

## Davit Tonoyan in Georgia: New Impetus to Bilateral Cooperation



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Emergency Situations Minister visits Georgia*

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## President pays working visit to Aragatsotn

President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan attended Byurakan Observatory of the National Academy of Sciences of the RA named after Victor Hambardzumyan, President's press service reports.

President Sargsyan got acquainted with the projects proposed by the Observatory for increasing the scientific and educational function of the Observatory and involvement of young workers that are aimed on stimulating also tourism in this region.

One of the propositions concerned a formation of a research and education centre the activity of which would focus on teaching astronomy by contemporary methods using a virtual observatory. The Observatory also plans to organize a visit centre that will contain a museum of astronomy history, a planetarium, a lecture centre, the lanes leading to the telescope and the surrounding territories will be improved.

During Serzh Sargsyan's visit propositions of changes in the international scientific prize named after Victor Hambardzumyan were made that aim at making the prize more efficient for Armenia. According to the authors the



changes in the status of the prize will favor astronomical research in Armenia as well as will give the Armenian scientists the opportunity to integrate actively in the international scientific community.

Afterwards Serzh Sargsyan visited Ashtarak where he was present at the opening ceremony of a rebuilt and fundamentally repaired sport school for children and youth under the Armenian public sport organization "Sevan".

Accompanied by the representatives of the power structures of the city, sport community, trainers and students, President Sargsyan made an excursion in the school, got acquainted with the fulfilled work and the conditions created for training.

The reconstruction and repair of the sport school are implemented by the funds of state budget. The school will be available for about 350 sportsmen from Ashtarak and neighboring territories.

## Bako Sahakyan re-elected President of Artsakh Republic



Artsakh's incumbent President Bako Sahakyan will retain office until 2020.

He was elected at a special sitting of the National Assembly with 28 votes

today.

Bako Sahakyan's candidacy was supported by Motherland, Democracy and ARF Dashnaksutyun factions, as well as by Arsen Arstamyan – the only independent MP in the legislative body.

Four MPs cast their ballot in favor of the only other candidate – Edward Aghabekyan, nominated by Movement-88 faction.

Bako Sahakyan will remain in office until the term of the National Assembly of 6th convocation comes to an end in 2020.

According to the new Constitution adopted earlier this year, after 2020 the elections of the President and the National Assembly will be held simultaneously.



## Armenia's President rules out unilateral concessions



“The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs have no doubt as to which party is responsible for tension at the Line of contact,” Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan said in an interview with R-Evolution program of Armenia TV.

He added, however, that “the Minsk Group is not almighty in a certain sense. “Any of the co-chairing countries is able to impose anything on Azerbaijan if it stems from its own interests. But it’s hard to imagine Russia, France and the United States imposing their opinion on Azerbaijan,” he added.

According to President Sargsyan, “compulsion is not always the best option, that’s why the Co-Chairs opt for persuasion rather than harsh compulsion.”

President Sargsyan reiterated Armenia’s demand to create an investigation mechanism at the line of contact – a measure that had been agreed at Vienna and St. Petersburg summits.

“It’s not only meant to reveal the party violating the ceasefire, but also investigate which officer or which soldier violated the ceasefire regime,” the President said.

Serzh Sargsyan added that the mechanism

has not been implemented for the simple reason that Baku stands against it. “The refusal clearly indicates that they are the author of tension.”

The President said “there has been no change in Armenia’s principled stance after the four-day war in April 2016.” He voiced confidence that there has not been any change in Azerbaijan’s position, either.”

“The April war simply showed that Azerbaijan refuses from solving the conflict on the basis of Madrid Principles,” he said.

As for concessions, the President said “we have never spoken about any concessions over the past twenty years. We have always spoken and keep insisting on the resolution of the issue on the basis of mutual concessions.”

President Sargsyan is confident that “the Armenian side will never think about easing the situation through unilateral concessions even if the settlement of the conflict drags out for another 20 years.”

He said the targets of the Armenian side are obvious – realization of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic people’s right to self-determination, land border between Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia, reliable security guarantees for the Nagorno Karabakh Republic.

## Armenian FM briefs CSTO colleagues on efforts towards Karabakh peace

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian on July 17 briefed the Foreign Ministers of CSTO member states on the efforts of Armenia and the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs towards furthering the process of settlement of the Karabakh conflict.

Armenia’s top diplomat also presented Baku’s actions aimed at frustrating those efforts, namely the refusal to implement the agreements reached in Vienna and St.

Petersburg, military provocations and the subsequent escalation of the situation.

Edward Nalbandian presented Armenia’s views on the developments in Syria, the programs of support for refugees that have found shelter in Armenia, as well as the details of provision of humanitarian aid to the people of Syria.

During the meeting the Foreign Ministers exchanged views on cooperation between CSTO and other regional and international

organizations.

The diplomats also referred to the process of implementation of provisions of the Yerevan Declaration adopted by the CSTO Collective Security Council in 2016, the priorities of the Belarusian presidency of the CSTO, issues affecting global and regional security, the situation in Central Asia and South Caucasus, as well as the developments in the Middle East and efforts towards establishing stability in Afghanistan.



## Armenia to ratify new defense accord with Russia

The Armenian government paved the way on Thursday for the parliamentary ratification of an agreement with Russia to boost a joint Russian-Armenian military force that was created more than a decade ago.

Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu and his Armenian counterpart Vigen Sargsyan signed the agreement on “the united group of troops of the two countries” after talks held in Moscow last November.

The agreement clarifies and upgrades the mission of the joint force comprising troops from the Russian military base in Armenia and the Armenian army’s Fifth Corps. In particular, it stipulates that the commander of the Russian-Armenian contingent will be appointed by the Armenian army’s commander-in-chief.

Also, the commander will be subordinate to the chief of the Armenian army staff in times of peace. He may report to the head of Russia’s Southern Military District in case of a war or imminent military aggression against Armenia or Russia.

“The main task of the United Group of Troops is to identify preparation of military aggression against Armenia and Russia in a timely manner and to repel it jointly with the armed forces of Armenia and Russia,” Defense Minister Sargsyan said in November.

The deal was ratified by Russia’s lower and upper houses of parliament on July 14 and July 19 respectively. Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan’s government formally recommended its ratification by the Armenian parliament, which now seems a forgone conclusion.

Alexander Iskandarian, director of the Yerevan-based Caucasus



Institute, said that the signing of the Russian-Armenian accord was largely a formality that underscored close military ties between the two states.

“This agreement is one of the formats for comprehensive interaction between the Russian and Armenian armed forces which helps to ensure Armenia’s protection against Turkey,” Iskandarian told RFE/RL’s Armenian service (Azatutyun.am). The Armenian military will thus be able to continue to concentrate on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, he said.

Another analyst, Armen Grigoryan, suggested that the deal was initiated by the Russians. He said they plan to use to increase “Russian influence in Armenia.”

## “Standard” International Triennial of Contemporary Art in Armenia opens for the first time

“Standard” International Triennial of Contemporary Art opens in the Republic of Armenia with the support of the RA Ministry of Culture, Arts for the World, Swiss Embassy in Armenia, and the Armenian Art Council, Ministry of Culture of Armenia’s press service reports.

“Standard” emphasizes the rich historical and cultural environment in Armenia.

Standard is a Triennial art exhibition of Contemporary art that aims at involvement of broad and diverse layers of social space, creating opportunities for dialogue and collaboration among artists, writers, co-founders, scientists, local communities and visitors.

“Armenia has been a solid base for thinking and developing a project such as STANDART. The Biennial of Contemporary Art in Gyumri, the vibrant art realities in Yerevan, the Golden Lion that the Armenian Pavilion was awarded at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015, and many other achievements of recent years made our task easier. The very name of the triennial is inspired by the avant-garde magazine published in 1924, called STANDARD (STANDART in Armenian transcription)”, mentions Vartan Karapetyan, President of the Armenian Arts Council.

Adelina Jouberyan Phon Fürshtenberg has been chosen by the Armenian Arts Council as the principal curator for the first “Standard” Triennial. She is the curator of the Golden Lion

awarded Pavilion of Armenia at the 56th Venice Biennale.

The idea of “Standard” is inspired by the French Surrealist writer and poet Rene Daumal’s (1908-1944) unfinished novel “The Mount Analogue”.

“As a symbol of a poetic research and temporary experience, “The Mount Analogue” is a meditation on the pursuit of knowledge – based on the concept that the essence of a creative mind is directly related to who one is and what one experiences. The result of this art experience is a series of art exhibitions, encounters and direct collaborations, site-specific works and performances”, Vartan Karapetyan says.





## Armenia needs Eurasian Union membership, insists Ruling Party

President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party (HHK) has dismissed an opposition leader's calls for Armenia to leave the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

Edmon Marukyan, a pro-Western leader of the opposition Yelk alliance, advocated an exit from the EEU last week after Russia stopped recognizing the validity of driving licenses issued by Armenia and other countries where Russian is not an official language.

A Russian law which took effect on June 1 banned foreign nationals with driving licenses issued by their home countries from working as drivers in Russia. The State Duma, the Russian lower house of parliament, passed last week another law which waived the restriction for citizens of those countries, including EEU members Kyrgyzstan and Belarus, where the Russian language has an official status.

Marukyan said that the Russian laws run counter to EEU regulations on a common labor market set up by the bloc's member states. The EEU's executive body has reportedly given the same assessment, telling Moscow to scrap the ban on Armenian driving licenses.

Reacting to Marukyan's statements, HHK spokesman Eduard Sharmazanov said late on Thursday: "If there are political forces that agitate for the exit from the EEU, they had better come up with concrete alternatives and facts, rather than speak on the emotional plane."

Sharmazanov claimed that the Sargsyan administration's controversial decision to join the EEU was based on "clear calculations as to what our farmers, investors, tourism sector and the economy [as a whole] will gain." He said that the



Armenian economy has already benefited from better access to the Russian and other ex-Soviet markets.

"We have increased our exports by 23 percent [in 2017] and a large part of them went to EEU countries," Sharmazanov told reporters. "The number of tourists [visiting Armenia] has gone up by about 30 percent. We must not make political statements without serious corroborations."

Sargsyan unexpectedly announced his decision to seek membership in the EEU in September 2013 shortly after Armenia and the European Union completed negotiations on a far-reaching Association Agreement. The foreign policy U-turn, which scuttled the planned deal with the EU, was widely attributed to Russian pressure.

Marukyan's stance on the EEU has not yet been officially backed by Yelk's leadership. The bloc consisting of three opposition parties holds 9 seats in Armenia's 105-member parliament.

## Lukashevich: Kasprzyk's Office should be expanded



There is a great need to expand the office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk, to increase its monitoring capabilities on the contact line of troops, Russia's permanent representative to the

OSCE Alexander Lukashevich said during a Moscow-Vienna space bridge on July 19, APA reports.

"Unfortunately, such resolutions cannot be achieved due to the contradictory positions of the parties to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the absence of a compromise," he said. "I think that in the near future it is hardly possible to do more than the OSCE Minsk Group does by actively working with the parties to the conflict."

He recalled that the co-chairs have recently held a meeting with the Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers in Brussels.

"There are some suggestions that the presidents of these countries can meet. The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs are actively working with the parties to the conflict, but the co-chairmen are not wizards, and they cannot establish the necessary level of security in the region. The first and foremost is to maintain the dialogue, to make sure the parties do not go over to military operations, to make sure no serious problem arises against the efforts to resolve this protracted conflict," added Lukashevich.

## Russian-Armenian Investors said to finance first projects in Armenia

An investment fund set up recently by three dozen wealthy Russian entrepreneurs of Armenian descent will start financing business projects in Armenia this autumn, a senior government official in Yerevan said on July 17.

The fund called the Investors Club of Armenia (ICA) was officially set up in March at a ceremony in Yerevan attended by Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan. The latter has warm rapports with its key founders, notably the Armenian-born billionaire Samvel Karapetyan (no relation).

The Armenian government signed a memorandum of understanding with the ICA in April. Minister for Economic Development Suren Karayan said at the time that the fund's investments in the Armenian economy should total around \$300 million this year.

According to one of Karayan's deputies, Hovannes Azizyan, the ICO will likely launch its first investment projects in October or November. "The projects to be implemented by the Club will mainly target the areas of energy and renewable energy," he told a news conference. "Now discussions are underway on the possibility of the Club's involvement in some manufacturing sectors as well."

Azizyan said that the Russian-Armenian investors are particularly interested in hydropower and solar energy. The government, he said, expects them to finance, among other things, the construction of medium-sized hydroelectric plants.

One of those plants would be built in Samvel Karapetyan's native Lori province. The Armenian Energy Ministry estimates that work on the 76-megawatt facility would cost

roughly \$150 million.

Azizyan would not be drawn on the amount of funding which the ICA has set aside for its first projects. "When the projects are finalized we will give information about the investment package," he said.

Foreign direct investment in the Armenian economy has rapidly declined in recent years. Government data shows that it stood at a modest \$130 million in 2016.

Prime Minister Karapetyan has repeatedly promised to attract more than \$3 billion in investments in the coming years since he was appointed as prime minister in September. The former business executive, who lived and worked in Russia from 2011-2016, has said that at least \$830 million of the sum will be invested in 2017.

The Russian-Armenian businessmen voiced strong support for the 53-year-old premier's ambitious reform agenda when he paid an official visit to Moscow in January. Samvel Karapetyan reaffirmed that backing at the official launch of the ICA in March.

In addition to his extensive business interests in Russia, the tycoon owns Armenia's national electric utility, largest thermal power plant, and a shopping mall in Yerevan. His Tashir Group is due to open another sprawling trade center in the Armenian capital in September.

According to "Forbes" magazine estimates, Samvel Karapetyan's personal fortune is currently worth \$3.5 billion, meaning that he is most probably the richest ethnic Armenian in the world.

*By Anush Muradian*



Official publication



## President holds consultation on Armenian-Indian economic cooperation agenda



Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to the Republic of India Armen Martirosyan reported on July 18 to President Serzh Sargsyan on the Armenian-Indian cooperation agenda and the steps taken to boost exchanges in the prospective areas.

Held as part of the series of consultations with the President of the Republic of Armenia on the economic component of Armenia's foreign policy, the meeting was attended by the heads of those ministries and government agencies responsible for coordination of cooperation in the areas of mutual interest.

Noting that this year marks the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and India, the President considered it as a good opportunity to summarize the achievements and highlight the opportunities of bilateral cooperation, especially as the economic component is concerned.

According to President Sargsyan, all the necessary preconditions are in place in this respect, as the two countries have managed to turn the deeply-rooted friendly relations into strong ties of partnership over the past few years.

"Despite the present high level of the Armenian-Indian dialogue, which is anchored on strong historical ties and traditions, I think we have not yet fully tapped

the potential inherent in these relations. India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and, therefore, we need to advance the cooperation with that country, first and foremost, as regards the economic constituent. Indeed, the Armenian-Indian intergovernmental commission has a crucial role to play in this matter with updated and more targeted agenda items ranging from information technologies to agriculture, diamond processing and tourism.

We have several good examples of cooperation. Here, I would like to single out the Yerevan State University-hosted Armenian-Indian Center of Excellence for ITC ((Information and Telecommunications) technologies, which is doing a great job.

We are prioritizing the program of introduction of educational programs aimed at creating an integrated computer network between schools in Armenia as implemented in cooperation with India and the ITC Excellence Center.

Tavush and Vayots-Dzor Marzes will largely benefit from the connection to the Center's network of the hardware available in the local schools. Generally, a huge work has been done in India: they have built up a wealth of long experience and enjoy significant capacity in this area. Therefore, taking into account India's po-

tential, we should intensify cooperation in this field.

I also want to mention our cooperation in education and science. You may know that more than a thousand Indian students are currently studying in Armenia's universities. Along with mastering professional skills and knowledge in Armenia, they are getting acquainted with our culture and history. Back to their homeland, they will complement the ranks of our friends. This is a very important factor, and we have huge opportunities to develop cooperation in this direction.

Calling at the Yerevan State Medical University a few days ago, I got acquainted with their programs: they are prepared to increase the number of students here and expand cooperation in healthcare and education, in general.

I think we have considerable opportunities to cooperate in diamond cutting, jewelry, and we have to continue work in this direction. We should avail ourselves of the opportunity to cooperate in the field of pharmaceuticals, where India boasts great achievements. They are a major supplier, and we must show our capabilities to get them involved in the Armenian market.

We certainly have great potential of interaction in the field of agriculture. As far as I know, a working group is up, and reciprocated visits have been paid over the past few years. Here, too, cooperation can be effective, in particular, as regards agricultural machinery.

We must definitely endeavor towards the development of tourism. This country with a huge population may offer great opportunities in the field of tourism. Mr. Martirosyan, I am urging you to address these issues more thoroughly in your report. We must be sure of what we need to do in specific spheres so that we could avoid voicing such low figures next time: I mean in the sphere of trade, where the potential is too great," the President of Armenia said.

After hearing Ambassador Martirosyan's report, the President issued a number of recommendations, which will be included in the agenda of the Armenian-Indian intergovernmental commission.

## Armenian IT growth hits record high

The rapid growth of Armenia's information technology (IT) sector employing thousands of engineers accelerated to 38.2 percent last, according to government data.

The tech industry had already expanded by an average of over 20 percent annually in the previous decade, making it the fastest-growing sector of the Armenian economy. According to government estimates, the country's 500 or so mostly small and medium-sized IT firms earned over \$550 million in combined revenue in 2015.

The sector is dominated by the Armenian branches of U.S. tech giants like as Synopsys, National Instruments, Mentor Graphics and VMware. But its steady expansion is also increasingly driven by homegrown Armenian companies.

The most successful of these startups is PicsArt, one of the world's leading mobile photo editing and sharing applications. The company now has more than 350 employees in Armenia and boasts 90 million active monthly users worldwide.

Another, smaller startup founded in 2013 attracted \$5 million in funding from two U.S. venture capital firms earlier this year. The company called Teamable develops special software used by businesses for hiring skilled workers. Like PicsArt, Teamable has offices not only in Yerevan but also in San Francisco.

Another Armenian firm, SoloLearn, won this month the Grand Prize of Facebook's annual "Apps of the Year" event, which attracted 900 submissions from 87 countries. SoloLearn offers a free online app for people interested in learning computer programming.

Karen Vartanyan, chairman of Armenia's Union of Information Technology Enterprises (UITE), stressed the growing importance of such startups. "Our local products are increasingly emerging and proving a success in the international market," he told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutjun.am).

Vahan Shakaryan, the executive director of the Yerevan-based company Technology and Science Dynamics manufacturing smartphones and tablet computers, said the sector's has been rapidly developing because it is export-oriented. He also cautioned: "Booms are possible in economics. They key thing is to at least stay at the same level after they are over. It's quite a challenge."



For Vartanyan, the key challenge is a continuing lack of skilled IT personnel in Armenia. "Our growth is now stunted by a serious shortage of personnel," he said. "The education system is in tatters."

Industry executives have long complained about the inadequate professional level of many graduates of IT departments of Armenia universities. According to their estimates, there are now between 2,000 and 4,000 job vacancies in the sector employing about 15,000 people.

Successive Armenian governments have pledged to tackle this problem. Vartanyan in-

sisted, however, that there is still no "comprehensive, strategic cooperation" on the matter between the authorities and IT companies.

In January, Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan met with a team of government officials and tech executives that proposed a wide-ranging reform of engineering education in Armenia. One of those executives said only half of 1,300 IT students graduating from Armenian universities each year are qualified enough to work in the sector without undergoing further training

*By Sargis Harutyunyan*



## Aliyev Family's Financial Role in Shipping Weapons to Terrorists



*Harut  
Sassounian*

Last week I wrote about the sensational revelations by Bulgarian investigative journalist Dilyana Gaytandzhieva in *Trud* newspaper, who reported on leaked documents that Azerbaijan's state-run Silk Way Airlines has shipped under diplomatic cover 350 plane loads of heavy weapons and ammunition to terrorist groups around the world during the last three years.

A report by Radio Free Europe's (RFE) Azeri investigative reporter Khadija Ismayilova, who has been jailed for her disclosures of Azerbaijan government's human rights abuses, has revealed in a 2010 report on President Ilham Aliyev's daughter, Arzu Aliyeva's part ownership of a company that is linked to Silk Way Airlines. This fact explains how the airline managed to get all the diplomatic clearances to ship such large quantities of weapons to terrorists.

It turns out that Silk Way Airlines belongs to SW Holding, a group of companies that "enjoys a near-complete monopoly of airline service," including mid-flight meals served by Sky Catering, and taxi service run by Airport Gate, both of which are owned by SW Holding. In addition, technical maintenance of the national carrier's planes and helicopters are carried out by Silkway Technics, and "multiple other companies controlling everything from Traveler assistance to ticket sales to duty-free stores are all owned by SW Holding," according to Ismayilova.

SW Holding also owns Silk Way Bank, which is owned by President Aliyev's then 21-year old daughter Arzu Aliyeva and Zarifa Hamzayeva, wife of president of Azerbaijan's AZAL state airline company, according to RFE's Azerbaijani service. Silk Way Airlines is also a part owner of the Silk Way Bank.

Interestingly, Ismayilova reports that "the rise of SW Holding, which has seamlessly absorbed many of AZAL's former businesses, has raised questions about dubious privatization practices in Aliyev's Azerbaijan. It also serves to underscore how the political elite continues to use close friends and family members to preserve its hold on the country's most valuable assets—despite Azerbaijani laws that list nepotism by state officials as an offense punishable by up to 12 years in jail."

President Ilham Aliyev is simply continuing the practice started by his father Heydar Aliyev, who after ruling Azerbaijan for two decades passed the Presidential baton to his son. In a constitutional referendum in 2009, term limits on the President were abolished making Ilham Aliyev President for Life. Not to take any chances, he recently appointed his wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, as Vice President, to become his possible successor.

As I had reported earlier, based on an article in *The Washington Post*, President Aliyev's preteen son, Heydar, was the legal owner of nine luxury mansions in Dubai purchased for \$44 million. President's two daughters, Arzu and Leyla, also own property in Dubai. The three children together own property in Dubai worth \$75 million. Obviously this is not money they earned nor did their parents. President Aliyev's annual salary is \$230,000. Ismayilova estimates President Aliyev's wealth to be "in tens of millions of dollars." This is surely an underestimate, given

the lack of concrete figures. However, just the fact that Aliyev's three children own property in Dubai worth \$75 million, President Aliyev's wealth could be safely estimated to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars if not in the billions of dollars! Contrary to Azerbaijani law, neither President Aliyev nor his wife have declared their net worth.

Under Azerbaijani law, public officials are prohibited from owning businesses, while family members are exempt from this restriction, a loophole exploited by the Aliyevs to hide their earnings in their children's holdings. Just Arzu Aliyeva's part ownership of the Silk Way Bank is worth over \$12 million. According to RFE, "presidential secretary Azer Gasimov confirmed that Arzu Aliyeva was one of the owners of the Silk Way Bank."

Gulu Khalilov, the spokesperson for the State Committee on Privatization of State Property, told RFE that he had no information on the privatization of AZAL, the state airline company, including its holdings, like AZAL Bank. RFE was told that none of the legal procedures for privatization were followed.

"In the meantime, SW Holding has slowly but steadily acquired nearly all of AZAL's former companies, including the insurance firm AZAL Sigorta, which is now co-owned by SW Holding and the two daughters of Jahangir Asgarov, the president of AZAL and the husband of Zarifa Hamzayeva, the current co-owner of Silk Way Bank," according to Ismayilova. "SW Holding has also been the sole contractor on a number of high-profile AZAL projects, including airport-construction deals in Lankaran, Ganja, and Zagatala worth a total of \$150 million."

President Aliyev and his family must be held responsible as part owners of a state-run airline that ships sophisticated weapons to terrorists around the world.

**With this, The Highlights starts one more new heading, The Extraordinary News provided by the Press and Information Dept of the Armenian Ministry of Emergency Situations.**

**Avoiding any explanation or detail, we state that for a country like Armenia MES with all its divisions and services – be it Rescue Service, or Fire Fighters, HydroMeteoService and others could be considered vitally important structure.**

**And a serviceman (woman) who responds a phone call on number “911” MUST be ready to answer any kind of question, again, ANY, if even it could seem to many a strange one...For instance, “Would you pls to tell me what movie we can watch today in Nayiri Cinema Theatre?”**

**Very difficult but noble and grateful job...**

## Border Communities Will be Provided With Civil Defense Footholds

July 17

**RA ES Minister partook in the opening ceremony of civil defense bases in Tavush region**

Within the framework of the working visit to Tavush region, the RA Minister of Emergency Situations Davit Tonoyan participated in the opening ceremony of new and up-to-date modernized footholds based in the region. Rescue Service Civil Defense Department of the Ministry of Emergency Situations continues the process of technical re-equipment, modernization of civil defense footholds as well as the construction of new ones.

the destroyed, ramshackle and burning buildings and rendering first medical aid in the areas of accidents and disasters.

Minister Tonoyan first visited Paravakar community where civil defense special facilities protection regular foothold permanent deployment territory was put into exploitation. The Minister toured the territory and got acquainted with property and technical equipment. Residents of the given border communities were employed to serve in civil defense bases which also enabled to solve the population employment problem.

In the community of Choratan where the civil defense regular foothold will be built, the Minister of Emergency Situations was welcomed with salt'n'bread and with great enthusiasm. The community residents thanked the Minister for creating new jobs for young people and

ested in their working and living conditions, detailed the problems facing the Civil Defense divisions.

Highlighting the mission carried out by MES civil defense employees, the Minister stressed the importance of high professionalism of the staff, both in performing qualified protection, rescue and fire fighting activities in different emergency situations and providing first medical aid to the population if it is necessary.

Having visited several shelters located in border communities intended for population safe protection in case of emergencies, the Minister of Emergency Situations got acquainted with the process of construction works in shelters mainly carried out with the support of philanthropists.

In the communities of Movses and



Ten footholds with two detachments of special facilities protection have already been set up at the RA MES RS Civil Defense Forces Collective Center.

Civil defense bases have been deployed and already operating in the border communities of Azatamut, Chinari, Nerkin Karmir Aghpyur, Aygepar, Movses, Paravakar, Voskevan, Sarigyugh, Berdavan and Koti of Tavush region of Armenia.

MES Civil Defense footholds were designed for the protection of special facilities of border areas, guard services, construction of protective structures and positions as well as for detecting and evacuating the affected people from

for keeping the problems of the border communities in the spotlight.

RA ES Minister also talked with the community youngsters who would soon join MES Civil Defense staff.

The next stops were the border communities of Moses, Sarigyugh and Voskevan where Davit Tonoyan cut the red ribbons at the solemn ceremony of opening of the fully renovated civil defense footholds. The construction of buildings and major repair works were completed, the footholds were furnished with the necessary equipment, modern means of communication and property.

At each foothold, Minister Davit Tonoyan talked with the staff, was inter-



Voskevan, the Minister of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Armenia awarded heads of communities, employees of Police and Defense Ministries, representatives of various organizations and private entrepreneurs as well as the RA MES civil defense employees with the RA MES medals and Certificates of Honor for close cooperation with the Ministry of Emergency Situations as well as for great support in the construction of footholds of the RA MES.

In the near future it is planned to open ten more civil defense footholds in the border communities of Tavush and Vayots Dzor regions.



## Mountain Tourism and Campaigns are on Rescuers' Agenda: RA MES Conducted Overnight Stay Drills

On July 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 and 17-18, four rescue squads of the Center of Conducting Special Purpose Rescue Operations of the RS Rescue Forces Department of the RA MES conducted overnight campaigns to Mount Ara, on topic "Organization and implementation of search and rescue operations in the mountains".

The purpose of the campaigns was to improve the knowledge and practical skills of rescuers in difficult relief conditions.

In the highlands, forty-three rescuers carried out search and rescue operations, moving across various mountain landscapes, and after making long passes and overcoming difficult places including river crossings. Through group support, rock climbing, rising and landing with the injured was carried out, overnight stay by setting up tents and livelihood implementation was organized.

The RA Ministry of Emergency Situations regularly organizes similar drill-campaigns, highlighting the preparedness of the rescuers for any difficult situation and, if necessary, providing timely assistance to mountaineers. Often, mountain tourism participants lag behind the group or get lost and being unable to orientate in an unfamiliar location, they get into panic.

The drill-campaigns allow the rescuers to quickly conduct search operations

in familiar site and take the lost citizens to a safe place.

In the near future, it is also planned to organize a campaign-drills to Mount Aragats.



## RA Ministry of Emergency Situations was Recognized as State Institution of the Year

July 18

On July 18, "Armenian PR Association" scientific-informational NGO organized the 2nd Armenian PR Awards. The Armenian PR Awards aimed at co-

ordinating the best projects in the public relations sphere in Armenia as well as worthily appreciate PR specialists, by this promoting the formation and development of PR culture in Armenia.

The Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Armenia was recognized as the winner in "State Agency of the Year" nomination on the basis of expert research and target audience surveys' results.

As Minister of Emergency Situations Davit Tonoyan was on an official visit to Georgia, the Award was handed over Deputy Minister Davit Karapetyan.

- This award is both inspiring and binding, this is the assessment of the work of the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations big team - from a rescuer to Minister. Of course, this is also the result of the work of the MES Information and Public Relations Department, however, no matter how professional the PR team is, the best outcome can only be achieved if the organization carries out its main tasks. Therefore, this Award is the result of our rescuers,

"911" service's dedicated and careful work,- noted Davit Karapetyan.

The Deputy Minister also thanked the organizers of the event for the appraisal and the promotion of healthy competition in the professional field.

The role of media in the forming transparent, open and constructive working style of the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations with society is especially great. RA Ministry of Emergency Situations is also grateful to partner media for trust and cooperation.

## RA ES Minister's Official Visit to Georgia: Armenian-Georgian Cooperation Gets New Impetus

July 18

RA Minister of Emergency Situations Davit Tonoyan paid a two-day working visit to Georgia.

This was the RA ES Minister's first visit to Georgia, within the framework

*continued on page 12*



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of Armenian-Georgian cooperation in the sphere of emergency situations. RA ES Deputy Minister Enriko Apriamov and RA MES RS Director, r/s Colonel Mushegh Ghazaryan were in the delegation headed by RA Minister of ES. In the frames of the working visit, Minister Tonoyan met with Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia Giorgi Mghebrishvili.

During the meeting, the sides discussed opportunities for expanding cooperation between the two states in the field of emergency situations and joint response to disasters. Giorgi Mghebrishvili presented Minister Tonoyan the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia in the fields of civil defense and emergency situations, in particular the 5-year program of modernization and standardization of the Emergency Management Agency.

Presenting the vision of the Armenian side on the prospects of Armenian-Georgian cooperation in the field of emergency situations, the RA Minister of Emergency Situations expressed confidence, that after the meeting, the cooperation between the two states and joint response to emergencies will become more closely and effectively.

In his speech, Minister Tonoyan noted, that during the meeting an agreement was reached to strengthen the Armenian-Georgian transboundary response to natural and man-made disasters under the auspices of a number of international organizations, which would boost the resilience of the population of the two countries.

RA Minister of Emergency Situations, accompanied by the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia, also visited the Emergency Situations Management Agency and Joint Action Center to get acquainted with their functions and

technical equipment.

**The Highlights note: It should be stressed one more time that it was the very first visit of the Minister of Emergency Situations of Armenia to Georgia since our country's independence.**

### **Risk Assessment and Prevention are Key Priorities in Disaster Prevention: Disaster Risk Management-Related Issues Discussed at RA MES**

**July 19**

On July 19, the first session of the RA Disaster Risk Management National

The session was chaired by the Chairman of the Consultative Body, RA Minister of Emergency Situations Davit Tonoyan. The Minister presented the agenda of the session and touched upon what should be done.

-Today's meeting is significant as it officially kicks off the Strategy Governing Board's activities for the management and coordination of the process of implementation of the RA Disaster Risk Management (DRM) National Strategy approved at the RA Government session held on April 6, 2017.

The purpose of the session is to define the role of the Board and the working format, to generally present the DRM National Strategy and its Action Plan, to discuss the priorities stemming from the

Strategy Implementation Action Plan and other issues.

Margarita Hakobyan, representative of the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations and Ara Nazinyan, the World Bank expert presented the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Risk Management Strategy in Armenia, referring to the goals, outcomes and targets.

DRM strategy stems from RA National Security Strategy, it is in line with Sendai Framework for Action 2015-2030 and is aimed at achieving sustainable development goals. The DRM Strategy is aimed at protecting people and their

health, property, livelihood, and production as well as cultural and environmental assets.

The DRM National Strategy and its implementation Action Plan are essentially a leading document aimed at disaster risk management capacities development of the Republic of Armenia and making Armenia a resilient country.

The attendees discussed the role of stakeholders, structures and partners involved in the process, proposed mechanisms for general management of the effective process.



Strategy Governing Board was held at the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations. Strategy Governing Board is a consultative body comprising the Deputy Ministers of Healthcare, Labor and Social Affairs, Nature Protection, Agriculture, Economic Development and Investments, Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources, Territorial Administration and Development, Education and Science, Finance, Deputy Chief of Police at the RA Government and Deputy Chairman of the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia.



## Mayor Taron Margaryan and His Team Visit Artsakh



By  
**Gourgen  
Khazhakian**

Chief  
Correspondent

*Undoubtedly, last week No.1 news from the Yerevan City Hall was visit of delegation headed by Mayor Taron Margaryan to the*

19.07.2017

The delegation headed by Yerevan Mayor **Taron Margaryan** which is in Artsakh with an official visit accompanied by Stepanakert Mayor **Suren Grigoryan** visited the memorial complex in the capital of the Artsakh Republic to pay tribute to the memory of Artsakh citizens who fell in the Great Patriotic War and Artsakh Liberation Struggle. Mayor Taron Margaryan together with Stepanakert Mayor laid flowers at the graves of the fallen heroes.



**Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan meets Stepanakert Mayor**  
19.07.2017

Within the frames of the official visit to Artsakh the delegation headed by Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan met Stepanakert Mayor Suren Grigoryan. Expressing gratitude to Yerevan Mayor for permanent readiness and efforts strengthening and expansion of effective cooperation between the two capitals, Suren Grigoryan assured that the residents of Stepanakert attach particular importance to tight cooperation with Yerevan, the results of which are obvious and noticeable for each citizen of Stepanakert.

*"Mister Mayor, it's really delightful to state the fact that our interaction is effectively developing in all directions and the results are noticeable. And your personal contribution is significant in all this. I also want to stress the importance of interaction*

*SECOND ARMENIAN REPUBLIC, i.e. Artsakh.*

*In case of Mr Margaryan such a visit to ancient Armenian land that won its FREEDOM has a special symbolism as Mr Mayor is a proud inheritor of Sasun (Western Armenia temporarily occupied by Turkey) FREEDOM FIGHTERS and the son of Armenia's longest posted PM Andranik Margaryan of the blessed memory who,*

*established between the administrative districts of Yerevan and districts of Artsakh. I also want to outline that the support of Yerevan gradually becomes visible in the districts of Artsakh too", said Suren Grigoryan, and taking the opportunity congratulated Yerevan Mayor on being re-elected on his office and wished lots of new success, expressing confidence that from the point of view of effective use of potential and harmonic development of Yerevan the further years will open new prospects for cooperation.*

*alike his grandpas, was a FREEDOM FIGHTER in the years of Communists' rule.*

*So it was not mere by chance, not at all that his visit to Artsakh Mayor Taron Margaryan started from paying tribute to the memory of those FREEDOM FIGHTERS who sacrificed their lives in the name of VICTORY in the Great Patriotic War and Artsakh Liberation Struggle...*

*nakert contributing to the development of Artsakh capital", said Taron Margaryan.*

**Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan meets Artsakh President Bako Sahakyan**  
20.07.2017

On 20 July Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan met the President of Artsakh Republic **Bako Sahakyan**.

Taking the opportunity, Artsakh President congratulated Taron Margaryan on



Expressing gratitude for warm welcome and congratulations, Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan in turn noted that the programs fulfilled by the teams of the two capitals that have got positive assessment, serve in fact as a basis for future more large-scale programs to be implemented by joint efforts.

*"The friendly relationship between the two capitals is reflected in the program of cooperation established between Yerevan and Stepanakert. The process of the program of cooperation is satisfactory and what is very important, it gives significant results in various spheres of urban economy. Since 2012, together with our Artsakh colleagues, we have been implementing numerous programs aimed at Artsakh development in the spheres of culture, education, social welfare, health, humanitarian issues, tourism. Please be sure that Yerevan Municipality is always next to you and is ready to assist our partners from Stepa-*

his re-election in Yerevan Mayor's office and expressed satisfaction with the results of cooperation between Yerevan and Stepanakert stressing that Yerevan Municipality plays its special and important role in Artsakh life and the Armenians of Artsakh highly appreciate it. Outlining the importance of tight cooperation of administrative districts of Yerevan with the districts of Artsakh, Bako Sahakyan expressed hope that it will get the level of cooperation between Yerevan and Stepanakert.

*"The programs aimed at strengthening of relationship with Artsakh are at the focus of your permanent attention and it is really worth appreciation. The tight cooperation between Yerevan and Stepanakert is visible and numerous programs are fulfilled within its frames. I hope that with the same enthusiasm the administrative districts of Yerevan and districts of Artsakh will cooperate. Please be confident that the interac-*

*continued on page 14*



## Mayor Taron Margaryan and His Team Visit Artsakh

from page 13

tion with Yerevan is highly appreciated in Artsakh and I am sure that you and your team will go on contributing to the development and flourishing of Artsakh", said Bako Sahakyan.

Expressing gratitude for warm welcome and congratulations, Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan in turn congratulated Bako Sahakyan on his being overwhelmingly elected President of the Artsakh Republic in Artsakh Parliament and wished him strong health and success for the sake of Artsakh and its citizens.

Yerevan Mayor briefly presented the process of implementation of the programs in various spheres of urban economy within the frames of agreement signed between Yerevan and Stepanakert. He also assured that the activities will be carried on in all directions.

on doing their best for the development, progress and prosperity of the two Armenian republics.

### Construction of "Azatamartiks' Park" in Stepanakert is going on with the assistance of Yerevan Municipality 20.07.2017

Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan who is in Artsakh with an official visit together with Stepanakert Mayor Suren Grigoryan and the Chairman of the Union of Artsakh Freedom Fighters ("Azatamartiks"), Major General **Samvel Karapetyan** visited "Azatamartiks' Park", familiarized themselves with the process of construction of the recreation zone (2 hectares). The construction of the Park is fulfilled within the frames of cooperation program signed between Yerevan and Stepanakert Municipalities.

tion of "Azatamartiks Park", the persons in charge expressed gratitude to Yerevan Mayor for the initiative and implementation of the Program, and outlined that this recreation zone will become another symbol of effective cooperation established between the two Armenian capitals.

Stepanakert Mayor in turn expressed confidence that the Park will become a comfortable recreation zone not only for Stepanakert residents but for the guests of the Artsakh capital as well.

### Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan visits servicemen from Yerevan 20.07.2017

On 20 July Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan together with the Head of the Republican Party faction of Yerevan Council of Elders **Sergey Mkrtchyan**, Chairman of the Standing Committee for Financial and



"Mister President, be sure that we attach particular importance to strengthening and expanding the cooperation with Artsakh and as you have already noted, these relations are developing quite successfully. All our programs will be long-term, moreover; the large-scale projects and initiatives promoting dynamic development of Artsakh will be at the focus of our particular attention", stressed Taron Margaryan and assured that the persons in charge will go

Presenting details of the Program, the persons in charge noted that design of the park would stand out with unique architectural and landscape solutions, fountain complexes and walkways. Besides, an amphitheater will be built for performances and events. The area of the Park will be provided with pedestrian ties from Tumanyan Street to the school, the stadium and the square.

Attaching importance to the construc-

Credit/Economic Issues of the Council of Elders **Armen Yeremyan** and the heads of administrative districts of Yerevan visited one of the military units of Artsakh Defence Army and met with the servicemen from Yerevan.

Talking to them, Taron Margaryan noted that the defence of homeland borders is a very important and responsible mission and assured that Yerevan Municipality will



go on supporting the servicemen and their families.

Expressing gratitude to all soldiers and officers, Mayor Taron Margaryan stressed that due to soldiers' courage, particularly of those who serve in frontier zone, it's possible to preserve peace and ensure gradual development of the two Armenian republics.

The soldiers in their turn thanked Taron Margaryan for permanent attention and support and for the possibility to meet their parents. They also assured the Mayor that they defend the borders with the great pride and responsibility.

## **Taron Margaryan is present at the events dedicated to Chartar Town Day 20.07.2017**

Artsakh President Bako Sahakyan, Stepanakert Mayor Suren Grigoryan and Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan who is in Artsakh with an official visit were present on the events dedicated to Chartar Town Day.

The participants of the event laid flowers at the memorial commemorating the victims of Artsakh liberation struggle rendering the memory tribute to the soldiers fallen for homeland freedom.

Artsakh President, Stepanakert Mayor and Yerevan Mayor also familiarized themselves with the samples of the exhibition opened

in the area adjacent to Culture Chamber of Chartar. The carpets produced by «Karabagh» carpet company and other samples of handicraft of Chartar dwellers were displayed at the exhibition too.

## **Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan awarded with the title of Honorary Citizen of Chartar 20.07.2017**

Artsakh President Bako Sahakyan and Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan were present at the main event dedicated to Chartar Town Day. Within the frames of the event organized in Chartar Chamber of Culture and Sport after Sevak Ghukasyan the history of Chartar was presented. The festive event was accompanied by folk dances and songs.

During the solemn ceremony, for the contribution to Chartar development Mayor of Chartar **Arthur Aghabekyan** awarded Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan with

the title of Honorary Citizen of Chartar. Expressing gratitude for appreciation, Mayor Taron Margaryan assured that the cooperation established between Yerevan and Chartar will be strong and expanded, ensuring long-term development.

For effective cooperation between Yerevan and Chartar Mayor Taron Margaryan awarded Chartar Mayor Arthur Aghabekyan with Yerevan Mayor's Gold Medal.



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During the festive event the Head of Avan Administrative District of Yerevan Manvel Javadyan was awarded with the title of Honorary Citizen of Chartar. Member of the RA Parliament **Robert Sargsyan** was awarded with the thanksgiving diploma of the Mayor of Chartar.

It should be noted that singers and dance groups arrived from Yerevan participated in the festive events with their concert program "Yerevan is Greeting".

## **Meeting with families of Stepanakert residents fallen and injured during April War 21.07.2017**

Within the frames of the official visit of the delegation headed by Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan to Artsakh the Head of Social Welfare Department of Yerevan Municipality **Ruzanna Zakaryan** and the Chairman of the Standing Committee for Urban Development and Land Use Issues

of Yerevan Council of Elders **Hovhannes Tokmajyan** met with 15 families of Stepanakert residents fallen or injured in the 2016 April War. They were granted necessary household appliances.

On behalf of Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan Ruzanna Zakaryan assured that strengthening the ties between the army and society is in the center of permanent attention of Yerevan Municipality and in this context all the programs of assistance will be long-term.

## **Doctors from Yerevan provide medical services in medical establishments of Stepanakert 21.07.2017**

Within the frames of the official visit of the delegation headed by Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan to Artsakh, eminent physicians from Yerevan medical establishments visited Stepanakert as well.

The Chief Cardiologist of Yerevan **Parunak Zelveyan**, the Chief Children's Surgeon of Yerevan **Nikolay Dallakyan**, the Chief Dermatologist **Karen Babayan**,

the Chief Chemotherapist **Haykuhi Geokchyan** and a number of other specialists on the spot organized free examinations and consultations of 275 patients and performed 8 surgeries.

During the visit the Head of Yerevan Municipality Department of Health **Kamsar Babinyan**, the Head of Republican Party faction of Yerevan Council of Elders Sergey Mkrtchyan and the Chairman of the Standing Committee for Financial and Credit-Economical Issues of Yerevan Council of Elders Armen Yeremyan granted the Artsakh Ministry of Health 50 names of medication and other necessary materials.

## **Music school and libraries of Stepanakert were granted about 1600 volumes of books and school literature 21.07.2017**

During the visit of Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan to Artsakh the Head of Yerevan Municipality Department of Culture Ruben Hovhannisyan visited Hovhannes Tumanyan Library in Stepanakert, the Muratsan Library and the Komitas Music School.

Within the frames of tight cooperation between Yerevan and Stepanakert in the sphere of culture these establishments were granted about 1600 volumes of books and school literature.

## Makaravank Monastery: One of the Most Significant Architectural Complexes of Medieval Armenia



By  
**Gourgen  
Khazhakian**

**Chief  
Correspondent**

Makaravank is a 10th-13th century church complex adjacent to the Achajur village of Tavush Province of Armenia (with the town of Ijevan as the province center, 150 km away Yerevan) located on the slope of Paitatap Mountain.

Makaravank Monastery is one of the most significant architectural complexes of medieval Armenia. The Monastery consists of four churches and a gavit (entrance hall) that was surrounded by high defense walls in the past.



There are also two cemeteries, arched gates, fountain and ruins of many other premises in the Monastery's yard.

From the 14th century this Monastery has stopped serving religious services due to unknown reasons, and, according to specialists, this was the first time when a Monastery stopped serving.

The oldest structure there is Makaravank's 10th century cross-winged domed church with annexes in the corners which differs from the ordinary structures of this type by rich carved ornamentation on the wall of the altar dais and on the framings of the main windows of the interior.

Why the Monastery called Makaravank?

According to a legend, church was built by a master named **Makar** and his only son. Son was a mason and the father – a builder. As the church walls were becoming higher and higher, one day the Master decided not to go down from the walls so to sleep on the church walls. One day Makar noticed that the stones were of different size and decorations were poorer than those he was getting before. He decided to ask the son what was the reason, but someone down answered that the son was sick. Makar demanded to bring his son to him, no matter in what condition the latter was, but they did not fulfill the demand. So he realized that his son was already dead and threw himself down from the wall. He was buried under a wall of the

church that remained unfinished, and from that time they started to call the Monastery Makaravank.

There is also another legend according to which the Monastery was once called *Agravavank* ("Monastery of Ravens").

The story has it that one day, when the workers (or monks-?) of the Monastery were having lunch, a snake sneaked into the soup. At that minute a raven was flying above them, and it saw the snake and tried to warn the men about danger. The men, however, didn't understand the raven's warning. And then "heroic" raven flew down like a stone and threw itself straight into the boiling soup. Only after cleaning the pans they found the snake. That is why they called the Monastery after the bird who saved their lives by sacrificing its own.

The oldest church in Makaravank Monas-



tery built with red tufa stone was established in the 8-9th centuries.

To the east from this church Abbot **Hovhannes** built St. Astvatsatsin (Holy Mother of God) Church in 1198, in memory of his parents and brothers. There is a carving inside a small circle on St. Astvatsatsin church wall, - a man's face depicted there. It is said to be Master Makar's face, however there is another version, according to which the image resembles Jesus Christ.

This church has unique high-relief sculptures depicting birds, lions as well as a battle between an eagle and a dragon.

To the north from the church ruins of an ancient small chapel could be found.

The main church of the Monastery was built in 1205 by **Vardan**, son of Prince **Bazaz**. This church is also richly decorated from the interior with eight-pointed stars and octagons between them arranged in two rows, covered with various floral motifs, creating unusual bouquets, all kinds of fishes and birds and also sphinxes and sirens.

They are considered to be unique examples of the architecture in the medieval Armenia.

The shield of Prince **Vache Vachutian** who built the gavit in 1224, is also unique and depicts two eagles. Passing through the gate in the circuit wall, the gavit is on the left. The facade of the gavit bears sculptures of a sphinx and a lion fighting a bull.

In the Monastery's yard a big stone with a

round hole can be found. They say this stone a magic as it is believed that here all dreams come true when someone passes through the stone.

There is a small picnic area not far away from the Monastery. Visitors can bring their own food and have a nice time in the wonderful forest.

In terms of its architectural style, the Monastery is similar to Gandzasar, Noravank, Aghtamar, and a number of other churches.

The best time to visit Makaravank is in late spring or in summer when the forest is blossoming.

And, as usual, a couple of reviews from TripAdvisor:

**AntodallaMotta**  
Milan, Italy



Reviewed May 1, 2017

*"A surprising visit"*

The monastery is quite far away from the village, lost among the trees. As we turn off the Lada, we heard somebody singing. There were only three priests doing the Liturgy in the Church. We were the only attendees. At the end we were invited to have a peaceful and delight lunch with them among the ruins, peacefully talking of the monastery, the village, the Armenia and Italy. One of the best moment of the whole travel in Armenia.

**MoonlightRainSea**  
USA

Reviewed August 21, 2014

*"My favorite monastery in Armenia"*

Makaravank is my very favorite monastery in a country of hundreds if not thousands of churches and monasteries. This off the beaten path and therefore more peaceful to visit. The structures themselves are beautiful, though perhaps some of the other places like Tatev and Noravank have more spectacular views. I strongly recommend a visit if you're going to Sevan or Goshavank anyway.

*Infos from [traveltoarmenia.am](http://traveltoarmenia.am) and [360armenia.com](http://360armenia.com) used in this story  
Photos from Wikipedia  
and by Yvette Guyette*



## Recent News from Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator: VivaCell-MTS Customer Support Contact Center Has Modernized

VivaCell-MTS Customer Support Contact Center, also well-known as the “111” service, has been modernized and replenished with new technological solutions. A most comfortable work environment has been created to increase the quality of the work and leisure of Customer Support Contact Center employees.

General and individual automatic LED lighting systems have been installed in the renovated and expanded Customer Support Contact Center that allows the employees to adjust the level of lighting on their desks according to their individual preferences. A new air conditioning system has been installed. Innovative solutions have been applied to provide full acoustic insulation of the Customer Support Contact Center interior.

VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian**.

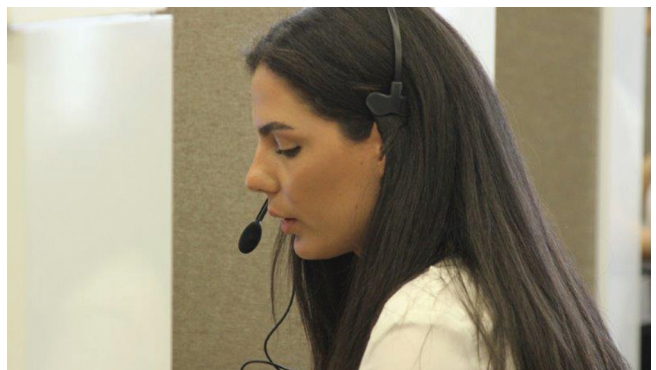
The Customer Support Contact Center is one of the key units of the Company carrying out a number of functions: promptly responding to customers' inquiries and complaints, informing about the services and products rendered by the Company, giving technical advice, and, if necessary, making house calls for the elderly subscribers and subscribers with disabilities. In 2017, from January until May, Customer Support Contact Center handled 1,573,961 customer calls, 5521 electronic letters, 5871 online chat sessions and 502 written applications.

The renovated Customer Support Contact Center, equipped with state-of-the-art devices, now houses more operators than before. Taking into account the busy work-

Support Contact Center, previously having the experience, is ready to provide paid distant customer services to small, medium-sized and large enterprises (commercial insourcing).

The first who have been exposed to the innovations introduced at VivaCell-MTS Contact Center were Facebook fans following the official business page of the company (<https://www.facebook.com/MTSArmenia/>). They learned about the Call Center before its official opening and presented their questions to the Company in direct transmission mode, during Facebook Live session by VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph Yirikian.

By the way, employees of VivaCell-MTS Customer Support Contact Center, unlike Service Center employees, are not obliged



*“The technological upgrade of the Customer Support Contact Center is aimed at boosting the customer service quality, increasing the capacity of the office to house more employees and creating a more comfortable work environment for the staff. VivaCell-MTS continuously works on upgrading its operational systems. Being on the forefront of technology requires constant efforts from on all sections of the Company. This commitment lies at the heart of VivaCell-MTS success and competitive advantage for over 11 years,”* said

ing schedule of the employees, comfortable conditions have been created for their leisure time: the lounge room and the kitchen have been renovated and refurbished. The Customer Support Contact Center is also adjusted to the needs of employees with disabilities.

The modernization process of the Contact Center, aimed at ensuring high service quality and increasing the capacity to provide necessary information to the subscribers, will be continued.

VivaCell-MTS modernized Customer

*to wear a uniform. Through this kind of approach towards its employees, the Company takes care of their comfort and preferences, by taking into account their heavy shift-based working schedule and the fact that communication with customers is over the phone.*

**Editor's note:** It becomes a fashionable thing for businesses in Armenia to use too often motto “We Love Our Customers”, but in case of VivaCell-MTS such a motto could sound really TRULY...

## Zodiac Weekly Forecast



### Aries (March 20–April 19)

Rise above the mundane situation and see the bigger picture of your relationship(s). Metaphorically we bring people into our lives to help teach us what we need to know. If

the personality of another person irritates you, then there is something important to learn about yourself. Maybe there is a truth that you have been avoiding and this irksome person is present as a teacher.



### Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Read the lead paragraph because at this time it especially pertains to you. The crux of the stressor may be in the areas of shared resources. That includes time, money, or resources that you share with another or with the greater community. That could

include money or social security, taxes, insurance and/or debts.



### Gemini (May 20–June 20)

You are likely making improvements in your home or property. You'll be updating the old with something new and contemporary. Mercury, the ruler of communications, is involved so it may have to

do with computing and microchips.



### Cancer (June 21–July 21)

Give special attention to unusual messages or to new people who enter your life during this time. A "teacher" crosses your path in the form of a person, a book, or the right message that will steer you in the

next favorable direction.



### Leo (July 22–August 21)

Mars, the warrior, enters your sign this week and will be traveling with you for seven weeks. This energy is especially helpful in defining our boundaries. Periodically we need to examine who we are as well as who we are not. Often something is

eliminated. In general, it represents an increase of your courage and physical strength.



### Virgo (August 22–September 22)

Your ability to concentrate upon projects that require management of details is strong. Organizing files, closets and cabinets will clear the clutter from your mind. Fortunately, you are able to make mindful deci-

sions. If information is needed, you can find it readily. The week favors education in practical skills.



### Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

You may encounter someone who wants to argue about a subject that has no end, i.e. religion or politics. Remember that what you think is not who you are. It is an opinion,

only, and doesn't deserve a battle to the death. Make note of any developments that seem meaningful and "supposed" to happen between you and another.



### Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

From now through early September, your attention will be drawn to career and life direction. Activity in your outer world picks up speed. Authorities and others may be chal-

lenging, so have your ducks in a row if you take initiatives. Use this time to improve your "product" or your presentation.



### Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)

Good news comes from a distance or perhaps on the internet. Activities involving the law, travel, the church, distant communications and/or pub-

lishing are favored. Personal relationships may be difficult for a short time this week. Check the lead paragraph.



### Capricorn (December 21–January 19)

A tenant, co-worker, or an employee may be challenging. It is annoying, but not the end of the world. You are coming upon a significant change next winter. Perhaps the

events of this week will press you toward that shift. There may be a need to focus on matters of your body, especially related to teeth, skin and bones.



### Aquarius (January 20–February 17)

If you are stymied, don't hesitate to consult a professional who is likely to have the information you need.

Your partner may take on an uncharacteristic manner of self-assertion. He or she is not so likely to back down from a fight. Life will be generally more harmonious if you avoid the hot topics.



### Pisces (February 18–March 19)

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

are highly prone to think dark thoughts about yourself. This is passing. Let it go.



# ARMENIA

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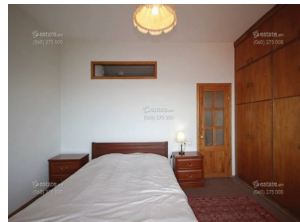
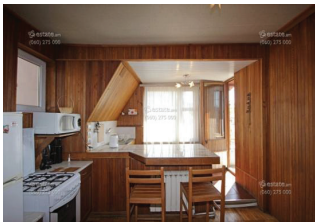
## APARTMENTS FOR RENT



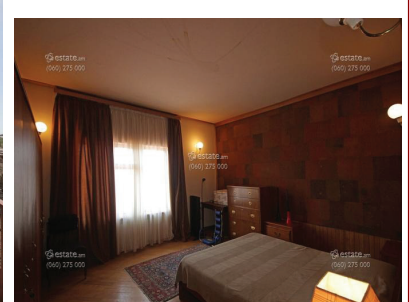
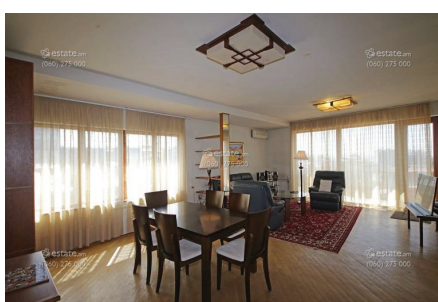
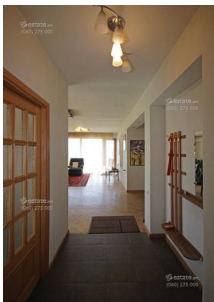
Comfortable two bedrooms apartments in the center of Yerevan, close to the hotel BASS. Each apartment is 110 sq.m., has two balconies, nice view to mount Ararat and separate entrance from the street. Both have central heating system, Wi-Fi, air conditionings, washing machines, TV sets, etc.  
**Address: Aygedzor Street 3, Yerevan.**  
**Tel. (374) 095-27-87-09; 093-22-95-70 ( landlord )**



The apartment on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Price for a long-time: \$ 850 per month; for a short time period: \$ 40-50 daily.



The apartment on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Price: \$ 1300 per month.



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