

# Armenia's 2019 budget approved by Parliament



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## Ralph Yirikian, Hakob Arshakyan: Supporting Country's Intl Development above Political Preferences or Business Interests

**"Dr. T" is the Global IT Award 2018 Laureate**

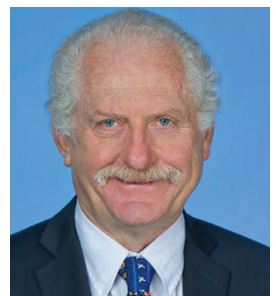
*By Gourgen James Khazhakian*  
Chief Correspondent

*Dr. James Truchard*, Co-Founder of the *National Instruments*, is the 2018 laureate of the State Award of the Republic of Armenia for Global Contribution to Humanity through

IT (fmr. the Award for Global Contribution to Humanity through IT of the RA President).

It was announced officially at a news conference held on Friday 23 November at the RA Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technologies.

RA Acting Minister of Transport, Commu-



nication and Information Technologies Hakob Arshakyan, Founding General Manager of the Award General Partner VivaCell-MTS Ralph Yirikian, and Hovik Musayelyan who has been coordinating works of the Award Committee were the speakers.

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## 'Armenia's future depends on each and every one of us' – President addresses nation ahead of campaigning launch

President Armen Sarkissian has addressed the nation on the occasion of the launch of the campaigning period ahead of the general election.

"Dear countrymen,

The campaigning for the early election of the National Assembly starts on November 26th.

This election is the most important event of Armenia's political life since the great changes of April-May, the results of which are very significant in terms of the country's development and prospects.

High responsibility and conscience – whatever office we hold, whatever opportunities we have – is required from each of us.

I therefore address the state bodies: Continue fulfilling your lawful duties and constitutional requirements with



dignity. I am sure that free, equal and legitimate elections are from now on an inseparable part of our new history.

I am addressing the political parties and alliances running for parliament: I hope that you have treated the development of your political bids – teams

and plans – with utmost responsibility. These will guide the pathways of Armenia's further development. Be committed to the values you believe in, and at the same time [be] respectful and courteous to each other.

I wish good luck to all polit-

ical entities taking part in the upcoming election.

I am addressing our citizens: Be demanding during debates of programs, hear out everyone in order to make your choice in an informed and conscious manner. Make your decision in line with your thinking and values of Armenia's development.

Remember, Armenia's future depends on all of us, on each and every one of us.

God bless the Republic of Armenia, God bless the Republic of Artsakh, God bless the Armenian people and all citizens of the Republic of Armenia," Sarkissian said, according to his office.

Candidates running for parliament will begin campaigning tomorrow.

Armenia will elect a new parliament on December 9.

## Armenian Minister complains about gas deals with Russia

Russian-Armenian agreements signed in 2013 and 2014 have made it harder for Armenian utility regulators to cut domestic prices of natural gas, Energy Minister Garegin Baghramyan said on November 21.

Baghramyan said this is why the prices did not go down after the cost of Russian gas imported by Armenia fell from \$189 to \$165 per thousand cubic meters in 2015. In his words, the tariff cut only translated into extra revenues for the country's gas distribution network owned by the Gazprom giant.

The Russian-Armenian agreements prevented the Public Services Regulatory Commission (PSRC) from making gas cheaper for Ar-

menian households and corporate consumers at the time, added Baghramyan, who had worked for the regulatory body 15 years.

The minister admitted at the same time that the retail prices fell after Gazprom cut its retail tariff for Armenia to \$150 per thousand cubic meters in 2016. Gazprom charges Germany and other European buyers of Russian gas more than \$200 per thousand cubic meters.

A Russian-Armenian supply contract that set the current gas price runs until the end of this year. The Armenian government and Gazprom have been negotiating on a new deal.

Baghramyan reiterated that the government is seeking a further drop in the Russian



gas price. Yerevan also hopes that the Russians will agree to ease the pricing restrictions imposed on the PSRC, he told a news conference.

Gazprom has so far given no indications that it is ready to cut the price further or at least keep it unchanged.

The chief executive of Armenia's Gazprom-owned gas network, Hrant Tadevosyan, said on Monday that the Russian giant could actually raise the price soon. Tadevosyan said that his company is operating at a loss for a second consecutive year.

## "A country of the free and powerful": Armenian leader heralds beginning of 'non-violent, velvet, ECONOMIC revolution'"

The city-wide march led by acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Yerevan concluded on November 24 in downtown.

Speaking to the crowd of supporters, Pashinyan said he is signaling the beginning of a non-violent, velvet economic revolution in Armenia.

"Today we carried out the longest and most longest lasting procession in the history of the third Republic of Armenia," he said.

"Our march lasted 9 hours and 25 minutes, and 37.5 kilometers in one day. What did this all symbolize: First, with this we once again showed that our will is stronger than stone, and our spirit knows no surrender, and no one and nothing will stop us on the pathway of building a free and happy Armenia because we enjoy our people's confidence, our people's mandate, and we, with the power of the people, will lead Armenia toward freedom, development, happiness, as long as our people will want it.

Today we saw thousands of citizens, we greeted thousands of citizens, we looked them in the eye, we received the blessing of thousands of citizens. Second, essentially, to some extent this was a path of atonement, because for already six months we are leading Armenia in the status of government and power. This was a procession of atonement for all our possible mistakes and errors. This was also a pro-



cession of atonement in respect of all those citizens who in any way got bitter in this period, who experienced any kind of disappointment during this period.

But not only was this a procession, but also a unique pilgrimage in the streets of the capital Yerevan. With this pilgrimage, we reiterated our commitment to the values of the democratic, non-violent, velvet revolution that took place in Armenia.

We showed we are committed to this path, and nothing will force us to deviate from it. The revolution began when I, authorized by you and our political team, declared on April 16 in

the France Square [Yerevan] that a non-violent, velvet, democratic revolution is beginning in Armenia, and that's exactly what happened.

Here and now I would like to herald that a democratic, non-violent, velvet economic revolution is beginning in Armenia, with the results of which Armenia will truly become an economically developed, high tech, industrial, prosperous country, a country of free people, a country of powerful people," Pashinyan said.

Pashinyan, Cabinet members and a crowd of supporters marched through entire Yerevan city on November 24, and concluded the procession in Republic Square.

## Armenia's 2019 budget approved by Parliament

The outgoing National Assembly approved on November 22 the Armenian government's draft budget for next year which calls for a 12 percent rise in public spending projected to total 1.65 trillion drams (\$3.4 billion).

Despite the planned increase, the government will keep public sector salaries and pensions largely unchanged.

The budget commits the government to collecting 1.5 trillion drams in tax and other revenues. This would further cut the budget deficit which should fall to 2.7 percent of GDP this year. As has been the case in the past two decades, the deficit will mostly be financed with foreign loans and grants.

Armenia's military spending is projected to soar by 25 percent, to 309 billion drams (\$633 million), in 2019. By comparison, the government is planning to spend 444 billion drams

on social programs, 139 billion drams on education and 90 billion drams on healthcare.

The government agreed to increase its total spending target by about 6 billion drams (\$12.3 million) as a result of parliament debates. According to Finance Minister Atom Janjughazyan, lawmakers proposed 146 amendments.

The 105-member parliament passed the budget by 66 votes to 4, with two abstentions. The spending bill was backed by most deputies representing former President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK).

Still, three senior HHK lawmakers -- Eduard Sharmazanov, Arpine Hovannisyan and Armen Ashotyan -- voted against it.

Citing the budgetary targets and other macro-economic data, Sharmazanov accused Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of failing to make good on his pledges to significantly speed up

economic growth in the country. He argued that Pashinyan's government has forecast a growth rate of only 4.9 percent for 2019.

The Armenian economy is on track to grow by roughly 6 percent this year after expanding by 7.5 percent in 2017. According to official statistics, GDP growth accelerated to 9.7 percent in the first quarter of 2018 that marked the last three months of Sarkisian's decade-long rule.

The 2019 budget envisages pay rises only for 14,000 or so doctors and other medical personnel working in state-run polyclinics.

Presenting it to the parliament on November 13, Pashinyan defended his government's decision not to raise the salaries of other public sector employees as well as pensions and poverty benefits. He attributed that to a lack of state revenue and economic realities inherited from the previous government.



# Ralph Yirikian, Hakob Arshakyan: Supporting Country's Intl Development above Political Preferences or Business Interests

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"Armenian (new) Government is intended to create an environment which will allow to turn Armenia in a country with developed high technology industry. So by inviting such prominent people to Armenia, we not only show our esteem to them and celebrate their achievements but also demonstrate our approach toward the ICT sphere. And each of the laureates of the GIT Award becomes a kind of ambassador of Armenia in the world and thus help raising our country's reputation as a technological country," said **Hakob Arshakyan**.



According to Mr Arshakyan, this is a wonderful opportunity to deal with the great entrepreneur and talented engineer, and he is convinced that though Armenia has just restarted its scientific and technological development, the Armenian companies will also have tangible success soon. He expressed optimism on that in Armenia in the foreseeable future companies having multimillion dollar turnover will be created, and maybe there will be leaders who could claim this Award.

"We have identified three directions: technological education and research, involvement of international companies and support to local companies. As a result of their implementation, we will be able to create an environment in which the sphere will develop at our pace and direction," added Hakob Arshakyan.

"It is the 9th year already we've been awarding luminaries of the ICT world", said Dr.

**Hovik Musayelyan**, coordinator of the Award Committee, Director of Synopsis Armenia. He informed the gathered mass media crowd that this year the Award has been renamed, but they continue their job started yet in 2010 and reminded names of all the previous laureates. "All the laureates are the legends who've changed the course of the human lives, from the point of view both scientific-engineering and entrepreneurial sense", said Dr. Musayelyan and officially announced the name of the Award laureate for 2018, i.e. Dr. James Truchard. According to Mr Musayelyan, he is a unique person who made huge contribution in a big number of spheres ranging from human lives' saving to the urban development and pharmaceuticals.

"We are proud that the world legends visit Armenia every year re-establishing our country's reputation and renown," Hovik Musayelyan said.



Minister Arshakyan added by stressing "Dr T."s (James Truchard's nickname - NT) role in creation of the so-called virtual instrumentation.

"And you know that no project will be implemented without our dearest sponsors, so now let me give floor to Mr Ralph Yirikian, General Manager of VivaCell-MTS, the Award General Partner since its very establishment", said Mr Arshakyan.

"This Award's major distinction from other projects is in being a kind of international passport for Armenia at the world ICT map. The laureates, these genius people whose visiting Armenia attracts the world attention to our Homeland as a rapidly developing ICT hub, bring here their knowledge and experience to share with our specialists, our promising youth. As a continuous project, the impact of the Global IT Award extends far beyond the ef-

forts to have Armenia properly placed on the world's ICT map and thus to better enhance the country's image globally. The biggest outcome of the Award is that here in Armenia we host true innovators whose breakthrough inventions have defined the path of global development, and that these people lecture for the Armenia ICT community and younger generation. The laureates of the Award, just like the geniuses of all times, have never mimicked anyone, have never chosen roads treaded before, and have never tried to fit into the existing rules of the game. Armenia has the intellectual potential which will not only foster its ICT development as the country's competitive advantage but will also help to create a new quality in the industry to stand as equal by the side of the ICT giants, in the long run," VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said. He added that as the next year we mark the Award's jubilee, i.e. its tenth anniversary, they

think how to celebrate it in a proper way for a country whose ICT sector is a development priority.

Your correspondent who has been covering the Award since its very establishment, asked Mr Yirikian a question that could be sound like the following: we thought that you were supporting the GIT Award because of the old regime, but now we see you again with the Award, and so with the new Government... Does it mean VivaCell-MTS will continue supporting in the future, in the years to come?

Below The Highlights' readers could find Mr Yirikian's response:

"Let me answer you from two angles: the first, personal one – as Ralph Yirikian, and the second, as of VivaCell-MTS... For me, as Ralph Yirikian, it does not matter who is in power in our country in this or that moment as the governments come and go, but the **Hayreniq** (the



*Motherland) is eternal. As I said before, the GIT Award has mission to position Armenia as an important hub at the world ICT map. From the VivaCell-MTS point of view, we'll support this Project as long as our Company's budget allows to be the GIT Award General Partner, and so we think about forthcoming jubilee, the following jubilees...*

And a question from yours truly to Minister Hakob Arshakyan: *"Have you had an opportunity and time to get familiar (in detail) the history of the Award, its all laureates, their achievements and presence in Armenia?"*

Mr Minister replied with the following: Being an engineer by trade, I've got familiar with the GIT Award, its laureates etc. As of details of the process, its course and important features, as the Award Committee Chairman, I've got knew when working closely with Mr Musayelyan as well other team members...I might stress that important decisions for the GIT Award's being a continuous one have

*celebrities to Armenia (that is a pre-condition for a laureate - NT) because of their being very busy, with agenda full for two-three years in advance, and normally in other (developed) countries such kind of awarding takes place every two, three or even five years...However, we (proudly) succeeded to find enough nominees and, coming back to your second question, I can say that now we have a list of nominees for several coming years".*

To remind, the Award for Global Contribution to Humanity through IT of the RA President was founded on 6 July, 2009 by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Armenia and is granted annually to an individual whose internationally acclaimed contributions to IT have resulted in near-revolutionary or revolutionary developments that have positively impacted or hold the potential to positively impact the history. These investments may have different forms: technological, educational, business and financial.

has pioneered the way scientists and engineers solve the world's grand engineering challenges.

As one of Forbes' America's Favorite Bosses, Dr. James Truchard, commonly known around NI as "Dr. T.", has led the company from a three-man team to a multinational organization recognized as a Fortune 100 Best Places to Work and one of the top 25 "World's Best Multinational Workplaces" by the Great Places to Work Institute.

Under Truchard's leadership, the company's long-term vision, known as the 100 year plan, and focus on improving the world by providing tools that accelerate productivity, innovation, and discovery, has led to strong, consistent company growth and success of its broad base of customers, employees, suppliers, and shareholders. Learn more about the NI company story at [ni.com/company](http://ni.com/company).

Elected to the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences and the National Acad-



been taken before my being Chairman of the Award Committee, and our Govt appreciates the job done in previous years and is intended to support the Award as much as we can.

Importantly, Minister Arshakyan agreed with a statement done by Ralph Yirikian on creation of a kind of "intl passport" for Armenia at the world high-tech/ICT map and that this fair goal was above any political preferences or business interests. He added the current Armenian Government has been obtain of making any "political accents" in terms of such programs that can be helpful (significantly - NT) to strengthen the Armenian statehood.

The last question asked Dr Musayelyan was like this: *"The benchmark you've set for a laureate is a very high one, so don't you think you'll have problems with finding enough number of nominees of such a caliber in coming years?... And please reveal us a couple of the possible nominees' names you have already in the list".*

Mr Musayelyan said in particular: *"Yes, it is true, we've set a quite high benchmark for laureates...And we have some difficulties in the very first years as the nominees were asking about previous laureates...And you are right when stating that it is not easy to bring such*

*This is the 9th year of the Award. It consists of Golden Medal symbolizing Armenia and high technologies and a symbolic Trophy.*

The awarding ceremony is held by the Award Committee and the laureate is chosen by the Selection Panel.

The Laureates of previous years are the world renowned figures like:

Retired Chief of Intel Corporation **Craig Barrett**, the Co-Founder of Apple, Inc. **Steve Wozniak**, Chairman Emeritus of Synaptics, Inc. and President of Federico and Elvia Faggini Foundation **Federico Faggini**, former CEO of Hitachi Corp. Dr. **Tsugio Makimoto**, Chief Development Officer of Sisco Systems **Mario Mazzola**, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Kaspersky Lab **Eugene Kaspersky**, one of the founding fathers of Internet and CEO at Open-Root **Louis Pouzin** and the founder of the Nest Labs, creator of iPod **Tony Fadell**.

About Dr. James Truchard

Named an *Innovation Agent* by Fast Company, James Truchard, President and CEO, co-founded National Instruments in 1976 and

has also been inducted into Electronic Design's Engineering Hall of Fame and has earned the distinction of being elected an IEEE Fellow.

Additionally, Truchard has been recognized with the Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship for his community involvement with organizations including: the Engineering Foundation Advisory Council, The University of Texas at Austin Chancellor's Council, Austin Software Council, and FIRST Robotics.

Truchard's personal passion for gardening and photography has led him to writing a gardening book that he plans on giving to non-profits for their use fundraising.

Truchard holds a doctorate in electrical engineering, as well as a master's degree and bachelor's degree in physics, all from the University of Texas at Austin. Truchard earned his Master's and doctorate degrees while working full-time as the Managing Director of the Acoustical Measurements Division at the UT Applied Research Laboratories.

On January 1, 2017, Truchard retired as President, CEO, and Co-Founder. He continues to hold his position as the Chairman of the Board.



## Armenian Minister sees slower growth in 2018

The Armenian economy is on course to grow by 5 to 6 percent this year, Economy Minister Tigran Khachatryan said on November 23.

Economic growth in Armenia accelerated to 7.5 percent in 2017, according to official statistics. It hit 9.7 percent in the first quarter of this year, before the start of weeks of mass protests that led to the resignation of the country's longtime leader, Serzh Sargsyan, and his government. Data from the Armenian Statistical Committee shows that growth has slowed down since then. The government agency has also reported a sharp drop in foreign investment. Political opponents of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, the protest leader who came to power in May, have seized upon these figures to criticize his economic record. They claim that his government's policies are scaring away local and foreign investors.



Khachatryan insisted that the dramatic regime change, commonly referred to as a "velvet revolution," will benefit the domestic economy in the longer term. He argued that the new government has already broken up economic monopolies linked to the former regime and is taking other measures to improve Armenia's business environment.

"The revolution has led to a greater degree

of economic freedom, easier access to the markets and more equal competition," said Khachatryan. "These are factors that could and should create a more favorable environment for investment-related decisions. But they can't produce solutions and results at once."

The minister predicted that the upcoming parliamentary elections, which Pashinyan's bloc is widely expected to win, will also contribute to faster growth. The resulting "stabilization of the situation" in the country will only encourage businesspeople to launch new projects, he said.

Pashinyan cited economic considerations when he started pushing for the holding of the snap elections in early October. He said political uncertainty resulting from his team's modest presence in the current Armenian parliament is hampering economic activity.

## Agriculture ministry, IFAD discuss prospects of future cooperation

Acting minister of agriculture Gegham Gevorgyan held a meeting on November 23 with Naoufel Telahigue, Armenia Country Programme Manager at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) North Africa and Europe division.

During the meeting Gevorgyan emphasized the significance of joint programs with IFAD and expressed hope that the bilateral cooperation will further develop and expand, the ministry said.

The caretaker minister briefed the IFAD delegation on the government's agricultural policy

and the planned reforms, as well as ongoing projects carried out jointly with other international organizations.

The sides discussed the current projects and the possible steps from increasing their productivity, and also outlined the main directions for new programs.

The meeting also specially addressed the Global Environment Fund (GEF) Sustainable Land Management for Increased Productivity in Armenia program, which is being carried out by a governmental agency on rural area development. The general goal of the program is to increase



the revenue and assets of farmers having small businesses through investments in sustainable land management systems and technologies.

Naoufel Telahigue expressed readiness to continue cooperation with the Armenian ministry of agriculture for developing and implementing new programs.

## Nikol Pashinyan attends workshop on Armenia's economic development

Acting Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan attended a workshop entitled "Current Challenges and Strategic Directions of Armenia's Economy Development." The forum kicked off with speeches on Armenia's current socio-economic development status, Noyan Tapan was informed from the official website of the Prime Minister of Armenia.

Nikol Pashinyan listened to the speakers' reports on raising the level of constitutionality in Armenia, the improvement of the public



administration system, the new public contract, the institutional transformation and the current state of the economy and the de-

velopment of the issues, following which the participants presented their positions on the topics discussed and the questions around.

Referring to the issues discussed in the reports and summarizing the discussion within the framework of the first part of the conference, Nikol Pashinyan said he was inspired by its results. "In fact, at the very least, the first 5 reports outline the logic and priorities of our steps, what we do in the course of this time, we try to do and try to do better. For example, after the revolution, when we were constantly questioning economic issues on political platforms, first of all we underlined the importance of con-



stitutionalism in the country.

Everyone was saying that this is a political issue and we should talk about the economy. We were saying that the most important thing for the economy is legitimacy, the equality of all before the law, the formation of an environment of justice.

The next problem we encountered and quickly recorded is the extreme ineffectiveness of the public administration system. We have formulated this as a political issue, which will inevitably be the case in 2019. we will talk about it, that is, I hope we will get a vote of confidence in the elections and after all, we will focus on that topic."

The Acting Prime Minister spoke about those issues raised in the report on the new social treaty, including the opportunities created by the revolution, the criticism of the government, and the government's actions.

"In my opinion, this perception is the inertia of the old political system, because if the government takes up all levers and gives all solutions, then it should naturally be held responsible for everything else. This is nonsense, but it is what we used to have. Everyone wants the government, moreover, the prime minister go into the details of micro-management. The government's task is not to check the workings of every single cell, but to ensure the healthy functioning of the body itself. Here the most important thing is to formulate an accurate diagnosis and take steps to that effect. Our ideology today is as follows: there is possibility for different layers of society to assume a role and responsibilities for solving issues.

During our political activities, at least since 2015, when we formulated our political vision, the individual effort has been crucial to resolving all public issues and we believe that these opportunities have been created today. The most important task is to change people's behavior, and in fact, the revolution took place only because of the change in the citizens' behavior," the Acting Prime Minister said.

According to Nikol Pashinyan, there has been a change in political behavior and this has solved the problem of political revolution. With the change of economic behavior we will be able to solve the problem of economic revolution, depending on how taxpayers understand their fiscal liabilities: a burden, a sentence, or as participation in our country's economic, political and social development?

"Changing the taxpayer's behavior and the public perception of businessmen is a top priority that needs to be addressed today. We must admit that for a long time there used to

be a negative attitude toward business with few exceptions. The point is that they were permanently involved in political processes, and the government was interested in their involvement in political processes. Things have changed today. For instance, the number of business-related candidates in the upcoming parliamentary elections is at record low.

But I do not want it to be interpreted as kind of downgrading or humiliation for business people. This is the opposite process, and I think that as a result, a businessman should mean much more than a deputy, because the businessman is the person who creates a product, who provides jobs, who pulls the locomotive of the state revenue, and as a result, we all have the opportunity to form the platform where economic, political and international geopolitical changes should take place in our environment," Nikol Pashinyan underscored.

The issue of improving the demographic situation has been touched upon at the conference. The Acting Prime Minister said in this connection: "It is our most important task, if we put the solution to the logic of natural growth, and even if we have a lot of success now, it will be resolved in 15-20 years, because the babies born within a year will not come of age but in 18 years the earliest. In this regard, we really value the idea of immigration. By saying immigration, we do not mean just the physical transfer of people. We hope that by saying immigration, we can witness influx of capital and new culture, because we are global nation, and the idea that I like is the following: I imagine that our country, the Republic of Armenia, must become an object of immigration from different communities of the world, where people may come and bring in new culture, new understanding, a new look, new ideas so that we could say that while 1000 years old, we are a newborn and reborn nation."

In his speech, Nikol Pashinyan touched upon the current situation in the universities, the educational system and the effectiveness of research centers.

Nikol Pashinyan noted that an incomprehensible institution of state and departmental universities has emerged in Armenia and this is also a matter of the efficiency of public administration.

"We spend so much money on education, but we are actually spending much more, because there are agencies that finance their own universities. And as a result, we have the following situation: when graduates go to a government office for a job, they are told that their diploma is worth nothing as they had to study at the

affiliated institution. This approach is definitely unfair and unacceptable to me. Institutions should be combined and harmonized, and we should set science, research and education on the same rails," the Acting Prime Minister said, attaching importance to the science-economy-government-community active communication.

"Many great discoveries and advances in the modern world have been made on the ideas found in student essays. And how many students are today writing essays? Walking in the city center one can see more essay selling kiosks than cigarette sellers. It seems that this has nothing to do with ourselves, but the decay goes right there. We need to raise the standards and take steps to internationalize our universities," Nikol Pashinyan said.

Regarding the prospects of Armenia's economic development, Nikol Pashinyan said: "Our economy and politics should first of all serve our strategic needs. In this regard, we should not forget that security is one of our strategic priorities. We have the potential and possibility to build such an economic environment.

1. We must agree that the lack of rule of law in our country, the lack of democracy should not be conditioned by the security environment.

2. We should not justify the development of our economy with the overall security environment, because we have different possibilities in the 21st century. Today, economic development is mainly associated with the development of human capital. Human and intellectual capital is our greatest value, and everything must begin from here. Our goal is to ensure our citizens' freedom, happiness and prosperity, and that is a political issue that we must address together." The Acting Prime Minister said with satisfaction that during the discussion he did not hear any sentence with which he could not agree. "This makes me happy, because it means that we have a sense of public consciousness about what we have to do. We have communicated with some of those in attendance during this period, while we have not yet talked to others, but what can be the next important outcome of our revolution is perhaps the restored feeling of our common values. As we are facing the same realities, we can come to the same conclusions and draw the roadmap of future action," Nikol Pashinyan said.

Stressing the need for holding similar meetings as they help generate and implement ideas, work out roadmaps, find solutions and listen to each other, Nikol Pashinyan said he was open to such discussions and ready to meet again.

## Pan-Armenian charity raises more money for Karabakh

In an annual telethon broadcast from Los Angeles, a pan-Armenian charity has raised more than \$11 million that will mostly be spent on its ongoing infrastructure projects in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Hayastan All-Armenian Fund received \$12.5 million and \$15.5 million in donations during similar fundraisers held in 2017 and 2016 respectively.

As always, the Thanksgiving Day telethon featured prominent members of the Armenian community in the United States and Karabakh Armenian leaders. It was broadcast by Armenian and U.S.-Armenian TV channels.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan made a live televised appeal to Armenians around the world when he visited Hayastan's headquarters in Yerevan early on Friday. He urged them to donate more funds to the charity, stressing the importance of its projects implemented in Armenia and Karabakh.

In a statement issued shortly afterwards, Hayastan said the sum collected by it this time includes \$2.5 million donated by a "benefactor" who did not want to be identified. Two other wealthy donors, Armenian-American businessmen Antranig Baghdassarian and Albert Boyajian, contributed \$1 million each.

Most of the latest donations will be channeled into two projects in Karabakh launched by Hayastan last year. One of them is aimed at



expanding local irrigation networks while the other seeks to support greater use of solar energy by Karabakh households.

Hayastan has implemented over \$350 million worth of projects in Karabakh and Armenia since being set up in 1992. The fund's current Board of Trustees is headed by Armenia's President Armen Sarkissian and comprises Pashinian, other senior Armenian state officials, Catholicos Garegin II as well as prominent members of Armenian communities around the world. In recent years the fund has partly financed, among other things, the con-

struction of a second highway connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. The 116-kilometer-long road was inaugurated last year.

Hayastan's activities were overshadowed in July by the arrest and ensuing resignation of its then executive director, Ara Vartanyan. Although Vartanyan admitted using Hayastan's money for online gambling and other "personal purposes" he avoided prosecution after reportedly compensating the charity.

Pashinyan's government has since pledged to help ensure greater transparency in the fund's activities.

## Government may close Diaspora Ministry



The government is considering closing Armenia's Diaspora Ministry or downgrading its status, Diaspora Minister Mkhitar Hayrapetyan said on November 22.

The ministry was set up in 2008 by then President Serzh Sargsyan. It is tasked with

maintaining and strengthening the country's cultural, educational and other ties with the worldwide Armenian Diaspora.

Hayrapetyan said the future of his ministry is now under review in line with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's plans to downsize the

entire government.

"We are continuing to discuss [its future] right now," he told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am). "There are two options: the closure of the ministry or its reinforcement. I personally have proposed the latter option: an agency with greater functions and levers."

The 28-year-old minister admitted that the ministry employing about 90 people has until now played a largely "symbolic" role. The government must set much more "ambitious" objectives for it, he said without elaborating.

In Hayrapetyan's words, if the government does not accept his ideas it will likely decide to incorporate the Diaspora Ministry into another ministry or downsize it and lower its status.

Hayrapetyan is the youngest member of Pashinyan's cabinet formed after the latter swept to power in May in a wave of mass protests. He is running as a candidate of the premier's My Step alliance in parliamentary elections scheduled for December 9.



## For Armenia democracy is a security issue, acting FM says

For Armenia democracy is not a mere choice of political model, it's a security issue, Armenia's acting Foreign Minister says.

"Women and youth are stakeholders in building security, stakeholders in building national institutions, participating in national life, participating in the arrangements within which a society finds harmony," Mnatsakanyan said in an address to the Plenary Session of World Democracy Forum "Women, security and democratization in the context of multilateralism."

As an example, he recalled that when the Prime Minister of Armenia was marching during protests [that led to ex-PM Serzh Sargsyan's resignation], when he was addressing the crowd, he looked around and



reflected on what he had been observing: "when I saw this many women, this many young women, this many women with pushchairs and their children, I knew this is going to happen."

"That was a very important message. We are living in a region, where we are not free

of a conflict. We deal with the unresolved conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Women have that power of delivering the alternative message to militarism, to hatred. And we recognize that. There is this initiative in Armenia that we want to mobilize the women on all sides, so

that they carry the message of peace," the acting Foreign Minister said.

He added that there is the belief that women have the capacity to be socially more responsible. "And their sensitivity to peace is far stronger. But we haven't got to a point at which we can claim effective use of this capacity. And I think that's a collective challenge," he stated.

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan noted that Armenia has constitutionally set a target, a minimum level of 25 percent for participation of women in Parliament.

"We still have to reach that target. And that is not good. We still have to raise the level of women's participation in political life. And I think we are not an exception," the acting FM stated.

## Armenian Police Chief downplays higher crime rate



The chief of the Armenian police, Valeri Osipyan, downplayed on November 22 an 11 percent increase in the number of crimes registered in the country this year, saying that they were previously underreported.

According to Armenia's Statistical Committee, law-enforcement bodies recorded 16,227 crimes in January-September, up from 14,554 in the same period of 2017.

Some critics blame the current Armenian

government, which took office after this spring's "velvet revolution," for the higher crime rate. They claim that it is less tough on crime than the previous authorities in Yerevan.

Osipyan insisted, however, that other factors are at play. "True, there has been an increase in crimes but it's not risky enough to make us feel concerned ... It has to do with a number of factors," he told report-

ers.

"First of all, the vicious practice within the police system of concealing crimes has been completely eliminated," explained Osipyan.

He said police officers used to tell victims of theft, robbery and other offenses not to file formal crime reports "so that that does not affect police indicators." As a result, many crimes were "registered orally" and thus not added to official statistics, he said.

Osipyan, who was appointed as police chief by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in May, declined to name any police officers responsible for that. He insisted only that his predecessor Vladimir Gasparyan "always demanded that they don't under-report" crimes.

According to Osipyan, another reason for the larger number of registered crimes is that their victims are now less wary of reporting them because of what he described as greater public trust in the police. "While people did not trust, respect and love us, police servicemen, in the past, I can say that the opposite is the case now," he claimed.



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

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

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

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

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



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## Kurdish Member of Turkish Parliament Delivers a Harsh Speech & Ends up in Jail



By  
**Harut  
Sassounian**

Ferhat Encu, a Kurdish member of the Turkish Parliament from the Sirnak province of Turkey, delivered a while back extremely critical remarks about Turks and Turkey on the floor of the Parliament in Ankara. I just discovered the video of his bold speech on YouTube.

Encu, a member of the Kurdish HDP Party, is well known for his steadfast opposition to the Turkish government for its perpetual violence against Kurds and violation of Kurdish human rights. In 2011, the Turkish Air Force bombed a group of Kurdish civilians killing 34 of them, including several members of Encu's family!

During his speech, Encu, 33 years old, received many threats from Turkish parliament members. Subsequently, he was stripped of his parliamentary immunity and jailed. He remains in jail!

Here are Encu's six-minute-long powerful remarks in the Turkish Parliament which was constantly interrupted by threats: "I will make my statement short and to the point. Some of you call us killers. But, who kills civilians and who is a killer? You are!"

Threats shouted at Encu from the Parliament floor: "Shut him up! Take that terrorist and shoot him!"

Parliament Speaker: "Let him speak. Say what you have to say and finish it."

Encu continued his remarks: "Together here, you are tough! But, the truth is you are just a mouth and nothing more. I, as a Kurd – history is my witness – that I, as a Kurd, live in my land, Kurdistan, at a time when you were gathering grassroots and feeding, playing around with your horses in Mongolia..."

Shouts from the floor: "Shoot him!"

Encu: "This so called your land is not your land, nor that of the AKP [Pres. Erdogan's ruling party]. This land is older than all of you. It belongs to the real people..."

Parliament Speaker: "You will be punished for this. You can talk this over Kebab during lunch time. You support terrorists in front of us."

Encu: "The honorable Greeks and Armenians were here..."

Shouts from the floor: "Shoot that terrorist."

Encu: "We Kurds are still here. No tanks and none of your military can remove us..."

Shouts from the floor: "We destroyed your city."

Encu: "You can destroy it, but we will build a dozen more. You Turks are nothing. We have defeated worse monsters than you in Silopi. Drop your bombs. Kill our children. Kill civilians, but you cannot kill us being a Kurd in Roboski, all over Kurdistan or what you call 'Turkey.' Humanity has seen worse than you. We defeated them..."

Parliament Speaker: "You will go to jail for this. Five years will be your minimum sentence."

Encu: "I don't give a damn. Truth is more important than life..."

Shouts from the floor: "He needs a bullet. Arrest him!"

Parliament Speaker: "We have sent for security. He will be arrested."

Encu: "We Kurds will always be Kurds, before you Turks came here and after you Turks leave here. Your 'Turkey' is the stolen land of Greeks, Armenians and us Kurds. History is my witness."

Shouts from the floor: "Your head will roll."

Encu: "What can you do? Here I am against hundreds of you. What you got in you?"

Parliament Speaker: "You will be punished for this."

Encu: "Kill me. I will still tell the truth."

Parliament Speaker: "Say that when the security gets here. By this law book, I will send you to 10 years in prison. Ten years is the minimum."

Shouts from the floor: "He needs to be shot right here."

Encu: "I will finish."

Shouts from the floor: "You will pay with your life for this; you scum Kurd!"

Encu: "Bark all of you as you wish. I stand strong here, come and face..."

Shouts from the floor: "That is enough. Where is the security?"

Encu: "You all act tough in a group, but alone, you are cowards. Our Kurdish youth showed that to your military. No Turkish soldier or police can patrol a Kurdish street. Your soldiers ran from our youth. Like now, you just have mouths and act tough together. But, face to face you are nothing..."

Shouts from the floor: "Shut that Kurd up!"

Encu: "Alone, I, as a Kurd, can take on all of you..."

Shouts from the floor: "Firing squad!"

Encu: "You think by killing us you can defeat us; it only makes us stronger. You call me a 'terrorist,' I, who fight for my freedom from your occupation. I, who lived in this land for thousands of years, you come and occupy it. I fight for the freedom of my people, for freedom like all other nations..."

Shouts from the floor: "You will be shot!"

Encu: "I face death and bullets bravely for my freedom like millions of other Kurds. No occupation lasts forever. Freedom always triumphs at the end..."

Shouts from the floor: "You signed your own death warrant by a Turkish bullet. You are a dead man walking. Don't let him leave alive from here."

Parliament Speaker: "Go back to your seats. He is alone. There is nothing to worry about. He is alone. We are many. We will get him. Take your seats."

The fearless and self-sacrificing Ferhat Encu has joined thousands of other innocent Kurds and Turks who have been arrested by the Turkish government in recent years for expressing their opinions and some for no reason at all! It is shameful that world leaders have remained silent in the face of such massive and persistent Turkish violations of human rights!

## Young European Ambassadors Presented EU Opportunities for Youth

On 24 November 2018, in cooperation with the Armavir Development Center, Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) organized a meeting with the youth of Armavir and nearby communities to present the initiative, the opportunities it provides, as well as to briefly reflect on the EU projects and activities under the umbrella of #EU4YOUTH.

The participants learnt about the EU, its history and institutions, EU-Armenia relations. They had the chance to learn about the #EU4YOUTH projects which are implemented in Armenia.

YEAs represented Erasmus opportunities, as well as platforms and tools through which young people can find more information on such opportunities.

During the visit, YEAs followed up on the activities done earlier this year



in Lukashin village of Armavir region on the occasion of the World Environment Day. In June 2018, the Armenian

YEAs organized a tree-planting activity in Lukashin together with the Armavir Development Center.

## Masis Mayilian Met with the Delegation of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic

On November 24, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh Republic) Masis Mayilian met with the delegation of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic led by Vice Prime Minister Alexey Tsurkan.

The Foreign Minister noted with satisfaction the high level of relations established between both the Foreign Ministries and other state bodies of the two countries.

In this context, Masis Mayilian highly appreciated the signing of an agreement between the Governments of the two countries on the mutual establishment of trade representation offices, which took place in Stepanakert on November 23. According to the sides, the agreement will complement



the legal basis of bilateral relations and will be an important step in establishing stable cooperation in the economic

sphere.

The sides also discussed a range of issues related to the prospective directions for ex-

panding the cooperation between the two countries and the implementation of joint practical programs.



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

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



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

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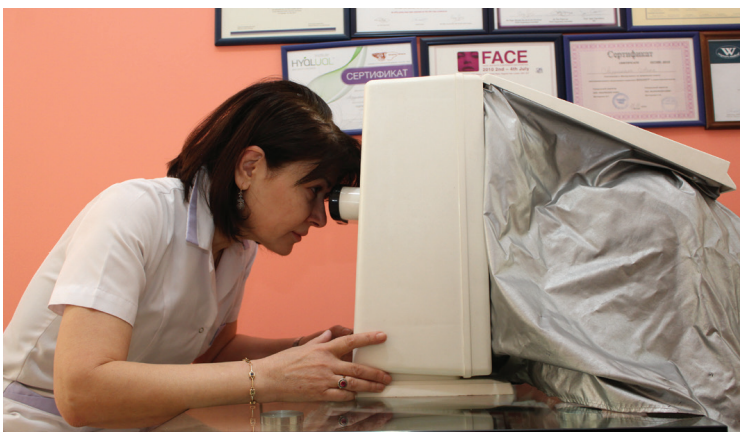
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method (dynamic mode) which allows to treat very large areas of the body within few minutes.

**Localized fat removal:** In Armenia the first cryolipolysis method was implemented by City Spa in 2016. Cooltech is an innovative machine that acts as a none surgical lyposuction, 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 Wellshape machine for anti-cellulite treatment.



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



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## Zodiac Weekly Forecast



**Aries (March 20–April 19)**

Mercury is changing directions in the territory that deals with education, publishing, travel, public speaking, the law, and philosophy. Therefore any of these activities are subject to shifts, changes, or sudden deceleration due to lack of decision. Maybe the right solution just is not yet available. Have a sense of humor. This, too, shall pass.



**Taurus (April 20 – May 20)**

Mercury is retrograding in the territory of taxes, debt, and joint resources. You will likely experience a need to go back and review financial history. Some may be hesitating over whether or not to become sexually involved with a new lover. The answer for that one is to step back for now. Think again in January.



**Gemini (May 20–June 20)**

Because Mercury is retrograding in your partnership house, changes will be coming to you through others. A partner may change his/her mind about a previously made decision. Those of you engaged in any kind of contract or promise may feel the need to back off and rethink the situation. Those who are recently separated may want to try the relationship again.



**Cancer (June 21–July 21)**

This Mercury retrograde experience occurs in the territory of health, coworkers, tenants, employees, and pets. You may find it very hard to move forward with your diet and exercise program. Medical tests may return with false results. Double check. It is a particularly good time to organize and sort closets, records, and files.



**Leo (July 22–August 21)**

Mercury will be retrograding in your territory of children, creative life, and romance. You may feel the need to reconsider relationship decisions. It is also possible that you will want to reconnect to former lovers, even if only to check in and say hello.

This could be a time to call a temporary time-out in an ongoing relationship.



**Virgo (August 22–September 22)**

We are in the middle of a three week Mercury retrograde period. The area of focus is related to property, family, and issues of security. You are likely reworking things in one of these territories. Family members may be erratic or indecisive, making it difficult to conclude open agendas. Have patience.



**Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)**

The Mercury retrograde focus is specifically on communications, neighbors, siblings, and others who are in your daily environment. Concentrate as much as possible on clear communications and double check what you think you heard. You may need to consider the needs of your vehicle now. Give it a checkup. Make minor repairs as needed to avoid more serious issues later.



**Scorpio (October 23–November 21)**

The probability is high that you will discover some financial error made in the past that must be rectified fairly soon. It may be as simple as finding a bill that was forgotten and left unpaid. Or it could be a little more complicated and involve a previous misunderstanding with a loved one over shared resources.



**Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)**

Mercury is turning retrograde in your sign and will be more likely to affect your daily affairs than many of the other signs. It isn't easy for you to slow down but wisdom says don't even try to finalize anything of importance while a retrograding Mercury is with you. Use the energy to research information and gather resources for better decisions later.



**Capricorn (December 21–January 19)**

Memories from your life history may surface for examination at this time. Old friends or acquaintances who return for a short time could be the trigger for this life review. It is possible you may have a greater than normal need to reflect, to write, and otherwise give attention to your inner self. For that reason, circumstances will slow down in your outer life.



**Aquarius (January 20–February 17)**

Mercury has been retrograding in the Archers' territory that concerns friends, organizations, and community contacts. You may be having difficulty bringing things to fruition or conclusion in any of these areas. Perhaps you are compelled to put previous plans on hold. This is temporary.



**Pisces (February 18–March 19)**

Your ruling planet, Mercury, has altered directions in the house of career and life direction. This is really more of a tweaked change than a life change. However, if you happen to have applied for a job recently, you may find that you are changing your mind about that particular route. Now is the time to research the best possible choices, but don't act yet.



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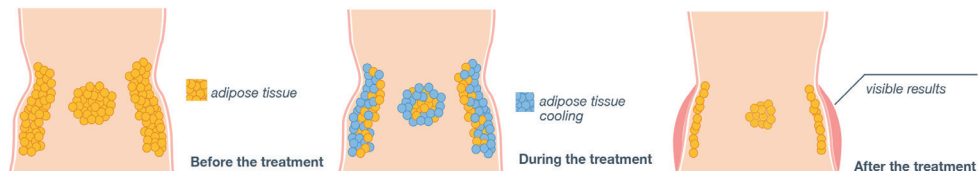
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# Noyan Tapan

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 ARAKELIAN**  
Director of the weekly:  
**MARINA HARUTYUNYAN**  
Chief Correspondent: **GOURGEN KHAZHAKIAN**  
Proofreader: **SUSANNA MKRTCHIAN**  
Layout: **DIANA GRIGORYAN**  
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

E-mail: [contact@nt.am](mailto:contact@nt.am)  
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