

New Year Tree lights up Yerevan



Armenia started its countdown to New Year after the lights of the New Year tree went on in the main square of capital Yerevan. The festive events will continue through January 13, when the nation traditionally celebrates the “Old New Year.” A fairy town with interesting modern solutions and colorful decorations has been built at the Republic Square. The main concert will kick off at 10 pm on December 31 and will continue until 23:45. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan will then take the stage to make a New Year address. After midnight the celebration will continue with a concert by Goran Bregović and his group.

Dear readers!

The Noyan Tapan Highlights editorial team wishes you a wonderful new year filled with abundance, joy, and treasured moments. May 2020 be your best year yet!

We are grateful for our collaboration with you in 2019, and we look forward to working together in the new year. Thank you for staying with us!

Happy 2020!

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EAEU heads of state hail Armenia's effective presidency of the organization

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attended on December 20 the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council's regular meeting at Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library in St. Petersburg.

The Eurasian Economic Union's development agenda and the prospects for cooperation were discussed during narrow and expanded-format sessions. The Supreme Eurasian Economic Council endorsed the nomination of Mikhail Myasnikov as Eurasian Economic Commission Board Chairman. Incumbent Board Chairman Tigran Sargsyan will be in office until February 1, 2020.

The meeting approved the new composition of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission and decided that Belarus should take over the presidency of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2020. The decision will come into force on January 1, 2020.



"As Armenia's year-long presidency in the EAEU is nearing completion, I would like to thank all our partners for the work done during this time. I think that we enjoyed a pretty good, effective and fruitful presidency. I am confident that we will continue to cooperate in this spirit. Congratulating Belarus on assuming the presidency, I wish you all the best," the Prime Minister said.

President Alexander Lukashenko of the

Republic of Belarus thanked the Armenian Prime Minister for his kind remarks and best wishes.

"Dear colleagues, I think you all share the opinion that we should extend a vote of thanks to the Armenian side for quite effective presidency," Lukashenko stated.

The heads of EAEU-member states signed the agreement on EAEU-member state citizens' pension guarantees. The Member States approved the EAEU directive on lifting the barriers to domestic market operations, and the directive on implementing service liberalization programs.

Decisions were passed on amending the EAEC's working regulations and approving the action plan for forming a common electricity market.

In conclusion, it was decided to hold the next meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in May, 2020 in Belarus.

Artsakh and Egypt to cooperate in tourism, culture and sports



On December 16-18, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Artsakh Masis Mayilian, who was in the Arab Republic of Egypt on a short working visit, met with representatives of the business circles of capital Cairo.

The Foreign Minister presented the tax policy and the privileged conditions for large investors in Artsakh. An exchange

of opinions on the prospects of making investments in some economic spheres of Artsakh took place.

Within the framework of the visit, Masis Mayilian met with Governor of Southern Sinai of Egypt Khaled Fouda Siddiq Muhammad.

The Foreign Minister highly appreciated the traditional friendly attitude of the Egyptian

authorities towards the Armenian community, noting the important contribution and role of Armenians in the development of the country.

During the meeting, Masis Mayilian presented the priority directions of economic development in the Republic of Artsakh. In this context, the Foreign Minister, especially highlighted the tourism sector and touched upon various initiatives implemented in the Republic, aimed at increasing the tourist attractiveness of Artsakh, which ensure quite satisfactory results.

As a result of the meeting, agreements were reached on establishing and developing cooperation in the fields of tourism, culture and sports.

In Cairo, Masis Mayilian also visited the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to Egypt, as well as the residence of the Head of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, St. Gregory the Illuminator, and met with Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia Karen Grigoryan and Head of the Diocese Bishop Ashot Mnatsakanyan.

Trump administration reacts to Armenian genocide resolution



U.S. -- U.S. President Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (L) take part in a joint press conference in the East Room of the White House in Washington, November 13, 2019

The administration of President Donald Trump distanced itself on December 17 from the U.S. Senate's landmark resolution recognizing the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey.

"The position of the Administration has not changed," the U.S. State Department spokeswoman, Morgan Ortagus, said in a short statement on the resolution which the Senate adopted by unanimous consent on December 12.

"Our views are reflected in the President's definitive statement on this issue from last April," she added.

Like his predecessors, Trump has avoided

using the word genocide in his annual statements on the mass killings and deportations of Armenians. He has spoken instead of "one of the worst mass atrocities of the 20th century."

Trump apparently made no attempts to stop the Democrat-led House of Representatives from recognizing the genocide in late October after decades of lobbying by the Armenian community in the United States. But he did try to scuttle the passage of a similar resolution by the Republican-controlled Senate.

For three consecutive weeks the Senate resolution was blocked by Republican

senators at the behest of the White House concerned about its damage to U.S.-Turkish relations. The two main co-sponsors of the measure, Democrat Bob Menendez and Republican Ted Cruz, faced no more objections when they presented it on the Senate floor for the fourth time.

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) was quick to criticize Trump's refusal to also characterize the First World War-era slaughter of some 1.5 million Armenians as genocide.

"How long will Trump remain loyal to [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, enforcing Ankara's Turkey First veto against honest American remembrance of the extermination & exile of millions of Christian martyrs, after 95% of Republicans ... backed the Armenian Genocide Resolution?" the ANCA wrote on Twitter.

In a separate tweet, the lobby group expressed confidence that the genocide's recognition by the U.S. administration is "just a matter of time."

Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan thanked the Senate and the House for the "historic" "genocide resolutions on December 13.

By contrast, the Turkish government strongly condemned the Senate action, with Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu calling it a "political show" that "has no validity whatsoever."

Court of Appeals rejects Robert Kocharyan's request for release on bail

The Court of Appeal of Armenia on December 20 declined ex-President Robert Kocharyan's request for release on bail.

The court decided to reject the appeal of Mr. Kocharyan's lawyers and uphold the decision of the court of general jurisdiction, judge Lusine Abgaryan said.

The decision can be appealed to the Court of Cassation within 15 days.

Robert Kocharyan is charged with overthrowing constitutional order in March 2008 following a presidential election. At least ten people were killed in clashes between police and protesters on March 1, 2008.

The trial of Robert Kocharyan and three other former officials commenced in Yerevan on September 12.



Three arrested in Armenian probe of foreign adoptions

(RFE/RL – Yerevan) - The director of Armenia's main maternity hospital and two other officials were arrested on December 18 on suspicion of forcing young women to abandon their babies who were subsequently adopted by foreigners paying bribes.

The Investigative Committee made the arrests as part of a criminal investigation launched by another law-enforcement agency, the National Security Service (NSS), earlier this year.

In a November 14 statement, the NSS claimed to have found evidence of three dozen Armenian children have been illegally adopted by Italian nationals. In particular, it said, in 2016-2018 several officials used threats, blackmail and lies to convince over a dozen pregnant (and presumably unmarried) women to abandon their expected children.

According to the statement, immediately after their birth the children were taken to state-run orphanages whose senior employees later arranged their adoption by foreigners through forgery of their medical records and other violations of adoption rules set by the state. The NSS said that members of the crime ring made sure that Armenian citizens could not adopt the babies.

The arrested suspects are Razmik Abra-



hamyan, the director of the Republican Maternity Hospital, his deputy Arshak Jerjeryan and Liana Karapetyan, the director of a Yerevan orphanage. The Investigative Committee said that they colluded with two other individuals for personal gain but did not give any details.

All three suspects were interrogated later on Wednesday. It was not clear whether any of them admitted involvement in the alleged child trafficking.

A spokeswoman for the Yerevan-based hospital, Vartuhi Simonyan, declined to comment on its long-serving director's arrest. At the same time Simonian categorically denied the medical institution's involvement in child adoptions in Armenia.

Abrahamian, 76, was already charged in April this year with giving a bribe to then Deputy Health Minister Arsen Davtyan. Unlike Davtyan, who was reportedly caught red-handed in his office, the veteran

doctor was not arrested at the time.

According to government data, a total of 54 Armenian children were adopted by foreign nationals, most of them Italians and Americans, from 2016-2018.

The integrity of foreign adoptions in Armenia has long been in serious doubt. A 2011 news report by RFE/RL's Armenian service suggested that U.S. adoption agencies continue to make hefty informal payments to Armenian officials dealing with adoptions. It cited a sample contract signed by one such agency with Americans wishing to adopt Armenian or Georgian children.

The contract, offered to a potential client in the United States in 2007, explained that almost \$5,000 of more than \$30,000 charged by the agency for every adoption would be spent on "gifts to foreign service providers and government functionaries performing ministerial tasks as an offer of thanks for prompt service." It claimed that such gifts are "customary" in Armenia and Georgia and do not violate U.S. law.

"Gifts and gratuities" were also a separate spending category in a sample agreement that was offered by another American adoption agency.

Tender Notice

Embassy of India, Yerevan – Hiring of Security Service Provider (SSP) for providing security at two premises in Yerevan, Armenia.

Please refer to the official website of Embassy of India, Yerevan for full details at:


<https://eoiyerevan.gov.in/>

OR

<https://eoiyerevan.gov.in/pages.php?id=33>

Last date for submission of bids: **09 January, 2020 (1700hrs)**

For enquiries (email only): Please contact: hoc.yerevan@mea.gov.in


Head of Chancery
Embassy of India
Yerevan, Armenia

EU hails Armenia's progress in implementing its reform agenda

Established under the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), the EU-Armenia Partnership Committee met for the second time in Brussels on 16 December 2019 and took stock of the implementation of the Agreement.

The CEPA is a key tool for reforms in and the modernization of Armenia, in line with the Armenian government's ambitious, long-term strategic vision. The EU expressed appreciation for the progress made by Armenia in implementing its reform agenda so far, notably with new judicial and anti-corruption strategies.

The EU and Armenia also enjoy very good cooperation in the framework of the EU-Armenia justice policy dialogue. The EU stressed the importance of Armenia continuing on its reform path, inter alia for the protection of human rights. Reform should be in line with the core principles of the rule of law and based on inclusive dialogue and partnership with all stakeholders,



including civil society.

As a key reform partner for Armenia, the EU stands ready to provide further expertise and financial assistance to strengthen the government's capacity to design and deliver reforms and approximate to EU standards. This can provide concrete benefits to the citizens of both the EU and Armenia.

The Partnership Committee also looked at CEPA implementation in the fields of transport, energy and environment, giving guidance for more detailed follow-up at expert level under the EU-Armenia Energy, Trans-

port, Environment, Climate Action and Civil Protection Subcommittee, which will meet in Yerevan in March 2020. In addition, the EU and Armenia agreed to launch in March 2020 regular expert consultations for more in-depth discussion of specific subjects in the field of climate action and environmental protection.

The EU-Armenia will continue their policy dialogue on education reform.

They will pursue collaboration in the area of research under Horizon 2020 and launch consultations on Horizon Europe. Furthermore, the EU and Armenia will explore the possibilities of drafting a youth strategy and action plan. Finally, the Partnership Committee discussed issues related to economic development, security, Eastern Partnership and regional affairs.

The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Luc Devigne, Deputy Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia at the European External Action Service, and Mr Avet Adonts, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

City of Miami Beach officially recognizes the Armenian Genocide

The City of Miami Beach, Florida has passed a resolution officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide, reported FLArmenians.com.

The resolution was introduced by Miami Beach City Commissioner Mark Samuelian and passed unanimously.

"I am extremely proud of my Armenian heritage, and happy to have visited Armenia this summer and seen the wonderful countryside and its people. I commend the U.S. House of Representatives for condemning and recognizing the Armenian Genocide and proud of the City of Miami Beach for adopting this resolution," Mark Samuelian



said in a statement to FLArmenians.com.

"In addition, I congratulate the Armenian Genocide Committee, Inc. (AGC) for its efforts in commemorating the Armenian Genocide here in South Florida. This is a significant step in honoring the history of the Armenian people and their contributions," Samuelian said.

In 2017, Samuelian became the first Armenian American elected official in Miami-Dade County history.

"The City of Miami Beach is the first city in Miami-Dade County to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide, and I know I speak for the thousands of Armenian Americans in Miami-Dade when I say 'Thank You' to Commissioner Samuelian, Mayor

Gelber, and the entire City Commission on this historic occasion," stated AGC Chairwoman Arsine Kaloustian.

"As the Armenian American community in South Florida continues to grow, AGC will continue to build on our accomplishments and expand Armenian Genocide awareness, education, and affirmation in the Sunshine State," Kaloustian said.

World Bank: GDP growth in Armenia remains strong

GDP growth in Armenia remains strong, fueled by private consumption, the World Bank says in a monthly economic update for December 2019.

Inflation has been slowly edging upwards, while strong growth in imports of vehicles and lower gold exports widened the trade deficit.

The Budget recorded a 0.5 percent of GDP deficit in October but remains in surplus year-to-date. The poverty rate fell from 25.7 percent in 2017 to 23.5 percent in 2018.

Below are some key findings presented by the World Bank:

GDP grew by a strong 7.9 percent year-on-year (yoy) in the third quarter of 2019. This brings the cumulative GDP growth in 2019 through September to 7.5 percent yoy, driven largely by private consumption. Importantly, net export and capital formation, which stagnated at the start of the year, had positive, albeit modest, contributions to growth (0.7 percentage points (pp), each), which helped compensate for the decline in public consumption, the World Bank said.

On the production side, most of growth



(5.5 pp) came from trade and services and the rest from industry (mainly manufacturing (1 pp), mining (0.6 pp) and construction (0.3 pp)). These trends continued in October with the Economic Activity Index increasing by 7.7 percent, yoy.

Inflation in November continued to edge upwards. Consumer prices increased by 1 percent in November yoy, up from 0.9 percent annual inflation in the previous month, but still below the lower bound of the target range of the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) of 4 +/-1.5 percent.

With imports growing strongly and exports moderating, the trade deficit widened. After growing by 33 percent yoy in September, exports in October grew by only

1.3 percent yoy.

The appreciating pressures on the dram dissipated. The wider trade deficit was partly offset by stronger transfers from abroad, tourism proceeds as well as unrecorded re-exports lowered the financing needs.

The Budget registered a 0.5 percent of annual GDP deficit in October. With this, the surplus in the year-to-October declined to 0.9 percent of GDP; still a considerable overperformance compared to the annual budget deficit plan of 2 percent of GDP.

The poverty rate declined to 23.5 percent in 2018 from 25.7 percent in 2017. The reduction was more pronounced in rural areas and Yerevan, while in secondary cities the poverty rate increased.

Credit and deposits grew by above 15 percent yoy in October, with deposits growth slightly outpacing credit expansion. Both, the loan and the deposit portfolios grew as a result of the local currency component, thus helping to reduce the dollarization rate.

EU provides €5.1 million grant support for Armenia's road safety



The Republic of Armenia and the European Investment Bank have signed a Neighborhood Investment Platform Grant Agreement to support the implementation of the Armenia Road Safety Improvement Project. This Agreement will allow the European Commission to finance this project by an investment grant of up to EUR 4,25m.

The overall objective of the project is to improve the regional interconnectivity through the upgrade of the transport network in Armenia, and more particularly through introduction of road safety measures and foster capacity development for relevant authorities and stakeholders to reach international standards regarding road safety.

This project includes the following activities: road safety measures on M6 interstate road, road safety works and infrastructure improvements of 9 selected black spots on H-8 republican road and M-5 interstate road Yerevan – Armavir – Border crossing with Turkey, 15 selected blackspots on interstate roads: M-2 Yerevan – Ararat – Kapan – Meghri, M-4 Yerevan – Hrazdan – Sevan – Azatamut, M-12 Goris and M-17 Kapan – Shikahogh – Meghri, as well as additional identified blackspots.

The scope of the project includes additional technical assistance grant from the European Commission in the amount of up to EUR 650 000 and EUR 0.2M budget allocation for the EU Communication activities, notably the Implementation of the Communication for Behavioral Impact (COMBI) Strategy in the context of the Road Safety Improvement project in Armenia.

Armenian Government in talks with Google and PayPal to get services localized

The Armenian Government continues the negotiation with Google and PayPal to ensure the localization of their services for Armenia, Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan told reporters today, [Armenpress](#) reports.

“We have several problems with YouTube, Google Maps, PayPal and Google Play,” he said.

The Minister added that “serious steps are being taken in that direction in cooperation with the



Diaspora.”

“Our compatriots working at those organizations are also involved in the activities,” Minister Arshakyan said, refraining from further assessment of the process.

He did not rule out that results could be achieved in 2020.

Back in March 2019 Hakob Arshakyan declared the government would set up a working group to explore the opportunities of localization of YouTube and Google services.

Armenian youth to get scholarship to study in the Silicon Valley

The government will grant a state scholarship to Armenian youth to study in the Silicon Valley. The first-ever exclusive educational program has been initiated by the Ministry of High-Tech Industry, which will cover all expenses related to the education of selected Armenian entrepreneurs.

The 7-week course will be offered at the Draper University, also known as Draper University of Heroes. Elon Musk (Tesla, Inc.) Tim Westergren (Pandora Media Inc.), Airbnb leaders and YouTube founders will be sharing their experience and success formula with the youth.

The educational platform uniting the world's IT giants is now open for admis-



sion; applications are accepted until January 27.

Anyone aged 21 or over with entrepreneurial experience and a groundbreaking IT idea he/she wants to implement in Armenia, is fluent in English and ready to share knowledge with students and future entrepreneurs is eligible to apply for the course.

Applications can be submitted by address <https://www.draperuniversity.com/apply> The best applicants will be selected by the Draper University and a special commission of the Ministry of High-Tech Industry.

Draper University of Heroes is a residential and online school based in San Mateo, California, to help extraordinary people accomplish their life missions.

School alumni have gone on to build 350 companies including crypto leaders, QTUM, Spacecash, DataWallet, and Credo.

Since 2014, the university has been offering a free course on Bitcoin. Draper University was the first educational institution to accept Bitcoin as a form of tuition.

Over 440 km of roads constructed and renovated in Armenia in 2019

As of November 2019, 330 km of roads were constructed and renovated in Armenia, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in a Facebook post.

According to him, another 110 km of roads were renovated under subsidy programs, which means approximately 440 km

of roads were repaired this year.

The Prime Minister said the work done this year is actually equal to that done between 2013 and 2017.

He emphasized that the cost of road repairs has significantly decreased compared to the previous years.

“If, for example, the cost of one-kilometer road repair in 2014 cost more than 200 million AMD, this year the same works cost two and a half times cheaper, totaling about 80 million AMD,” the Prime Minister noted.

“Armenia’s external and internal security is the priority of all priorities” – PM congratulates National Security Service staff on professional holiday

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attended a gala event on the occasion of National Security Officer’s Day. Addressing the audience, the Prime Minister stated:

“Mr. Acting National Security Service Director, National Security Service Staff, Government Members, Officials, Dear journalists,

Congratulations to all of us on National Security Officer’s Day. I would like to specifically emphasize that the activities of the National Security Service are closely related to the interests and security of all citizens of the Republic of Armenia without exception.

I have repeatedly stated that Armenia’s external and internal security is a priority of all priorities. We have several institutions, institutions that ensure the security of the country, and one of these important structures is the National Security Service. As Prime Minister, I can say that that over the past 1.5 years the National Security Service has fulfilled the task assigned to it. There is much criticism about the NSS, but I want to note that a huge part of NSS activities is invisible to the public. Security is a phenomenon that is often overlooked and not usually visible. People do not usually thank the security service for good work because it is taken for granted. And when security is questioned at least a little bit, everyone pulls out their swords and attacks the authority responsible for it. I want to take this opportunity to thank the NSS for dedicated service.

The PM noted with regret that the Republic of Armenia still finds itself in such a geopolitical environment that gives rise to security challenges. “Unfortunately, we are located in a region where the situation is too volatile; where the situation keeps aggravating day after day. We will have long-term security challenges, ranging from the threat of terrorism to border security, and so on. But I want to emphasize that according to the latest data, the Republic of Armenia is on the list of safest countries in the world. Fancy what, a country in a state of conflict, a country with two closed borders out of four suddenly becomes one of the safest countries in the world. This fact is unfortunately often overlooked.

And I deem it important to draw your attention to the aforementioned important fact. That is why I wish to extend a spe-



cial vote of thanks to the National Security Service and other security bodies of our country: The Armed Forces, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Defense, the Police and the law enforcement system, in general. Nevertheless, this does not mean that I think that the NSS or any other body is working perfectly. No one can feel so, and no one can think that there is a body in Armenia - public or private, which works perfectly. And in general, no country has an ideal working body. And it is very important to note that we consider the improvement of state institutions as the most important priority, and there is no doubt that we will move consistently in that direction,” Nikol Pashinyan said.

The Premier reminded that there has been a lot of talk about how much he trusts the NSS, which acted in the times when he was an opposition politician, and before that, when he was a political prisoner.

“We all know very well what has happened, but I want to say something that I think is very important: of course, at different times, the law enforcement system, including the NSS, works in different conditions, in different environments. However, I want to say that even at that time, the NSS (taking into account also the understandable nuances of its activities) never crossed, at least as much as my own experience is concerned, the red lines that could exist at all in public relations. For this reason, today, as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, I trust the National Security Service of the Republic of Armenia, because I understand that the NSS should not be an entity to fit the government in office. The NSS should be a national security service in the literal sense of the word, under any government, without exception.

And this is the number one mission for this structure. And I want to say that all the more so, being the prime minister and the head of government, who is 100 percent

sure that all his activities, with all the nuances, without exception meet the interests of the national security of the Republic of Armenia, national interests, state interests, such a prime minister, such a government cannot have a bit of mistrust in the NSS. And I think that our biggest task is to implement balanced reforms in the NSS in the coming years to make its work more efficient. And, in particular, yes, I agree with the remarks that over time the National Security Service will make less effort in the fight against corruption in order to focus on counterintelligence issues and on combating terrorism; it should focus on maintaining the constitutional order and curbing violence.

Unfortunately, a very large part of our society does not realize the entire coverage of security activities. And I want to highlight a few other areas that remain out of the public eye. I mean intelligence, counter-intelligence, border troops, the fight against terrorism, which is usually out of sight, perhaps for objective and subjective reasons.

Dear attendees,

It is crucial for us to provide the NSS with proper working conditions. I mean that the NSS officers should have specific mechanisms and guarantees of social and psychological protection appropriate to their service. This is one of the most important nuances in the context of which we represent the further development of this institution.

Reiterating my congratulations on the upcoming National Security Service Officer’s Day, I wish we could celebrate this day with a higher spirit and more confidence every other year in a way that security issues could be tackled at a higher level in our country so that no one might pose a serious threat to the security of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Artsakh, and the Armenian people. Our security is in strong hands, our security is in safe hands, and this security and stability should be preserved for the benefit of the people of Armenia, the people of Artsakh and the Armenian people as a whole, as well as our statehoods,” PM noted.

On the occasion of National Security Officer’s Day, for courage and selfless service a group of NSS officers were awarded state awards and medals, letters of appreciation and commemorative medals of the Prime Minister.

Senate Recognition of Armenian Genocide: Reactions, Next Steps to be Taken



By Harut Sassounian

For the first time since the Genocide of 1915, the U.S. Senate unanimously adopted a resolution on December 12 recognizing the Armenian Genocide, after it was blocked for three consecutive weeks by different Republican Senators at the request of the White House. Since then, I have received countless phone calls and emails from Armenians asking me if this resolution, along with its companion resolution – adopted overwhelmingly by the House of Representatives on October 29 – will now go to President Donald Trump for his signature.

I have written about this subject many times before, but it bears repeating that these two resolutions are “stand alone” resolutions, which means that they do not go to the White House and the President is not requested to sign them. This is the end of the road for these two resolutions. If they were submitted to the two Houses of Congress as a “joint resolution,” they would then have been submitted to the President for his signature.

Nevertheless, regardless of the type of resolution, if Pres. Trump so wishes, he can use the term “Armenian Genocide” in his annual statement on April 24, 2020.

Even though the October 29 recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the House of Representatives was the third time the House has passed such a resolution, the December 12 Senate resolution is historic since it is the first time since 1915 that the U.S. Senate has adopted such a resolution using the term Armenian Genocide. Furthermore, these two “stand alone” resolutions do not have the force of law, therefore, no legal consequence. They are simply considered the “Sense of Congress.”

Nevertheless, the adoption of these two Resolutions and their international media coverage angered the Turkish government. Several Turkish officials issued statements condemning Congress and threatening to expel the U.S. troops from two air bases in Turkey! Turkish officials also tried to minimize the importance of these Resolutions by stating that they have “no value at all.” The

Turkish government went as far as compelling its Parliament to issue a resolution condemning the U.S. Senate for recognizing the Armenian Genocide. The Turkish government also summoned U.S. Ambassador in Ankara, David Satterfield, telling him that the Armenian Genocide resolution would disrupt U.S.-Turkish relations, while claiming that the resolution has “no value at all.” Why, then, has the Turkish government spent millions of dollars for years on lobbyists trying to block the resolution in Congress? How can a “worthless” resolution disrupt U.S.-Turkish relations, and why would Turkey threaten to expel the U.S. from the Turkish air bases?

Just as offensive are the attacks on the Senate resolution by Azerbaijan’s officials. “The adoption of the resolution ... is an attempt to falsification of historical facts and its use as a means of political pressure,” stated Leyla Abdullayeva, Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman. The resolution “serves only the dirty purposes of the Armenian lobby circles,” she added. Armenia’s officials should react sharply by condemning Azerbaijan’s denialist statement, which makes Azerbaijan an accomplice to the crime of Genocide after the fact. As a punishment, Armenia should declare that it is temporarily freezing all negotiations with Azerbaijan on Artsakh.

While it was expected that the Turkish government would lash back at the Armenian Genocide resolutions, we are chagrined that the newly-elected Armenian Patriarch of Turkey, Sahak Mashalian, gave a lengthy interview to the Turkish newspaper Sabah, calling the Senate Resolution “not very moral.” While it is understandable that Armenians in Turkey are hostages deprived of their basic human rights, nevertheless there was no reason for the Patriarch, who was elected just one day before the adoption of the resolution, to go to such great lengths to parrot the Turkish government’s denialist propaganda! He not only condemned the U.S. Senate, but said such offensive things as calling for a historical commission to study if a genocide had taken place, falsely claiming that some Armenians sided with Russian troops in attacking the Ottoman forces, accusing Armenians and Turks of massacring each other, urging Armenians and Turks to find a mutual solution without the interference of “third parties,” and supporting the adoption of the infamous Armenia-Turkey Protocols by both countries. All of these are arguments advanced by the Turkish government. Patriarch Mashalian stated at the end of his interview that “I am not a politician; there is a political dimension to this [issue].” He should have refused to talk to Sabah, stating simply that he is a spiritual leader and does not wish to engage himself in political matters.

Regarding the Patriarch’s suggestion that

third-party countries should not involve themselves in the Armenian Genocide issue, he is completely wrong! If it weren’t for the Diaspora’s lobbying efforts for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, this issue would have been forgotten by the world long ago! Rather than taking the side of the denialists and liars, Patriarch Mashalian should have worked tirelessly to establish the truth of the matter. This is the least one can expect from a man of God! Finally, even though the Patriarch is parroting the Turkish denialist talking points, we are not sure that the Turkish government has actually pressured him to give the interview to Sabah. He may have done it on his own to score points with the Turkish government, expecting that Ankara will shortly approve his election as Patriarch. “No one in this congregation would want to vote for a patriarch without approval from the state,” Mashalian told Sabah. The Patriarch is scheduled to meet with Turkish President Erdogan this week!

Since Catholicos Karekin II and Aram Catholicos rushed to congratulate the newly-elected Patriarch of Turkey, I wonder if after Mashalian’s cowardly statements to Sabah, the two Catholicos would retract their congratulations and denounce the Armenian Patriarch’s denialist statements!

Armenian government officials, including the President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister issued statements thanking the U.S. Congress and Armenian Americans for their support of the Genocide resolution. While Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated that the adoption of the resolution would reduce the Turkish threat to Armenia’s security, he regrettably added that he supports the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations “without preconditions.” If the recognition of the Genocide defends Armenia’s security, why would the Prime Minister say that “for us recognition of the Armenian Genocide is not on the agenda of our relations with Turkey?”

In terms of next steps, it is high time that the Armenian government apply to the World Court – International Court of Justice – demanding from Turkey everything that Armenians lost as a result of the Genocide. These include:

Paying monetary compensation for the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide;

Returning all personal properties, such as houses, farms, bank accounts, and valuable items in bank safe deposit boxes to victims’ heirs;

Restoring churches, monasteries, schools and cemeteries to the Armenian community in Turkey;

Liberating and uniting Western Armenia with the Republic of Armenia.

Amb. Nersesyan hands over an Armenian Order of Honor to Robert Dole



Armenia's Ambassador to the US Varuzhan Nersesyan met with prominent US statesman, former Senator and great friend of Armenia and Armenians Bob Dole on December 17.

On behalf of the President and Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Ambassador Nersesyan passed their greetings and the best wishes and handed over the

"Order of Honor" bestowed on Senator Dole for his considerable contribution to the development and enhancement of the friendly relations between Armenian and the USA.

Ambassador Nersesyan expressed profound gratitude to Senator Dole for his tireless efforts in 1980-90s for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, which in

their turn contributed to the recent adoption of resolutions H.Res. 296 by the House of Representatives and S.Res. 150 by the Senate. Senator Dole noted that he was satisfied with such an impressive outcome of the long fight for justice. Reminiscing his great friend, Doctor Hampar Kelikian, who saved his life during the WWII, Senator Dole underlined that he was always proud of his friendship with Armenians and Armenia.

Ambassador Nersesyan told the Senator about the recent wide-scale democratic reforms in Armenia and the positive dynamics in Armenia-US relations following the Velvet Revolution. He also informed Bob Dole about the cooperation with his native State of Kansas, particularly between the Kansas National Guard and Armed Forces of Armenia. Senator Dole expressed his readiness to assist in these endeavors

St. Giragos Armenian Church in Diyarbakir being restored



St. Giragos Armenian Church located in Sur district of Diyarbakir (Tigranakert) is being restored, Tarafsız Haber Agency reports.

The renovation has been initiated by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. Sur Governor Abdullah Ciftci has provided 30 million Turkish lira (about 5 million USD) for restoration of four churches in the region.

The Church was built in 1376 and is known to be the biggest Armenian church

in the Middle East. It was used by the German army as headquarters during the World War I and was converted into a warehouse after the war.

Between 1960s and 1980s, the Armenian community obtained its ownership but due to mass immigration to urban areas, the church remained deserted for several years.

It was renovated and reopened with the support of the Armenian Patriarchate of



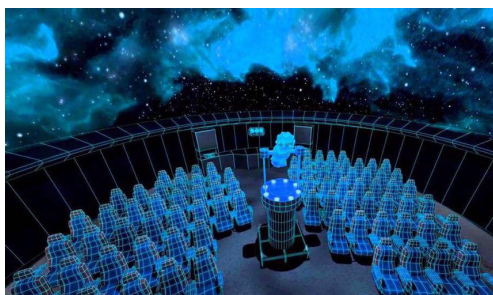
Constantinople in October 2011, but was seriously damaged in September 2015 as a result of clashed between Kurds and the Turkish army.

First planetarium to open in Armenia in January 2020

The first planetarium in Armenia will open in Yerevan on January 1, 2020. It will feature films about the origins of the universe, the formation of stars and planets, as well as the development of astronautics and space technologies.

The project has been developed by the St. Petersburg Planetarium 1 team and leading planetarium designer Grigor Mashuryan.

The planetarium will have a screen of 14 meters in diameter and will accommodate up to 50 people. Viewer will sit on comfortable



sacks, so that they can literally lie down and look at the starry sky.

“It is especially important nowadays for children to pursue technical specialties, which will help educate more engineers in our country who will shape the future development of Armenia,” Grigor Mashuryan says.

The planetarium in Yerevan will offer a brilliant educational program comprised of films created by the European Space Society and Planetarium 1.

The planetarium is also expected to host opera, symphony and jazz concerts, as well as official events and performances.

Small countries can still be powerful, Armenian President says



Small countries can still be powerful, Armenian President Armen Sarkissian said, addressing the prestigious Doha Forum.

Speaking about Armenia, President Sarkissian said “our country has privileges in the new world.”

“It is not only our millennia-old cultural heritage or our origins, but the fact that we value education, science and technology. We have succeeded, for example, in creating an educational and scientific system that we now export to developed countries like France, Germany, and the United Kingdom,” the President added.

“Armenia is a country that has a very clear advantage – we are a small nation and a state, but we are a global nation. The number of Armenians living in the world exceeds the number of Armenians in Armenia by four to five times. They are survivors — people who can change their lifestyle depending on the situation. They

Survey: Ryanair, British Airways and American Airlines named among the worst

American Airlines, British Airways and Ryanair have been voted some of the worst airlines in the world.

An annual airline survey has found the well-known carriers at the bottom of the charts when it comes to food and drink, seat comfort and value for money.

Ryanair has finished bottom of the respected Which? annual airline survey for the seventh consecutive year, the Daily Mail reports.

In the consumer champion’s poll, passengers have given the Irish budget carrier the lowest possible rating for boarding, seat comfort, food and drink, customer service and cabin environment – leaving it with a dismal overall customer score of 44 per cent.

The overall winner yet again, with the highest score across both tables, is Singapore Airlines.

British Airways finished second-bottom, just above American Airlines, in the long-haul ranking, three places below last year. It is third-bottom of the short-haul list, dropping two places, scoring an overall customer satisfaction score of 55 per cent.

The survey, conducted in September 2019, asked 6,535 Which? members about their recent experiences of flying with an airline from the UK, with 10,180 member experiences recorded.



Short-haul airlines (best to worst) Long-haul airlines (best to worst)

Aurigny	Singapore Airlines
Jet2	Qatar Airways
SAS	Emirates
Aer Lingus	Virgin Atlantic
Swiss	KLM
Norwegian	Air Transat
Lufthansa	Thai Airways
Eurowings	Delta Airlines
EasyJet	Tui Airways
KLM	Qantas
Tap Portugal	United Airlines
Flybe	Air Canada
Tui Airways	Etihaad Airways
Wizz Air	British Airways
British Airways	American Airlines
Vueling Airlines	
Ryanair	

are good citizens of the countries they live in,” he continued.

According to President Sarkissian, the world is complex and polarized. “The world is so complex that we have to call it quantum. We need to understand how fast

this new world is changing in line with latest technologies. This is a new world where the small can be both beautiful and strong. I want all the small countries to realize that they can be small but powerful.”

Fine art from Gerard Cafesjian collection to be auctioned by Andrew Jones



Fine art from the collection of Armenian philanthropist, art connoisseur and legal publishing legend Gerard Leon Cafesjian will be auctioned by Andrew Jones Auctions on Saturday, January 11th, 2020.

The auction will be held online and, in the Andrew Jones, Auctions gallery located at 2221 South Main Street in downtown Los Angeles, starting promptly at 10:30 am Pacific time. Internet bidding will be facilitated by LiveAuctioneers.com and Invaluable.com. In all, 140 lots will come up for bid, to include contemporary paintings, sculptures, prints and mixed media works.

“In six decades of collecting, Gerard Cafesjian broadened his vision and honed his eye to bring together international avant-garde works that make statements, reveal beauty, display whimsy and challenge the viewer,” said company president and CEO Andrew Jones. We’re honored to offer this segment of his collection, which features international artists in a variety of media.”

Two works by Vesna Kittelson (Croatian/American, b. 1947), from the artist’s War Painting Series (est. \$2,000-\$3,000) reveal Cafesjian’s concern with crimes against humanity and social injustice. His eye for color and playfulness are evident in pieces like Yvonne Canu’s (French, 1921-2008) *Fleur sous les fleurs* (est. \$2,000-



\$3,000) and Roberto Sebastian Matta’s (Chilean, 1911–2002) *Untitled*, 1970 (est. \$2,000-\$3,000) as well as irreverent works like Igor Gusev’s (Ukrainian, born 1970) large scale oil on canvas titled *Elvis Returns*, 2010 (est. \$6,000-\$8,000).

Gerard Cafesjian was born in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, New York, to Armenian refugees fleeing genocide in 1915. Raised in New York City, Cafesjian immersed himself in the art culture that surrounded him, spending time at museums and art galleries.

After serving in the Pacific during World War II, he returned to New York to pursue studies in economics and law at St. John’s University Law School, Cornell University, and earned a Doctorate of Jurisprudence from Columbia Law School.

Cafesjian also made time to study painting and sculpture at the Art Students League.

Cafesjian retired in 1996 and focused his resources and time on philanthropic pursuits, mostly in his ancestral home of Armenia. He founded the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art in 1999, and, in 2001, he created the Cafesjian Family Foundation, which developed infrastructure for cultural enrichment, financial services, media, and renewable energy in Armenia.

One of his proudest achievements was the establishment of the The Cafesjian Museum Foundation and the Cafesjian Center for the Arts, which opened in Yervan in 2009. The museum holdings boast over 5,000 works derived primarily from Cafesjian’s own vast and varied collection. He wanted the center to promote and support historic and contemporary Armenian artists such as John Altoon, Sonia Balassanian, Armen Eloyan, Archille Gorky, and Martiros Saryan. He also strived to bring the best of international contemporary art to Armenia.

Armenian filmmaker Jivan Avetisyan selected to attend the “Berlinale Talents” in Berlin

Asbarez – Armenian filmmaker Jivan Avetisyan has been selected from over 3,400 applicants from 134 countries to attend the “Berlinale Talents” in Berlin, Germany.

“Berlinale Talents” is an initiative of the Berlin International Film Festival. Jivan Avetisyan’s new feature film project “Revival,” slated for production in Spring 2021, was the premise of his selection. The six-day summit will be held from February 22 to 27, 2020.

The selection committee shared with Jivan Avetisyan: “We appreciate your ambitious approach to filmmaking and to the content of your stories. In 2020, “Berlinale Talents” is going collective: the six-day summit looks at proven and experimental community models in four creative fields: “Cinema,” “Film Set,” “Company,” and “Society.” Collectives from the film, art, and theater worlds will come to Berlin for the nearly 100 talks, workshops, and networking events.”

Jivan Avetisyan thrives to tell Artsakh



stories through the film. His latest project “Gate to Heaven” is set to premiere in Los Angeles on Saturday, March 21, 2020 at the renowned Alex Theatre. The drama film was co-produced with Armenia, Lithuania, Germany, France, Bulgaria, Czech, Italy, and the U.S..

“Gate to Heaven” is presented in four different languages: English, Armenian, German, and French, but is primarily in English. Richard Sammel (Germany) and Tatiana Spivakova (France) play the lead roles, while Sos Janibekyan (Armenia),

Naira Zakaryan (U.S.), Leonardas Pobe-donoscevas (Lithuania), Nina Kronjager (Germany), Benedict Freitag (Switzerland), play the supporting roles.

The second full-length feature film, “The Last Inhabitant,” was created in 2016, again with the collaboration of the National Cinema Center of Armenia and Lithuanian Artbox Production House. The film was considered for the 2017 Golden Globe Awards, “Best Foreign Language Film category.” Additionally, “The Last Inhabitant” was included in the 20th Shanghai International Film Festival in the “Panorama” Program. It was then screened at the 74th Venice International Film Festival. It was purchased and licensed by HBO to air in Eastern European countries.

The cast included A-class, world famous talent from Iran, Lithuania, Greece, Russia, and the U.S. The film’s composer is prominent “System of a Down” rock group soloist, Serj Tankian.


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VBET PROUDLY SUPPORTS ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN WHEN HE DEFENDS HIS WBA SUPER CRUISERWEIGHT TITLE AGAINST CONSTANTIN BEJENARU ON DECEMBER 28.

The award-winning sports betting and gaming operator was with the French-Armenian boxing sensation every step of the way when he defeated Kane Watts in Paris last month.

And VBET will once again be in his corner when Arsen returns to the ring against Moldovian southpaw Bejenaru at the Palais des Sports in Marseille. Good luck, Arsen. We'll see you on December 28!

Bet on the WBA Super Cruiserweight title with VBET: www.vbet.com

VBET is an award-winning sports betting and gaming operator that offers its players the opportunity to bet on a growing range of live sports and eSports markets.

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VBET counts Arsen Goulamirian and Youri Djorkaeff, the World Cup-winning former French footballer and now CEO of the FIFA Foundation, among its ambassadors.

VBET is the B2C brand of Armenian company BetConstruct, one of the world leaders in providing technologies and services for the online and land-based gaming industry.

Based in Yerevan, the company was founded in 2003 by brothers Vigen and Vahe Badalyan and has grown to reach over 3,000 people based in 16 offices around the world and 300 global partners who use its award-winning technology and products.

Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

This is a really good time to advance your political aspirations from behind the scenes. If you support the Powers that Be in your world, they will return the favor now. You are making progress toward reducing debt. Your physical body is in better condition and you are probably feeling very well.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

Your general attention is shifting for the next month into the arena of your career and overall life direction. Whatever you have created thus far will be noticed and perhaps applauded. As a talented leader, you may attract an invitation to manage an upcoming project.



Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)

For much of this week you are in a gregarious and talkative mood. You want to reach out to friends and share ideas. Love, relationships, and social life are given a go signal. The temptation to overspend is strong. If money is an issue, consider what would be fun and interesting that doesn't require a big expenditure.



Taurus (April 20 -- May 20)

A relationship or friendship that began suddenly in late spring has gone through one or two transformations already. If you are still together, this time brings yet one more change in how you relate to each other. If this is not a person, it may be a creative project that you began at that time. It could be described as "out of the box".



Virgo (August 22–September 22)

The "rules" and the world's expectations have you tied up like a pretzel right now. The harder you struggle, the tighter those binds seem to become. It's like a Chinese puzzle. Sometimes if you relax on the control issues, the solution comes through. Back off. Give it some space.



Capricorn (December 21–January 19)

Work and self-discipline from the past brings you a work opportunity that will bode favorably in the future. The source is probably a friend or an acquaintance in your general network.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

You are probably more sensitive to what others think right now. Don't ask anyone else to evaluate you or critique your work. Wait until you are finished with your creative efforts. On this same theme, avoid critiquing others. You do not have all the facts and your rationale is likely flawed.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

A relationship or friendship that began with gusto in May arrives at a point of evaluation. The question of commitment may always be an issue in this situation. Do you want it or not? Does "the Other want it or not?" Some relationships only move forward in fits and starts. You can see both bad and good points about this one.



Aquarius (January 20–February 17)

Venus enters your sign this week and will be traveling "with you" through mid-January, 2020. Her presence gives you an air of poise and people will simply like how you look. Often when Venus is featured, we become more interested in anything which adds beauty or luxury to our lives.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

There is a lot of chatter all around you. Some of it may be disturbing to your sense of comfort. Don't buy into it or worry overmuch. The dust will settle soon and whatever the event, it will be over in a few days' time.



Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

You have an opportunity to create a steadily growing investment of time, energy or money. The requirement is that you study the necessary details in order to develop a smooth working operation. Physical activity and competition are favored.

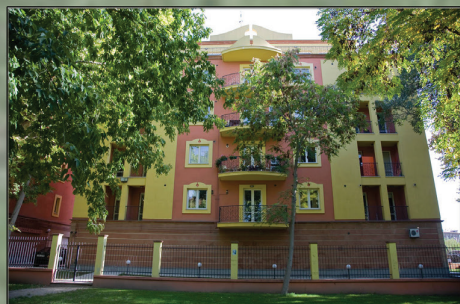


Pisces (February 18–March 19)

Be careful if you feel compelled to buy. You are likely to splurge on an item that ultimately doesn't fully offer what you think. The promise is big, but the result may fall short of your expectations.

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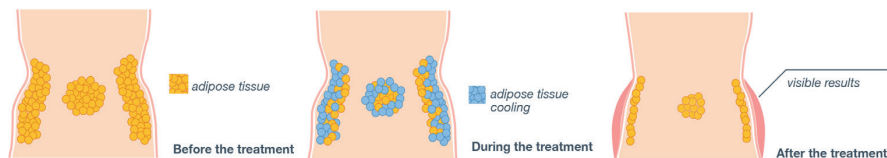
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The publisher: NT Holding LTD
Լրատվական գործունեություն իրականացնող՝
ՆՏ Հոլդինգ ՍՊԸ

Ծավալը՝ 2.25 մամուլ, տպաքանակը՝ 1500
Circulation: 1500 print copies and
15600 copies by e-mail list in PDF format

Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993

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**
Computer Design: **Ashot Khalapyan**
Համարի թող. պատ.՝ Մ. Հարությունյան

ISSN 1829-0604
Գրանցման վկայականի համարը՝
03U898368, տրված՝ 11.01.2013թ.
Registration certificate and the date:
273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

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