

Armenian, Azeri leaders meet in Vienna



Austria -- Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev meet in Vienna, 29Mar2019.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev met in Vienna on March 29 for fresh talks on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Neither leader made public statements immediately after the talks which lasted for more than three hours. According to the TASS news agency, Pashinyan said only that the meeting was "normal."

The meeting held in a hotel in the Austrian capital began in the presence of the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers as well as the U.S., Russian and French co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. Aliyev and Pashinyan then spoke one on one for roughly two hours before being again joined by the ministers and the mediators.

Stephane Visconti, the Minsk Group's French co-chair, described the summit as "positive," saying that the two sides got a better idea of each other's position. "We hope that a new meeting will be held soon," Visconti told reporters.

Aliyev and Pashinyan previously met on January 22 on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. They also talked during the summits of former Soviet republics held in September and December.

Their foreign ministers similarly held a series of lengthy negotiations, fueling more speculation about major progress towards a resolution of the Karabakh conflict. They

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“The Opera Chief is Maestro Orbelian!!!”

Scandalous order by a scandalous woman blasted and united people

By Gourgen James Khazhakian
Chief Correspondent



...Evening call from a friend from Opera Theatre became a cool shower in a frozen night: “...That wh...e did her black deed, AFTER ALL – she sacked our Maestro!”...

It was known widely that after the power change in April-May 2018 newly appointed Culture Minister, an English teacher by trade **Lilit Makunts** was sparing no effort to dismiss **Constantine Orbelian**, Al. Spendiaryan Natl Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre General Director (who has been holding part time position of the Artistic



Director as well), but after strong arguments of Maestro Orbelian – with very realistic prospects of being suited, she “calmed down”...

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Nikol Pashinyan meets with President Alexander Van der Bellen of Austria



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan who is in Vienna on a working visit on March 29 met with Austria's Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen.

Welcoming the Prime Minister of Armenia, the Austrian President said his country keen to continuously develop and expand

multifaceted relationship with Armenia. Alexander Van der Bellen complimented Nikol Pashinyan on the ongoing reform process in Armenia and expressed confidence that our country will abide by the path of democratic development and consolidation over the coming years. With ref-

erence to bilateral economic cooperation, the President of Austria assured that his country is prepared to discuss possibilities of implementing investment programs in Armenia.

Thankful for the warm welcome, Prime Minister Pashinyan said that the Armenian government is interested in deepening interaction with Austria. Nikol Pashinyan touched upon the democratic developments in Armenia, the fight against corruption and monopolies, the protection of human rights and the judiciary reform. The Premier expressed confidence that in close cooperation with its international partners, the Government of Armenia will successfully implement the ongoing and planned reforms.

The interlocutors discussed a broad range of issues concerning the Armenian-Austrian relations. They took the opportunity to exchange views over other topics of mutual interest.

Prime Minister Pashinyan briefed the Austrian President on the outcome of his meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Vienna.

Prime Minister, PACE President discuss issues related to democracy development in Armenia

At the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on March 27 met with Liliane Maury Pasquier, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

The Prime Minister noted that the Council of Europe and PACE are important partners for Armenia in the development of democracy and the strengthening of civil society. According to Nikol Pashinyan, last year's political changes in Armenia stemmed from these processes and there was no foreign involvement in them: democracy is not a matter of external political orientation for the people of Armenia but an internal belief and a system of values. "The Government of Armenia has developed a comprehensive agenda for democratic reforms. Close cooperation with European structures, including the Council of Europe and PACE, is of paramount importance for its successful implementation," the Prime Minister said, highlighting his forthcoming visit to Strasbourg in April. Nikol Pashinyan will deliver a speech at the PACE spring session.

The PACE President said she was glad to meet and discuss cooperation issues with the Prime Minister of Armenia. She pointed out that PACE is closely following the developments in Armenia and welcomes the peaceful and non-violent implementation of political changes.

"Armenia's citizens were able to achieve democratic changes in a peaceful way, and this is a very good achievement for Armenia," Liliane Maury Pasquier said. Touching upon the outcome of snap parliamentary elections, she noted that strong with the citizens' overwhelming vote of confidence, the political force led by the Prime Minister is now better poised to push ahead with the reform agenda. Liliane Maury Pasquier assured that the Council of Europe and PACE stand ready to support Armenia in this process. She noted that they are all looking forward to seeing Prime Minister Pashinyan in Strasbourg in two weeks.

The interlocutors next discussed prospects for deepening bilateral cooperation. Prime Minister Pashinyan said his government's priority is to strengthen democracy, achieve institutional development, including the



establishment of an independent judiciary, promoting freedom of speech and so on. The PACE President pointed out that the Council of Europe and PACE are prepared to back the Government in this process, including as part of the 2019-2022 Cooperation Action Plan. Thanking the PACE President for readiness of cooperation and support, Nikol Pashinyan noted that as a full member of the Council of Europe and PACE, Armenia is interested in developing cooperation with the European structures to upgrade the democratic standards in our country, since the Armenian citizens have earned that right and the Government will do its utmost to enforce it.

Armenia expanding involvement in UN peacekeeping missions



Armenia is developing national peacekeeping training capability and wants to certify it as an international peacekeeping training center to make it available for peacekeepers from other countries.

Armenian Defense Minister stated this during his address at the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial at New York City.

“In the spirit of collective responsibility, Armenia has been increasingly expanding its involvement in UN and UN-mandated peace and stability operations, including through involvement in the UNIFIL and MINUSMA. Armenia is a contributor to the NATO-led missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan. We have also shown consistent commitment to help bring lasting change in areas affected by crisis, as reflected through our most recent deployment of a National

humanitarian mission in Syria, comprising medical personnel and demining specialists, in cooperation with our Russian colleagues and in response to the request of the Syrian authorities and Armenian community”, Minister said.

“I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Armenia’s continued commitment to contribute to the international efforts in upholding international peace and security and to support to the Secretary General’s reform agenda”, Davit Tonoyan stressed.

“We are currently working on building specialized capacities of a Role 2 Field Hospital and EOD Engineering unit with C-IED capabilities to contribute to UN peacekeeping missions, as needed. These pledges have been duly announced and we are looking forward to completion of the relevant verification procedures to officially elevate our capabilities to make them deployable as soon as possible.

With the support of our partners, in particular with the United States, we are developing a national peacekeeping training capability to ensure proper training for our troops before their deployment to the peacekeeping missions. The goal is to certify this training capability as an inter-

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also met in Vienna late on Thursday.

Pashinyan sought to lower expectations from the Vienna talks when he spoke in the Armenian parliament earlier this week. He also made clear that he will continue to insist on Karabakh’s direct involvement in Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks.

Aliyev and other Azerbaijani leaders have repeatedly rejected the Armenian leader’s calls for the Karabakh Armenians to become a third negotiating party.

national peacekeeping training center and make it available for peacekeepers from other countries”, Minister said.

Davit Tonoyan also informed that Armenian Government adopted the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The document prioritizes enhancement of training and career development possibilities for women with the view to increasing their participation in peacekeeping, as well as peace-building activities.

“We already have women deployed to KFOR in Kosovo and Resolute Support in Afghanistan, and more women will soon be deployed to UNIFIL mission during our next rotation cycle in summer 2019 in order to ensure the compliance with the 15% target set by the United Nations”, Minister said.

Pashinyan tells about his meeting with Aliyev



In a meeting with the Armenian community of Vienna on March 29, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told about his meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

We present that excerpt from Prime Minister’s speech:

“I positively assess our meeting with President Aliyev. I cannot say that there has been a breakthrough in the negotiation process, a revolution, a turning point, but it is important that a process has started, which allows us to speak about our agenda, ideas, concerns and talk about the process I referred to in Stepanakert and later on during my press conference.

I hope that President Aliyev will also make a positive assessment of the meeting.

Here, I would like to touch upon a nuance. By saying that I positively assess the outcome of our meeting, I do not mean that someone has won or lost at all. As a matter of fact, meetings used to be held in that very logic until now. The point in today’s talks was not to go out and declare about one’s victory.

A dialogue is underway, and each side has its own ideas. The conflict is deeply rooted, and we need to state that we do not deal with a simple situation. This is a very serious problem, and I find it important to shape an atmosphere where we can voice and talk about each other’s concerns.

We should have the understanding that there is nothing harmful in talking to each other. The point is whether we can stabilize the situation at the line of contact, whether we can ensure that people in the border villages may live a normal life without any fear that snipers can kill them in the exercise of farming activities.

We must understand whether we can reflect on humanitarian aspects. There are civilians living on both sides, and we should understand whether we can try to organize meetings between individual families so that people could communicate with one another, or whether we can task our foreign ministers to follow up on the talks in order to understand the point of the problem.

But it is also clear that each side has its own position in which they are deeply convinced. Nevertheless, we can also try to speak about the opponent’s position in order to understand the rationale behind the opposite position.”

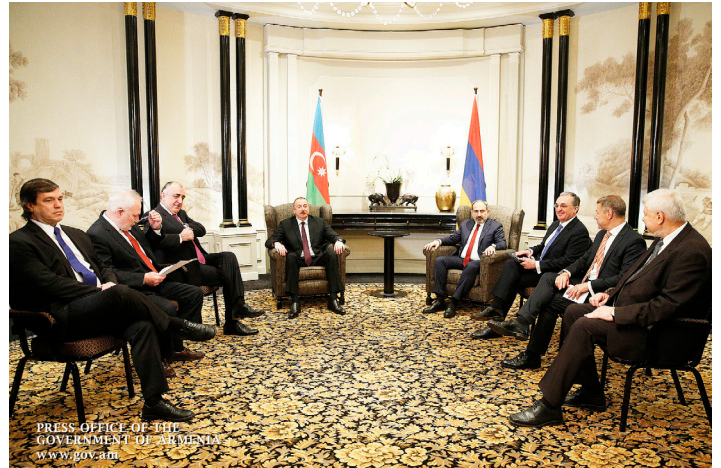
Pashinyan, Aliyev agree to continue the direct dialogue - OSCE MG statement

The OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs and the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers have issued a joint statement based on the results of Pashinyan-Aliyev meeting in Vienna. As Noyan Tapan was informed from the press service of the OSCE, the statement runs as follows,

“The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan met today in Vienna for the first time under the auspices of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stéphane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America). The meeting was also attended by Foreign Ministers Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and Elmar Mammadyarov. Andrzej Kasprzyk, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, also participated in the meeting.

The meeting took place in a positive and constructive atmosphere and provided an opportunity for the two leaders to clarify their respective positions. They exchanged views about several key issues of the settlement process and ideas of substance.

The two leaders underlined the importance of building up an environment conducive to peace and taking further concrete and tangible steps in the negotiation process to find a peaceful solution to



the conflict.

Recalling their conversation in Dushanbe, the leaders recommitted to strengthening the ceasefire and improving the mechanism for direct communication. They also agreed to develop a number of measures in the humanitarian field.

The Prime Minister and President instructed their Ministers to meet with the Co-Chairs again in the near future. They also agreed to continue their direct dialogue”

Armenia to send rescue teams to flood-hit Iran



Armenia’s government said on March 29 that it will send rescue teams and equipment to neighboring Iran to help authorities there deal with the consequences of deadly flash floods which hit the country last week.

The floods caused by heavy rain have reportedly left at least 37 people dead and tens of thousands of others displaced. Thousands of Iranians are being housed in emergency shelters provided by the government, according to state media.

The semiofficial Tasnim news agency quoted Iranian President Hassan Rouhani as saying on Wednesday that the floods affected 25 of Iran’s 31 provinces and that the scale of the disaster overwhelmed emergency services in some areas.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said he is “deeply

shocked” by the loss of life. “At this difficult moment Armenia is ready to support the friendly people of Iran and provide necessary assistance to overcome the consequences of the disaster,” Pashinyan tweeted in English and Farsi.

Armenia’s Minister for Emergency Situations Felix Tsolakyan reaffirmed the offer on Thursday at a meeting with the Iranian ambassador in Yerevan, Seyyed Kazem Sajjad.

“We want to send humanitarian assistance to Iran,” Tsolakyan told fellow members of the Armenian government the following day. “That will be organized through the Russian-Armenian humanitarian center.”

“We will be sending technical equipment, machinery and rescuers,” he said, according to the Armenpress news agency.

Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan, who chaired the cabinet meeting, welcomed the initiative, describing Iran as a “friendly country.”

Senior officials at the Armenian Rescue Service, which is part of Tsolakyan’s ministry, discussed details of the relief effort later on Friday.

Armenia has maintained a cordial relationship with Iran ever since its independence. Pashinyan and Rouhani pledged to deepen bilateral ties during the Armenian leader’s recent official visit to the Islamic Republic.

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But her Deputy, *nazenie gharibyan* who has become Acting Culture Minister after L.Makunts' being elected an MP, in 2019 January has turned out as ABSOLUTELY INCOMPARABLE and TIRELESS in non-stop harrassment of Orbelian who succeeded to turn Armenian Opera and Ballet Theater in a WORLD CLASS CULTURAL/EDUCATIONAL CENTER.

Orbelian, a WORLD KNOWN music-art-culture person with TREMENDOUS RESPECT and TIES thanks to which he awarded the Armenians UNPRECEDENTED HAPPINESS to enjoy LEGENDS at the our Theater stage such as *Renee' Fleming*, others...

Orbelian, thanks to whom within mere a couple of years the Theatre presented more premieres than in previous decades...

Orbelian, who has been MULTIPLYING FAME OF THE MILLENIA OLD GLORIOUS ARMENIAN CULTURE abroad, - GROUNDBREAKING TOUR WITH *MANON, KARMEN, MAGIC FLUTE* in the Middle East...

Orbelian who has been THREE TIMES GRAMMY NOMINEE...

Orbelian who has been invited to be an ASSOCIATED BOARD MEMBER OF METROPOLITAN OPERA...

Orbelian who paid THE HUGEST MONEY FROM HIS OWN FOR HIS DREAM' COMING TRUE...AND THE DREAM IS TURNING OUR THEATER ONE OF THE BEST ONES IN THE WORLD !

...Ironically, Maestro Orbelian received his dismissal paper in the same day when they was honoring him/the troupe for being awarded Artavazd Prize for CIPOLLINO children ballet...

There is NO NEED retell our readers "legal grounds" of such a "ministerial order" as such GROUNDS SIMPLY DO NOT EXIST!

...Entire staff of the Theater, heads of the



various creative unions, intellectual elite reps, Diasporan dignitaries and indeed THE GRATEFUL SPECTATOR are UNPRECEDENTEDLY UNITED now against this



UNFAIR DECISION of a person who has NEVER visited Opera House, who knows NO OPERA NAME, NO ARTIST, who, FINALLY, has been "tirelessly" DESTROYING NUMBER ONE ARMENIAN TREASURE – OUR GLORIOUS CULTURE.

"If this person does not know us, we the



Artist does not know herself !" – that was the Opera staff VERDICT...

AND....

"Let Maestro Orbelian to continue to be General & Artistic Director of the Yerevan Opera"

National Opera created a petition addressed to RA Prime Minister Mr Nikol Pashinyan:

"We are asking the PM of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan to REVOKE the order issued by Interim Acting Minister of Culture Nazenie Gharibyan to terminate Maestro Constantine Orbelian's Contract as General Director of the Theater".

Theater people normally are "difficult", but "the Orbelian case" UNBELIEVABLY united many and many, here in Armenia, Diaspora, Europe, Americas...

...For insatnce, *Dace Melbarde*, Minister of Culture of Latvia, signed the petition as well!

At 10.00, On Monday 1 April, as agreed, THE PEOPLE "occupied" small square just at the Government doors.

The Opera people was supported by an impressive crowd of other theatres reps... and as we speak about Armenian theatrical community, one must say that the members of the Board of the Theatre Activists wrote an open letter to the PM *Nikol Pashinyan* in which they said that, standing with the Opera/Ballet Theatre, they required from the PM Pashinyan to DISSMISS IMMEDIATELY interim acting minister of culture nazenie gharibyan and so expect ADEQUATE CULTURAL policy.

A group of the Opera Theatre leading way artists was received by PM Pashinyan who presented "arguments" of n.gharibyan for Maestro Orbelian dismissal, but heard THE STRONGEST REAL ARGUMENTS in favor of Orbelian.



Mr Prime Minister supposed the Opera people to present him their arguments in written form in favor of Orbelian, and... "If a single wrong point is found in this document presented to PM, I will dismiss him/her immediately"...

Well, by the moment they are working on the document...

To be followed

Monday, 1 April, Yerevan

World Bank approves more funding for Armenia

The World Bank Group has pledged to provide Armenia with around \$500 million in fresh loans and other funding over the next five years in support of its new government's reform agenda.

The group's executive board approved the 2019-2023 Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Armenia at a meeting held in Washington late on Thursday. In a statement, it said the CPF is "fully aligned" with the Armenian government's five-year policy program adopted earlier this year.

"The proposed World Bank Group strategy will capitalize on the momentum and political will for deeper reforms and renewed commitment to good governance sparked by recent changes in Armenia to support a rebalancing of the economy toward a new growth model," said Sylvie Bossoutrot, the head of the World Bank office in Yerevan.



The bank's previous, four-year assistance strategy for Armenia was approved in 2013. It called for \$873 million in total funding.

The latest CPF calls for more low-interest loans to Yerevan as well as investments by the World Bank's private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and risk in-

surance division, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

The Armenian energy sector is understood to be a major beneficiary of the planned aid package. The bank said IFC, which specializes in equity purchases, will help to modernize the sector in order to reduce its reliance on imported fuel.

"IFC will also support the government's efforts to increase competition and open the economy to foreign investment by providing direct financing to companies and supporting the development of export-oriented industries," added its statement.

"IFC welcomes the opening of Armenia's economy and the creation of new opportunities for investment," said Jan van Bilsen, the IFC regional manager for the South Caucasus.

The World Bank has already been Armenia's leading foreign creditor and donor, having provided it with over \$2 billion in loans and grants since 1992.

The government program cited by the bank envisages that the Armenian economy will grow by at least 5 percent annually for the next five years. In its latest Global Economic Prospects report released in January, the World Bank forecast slightly lower growth rates for this year and 2020.

Pashinyan assures Iran-EAEU free trade deal derives from Armenia's interests



The agreement on forming a free trade zone between Iran and the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) derives from Armenia's interests. And the local products cannot yield to goods which are imported with low customs fees if the local producers, villagers really work hard, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in his

remarks in the Parliament.

My Step faction MP Lilit Stepanyan asked whether the agreement may create some risks for agricultural and greenhouse entities in Armenia.

In response Pashinyan said this agreement is not only about making import from Iran to Armenia, but also mak-

ing export from Armenia to Iran. "The interesting point here is that a market worth 3 million signs a contract with a market worth 80 million, and the first reaction is that maybe potatoes will be imported from there, and the price of our potatoes will decrease. We have a potential to export

100,000 tons of potatoes annually, which we are not exporting. We open that market worth 80 million for us and state that they can capture our market worth 3 million. Yes, this is possible if we don't work", Pashinyan said, adding that the component of intellectual work in the agriculture sector should increase and that of the physical work should decrease.

The PM stated that there are no concrete calculations on how much the price of the potato imported from Iran will be, but assured that there are calculations that this agreement is beneficial for Armenia and derives from its interests.

The Parliament of Armenia on March 27 approved the bill on ratifying the interim agreement on forming a free trade zone between Iran and the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Armenia's Zvartnots Airport to invest 12 mln USD for renovation of runway



Zvartnots Airport plans to make a major investment and renovate the runway of the airport for bringing it to the best international standards level, Armenia Interna-

tional Airport CJSC told Noyan Tapan.

The airport runway is 3850m long and 56m wide. It was constructed back in 1963 and as of this date has been renovated and

reinforced for several times. The latest renovation works were performed during 2003-2004.

Taking into consideration the actual state of the runway there is a necessity to perform large scale works for the repavement. The repavement of the runway includes milling of the asphalt concrete, patching, cleaning of cracks and filling them with hermetic material, installation of geogrid in the area of cracks, implementation of the asphalt concrete etc.

The lighting technical system in the central part of the runway that will be dismantled during the works will be replaced with a new one. The new "LED" system corresponds to the best modern international standards.

The renovation works will start on April 1 and will last for 45 days. During the works performance the airport flights will be performed from 09.00 pm up to 09.00 am.

Preparations for World Congress on IT 2019 in Armenia presented in Minsk



After the visit of chairman of World Information Technology and Service Alliance Yvonne Chiu to Armenia, President of the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE) Alexandr Yesayan accompanied the head of the Alliance during her visit to Minsk to attend the annual meeting of the organization.

During the first day of the corporate visit, with the support of the Armenian trade

representative in Belarus Karen Yesayan, meetings with the Belarusian IT industry representatives were held. At the meeting with president of Digital Business Confederation Vladimir Basko, WCIT 2019 Project Director Syuzanna Azoyan presented the ongoing organizational procedures, the list of the participating countries, the topics discussed with the speakers and other details.

Vladimir Basko and Alexandr Yesayan have discussed the perspectives of bilateral cooperation, which was later presented in the meeting to the president of Business Angels network Valery Astrynski. Alexandr Yesayan invited his Belarusian colleagues to take part in the world's largest IT event held in Yerevan on October 6-9, 2019.

On the second day of the visit, President of UATE Alexandr Yesayan, who is also a WITSA board member, presented a report at WITSA BOD meeting on the organizational process of the WCIT 2019 and the support of the Armenian Government to host the event at a very high level.

A meeting with Armenian Ambassador to Belarus Armen Ghevondyan is also planned.

World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT 2019), has been established by the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA). WCIT 2019 will be held in Yerevan on October 6-9, 2019. The congress is hosted by Armenia and is organized with the support and under the high patronage of the Government of the Republic of Armenia. The organizational works are carried out by the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises-UATE.

Trump Has No Right to Give the Syrian Golan Heights to Israel



By Harut Sassounian

Ever since Trump became President of the United States, he has ignored both U.S. and international laws.

A few months ago, National Security Adviser John Bolton surprisingly announced that if the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigated any wrongdoing by American soldiers in Afghanistan, the U.S. government would ban ICC Judges from entering the United States and would sanction their assets in U.S. banks.

This represents the height of arrogance and flouting of international law. Instead of serving as a model of a civilized democratic country to the rest of the world, the Trump administration is ignoring and violating several international treaties.

While it is common knowledge that “might is right” in international relations, no previous U.S. President has such flagrantly disregarded the rule of law.

Trump’s recent actions in foreign policy are even more alarming. He has never taken seriously the complexity of the Arab-Israeli conflict. On the contrary, he has ignorantly announced that it is easy to solve the Middle East problem and has irresponsibly appointed his son-in-law Jared Kushner, who has no experience in diplomacy and knows nothing about the Middle East, to be in charge of the Arab-Israeli peace plan.

Last year, in another unwise and dangerous decision, Pres. Trump moved the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem which is “tantamount to recognizing Israeli sovereignty over land that is captured in the Six-Day War in 1967,” according to Professor of Law Eugene Kontorovich. In other words, the move to Jerusalem is a violation

of international law.

Last week, Pres. Trump shocked the world when he tweeted that the Syrian territory of Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since 1967, is Israeli territory: “After 52 years it is time for the United States to fully recognize Israel’s Sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which is of critical strategic and security importance to the State of Israel and Regional Stability.” Pres. Trump signed a proclamation on March 25, with Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu standing next to him in the White House, recognizing the Syrian Golan Heights as Israeli territory.

Can anyone be so flippant as to make such a grave announcement in a tweet? Just about every nation, except for Israel, condemned Pres. Trump’s unwise announcement. European Union countries, including Germany and France, criticized Pres. Trump’s decision on Jerusalem. Iran, Turkey and Egypt also sharply criticized the U.S. President. As expected, Syria declared that it will recover the Golan Heights with “all available means.”

The Golan Heights is one of the contentious territories that has been subject to serious negotiations between Syria and Israel, as part of the overall peace plan between Israel and Arab states. Announcing that Golan Heights belongs to Israel destroys what little remains of the United States claim that it is an impartial mediator. Rather than help the parties move towards peace, the United States has once again taken an unwise initiative that has aggravated the situation.

A German government spokesperson was quoted in *The Independent* newspaper saying, Berlin “rejected unilateral steps” to redraw national boundaries, adding: “If national borders should be changed it must be done through peaceful means between all those involved.”

The French foreign ministry stated that it did not recognize the Israeli annexation [in 1981] of the Golan Heights and that Mr. Trump’s statement is “contrary to international law.”

Palestinians quickly blasted Pres. Trump’s decision, saying it undermined the chance

for peace in the region. Palestinian spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudeineh said any action taken on the decision would be “a violation of the UN resolutions, have no value whatsoever and would remain mere ink on paper.” Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the Palestinian Liberation Executive Committee, called it an “assault on international law.”

Pres. Trump has foolishly undermined Israel’s safety by provoking all Arabs and Muslims against Israel and the United States rather than taking measures to calm the situation and find a peaceful solution.

To complicate matters further, Pres. Trump’s controversial announcement came shortly before the April 9 Israeli elections which will determine whether Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will retain his post. The U.S. action is not only misguided but also an interference in the elections of a foreign country, boosting the chances of victory for Netanyahu, who faces indictment for corruption. At a time when the U.S. is accusing Russia for interfering in the 2016 American presidential elections, the U.S. itself is blatantly interfering in Israel’s elections!

And for those Armenians who naively expect Pres. Trump to recognize Artsakh as Armenian territory, just like he recognized the Golan Heights as Israeli territory, I hate to disappoint them by stating that Armenia does not have Israel’s political clout in Washington. Secondly, Armenians should not validate the unjust handover of the occupied Syrian territory of Golan Heights to Israel by comparing it to Artsakh — an historical Armenian land given to Azerbaijan by Stalin.

Armenians should also be concerned that Pres. Trump’s flawed argument jeopardizes the recovery of Western Armenian lands occupied by Turkey. Saying that after 52 years of occupation, Golan Heights belongs to Israel, Pres. Trump is undermining the Armenian claim to Western Armenia since it has been occupied by Turkey much longer than that! No matter how long those territories remain occupied, they will always belong to Armenians just as the Golan Heights belongs to Syria!

“The government should mobilize our country’s intellectual potential to cope with the problems” - Orbeli Center inaugurated



Together with RA President Armen Sarkissian, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attended the opening ceremony of the Orbeli Analytical Research Center. The Orbeli Center is a project developed by Public Relations and Information Center SNCO under the Prime Minister’s Office, which conducts research and analysis in the field of economics, regional, domestic and foreign policy developments, security, infrastructure, media, etc.

Welcoming those present, Nikol Pashinyan noted: “I have repeatedly stated that the solution of the problems facing Armenia is the task of the intellectual sphere. I mean that the all problems imply above all intelligent solutions. None of us can physically be present anywhere, if we are not there in our mind; none of us can take any action, if we do not first perform these actions mentally. Of course, the task of any government, institution and individual is to be aware of their actions and control them. That is why we decided to create such an analytical center with a clear-cut objective to expand the common intellectual field and the space, in which the Government

and the authorities operate.

For us, an important priority is cooperation with the expert potential of Armenia. It is very important for us to build bridges of cooperation with other similar public and private entities. We do not consider this center, which will be functioning as part of the Prime Minister’s office, to be the only source of intellectual product.”

The Prime Minister stressed that the Cen-

try to identify the cooperation mechanisms with the existing and emerging think tanks. Together, we must fulfill enormous intellectual work, a demand for which we have on our agenda,” Nikol Pashinyan said.

The Prime Minister wished every success to Orbeli Center’s analysts and experts in their intellectual efforts. “Everything that is actually happening around us first of all occurs in our thoughts and, therefore, we



ter should have bridges and mechanisms for cooperation with other think tanks, including the private ones. “Armenia’s authorities should mobilize the intellectual potential to deal with the problems existing in the country. This is our first step. The next step is to

must have constructive, flexible and powerful thoughts, capable of overcoming obstacles. I have no doubt that this will be the case,” Nikol Pashinyan said.

During the event, the official website of the Orbeli Center was presented. Director of Public Relations and Information Center SNCO Hovhannes Movsisyan presented the work done to set up the Center, the development prospects and projects. “I think that the pledge of progress of any State is its human and intellectual resource, and we will try to combine and use this intellectual resource in various ways for the sake of development. We have long-term development plans, the Orbeli center will be not only an Armenian, but also an international center. We must be represented on foreign platforms and thereby make Armenia more representative in the world,” Hovhannes Movsisyan concluded.



The role of ancient civilizations is incredible in overcoming the challenges which threaten the world - T. Harutyunyan



In the city of Boao of China's province Hainan during the regular Asian forum held in Boao from March 26 till 29 about 2000 participants from more than 60 countries of the world were present, including Armenia. From Armenia Noyan Tapan Media Holding director Tigran Harutyunyan was invited also to participate in the forum. Among the participants of the forum were prime-ministers, ministers, businessmen, not only from Asian countries but from USA, France, Brazil, Australia and other countries.

During the past 18 years the Asian forum of Boao remains the most reliable platform for high level discussions of questions concerning Asia continent regional integration and economic cooperation.

In the frames of Boao Asia forum the following reports were presented: "On economic integration of Asia", "On new, developing economies", "On compatibility of Asia", "On financial development of

media leaders were participating also. Questions such as mass media modern challenges and ways to confront them, increase of recognition in international environment, mission and responsibility of mass media were discussed.

The director of Noyan Tapan Media Holding Tigran Harutyunyan during his talk at the Summit mentioned about the extremely important role of Omni media in modern social life, which was clearly exhibited



opportunity to people to quickly understand the situation and, getting information on reliable facts, enstrengthen their personal



during the Velvet Revolution in Armenia.

According to T. Harutyunyan, the Revolution could also not win as was the case during the last 25 years, if some mass

point of view about what was going on, participate in various meetings, marches, other disobedience actions.



Asia", several sub forums, as well as Asian Countries Media Summit was held.

In the Summit about 20 countries mass

media members did not organise almost non stopping information deliveries, live streams from the streets of Yerevan, giving



"Today in the world important changes are made", - T. Harutyunyan told, - "in the whole world people understand that our universe cannot develop in the old way. Everywhere progressive people make efforts to find new development ways, new models of mutual relations and new solutions. I think I will not be mistaken if I insist that in these changes of the world the most active and prospective region is Asia. In this reality a huge role belongs to China and especially significant is its mega-project of the last years "One Belt- One Road", which opens vast perspectives for a new level economic cooperation between Asian and European countries".

PACE Head Inaugurates ‘Europe Square’ In Yerevan



The president of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), Liliane Maury Pasquier, praised Armenia's "democratic institutions" and inaugurated a square in Yerevan named after Europe during a three-day visit to the country which ended on March 28.

Pasquier met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, parliament speaker Ararat Mirzoyan and other senior Armenian lawmakers. She also delivered a speech in the Armenian parliament on Wednesday.

"Armenian institutions have recently undergone a major transformation thanks to a profound constitutional reform," she said referring to the transition to a parliamentary system of government initiated by the country's former leadership.

"This reform, welcomed by the Council of Europe, was prepared and carried out in close collaboration with the Venice Commission."

"I want to commend the people of Armenia and the Armenian political class for using the new constitutional and political mechanisms in the context of a major political change that has taken place peacefully and within the constitutional, legal and democratic framework. This testifies to the

solidity of the democratic institutions and the high quality of the political class, all parties combined," Pasquier added in her speech.

She referred to the generally smooth political transition that followed last spring's "velvet revolution" in the South Caucasus state. It ended with the holding on December 9 of snap parliamentary elections won by Pashinian's My Step alliance. The PACE and other pan-European organizations recognized the vote as democratic.

Pasquier joined deputy parliament speaker Alen Simonyan and Yerevan's Mayor Hayk Marutyan in inaugurating on Thursday Europe Square located on the city's main pedestrian avenue.

The ceremony was timed to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the creation of the Council of Europe. Armenia joined the Strasbourg-based organization promoting human rights and democracy in 2001.

"Europe Square in Yerevan is a reminder of the fact that Europe is not a geographic area but a set of our freedoms and rights, and we must all be steadfast in defending our freedoms and rights," Pasquier said at the ceremony.

President Sarkissian hosts 2016 April war participants

President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian on March 29 hosted a group of former soldiers – participants of the 2019 April military operations, who established the "Union of Participants of April Military Operations" NGO, the President's Office informs.

The President expressed gratitude to them for conducting their duty towards homeland with dedication. "There is one absolute truth: what had happened during that days is in the mind and heart of our people. No one has forgotten and will not forget it. Your Union is very valuable because in reality those people win who are ready".

The President highly valued the former soldiers' experience, and continued his remarks: "War is won not only with weapons, but also with spirit, heart and mind. If none of this exists, you are incomplete. If the heart is only, you are a patriotic boy who can go out and be killed. If you only have brain, maybe you will not be able to



pass a certain border because the logic will say don't do that. But when the two are working together, it is the key to victory. You should be confident that what you have done, you did it for the Fatherland and also for you", the President said.

The President considered the heroic deeds demonstrated by the April war participants exemplary for the new generation. "You have passed an unexpected, difficult path regardless of your will, have lost your friends, and today each of you is a different person than you were before the war", the President noted, adding that the life of

each soldier has a great value, and everything must be done to rule out the tragic incidents.

The former soldiers stated that their goal is to unite all participants of the April military operations, consider supporting the families of fallen soldiers as their key priority. "For most of these families you are their sons", the President said.

The young heroes also stated that assisting the wounded is one of their upcoming key tasks. President Sarkissian introduced the program on assisting disabled soldiers and stated that they were wounded for the sake of homeland, and the state must take action to show that it appreciates this sacrifice. Armen Sarkissian said he urges to involve disabled soldiers in public and private sector and integrate them to life. The former soldiers touched upon the issue of having a space for their Union, and the President promised to assist on this issue.

Evolution and Artificial Intelligence scientific conference launched in Yerevan



World's leading scientists, experts touched upon the global development trends and agenda of evolution and artificial intelligence during an international scientific conference in Yerevan.

International scientific conference 'Evolution and Artificial Intelligence' has launched on March 29 and will last until April 3.

"The best specialists attending this small scientific conference are engaged in mathematical modeling, in other words, are dealing with the brain of artificial intelligence and evolution. They can talk about how they see the world in 50, 100 years. If we just want to deal with the simple reproduction of key scientific achievements recorded in the world, we will always be left behind that train. In order to compete and be the best, the leader, we need to learn

and accept that best", Armenian President Armen Sarkissian told reporters.

He stated that he will always assist such scientific conferences and informed that another important conference will take place in Dilijan in early June which will be attended by the best specialists of different fields from different parts of the world.

The President once again noted that if they want to become one of the world's developed countries in 10-20 or 30 years, they must seriously deal with the education and upbringing of children so that they will have a special place in the global business, political field and technological platform.

Talking about artificial intelligence, the President said there is no need to be scared of that, it will not limit the person's work, will not take it, but will contribute to the human development. "The same worry existed when the computers were created, but we see that computers have created a huge industry in the world. When children are asked what kind of specialist they want to become, some of them state diplomat and the rest – programmer. Artificial intelligence is going to help the people, will make them powerful so that they will be engaged

in their main activities for which they have been created, in other words with the creative activity. I am confident that when the artificial intelligence develops, the number of jobs will increase. In fact, it's a way of using mathematically regulated huge information source, nothing more. We will only move forward by artificial intelligence, biology", Armen Sarkissian said.

Shanghai Biomedical Center's representative Ao Ping assured that the achievements of science and technology should use with responsibility. "Artificial intelligence is going to contribute to human development and progress, but any scientific achievement can become a disaster in case of irresponsibility. I hope people will use it right and will only benefit from that", Ao Ping said.

Leading experts and scientists from US, China, Japan, France, Italy, Spain and other countries arrived in Armenia to participate in the scientific conference.

The conference is being carried out by the Artem Alikhanyan National Scientific Laboratory with the support of the Armenian government, UATE and Support to SME Development in Armenia program.

IDEA Foundation launches Climate Uturn ecological platform

IDEA Foundation launches Climate Uturn —an ecological platform that will focus on reforestation, waste prevention, energy saving, environmental standards development, IDEA Foundation told Noyan Tapan.

A sustainable ecosystem is strategically important for the development of any country. The only way to keep talented people in Armenia and attract new ones is to create comfortable and modern living conditions. This means a healthy environment, opportunities for self-realization, high-quality education and health care.

Systemic change is only possible when the country develops in a consistent and integrated manner, which is why IDEA implements interconnected anchor projects that spark multiplicative positive changes. This approach requires a solid foundation — a platform. IDEA's projects are based on several platforms: The Aurora Prize is implemented on the humanitarian platform, UWC Dilijan is on the educational one. Technological, healthcare, financial, tourist and urban platforms are part of IDEA Foundation as well. Like others, the environmental platform is a long-term initiative and is considered as a part of 30-year country development program.

"This is yet another ambitious initiative by IDEA Foundation in our journey to contributing to the holistic development of the country," mentions Rafi Baghdjian, CEO, IDEA.

"We strongly believe that we can co-create the future we want to live in. Nearly 50% of our daily actions are just a mindless habit. By introducing green habits, we plan to engage people into sustainable circle of collective action that creates positive environmental impact," says Diana Badeian, head of the Climate Uturn environmental platform, "we will focus on 3 most relevant areas where it's easier to take action and immediately see results. These are waste prevention, reforestation, and energy saving." In addition, the project program includes the development of environmental standards for products and services implemented in Armenia.

IDEA Foundation has many years of experience in creating infrastructure projects that improve the lives of communities, but environmental challenges are too big to be solved just by a single initiative. The Climate Uturn team holds negotiations with international and local partners and soon will open the registration for volunteers who will be the driving force of the initiative

Leader of the Year in CSR Sphere: VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph C. Yirikian Becomes the Laureate of the “Mercury” Award



VivaCell-MTS has been guided with a responsible model of management throughout 14 years since its foundation. For the employees of the Company Corporate Social Responsibility has always been a lifestyle rather than just a concept. Guided by high international standards, VivaCell-MTS has become a role model for different groups of our society. Organizations engaged in economic development programs recognize the importance and the necessity of the CSR, which is one of the crucial points in VivaCell-MTS' strategy.

During the awarding ceremony organized at Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall upon the initiative of the Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Armenia, organizations and individuals representing highly rated leading organizations in the public services sector, healthcare, territorial administration, communities, have been awarded in various nominations. This year the “Mercury” Award featured 23 nominations. Mercury Award in the nomination “The Leader of the Year in CSR” went to VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian**.

“Years ago, when we were still starting in Armenia, the corporate social responsibility strategies that we had adopted were new to Armenia, both as a corporate culture and

as a model of management. We knew that the society needed time to accept the importance of a socially responsible approach to business. That was equally true for organizations, which needed time to adopt the suggested system of values. And I must say that taking the wheel of leadership needed courage because people were mostly unaware of CSR. Over time, it became obvious for everyone that corporate social responsibility deals with various sides and values of life. Our example became contagious and led to a wide public acceptance of this attitude. That was our purpose: to lead by example and to



convince others to join us,” VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said.

The Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Armenia was founded in 2002. The mission of the chamber, in a broad sense, is the growth of the country's economy, improvement of its business environment, facilitation of commerce, and the support to



small and medium businesses in Armenia.

So we congratulate cordially The Highlights long time friend, a role model Citizen and Manager Ralph C. Yirikian for the next appreciation of his GREAT NOBLE JOB IN THE NAME OF ARMENIA AND ARMENIANS WORLD-WIDE !

Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

Mars, your ruling planet, shifts your attention on the March 31, 2019, to fresh territory. During the next seven weeks, your activities and feelings will be intensified in the life sector related to vehicles, short distance travels, politics, communications, education, your neighborhood, and siblings. Use caution while driving because your accelerator foot may be a bit itchy.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

Mercury has been retrograding in the territory of taxes, debt, and joint resources. You will likely experience a need to go back and review financial history. If you prepared your taxes in the past two months, there is a higher probability that errors were made in the paperwork. Double check yourself now.



Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)

You have been focused recently on an issue of home, hearth, family or property. The appropriate solution has just eluded you. Now that Mercury is turning direct, some of the complicating cogs will fall into place, offering a doorway to a finale.



Taurus (April 20 -- May 20)

It is possible you will be focused on an issue in which you feel bound and tied to someone else's tether. Career and life direction seems to be a focal point. You are normally a peaceful bull and like to enjoy your field of flowers. But this issue will require some concentration and creative thinking.



Virgo (August 22–September 22)

See the lead paragraph. Mercury is your ruling planet. It's possible that you have been waffling over several decisions and unable to choose the right ones. Now that Mercury turns direct, you will be able to untangle the various component parts and move in a forward direction.



Capricorn (December 21–January 19)

There has been tension in your relationships since mid-winter. The problem is related to who has the power. Leave it alone for a couple of weeks and see if things will settle over time. You have the power. Consider how you can share some of it with the person who is struggling with you. Life will take on a less stressful tone.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

Mars, the red planet of war, enters your sign this week and will be traveling with you for seven weeks. This energy is best used to handle physically heavy projects or take initiatives that you might not otherwise tackle. If you are choosing not to deal honestly with this assertive energy, the common side effects are irritability and infections.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

This is a great time to focus attention on returning to good health routines. Libras are so social that it is sometimes a challenge to maintain time consuming exercise or diet regimens. Over the next 3 weeks it is possible you will find a buddy whose schedule matches yours and who can help you hold onto your goals.



Aquarius (January 20–February 17)

There is probability of stress in your relationship life at this time. The issue is over power, who gets his or her way. Give it a break for ten days while Mercury stabilizes and then you can return to this issue with a more realistic focus.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

You are conflicted on the subject of romance versus caretaking, which is your natural instinct. Perhaps you are caught in the middle between the needs of a spouse and your children. Sometimes a Cancer becomes a parent to the partner, which usually creates a troubled atmosphere. Set aside decisions on these matters until you are more centered. That will be soon.



Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

You will be concluding a cycle of several weeks at this time. Your attention will begin to shift toward issues of intimacy and partnership, joint and corporate financial matters, taxes, and/or estate and business planning.

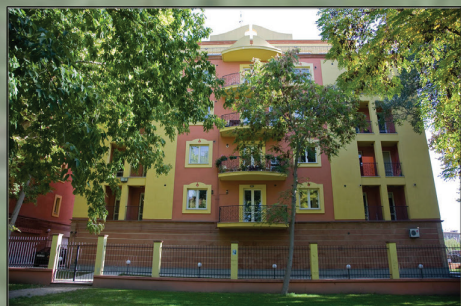


Pisces (February 18–March 19)

Mercury has been retrograding in your sign for the whole month of March. It shifts direction this week to direct. There will be a need for clean-up time over the next two to three weeks. You will be finishing projects that just wouldn't get done during this retrograde cycle.

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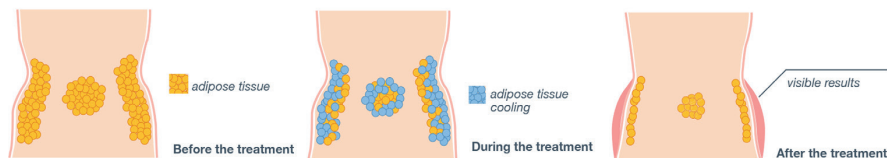
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