel is the bible for bargain-hunting wannabe expats.) Life is short, as they say. So go long.

Armenia

Local draft: \$1.50, served by someone with a PhD

What you'll save on: A world-class opera runs \$6.

Why here? University grads probably speak English better than you do and chess is the national pastime. Their top export seems to be smarts. Fashion and wine run deep; the always-organic produce is ridiculously

cheap. Sandwiched between Iran, Turkey, and Georgia, many of the tiny Christian country's 4,000 epic religious structures are on prime real estate -- analogous to where America created its ultimate national parks and resorts. Nearly every monastery offers the option to interact with the chatty, emcee-style resident priests who exemplify the coolness of all Armenians. Like most orthodox holy men, they marry and have families, which seems to give them an enhanced sense of humor -- not short on jokes or offering samples of homebrew wines in clay jugs.

Affordable adventure: Armenia's stairway to heaven -- an ascending Grand Canyon-esque road -- leads to the mind-melting Noravank monastery. Imagine multihued Moab speckled with ancient hilltop World Heritage Sites.

If you need a hedonistic binge: Armenia's 300 days of sunshine each year paired with hundreds of denuded mountains above the tree line make it one of the world's best places to paraglide, either as a beginner or a one-timer flying tandem with a pro.

Bolivia

Local draft: 75 cents to wash down a few of their 1,200 varieties of chilies

What you'll save on: A bed in a barebones hostel will run \$5 per night, and taking a leashed alpaca for a stroll is free.

Why here? Landlocked in a corner behind Pacific coast-hugging Peru and Chile, Bolivia remains an even greater bargain than backpacker sanctuaries like Cambodia. La Paz (elevation 12,000ft), the world's highest capital city, is where frugal long-term travelers crisscrossing South America hang their hats and regroup. Giveaway alcohol prices and all-night dance joints are a welcome reprieve from the city's hectic street scene.

Here, the mostly Roman Catholic country breaks from tradition with their version of America's WWE, Cholina wrestling, where empowered Bolivian ladies battle it out for your entertainment. Bolivia has the largest Native American population in South America and they invented the frugal existence. Although less than 10% of Bolivia's land is flat/fertile enough for growing crops farming is their primary occupation. Yet few Bolivians can afford the biggest crops -- in their case quinoa and coffee -- because they're worth far more as an export.

Andean natives never seem to be in a rush, probably because they maintain spiritual links to their 3,000-year-old ancestors. In the past 185 years they've had nearly 200 heads of state, so it's easy to assume that the current presidente on the Bolivian stamp doesn't have much time left. But in the cosmic sense, who does?

Affordable adventure: Once you stomach the \$160 cost of a visa, everything, I mean everything, is ultra-cheap in one of South America's least-visited countries. If you need a break from La Paz's buzz or elevation, you're just a 30-mile drive (passing an eruption of majestic mountains) from sea-like Lake Titicaca where drowsy llama herds graze while cows sip from the trout-filled lake.

If you need a hedonistic binge: Mountain biking 45 miles down the treacherous road that connects Coroico to La Paz is a kaleidoscopic evolution of microclimates, and throws a bit of mud in your face. The aptly named "death road" was cut into the side of a mountain chain in the 1930s by Paraguayan prisoners. It connects the Amazonian rainforest to La Paz. You'll note that many vehicles have tumbled off the narrow dirt road and met their fates far below. The 11,000-plus-foot drop means riders segue from thin, chilly air to baking humidity. Many outfitters compete for your business. Oh yeah, La Paz has decent hospitals.

Fiji

Local draft: \$1.25, x2 since you're also buying one for your new buddy

What you'll save on: A bowl of kava is by donation, your call.

Why here? Unlike the many Polynesian islands in the midst of the Pacific Ocean, dark-skin-Melanesian Fiji's vibe resembles that of the chilled-out Caribbean. The 10-hour nonstop flight from Los Angeles springs you into a remote patch of the Tropicana ring around the Earth that welcomes backpack nomads, divers, and package-tour types. Fiji's largest and most populous island, Viti Levu, yields lush resorts and ferries and flights to dozens of other beach-rimmed islands that cater to chic travelers as well as the \$20-a-night, thatched hut-dwelling beerchug contestants. Dandy.

If you really plan on living here for a while you'll have to truly go local -- earthen floors and all -- to live cheaply. Of Fiji's 325 is-

lands only about 100 are “inhabited,” and visitors rarely get to know more than a few after landing on Viti Levu. Everyone sees this large island’s intimidating peaks but heads offshore to predictable resorts. Instead, ascend into Viti Levu’s craggy mountain interior and take a hike on the wild side where an invitation from chiefs is required to enter most villages. Then, gather ‘round the kava bowl and drink the elixir used for centuries to mend conflicts between warring tribes; a peaceful happy hour. Kava means to Fiji what football means to Green Bay, Wisconsin — a marvelous trance. The buzz recalls a sort of earthy codeine canapé or a Native American mushroom blessing.

Affordable adventure: Get round-wound-sound by enjoying the stirring gospel singing in one of the many rustic Christian churches built in nearly every settlement. Waltz (like you own the place) into one of Fiji’s many plush resorts, play a drinking game or enjoy the amenities. Freed indentured servants brought here from India by 19th-century British colonialists add plenty to these already-multicultural islands — including killer Indian cuisine.

If you need a hedonistic binge: Fiji’s two “cities,” Nadi and Suva, have the usual tourist rundown of places to blow your money, but tighten your belt and you can survive on a budget that would make you cry back in the States.

Grenada

Local draft: \$1, while standing barefoot in sand

What you’ll save on: Exotic spices. Fresh and way cheaper than Trader Joe’s (the nutmeg on Grenada’s flag is telling).

Why here? You’ll find plenty of splendid beaches and nice places to crash on this West Indies paradise. GMT (Grenada Maybe Time) slips away from you as the locals’ songlike accent often needs translating. Keep in mind that this is the Caribbean and to navigate affordably you’ll have to go more native than you might prefer. Keeping the peace is Grenadians’ attachment to British Colonial law — one must bow to a picture of the queen when entering a court. And if you swear, it’s not hard to land there. Locals call this a “church state” because cursing within earshot of a cop can warrant an arrest. At least you don’t need any language but English to get around just fine.

Local joints play upbeat soca music, which gets Grenadians up and bouncing. They call it whining, pronounced “why-ning,” and it’s

a carnal dance demonstration: couples swiveling for hours, rarely making eye contact with one another. No doubt you’ll also encounter some of the 5,000-plus international students enrolled in the medical school, perhaps on the dance floor.

Affordable adventure: Hike jungles, laze on beaches, and just mingle. Dig on the national dish called oil down, getting its name from the coconut milk oil residue that infuses the one-pot stew of breadfruit, callaloo, okra, cabbage, fish, dumplings, turmeric, and whatever else is on hand. A lively traffic circle near Grand Anse Beach borders a makeshift outdoor marketplace sarcastically named “Wall Street” because the strip-mall parking area is bookended by banks. Along with being a mini-bus hub, the circle attracts locals who gather to buy open-air-grilled meat and drink beverages sold from ice chests in pickup beds. At night, cars blare music, creating instant parties.

If you need a hedonistic binge: You’ll soon



Montenegro

Local draft: \$1.75, served by someone who has no idea they could make a living as a model in the US

What you’ll save on: A two-hour bus ride crossing remarkable mountain range separating Adriatic coast with inland capital runs just \$7.

Why here? Free of the Communist hang-over that hung in the former Yugoslavian states post-1991, Montenegro is rocking it. The capital, Podgorica, has its share of uniform, sober buildings echoing the dismal Soviet concrete era, but the mannerly hard-working locals make it shine. But this place is not all about work. They also know how to party. Routine vodka-swilling haunts aside, chic nightlife options abound.

Affordable adventure: The mountainous, euro-using country has miles of gorgeous Adriatic Sea coastline, but the real fun happens in Podgorica’s sprawling open-air

continued on page 16

9 INCREDIBLE COUNTRIES WHERE YOU CAN LIVE FOR UNDER \$1,000 A MONTH

from page 15

restaurants overlooking the cooling Morača River, where ethno folk bands with accordions and harmonicas taking center stage serve as the backdrop. Nothing comes easy when a country emerges from a dictatorship into a democracy, but you can afford to live in style here while they figure it all out.

If you need a hedonistic binge: A highlight of the Old World Adriatic Sea side of this country of 750,000 residents is severely romantic Perast, a soulful, mountain base-hugging village on the Bay of Kotor. This stunning snapshot of native waterside culture can be taken in from several waterfront establishments. Versus more touristy parts of Europe (Italy is across the way), Perast is a bargain, full of locals who seem to enjoy Americans. On the edge of town, the Pirate Bar (not a play on words like it might be in California) is the choice for imbibing and snacking while overlooking the bay and mountains, which are all perfectly illuminated by serious sunsets.

Nepal

Local draft: \$1.15, likely in a joint where the walls can talk

What you'll save on: Gift-giving back home. Nifty local handicrafts cost bupkis.

Why here? Nestled between powerhouses China and India, this hypnotizing nation allows you to travel back in time, which also applies to its cost of living. Kathmandu, with a surplus of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, is one of those big towns (like Ushuaia, Argentina, the gateway to Antarctica) where every traveler is amped to the max since they are either preparing for or returning from one of their life's most epic experiences in the Himalayas.

Even while living there long-term, you'll never tire of that adventurous energy. Nepal's intensity lies in its out-of-this-world mountain scenery, embedded spirituality, and antique temples and villages. This crossroads for meeting down-to-earth (or coming-back-to-earth) travelers is a people-watching dream come true.

Affordable adventure: Just being there. If your job in Kathmandu, likely doing something humanitarian, doesn't work out, go take a stroll and pinch yourself. If you need a change in village scenery, take the 125-

mile bus ride/odyssey from Kathmandu to Pokhara, the country's second city and an apt place for you to discover your inner hippie. Although damage from the 2015 earthquake lingers, there is more to do than peer from your bus window. Punctuate the hilly, winding, no-guard-rails journey with stops to camp on sandy riverbank beaches, go whitewater rafting, or chill in a hammock.

If you need a hedonistic binge: One of three treks: the Annapurna Sanctuary, the Annapurna Circuit, or the Everest Base Camp Trek, your chance for an encounter with Mount Everest. Upon returning, reborn, you'll never be the same person.

Nicaragua

Local draft: \$1.65, in an open-air bar where you're not embarrassed that your Spanish peaked in 11th grade

What you'll save on: Surf lessons can be had for less than \$10/hour.

Why here? Even the poorest country in Central America -- you'll be humbled by how far \$500 a month goes here -- is a swell place to assess your coordinates of wonder. When the sun rises here at least four things happen. Hardcore bird lovers and surfers set out on mountain rainforest rambles or big Pacific Ocean wave hunts, and Managua's gamblers and shady night owls call it a night. Sample all of it, and you'll wonder why you didn't get here sooner. In the late '90s this place was slowly limping out of a war. Now it rivals Costa Rica, the darling of Central American tourism, as the place to be.

The narrow country is flanked by the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean while the landmass separating them is a massive, fertile mountain range. The Caribbean coast is flavored by Creole-accented slave descendants while on the west coast of this triangular country Spanish-descended Latino flair remains in full swing.

Affordable adventure: Off the Caribbean coast is idyllic Little Corn Island, which features economical lodgings and surprisingly swank yoga-focused resorts on an island that doesn't have cars -- and by law will now never permit anything with an engine.

If you need a hedonistic binge: The west coast's mountains create private Pacific Ocean beach coves, one providing an idyllic and secluded spot for Nicaragua's first five-star resort. Mukul (pronounced "moo-

cool," meaning "secret" in Mayan) is a totally unexpected, understated presence in the developing country. The posh resort in Guacalito was recently opened by the Pellas family, who, among other things, produces the country's famed Flor de Caña rum. The new property hosts honeymooners, upscale surfers, and Nicaragua's elite, none of whom are doing belly shots.

Zimbabwe

Local draft: \$2, accompanied by the scent of wildlife

What you'll save on: Bragging rights. Who the hell else do you know who's been here?

Why here? Africa's adrenaline capital, the Victoria Falls region, is once again open for business. Rafting on Class V rapids, giving a full-grown lion a massage, and beholding the epic Victoria Falls is only a taste. When the Zambezi river tumbles over the Victoria Falls shelf into an infinite gorge, it creates a steamy spray that can be seen from space.

Getting healthy here is easy and cheap. The locals are gracious and dapper, quick to share a smile. One theory as to why: Statistically poor locals raised in non-electrified villages have eaten only organic foods throughout their lives. When visiting places with bad raps, you have to keep your guard up but not close yourself off. The once-thriving economy is now struggling, but the chance of someone hassling you in Zimbabwe is about as likely as a New Orleans cop busting you for drinking a beer on the street.

Affordable adventure: You can also heat up your adrenaline. Built in 1905, the Victoria Falls Bridge crosses the 1,200-mile-long Zambezi just below the Falls and connects Zimbabwe and Zambia by both road and rail. This bridge over Africa's fourth-longest river is a platform for many adventures, including an entertaining attempt at "suicide practice." The world's third-highest bungee jump (New Zealand and South Africa rank first and second) enjoys a 365ft free fall.

If you need a hedonistic binge: Victoria Falls-area safaris cost maybe \$1,000 a night, still only half of what you'd pay for similar products (luxury or otherwise) in South Africa. Even if you don't go full-bore, five-star accommodations in this corner of Zimbabwe carry only two-star price tags and are friendly to the expat and backpacker sets.

Translation of Festal Works of St. Gregory of Narek to be presented in Fresno

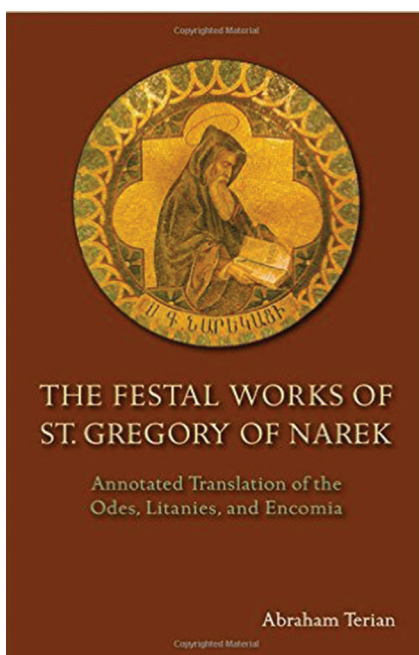
The Festal Works of St. Gregory of Narek, Annotated Translation of the Odes, Litanies, and Encomia, a book presentation by Dr. Abraham Terian will take place on February 27, 2017, at the Armenian Museum of Fresno Exhibition Hall.

Monday, is also the first day of Great Lent in the Apostolic / Orthodox Churches, and for the Armenian Evangelical Churches. The Roman Catholic Church commemorates on this date Saint Gregory of Narek, who is most known for his prayer book titled, Book of Lamentations.

This book, which has been translated to numerous languages, is an “edifice of faith for the ages, unique in Christian literature for its rich imagery, its subtle theology, its Biblical erudition, and the sincere immediacy of its communication with God.”

When proclaiming Saint Gregory of Narek a Doctor of the Universal Church, Pope Francis had this to say:

“Saint Gregory of Narek, a monk of the tenth century, knew how to express the sentiments of your people more than

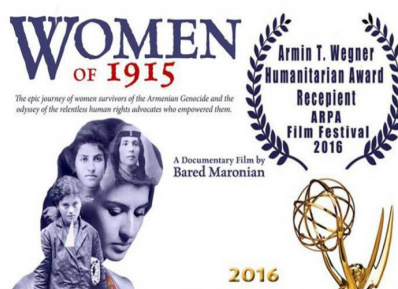


anyone. He gave voice to the cry, which became a prayer of a sinful and sorrowful humanity, oppressed by the anguish of its powerlessness, but illuminated by the

splendor of God's love and open to the hope of his salvific intervention, which is capable of transforming all things.” -Pope Francis, April 12, 2015

Terian's is the first translation in any language of the surviving corpus of the festal works of St. Gregory of Narek, a tenth-century Armenian mystic theologian and poet par excellence (d. 1003). Composed as liturgical works for the various Dominical and related feasts, these poetic writings are literary masterpieces in both lyrical verse and narrative. Unlike Gregory's better-known penitential prayers, these show a jubilant author in a celebratory mood. In this volume Abraham Terian, an eminent scholar of medieval Armenian literature, provides the nonspecialist reader with an illuminating translation of St. Gregory of Narek's festal works. Introducing each composition with an explanatory note, Terian places the works under consideration in their author's thought-world and in their tenth-century landscape. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 2016.

Holocaust and Genocide Lecture Series premieres Emmy-winning 'Women of 1915'



Massis Post

The 34th annual Holocaust and Genocide Lecture Series at Sonoma State University presents the Bay Area premiere of the 2016 Regional Emmy Award-winning documentary “Women of 1915,” which chronicles the plight of Armenian women during the Genocide and the non-Armenian women who came to their rescue, Tuesday, Feb. 28, 4 p.m., in Warren Auditorium at Ives Hall, Sonoma State University. The screening includes a presentation by filmmaker Bared

Maronian. This lecture is underwritten by the SSU Armenian Genocide Memorial Fund. Admission is free, parking is \$5-\$8 on campus.

The lecture series continues through May 9, with highlights including talks by Rabbi Michael Berenbaum, professor of Jewish studies at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles, and Dr. James Waller, the Cohen Endowed Chair of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene State College.

On March 28, Rabbi Michael Berenbaum speaks on the topic “Between History and Memory.” Berenbaum is the Director of the Sigi Ziering Institute: Exploring the Ethical and Religious Implications of the Holocaust, and a professor of Jewish Studies at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles. He is the author of over 20 books, and executive editor of the second edition of the Encyclopaedia Judaica. Berenbaum was also project director for the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

and the first director of its research institute. His work in film has won Emmy Awards and Academy Awards. Dr. Berenbaum's lecture is the annual Robert L. Harris Memorial Lecture and is underwritten by the Alliance for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, an SSU Academic Foundation Organization.

On April 4, professor James Waller, Ph.D., the Cohen Endowed Chair of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene State College and director of academic programs with the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, speaks on the topic “Becoming Evil.” Waller's books include “Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing,” and “Confront Evil: Engaging our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide.”

This year marks the first time the archive of the Holocaust and Genocide Lecture Series is available on YouTube. Videos of lectures are currently available from as far back at 1987.

Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

There will be an explosion in the sign of Aries. You may set a bonfire, have an accident, or join activist movements. Motion and action are prominent. There is potential for

your explosion to bring reprisal having to do with career. Maybe this has happened just recently.



Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

On Mar. 4 your ruling planet will be turning retrograde for a few weeks. It is possible you are already leaning into withdrawal from one or more relationships while you evaluate their impact on your life. This is not necessarily a permanent change.

It is designed to help you decide if the relationship(s) are for you.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

This is an excellent time to pursue any activity that requires your mental concentration. Contracts and written communications, along with short distance travel, have go signals. The New Moon Eclipse plants

a new seed in the house that describes life direction. You may not see it quite yet, but soon.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

Follow your instincts about where you need to be, particularly if that includes a new social situation. Then give attention to whomever or whatever new enters your life. It will serve as a helpful teacher and guide

you in the next direction.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

You or someone else may want you to feel guilty because you are unable to make things better. Recognize that you are not the magician you would like to be and let go of the guilt. Whatever happens now, you are highly prone to think dark

thoughts about yourself. This is passing. Let it go.



Virgo

(August 22–September 22)

Your ability to concentrate upon projects that require management of details is strong. Organizing files, closets and cabinets will clear the clutter from your mind. The new wrinkle in your life occurs through

your partnership(s). That may be business or personal.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Venus, the ancient goddess of love and financial resources, will turn retrograde in your partnership house. You and your partner have need of increased space between you. It

does not matter who initiates the idea for a breathing space. It comes from a joint need. This does not mean anything about love, so don't misinterpret and create trouble where there is not.



Scorpio

(October 23–November 21)

You and Aries have things in common this week. An emotional explosion or accident may suddenly alter the picture. There may be consequences on your health, at your

workplace, or in rental property that you own. Drive and handle tools very carefully.



Sagittarius

(November 22–December 20)

Organize files and details early in the week in preparation for an event near Feb. 27 that will elicit a passionate response. You'll want to

come from an informed and organized place in your head before that occurs.



Capricorn

(December 21–January 19)

There are developing problems in and around your home that may suddenly become visible. If not properly, then the restlessness and potentially surprising events may become

apparent in your family life. Usually there are clues ahead of time about the nature of the disorder.



Aquarius

(January 20–February 17)

If you focus your mind on a mentally challenging project that can have an identifiable outcome, things will move smoothly through the ear-

ly part of the week. The New Moon Eclipse occurs in your territory of personal resources. That can be money, time, and/or energy. See the lead paragraph.



Pisces (February 18–March 19)

Please read the lead paragraph carefully. This eclipse in your sign signifies that something new, but very small, will be entering your consciousness soon. It will involve reshaping your sense of identity to

include another factor. Your sense of compassion will increase, slowly at first. If, instead, you are being used by a vampire, you will realize this soon.

ARMENIA

Yezeguelian Hotel & Residence



In the Green Park
Near Congress Hotel
24 Studios and Apartments
€250 Per Week
(Payment Upon Arrival)

**In the Center
of Yerevan**



Warm Welcome
24/7 Security
Free Cafe & Bar

All Conveniences
Air Conditioned
Apartments



Kitchen, Refrigerator
Safe, TV, Internet



Modern
Rest Rooms

RESERVATIONS:

011 374 91 57 01 70
011 374 91 73 91 91

Yezeguelian@aol.com

Paris Office: 34 Avenue des Champs Elysees
Phone: 011 33 1 43 59 66 72
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-



teous manner. 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



ԱՆՎԱՍՏԱՆԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ
ՏԵՐԱԲՈՒՆՈՒՄ



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



ԱՆԿՈՂՆԱԿԻՆ ԻԿՎԱՆՈՒՆԵՐԻ ԼՈՂԱՆՔԻ ԿԱԳՄԱԿԵՐԱԿՈՒՄ ԻՐԵՆՑ ԻՍԿ ԱՆԿՈՂՆՈՒՄ

The Noyan Tapan
Noah's Ark
HIGHLIGHTS

The publisher: NT Holding LTD
Circulation: 1500 print copies and
15.600 copies by e-mail list in PDF format
Տպված՝ 2.25 մամուլ, տպարանակը՝ 1500
Լրատվական գործունեություն իրականացնող՝
ՆՏ ԽՈՒՂԻՆԳ ՍՊԸ
Գրանցման վկայականի համար՝
03Ա898368, տրված 11.01.2013 թ.

President of the NT Media Holding:
Tigran Harutyunyan
Editor-in-Chief of the Media Holding:
Gayaneh Arakelyan
Director of the Weekly:
Marina Harutyunyan
Chief Correspondent: **Gourgen Khazhakian**
Proofreader: **Susanna Mkrtchian**
Layout: **Diana Grigoryan**
Համարի թող. պատ.՝ Մ. Հարությունյան
Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993.
ISSN 1829-0604
Registration certificate and the date:
273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

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