

Armenia to hold referendum on Constitutional Court in April 5



Armenia will hold a referendum on suspending the powers of a majority of members of Constitutional Court.

A bill on holding the referendum on April 5 was adopted by parliament earlier this week and signed by President Armen Sarkissian on February 9.

The constitutional amendments would suspend the powers of seven judges who were appointed before a peaceful revolution against corruption and cronyism which brought Nikol Pashinyan to power two years ago. The court's two other judges, who were appointed later, will maintain their powers.

Pashinyan on February 6 called the Constitutional Court's decisions a "threat to democracy."

Last September the court ruled that a criminal case against Armenia's former president Robert Kocharyan was partly unconstitutional. Kocharyan has been charged with acting unlawfully by introducing a state of emergency in March 2008, following a disputed election.

"The only hope of the former corrupt regime is pinned on the Constitutional Court and its president Hrayr Tovmasyan," Pashinyan told parliament on Thursday.

Tovmasyan was charged in December with abuse of power while he was the country's justice minister. He has denied the charges.

"We will say 'yes' to the revolution, to freedom and to bright future on April 5, and will slam the door in the face of corruption' PM Pashinyan wrote on his Facebook page.

Armenian President, Prime Minister discuss foreign and domestic policy issues

p. 2

Chief of Armenia's Urban Development Committee arrested over bribery

p. 4

Slovenia notifies it has completed ratification of Armenia-EU Agreement

p.7

Former Armenian Security Chief to set up Party

p. 5

Prime Minister holds phone conversation with European Council President Charles Michel

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a telephone conversation with European Council President Charles Michel. The Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of the European Council discussed issues concerning Armenia-EU relations.

The parties expressed their readiness to further develop the Armenia-EU cooperation, including trade and economic relations.

At the heart of the discussion



was the agenda of democratic reforms in Armenia. The President of the European Council emphasized the importance of the path of reforms chosen by Armenia.

During the phone conversation, Nikol Pashinyan and Charles Michel exchanged views on their expectations from the upcoming Eastern Partnership summit in Brussels in June.

The telephone conversation was initiated by the Armenian side.

Armenian President, Prime Minister discuss foreign and domestic policy issues

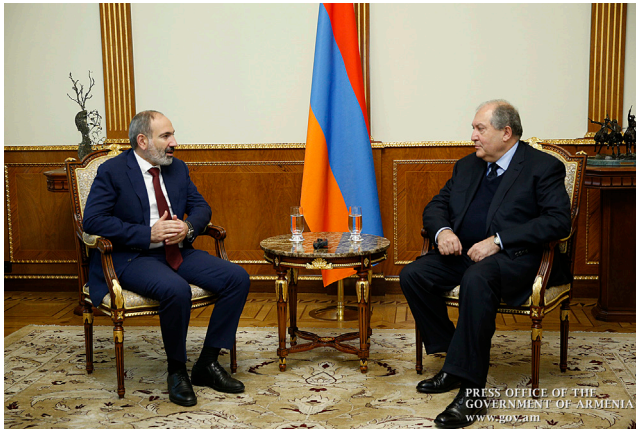
Armenian President Armen Sarkissian and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held a working meeting February 4.

Attaching importance to the periodic meetings, the interlocutors referred to issues on the agenda of the country.

“It seems to be our tradition to meet regularly to discuss all the events taking place in the international arena, as well as share the results of the visits, meetings, achievements and challenges of each of us,” President Sarkissian said.

Nikol Pashinyan, in turn, hailed the results of 2019, noting that the year was successful for the Republic of Armenia.

The Prime Minister noted that the indi-



cator of economic activity of 2019 was the highest

He hailed the indices of economic activity for 2019, noting that “2019 was the transition period after the revolution, and the focus of our discussions has always been

on the need to pay more and more attention to institutional reforms in the country and to establish and implement a strategic management logic.”

“I believe that we are entering such a phase in 2020, and the establishment of institutions in our country, the introduction of a system of checks and balances has always been in our focus and now we it is in the spotlight,” Pashinyan stated.

President Sarkissian it is also worth discussing future plans – investment plans.

“I can happily say that there seem to be new, small victories in my travels, be it the Persian Gulf states, Davos or Israel,” he stated.

FM Mnatsakanyan presents reform process to EU Ambassadors



Foreign Minister of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan held a traditional meet-

ing with the Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia and the Ambassadors of the EU member states accredited in Armenia, Noyan Tapan was informed from the press service of the MFA Armenia.

The interlocutors exchanged views on challenges and ways to solve them in the context of global and regional developments.

In the context of Armenia-EU partnership, the sides referred to the implementation

process of the Armenia EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement.

FM Mnatsakanyan presented to the EU partners the reform process in Armenia aimed at the development of democracy, strengthening of rule of law, establishment of independent judicial system, and fight against corruption.

The Armenian Foreign Minister also presented the recent developments over Nagorno Karabakh peace process.

Armenian parliament passes resolution to hold Constitutional Court referendum

06:02:2020 20:23:04	124
ԲԱԵԱՐԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ	
Գրանցված է ...	124
Բվորում ...	67
Բվեարկել է ...	103
Հի Բվեարկել ...	21
Անհրաժեշտ է ...	80 ձայն
ԿՈՂՄ ...	88
ԴԵՄ ...	15
ԶԵՆՆՊԱՀ ...	0
ՈՐՈՇՈՒՄԸ ԸՆԴՈՒՆՎԵԼ Է	Հարգ համար 4

Armenia's parliament decided on February 6 to hold a referendum on constitutional changes that would dismiss seven of the nine members of the Constitutional Court locked in a bitter dispute with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government.

They would be replaced by other judges to be confirmed by the current 132-member National Assembly in which Pashinyan's My

Step bloc holds 88 seats.

The decision was unanimously backed by virtually all My Step deputies. Lawmakers representing the opposition Bright Armenia Party (LHK) voted against it while their colleagues from the other parliamentary opposition party, Prosperous Armenia (BHK), did not vote at all.

My Step's Vahagn Hovakimyan, who presented the draft amendments during the parliament debate, said that the Constitutional Court is Armenia's least trusted state institution.

Addressing the National Assembly shortly before the vote, Pashinyan also strongly defended the amendments rejected as unconstitutional by opposition deputies. He again accused Constitutional Court Chairman Hrayr Tovmasyan and six other judges installed by former Armenian governments from 1995-2018 of being linked to the "corrupt former regime."

PACE Co-rapporteurs make correction to earlier statement

The Co-rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for the monitoring of Armenia have made a correction to their earlier statement. Citing the twitter page of the PACE, following the February 6 developments at the National Assembly of Armenia, Co-rapporteurs Andrej Šircelj and Kimmo Kiljunen said, "We were informed that the so-called "package" of amendments has been withdrawn from the agenda of the parliament. We nonetheless encourage the Armenian authorities to request the opinion of the Venice Commission on the constitutional amendment".

The earlier statement of the Co-rapporteurs ran as follows,

"The Armenian Parliament decided to hold an extraordinary session on 6 February in order to discuss a series of amendments that would remove the requirement for the Constitutional Court to check the compliance of draft legislation with the Constitution of Armenia. Among other things, this would change the procedure of revision of the Constitution itself. In addition, a constitutional amendment that seems to aim at ending the terms of several members of the current Constitutional Court with immediate effect has been tabled," said the co-rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for the monitoring of Armenia, Andrej Šircelj (Slovenia, EPP/CD) and Kimmo



Kiljunen (Finland, SOC).

These two topics are important, and the proposed changes could have long-term repercussions on the functioning of constitutional institutions. In this context, as well as taking into account some of the questions raised in that respect, we call on the Armenian authorities to request as soon as possible, the opinion of the Venice Commission, the Council of Europe's expert body on constitutional law. We believe that this opinion, which could be adopted very quickly via an urgent procedure, would be valuable to all stakeholders, including the Armenian electorate if a referendum were to be held".

Chief of Armenia's Urban Development Committee arrested over bribery

The head of the Armenian government's Urban Development Committee, Vahagn Vermishyan, was arrested on February 5 for allegedly taking bribes from real estate developers.

The National Security Service (NSS) arrested Vermishyan as well as two other individuals' hours after searching his office. NSS officers confiscated a computer and documents kept there.

In an ensuing statement, the NSS said Vermishyan has admitted receiving five bribes, worth between 1 million drams (\$2,100) and 2.5 million drams each, from private construction firms that were given privileged treatment by various government bodies in return. It said that the kickbacks were channeled into an architectural firm which the official had set up and registered in a friend's name.



According to the NSS, Vermishyan, who has headed the government agency since March 2019, also received \$5,000 in cash and \$4,800 worth of construction materials last October to secure a state award to the unnamed owner of several construction firms. It was not immediately clear whether that businessman was also taken into custody.

The high-profile arrest came nearly four

months after Sarhat Petrosyan, the prominent head of the government's Cadaster Committee, resigned in protest against government policies on urban development. Petrosian hit out at Vermishyan and the previous head of the Urban Development Committee, Avetik Eloyan, after tendering his resignation.

In particular, Petrosian claimed that Eloyan, who now works as an adviser to Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan, has used his position to win lucrative contracts for an architectural firm registered in his brother's name in May 2019.

Avinyan and Vermishyan dismissed those claims at the time. The deputy prime minister also denied that government regulation of urban development in Armenia has "regressed" since the 2018 "Velvet Revolution."

Former tax chief to remain under arrest

Armenia's Court of Appeals on Thursday upheld a lower court's decision to extend the pre-trial detention of former Finance Minister Gagik Khachatryan who is accused abuse of power and misuse of public funds.

Khachatryan, who was a member of former President Serzh Sargsyan's cabinet from 2014-2016, was arrested in late August after a law-enforcement agency claimed to have recovered 800 million drams (\$1.7 million) in "damage inflicted on the state" by him.

Khachatryan's nephew Karen was also arrested and charged at the time. The latter used to run an internal security division of the State Revenue Committee (SRC). The government agency comprising Armenia's tax and customs services was headed by Gagik Khachatryan from 2008-2014.

Both men deny a large-scale "waste" of government funds alleged by the National Security Service (NSS). The NSS claims,

in particular, that as head of the SRC Gagik Khachatryan also hired and registered employees who never reported for work.

While continuing to deny any wrongdoing, the once powerful ex-minister indicated through his lawyer, Yerem Sargsyan, earlier this week that he is ready to compensate the state for the entire damage allegedly caused by his actions.

Sargsian voiced the offer as he appealed



against the latest decision by a district court in Yerevan allowing investigators to hold Khachatryan in detention. He also petitioned the Court of Appeals to free his client on bail. The court rejected both appeals.

Sargsian insisted on Thursday that Khachatryan is in poor health and is not receiving adequate medical aid in prison. He accused law-enforcement bodies of ignoring medical documents certifying Khachatryan's serious health problems. The ex-minister has not attended the latest court hearings on the criminal case.

Throughout his tenure Khachatryan was dogged by corruption allegations, with some Armenian media outlets and opposition figures accusing him of using his position to become one of the country's richest men. They cited his family's extensive business interests, which include one of Armenia's three mobile phone networks, a shopping mall, a car dealership and a luxury watch store in Yerevan.

Khachatryan repeatedly denied ownership of these and other businesses, saying that they belong to his two sons and other relatives.

Former Armenian Security Chief to set up Party



(RFE\RL- Yerevan) - Artur Vanetsyan, the former head of Armenia's most powerful security service, has announced his entry into active politics, saying that he will set up a party to challenge Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government.

In an interview with the editors of nine Armenian newspapers publicized on February 6, Vanetsyan said the party will strive to disprove government claims that the country's former leaders are the main political rivals of the current authorities.

"A very important practice has emerged in Armenia, which is called dividing the society into [pro-government political] whites and [opposition] blacks," he said. "I think that it's a false political agenda that has been brought to our landscape; a political agenda whereby the former rulers are the alternative to the current authorities. I can assure you that there is no such thing."

"There will be no return to the past," added Vanetsyan. "I am someone who will be fighting against a return to the past."

Pashinyan appointed Vanetsyan as director of the National Security Service (NSS), the former Armenian branch of the Soviet KGB, immediately after coming to power in the "Velvet Revolution" of April-May 2018.

Vanetsyan worked as a deputy chief of the

NSS's Yerevan division up until the revolution. He quickly became one of the most influential members of Pashinyan's entourage, overseeing a number of high-profile corruption investigations launched by the new authorities.

Vanetsyan was unexpectedly relieved of his duties in September just a couple of months after being promoted to the rank of NSS general. He criticized Pashinyan's "impulsive" leadership style following his dismissal, triggering a bitter war of words with the premier.

Vanetsyan, 40, claimed in his interview that he himself decided to step down. He said his refusal to "participate in developments unfolding around the Constitutional Court" was one of the main reasons for that decision. He referred to controversial government efforts to replace the court's chairman, Hrayr Tovmasyan, and six other justices.

The former NSS chief also pointed to the latest concerns voiced by Council of Europe officials over the Armenian government's and parliament's standoff with the high court judges. "That is a very serious issue for us also in terms of national security because it relates to our country's international standing," he said.

Pashinyan's public feud with Vanetsyan

was reignited last month by the "Haykakan Zhamanak" newspaper controlled by the prime minister's family. In an extensive article, the paper accused him of organizing a smear campaign against Pashinyan's family allegedly conducted by anti-government media. Hrachya Hakobyan, a pro-government parliamentarian and Pashinyan's brother-in-law, alleged afterwards that Vanetsyan was fired in September because he was plotting a coup.

Pashinyan stated later in January that Armenian security services have thwarted a "hybrid" anti-government conspiracy hatched by current and former officials.

Vanetsyan denounced the "Haykakan Zhamanak" article as slanderous. He went on to call on the ruling Civil Contract party to consider installing a new prime minister.

"A person who attempted a coup d'état should have been placed in an appropriate institution," Vanetsyan told the editors of other publications. "Of course, I did not have such a desire."

Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia's Security Council and a Pashinyan ally, scoffed at Vanetsyan's declared entry into politics later on Thursday. Grigoryan described him as an "echo of the past" who will hardly attract a large following.

Armenia to upgrade Iran border crossing



The Armenian government has secured over 21 million euros (\$23 million) in funding from the European Union and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) for its plans to modernize and expand Armenia's sole border crossing with Iran.

Finance Minister Atom Janjughazian and the head of the EBRD office in Armenia, Dimitri Gvindadze, signed on February 7 agreements to that effect at a ceremony in Yerevan.

In a short statement, the Armenian Finance Ministry said EU grants will make up just over half of the sum needed for the project's implementation. An EBRD loan will presumably pay the rest of the bill.

The statement did not specify when work on the new Armenian-Iranian border facilities, located near the southeastern town of Meghri, will start and be completed.

The Meghri checkpoint processes up to one-third of goods shipped to and from landlocked Armenia.

Also, Iran is a major trading partner of the South Caucasus state. According to Armenian government data, Armenian-Iranian trade rose by 12 percent, to \$409 million, last year despite U.S. sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic.

Armenia has already rebuilt and upgraded in recent years its three border crossings with Georgia, its most important commercial conduit to the outside world. The \$60 million project completed in 2017 was mostly financed by the EU in the form of a loan and a grant.

World Bank's team is in Armenia to discuss business climate reforms agenda

Armenian minister of economy Tigran Khachatryan received member of the World Bank Group's Doing Business reform team Alejandro Espinosa-Wang to discuss the methodological issues of the report, as well as the Bank's support to Armenia's future business climate reforms, the ministry told Noyan Tapan.

The minister thanked for the consulting report that is a useful guideline to address the existing resources to solve the current



issues, as well as to organize future works.

The minister said the Bank's annual as-

essment is important not only in terms of making comparisons with other countries, but also from environment perspective to get a right and real picture on the existing problems, taking into account the respective regulations accepted in the world.

Alejandro Espinosa-Wang thanked the minister for the meeting and productive discussions, and outlined the issues that are on the agenda of this stage.

Big Business Bridge global forum to be held in Armenia

Deputy minister of economy Naira Margaryan met with Director of the Institute of Management Consulting, IMC Armenia, Silva Mesropyan.

IMC Armenia is a member of the International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI).

The meeting aimed at discussing the organization and preparations works of the upcoming Big Business Bridge global forum which will take place in Armenia in May. The Armenian ministry of economy, as an official partner of the event, attaches great importance to the development of con-

sulting institute in Armenia. "Among our priorities is the creation of a favorable ecosystem for business development, and the presence of high-quality and relevant consulting services is one of its most important components. We still have a lot of work to do on this path", the deputy minister said.

Holding the forum in Armenia aims at boosting the consulting service market in the country by enabling the representatives of the consulting field and the business to get acquainted with the mutual cooperation opportunities, the international experience and developments.



On the sidelines of the forum the Asia Pacific Hub Meeting will take place.

ICMCI member states are Austria, Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Russia, US, China, Sweden, Switzerland, etc.

Slovenia notifies it has completed ratification of Armenia-EU Agreement

Slovenia notified the European Council and the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union on 5 February of the completion of the national procedures necessary for the ratification of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan informs.

Twenty EU member states – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Poland, Luxembourg, Denmark, Malta, Romania, United Kingdom, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Croatia, Sweden and Slovenia – have informed the European Council and the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union of the completion of the internal procedures necessary for the ratification of the Agreement.

Belgium and France have also completed domestic procedures necessary for the ratification of the Agreement, but are yet to inform the EU Secretariat.



The Netherlands has also ratified the GEPA at the parliamentary level, but for final ratification it must be signed by the King.

Ryanair launches new Yerevan route to Paphos, Cyprus



Ryanair, Europe's No.1 airline on February 7 announced a new year-round Yerevan route to Paphos, with a twice weekly service commencing in June 2020, as part of Ryanair's Armenia Summer

& Winter 2020 schedules.

Armenian consumers and visitors to Paphos can now book flights between Cyprus and Armenia, flying on the lowest fares.

To celebrate, Ryanair has launched a seat sale with fares available from just €24.99, for travel until the end of April 2020, which must be booked by midnight Sunday (9 Feb), only on the Ryanair.com website.

Ryanair's David O'Brien said: "Ryanair is pleased to further develop direct EU links for Armenia with the announcement of a new year-round route between Yerevan and Paphos in Cyprus, commencing in June, as Ryanair continues to grow traffic, tourism and jobs in Armenia. European tourists and business travellers prefer direct flights with Ryanair, Europe's greenest airline, rather than high emission connecting flights through the polluting hubs of Germany, France and Holland."

Earlier Wizz Air [announced](#) flights between Yerevan and Larnaca.

Armenia taking all measures to prevent the entry of coronavirus

All necessary measures are being taken to prevent the entry of coronavirus into Armenia from the moment of crossing the border. Regardless of nationality, all those who have been in China are under daily supervision, the Ministry of Health informs.

All citizens arriving in Armenia are required to fill in questionnaires at check-points. A 14-day supervision is being established over persons without any symptoms.

Those who develop symptoms of the new coronavirus – cough, fever, difficulty breathing – are being immediately hospital-

ized and isolated, undergoing appropriate examination and treatment.



As for laboratory tests, it is provided free of charge to patients who meet the standard defined by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Taking into account the specificity of the laboratory examination (targeted use of control materials), the sampling is carried out in a phased manner, providing simultaneous sampling of several patients.

In order not to cause unnecessary panic, as well as to avoid hindering the work of professionals, the Ministry urges all to refrain from spreading unsubstantiated information, follow the official news feed only and call the Ministry of Health hotline at 8003 or in case of questions call the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention at 010 5506.

“Democracy in Armenia is irreversible.”- PM Nikol Pashinyan addresses the extraordinary session of the National Assembly

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan made a speech at the extraordinary session of the National Assembly, which discussed the proposed draft amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.

The Prime Minister stated in his remarks: The applicable Constitution of the Republic of Armenia provides for a model of the Constitutional Court that is widely regarded by international experts as balanced. The essence of this model is as follows: Candidates for three Constitutional Court judges are nominated by the President of the Republic, the Government, the General Assembly of Judges, the election is made by the National Assembly, and the Constitutional Court becomes the upper instance for balancing between the three branches of power. At the same time, the new constitution has two important nuances.

Unlike the former Constitution, the RA President in office cannot be a member of any party, judges cannot be partisans either, and given the fact that the Speaker of the National Assembly has been deprived of the right or is not entitled to nominate a judge for the Constitutional Court, we can state that the risks of politicization of the Constitutional Court are mitigated as much as possible in the applicable Constitution.

The risks for the Constitutional Court Chairman to exercise pressure on the Constitutional Court are also mitigated, because unlike the previous one, the Constitutional Court Chairman is elected for a six-year term, not for life. In addition, a CC judge may be elected president of the court only once. In addition, unlike the previous Constitution, the President of the Constitutional Court is elected by the judges of the Constitutional Court and not by the National Assembly. In addition, the abnormal practice where the same person could be a member of the Constitutional Court for 40 years has also been eliminated. This is an abnormal practice, because when any president or prime minister remains in office for 30 or 35 years, we consider it a monopoly, dictatorship, but we deem it quite natural when the same person is a member or the chairman of the Constitutional Court for 35 years.

Under the new Constitution, the term of office of a judge of the Constitutional Court is 12 years. At the same time, the same person may be elected as a judge of the Constitutional Court only once. This is how the Constitutional Court is described in our Constitution at the moment. And this model, also with the encouragement and support of international experts, was chosen and introduced as a result of the recording and analysis of constitutional problems recorded in the history of the Third Republic, because *de facto* and *de jure* the Constitutional Court has become an advocate of electoral fraud and illegal power in the Third Republic of Armenia.



In the 1996, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013 presidential elections, the Constitutional Court acted as an instrument that prevented the people from exercising their right to form a government in the country. The Constitutional Court made it clear that the citizens could not form a government in the country because it contradicted the conventional restraint of the sanction presupposition of a particular part of the case law. Then the members and the Chairman of the Constitutional Court wrote books on the need to conventionally impose sanctions on a particular part of the precedent logic of case law; they kept reading lectures, defending doctoral theses. But they could not answer a simple question of the people: ballot stuffing, dead souls coming to the polls, bribery, beatings, threats to get fired, total control of the TV.

Therefore, in order to leave the burden of these cruel and unanswered questions in the past, to turn a new chapter in the constitutional law and history of our Constitutional Court, the new Constitution chose the balanced and logical model that I spoke about at the beginning and about which many words of encouragement and gratitude structures and experts. Let us call this model the Constitutional Court of Our Dream.

But now I have to ask a question that may seem weary in the light of what I have said from this podium because what I said is envisaged in the currently applicable Constitution. So, do we have that constitutional court of our dream today, I mean a balanced constitutional court? The answer is “No.”

Okay, we have been in a transition stage from the semi-presidential system to the parliamentary system during this period, maybe we just have not managed to have the Constitutional Court of Our Dream. When will we have one that will not be under the banner of a political grouping? Will we have such a constitutional court after all?

Yes, we will, but, attention, in 2035 at the earliest, if things keep going like this, if nothing changes in our country, just because as they wrote the transitional provisions of the currently applicable Constitution, the RPA officials formulated it the way to let the notorious constitutional court continue in office for as long as possible.

In fact, the former Republican government

officials said the following: True, we have found the model of the Constitutional Court of Our Dream, where the Constitutional Court judge shall remain in office for 12 years, but we do not diminish the powers of the members of the old Constitutional Court, let them be members of the Constitutional Court as required by the Constitutions of 1995 or 2005.

As a result, we have two Constitutional Court members appointed by Levon Ter-Petrosyan, whose term of office expires in 2026 and 2029 respectively, two CC members appointed by Serzh Sargsyan, whose term of office expires in 2021 and 2037, one member nominated by Hovik Abrahamyan and elected by the National Assembly, whose term expires in 2027, another CC member nominated by Galust Sahakyan and elected by the National Assembly whose term of office expires in 2031 and one CC member nominated by Ara Babloyan and elected by the National Assembly whose term expires in 2035. And although the incumbent Constitution stipulates a 12-year term of office for CC members, the overwhelming majority of members of the old constitutional court will serve much longer, sometimes three times longer than stipulated in the applicable Constitution.

A separate case is that of the Chairman of the Constitutional Court. Although the current Constitution stipulates that the Chairman of the Constitutional Court should be in office for 6 years, the incumbent CC Chairman will serve for 17 years until 2035. The case of incumbent CC Chairman Hrayr Tovmasyan is a separate story that needs a separate investigation.

Being one of the authors of the text of the current constitution, or rather Serzh Sargsyan's trusted man in the editorial group and the *de facto* leader of the process; he did his best to adapt the text of the Constitution to his own plans. In essence, a deal was made between Serzh Sargsyan and Hrayr Tovmasyan with the following logic. Should Hrayr Tovmasyan conceive a text of the constitution that would give Serzh Sargsyan the opportunity to serve for life, then that very text should give Hrayr Tovmasyan the opportunity to serve as CC Chairman for life in spite of the Constitution itself.

By the way, Hrayr Tovmasyan did not reduce the term of office of the members of the old Constitutional Court, that is, he gave them the opportunity to serve more than the term prescribed by the new constitution for his own interests, because he had to serve in the old Constitutional Court until the age of 65, or for some members until the age of 70, because he originally intended that a CC member should be elected in the same way as he was given the opportunity.

He was elected to the Constitutional Court on March 2, 2018 though he knew that after some 37 days the procedure for being elected

page 8

to the CC would be completely changed. NA Speaker Ara Babloyan nominated him for CC candidate, although he knew that only 37 days later the NA Speaker would be deprived of the right to nominate a member of the Constitutional Court, he was elected to the Constitutional Court for 17 years, though he knew that 37 days after his election the term of office of judges was to be 12 years.

To this end, Hrayr Tovmasyan ensured that, despite the existence of a completely new description of the Constitutional Court, in the current Constitution, the old members of the Constitutional Court would continue to serve because if their term of office were reduced, Hrayr Tovmasyan could not be elected to the CC for 17 years.

The same is true for the CC Chairman. Hrayr Tovmasyan was elected Chairman of the Constitutional Court on March 21, 2018 in the National Assembly, although he knew that only 19 days later the National Assembly would be deprived of its power to elect the Chairman of the Constitutional Court. Hrayr Tovmasyan was nominated for CC chairmanship though he knew that only 19 days after NA Speaker would be deprived of his power to nominate a CC Chairman, where it is written that the CC Chairman is elected by the Constitutional Court for a term of six years, the same person may not be elected President of the Constitutional Court more than once.

And now, to have such a constitutional court as is stipulated in the Constitution, the Armenian people have to wait until 2035, because Hrayr Tovmasyan, with the help of his party, the Republican Party, has secured the seat of CC Chairman until 2035, contrary to the text of the Constitution. I do not want to break anyone's presumption of innocence, but the Republicans seem to have breached not only logic and morality on this path, but also the Criminal Code.

The problem is that the term of office of former President of the Constitutional Court Gagik Harutyunyan would expire on March 25, 2018. If he had continued in office until the end of his term, then Hrayr Tovmasyan would not have been elected to CC chairmanship for 17 years by the National Assembly.

And to make this possible, they persuaded Gagik Harutyunyan, who had already been granted the status of Supreme Judicial Council Chairman, to tender his resignation in early March, 20 days before his term expired, so that Hrayr Tovmasyan could be elected to the Constitutional Court for life at March 20 National Assembly session, which was the last regular session of the National Assembly before the new Constitution came into force.

Gagik Harutyunyan submits his resignation on March 5, 2018, but the staff of the National Assembly understands that if Gagik Harutyunyan resigns on March 5, there would be procedural obstacles that could make it impossible for Hrayr Tovmasyan to be elected CC Chairman for 17 years on March 20, 2018 at the regular session of the National Assem-

bly. Therefore, according to published data, they resort to fraud and register Gagik Harutyunyan's resignation on March 2, allowing official falsification.

A criminal case has been instituted in this Special Investigation Service and my political assessment is unanimous. With this fraud and this whole story, the embezzlement of power has been allowed.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to state that due to a number of constitutional manipulations, the incumbent Constitutional Court and its Chairman have appropriated the power of the people of the Republic of Armenia. I already talked about its first episode. We are talking about Article 213 of the incumbent Constitution, which allowed the old Constitutional Court to continue in office under the new Constitution and in spite of the Constitutional Court described in the new Constitution.

But there is another, no less important episode. Hrayr Tovmasyan has been given more authority over the Constitutional Court than the people of the Republic of Armenia, who is the highest holder of power in our country, at least in the constitutional text. The problem is that under the current regulation, the constitution cannot be amended without the permission of the Constitutional Court. That is, the people of the Republic of Armenia may wish to change anything in the constitution, but the Constitutional Court will not allow it, considering it to be unconstitutional. At the same time, no one can dispute this position of the Constitutional Court.

That is, the people of Armenia may wish to deprive Hrayr Tovmasyan of his unlawful status of CC Chairman, but the Constitutional Court will not allow it, considering it unconstitutional. That is to say, due to the efforts of Hrayr Tovmasyan and the RPA, an entity has emerged in our country, which is above the people and that subject is the Constitutional Court. This is a cruel example of the usurpation of power. Absurd is the conclusion that the Constitutional Court can make irrevocable decisions even on its own status. This is a really scandalous absurdity; how can the Constitutional Court make such decisions about itself?

There are lawyers who argue how come the National Assembly can make a decision on itself, the government can make a decision on itself, and the President, too, can do so. It seems like a powerful argument, but the decisions and laws adopted by the National Assembly can be appealed to the Constitutional Court by several entities, government decisions can be appealed to the Constitutional Court, the Administrative Court, the President's decrees and orders can be appealed to the Constitutional Court, the Administrative Court and the only body whose decisions, including its status, cannot be appealed is the Constitutional Court.

I am not saying that the decisions of the Constitutional Court should be appealed. Let there be atonement. I say that when it comes

to the direct powers of other bodies, moreover the authority of the people, the power of the people, the powers of the Constitutional Court must be highly regulated, predictable and limited by the sovereign right of the people. By the way, there is not even a single country in the world where the Constitutional Court is exercising its constitutional authority without a limit. There is no other such country except Armenia. And the situation that we also have in this regard in the Constitutional Court is a direct threat to democracy, because the most important component of democracy is the mechanism of checks and balances.

In our country, as I mentioned above, the institute of the President, the institute of the Government, the Prime Minister, and the National Assembly, even though the Constitutional Court has no counterbalance and no restraint at all, can and does actually restrict the highest holder of power - the people's authority - including the status of the Constitutional Court. This is a direct and terrible threat to democracy, and such a constitutional court was formed to prevent the development of democracy in Armenia, because the writers of this constitution nevertheless planned that there would be neither democracy nor people's power in Armenia until 2035. Or otherwise, the dog's head is in the Constitutional Court.

The only hope of the former corrupt regime is pinned on Hrayr Tovmasyan and the Constitutional Court. But we will not allow it and we will take another action and today we have come together to launch that action. Today, we must make a decision to resolve this issue with the people, and the National Assembly must decide to hold a national referendum on amending Article 213 of the Constitution.

The amendment of this article should terminate the powers of all members of the Constitutional Court elected in the old manner. This will happen if the citizens of the Republic of Armenia go to the polling station on the day of the referendum and say yes to the proposed changes and to the people's authority. In that case, two newly appointed judges will continue to serve in the Constitutional Court: Arman Dilanyan nominated by the General Assembly of judges and elected by the National Assembly and Vahe Grigoryan nominated by the President and elected by the National Assembly.

After the referendum, the Government of Armenia, the General Assembly of Judges, the President of the Republic will nominate candidates for the Constitutional Court judge, the National Assembly will elect the judges and within a few months we will have a Constitutional Court elected and acting in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, which will elect the President of the Constitutional Court.

Of course, we will set forth a condition before the new Constitutional Court that they should support the adoption of laws and constitutional amendments that balance the oversight powers of the Constitutional Court. And

page 9 ➡

“Democracy in Armenia is irreversible.”...

by the end of this

process, we will have a constitutional court that will not be under the banner of any political force or grouping or official, but will be before the people, the reporting people, the supreme constitutional court, but no higher than the people. The Republic of Armenia, all of us need a constitutional court that will guarantee democracy and the rule of law the Republic of Armenia, and not be a threat to democracy.

Honorable Presidency of the National Assembly, Dear MPs,

Proud Citizens of the Republic of Armenia,

And in the National Assembly and outside its borders there will be many views, discussions, speculations on the decision to hold a referendum. All necessary legal justifications are available in the draft package. I do not want to go into small or big details and I can record the most important from this high podium.

There is no problem in the Republic of Armenia that the people of the Republic of Armenia cannot solve. There is no question in the Republic of Armenia beyond the people's authority. The citizens of the Republic of Armenia are sovereign and competent; they can solve any problem.

By the way, after the non-violent, velvet, popular revolution that took place in spring 2018, there is much talk that the Civil Contract party or the My Step Alliance came to

power in a revolutionary way. This formulation is a result of misunderstanding, because the proud citizens of the Republic of Armenia were the ones to come to power in the Republic of Armenia. We are just people's representatives; we represent the people as envisaged by Article 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.

Yes, we represent the people and have the authority delegated to us by the people, and the Constitutional Court today does not represent the people, it represents the corrupt power of Serzh Sargsyan and it must go away.

And I want to say that all those people who may try to set legal or other obstacles to the free expression of our people's will shall be adequately rebuffed as anti-democratic and anti-state forces. And those who accept the supreme authority of the people will become devotees of shaping the future of Armenia.

Dear compatriots, I would like to address the members of the Constitutional Court with a few words.

Dear Members of the Constitutional Court.

I understand that what I said in this talk is not pleasing for many of you; you may deem some of the episodes offensive. But I mean, I do not tend to offend anyone, I just have to call things by their own name. To say more, if anyone in any part of my speech saw some kind of offence, I apologize. But the realities do not change.

Yes, there is a crisis around the Constitu-

tional Court that contains the threat of becoming a broader crisis, but I want to say that you can solve that crisis yourself, by doing great service to the state and the people, by providing a valuable service.

You, the ones elected under the old procedure, can resign as a member of the Constitutional Court. You can do it today, tomorrow, or you can do it before the President signs the decision on the referendum.

By the way, I would like to say that we have been discussing this issue with the President of the Republic and made sure that he approves the proposed option to resolve the situation through a referendum, regarding which I think he will make a relevant statement. So, dear members of the Constitutional Court, you can resign until the President of the Republic signs this decision and you will be of great service to the Republic of Armenia and its people.

I would also like to say that I am ready to meet with you all, individually, or all of you, to discuss its details. I can ask you to take this step-in person, in your own eyes, and I can offer your support in resolving this situation on behalf of the people.

If you accept the offer, we will go ahead. If this is not acceptable to you, then the question, I am sure, will be resolved by the people of Armenia, the proud citizen of the Republic of Armenia, because the Constitution is for the people and not the people for the Consti-

Caroline Cox: Genocide of Armenians in Baku, Sumgait and Artsakh must be recognized

On Wednesday 5 February 2020, MEP Costas Mavrides (S&D Group, Cyprus) hosted a conference with the title “The forgotten refugees: What Happened to the Armenians of Baku?” in the European Parliament. The conference was co-organized by the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) and the Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the European Union. The keynote speakers were the British humanitarian, Life Peer and former deputy speaker of the House of Lords the Baroness Caroline Cox and eye-witnesses Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte, an American-Armenian author and human rights advocate as well as David Babaev, a lecturer at “Université Libre de Bruxelles”. The latter are both survivors of the Baku pogroms.

Members of the European Parliament, EP advisers, students, representatives of the civil society and missions of various EU member states as well as Belgian citizens who are survivors of Baku pogroms, were present.

In his opening remark, the EAFJD President Kaspar Karampetian welcomed the participants and emphasized the importance of addressing the issue of the anti-Armenian pogroms, in particular in the premises of the house of European democracy. “In



its resolutions of 1990 the European Parliament unequivocally condemned the pogroms perpetrated against the Armenians by the Azerbaijani authorities, namely in Sumgait, Kirovabad and Baku,” stated Karampetian.

MEP Costas Mavrides announced that he had decided to host the event, among other reasons, because of his own experience as a child who had to flee for his life after the Turkish invasion in Northern Cyprus in 1974. He emphasized: “Remembrance is not about revenge but forgetting is unforgivable because it would lead us to the same crimes”.

His Excellency the Ambassador of Armenia Tatoul Markarian reminded that the anti-Armenian massacres in Azerbaijan were the first mass killings and ethnic cleansings in the post-Cold War Europe.

During their testimonies, Ms. Astvatsaturian Turcotte and Mr. Babaev shared their personal stories and what they witnessed as refugees fleeing Baku. “We spent months hid-

ing in our apartment, hoping that the violence against Armenians would end. But it never ended. We left everything behind and fled. We barely escaped but we survived. Many of our neighbors and family friends were not so lucky”, said Astvatsaturian Turcotte.

Babaev underlined that the killings and pogroms in Sumgait and Baku had not come from nowhere and the ground was already fertile. He noted: “These atrocities: violence, intimidation, rape, murder and burning people alive should not stay unpunished.” The Baroness Caroline Cox pointed out that the genocide of Armenians continued in Baku, Sumgait and Nagorno Karabakh-Artsakh and needs to be recognized so that it does not continue with impunity.

The guest speakers stressed that the Azerbaijani authorities still systematically incite and perpetuate Armenophobia as a state policy in Azerbaijan, a policy witnessed by the victims of Baku pogroms. They concluded by acknowledging the important role of the European Union as a soft power promoting dialog, peace and human rights.

The speeches were followed by a lively question and answer session, where the guest-speakers addressed the questions asked among others by Azerbaijani participants.

page 10 ➡

tution.

I would like to emphasize that we are ready to invite the leading international observer organizations - the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the European Union, the CIS, etc. - to observe the referendum, and there is no doubt

that guarantees for the people's free will be created just as it was the case with the 2018 free, fair, transparent democratic elections in Armenia, the results of which were not disputed in the Constitutional Court or ques-

tioned by any party, social or political group. This is the evidence of one thing: Democracy in Armenia has no alternative. Democracy in Armenia is irreversible.

“Democracy in Armenia is irreversible.”...

Trump's Israeli-Palestinian 'Peace Plan' is Recipe for Prolonged War

By Harut Sas-sounian

President Trump unveiled in the White House on January 28 his long-awaited “peace plan” between Israelis and Palestinians. The architect of the plan is the President's son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner.



The “peace plan” had several drawbacks even before it was announced. To begin with, neither Trump nor his son-in-law had any clue about the complexity of the Arab-Israeli conflict. From the start of his Presidency, displaying his ignorance, Trump continuously said that this is an easy problem to resolve. His son-in-law, an Orthodox Jew, is just as ignorant about the conflict in the Middle East. If the problem was so easy to resolve, it would have been solved a long time ago.

Trump's peace plan is nothing but a ploy to distract attention from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's indictment on corruption charges, as well as Trump's impeachment proceedings. A good faith mediator between Israelis and Palestinians must be objective and neutral. Trump is far from fulfilling this basic requirement, not after moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, recognizing the disputed Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and announcing that Syria's Golan Heights, occupied by Israel in the 1967 war, is Israeli territory. These are matters of complicated international law and subject to extensive negotiations. These are the reasons why the conflict has not yet been solved. Only someone who is ignorant of these complexities would opine that this is an easy issue to resolve and come up with a plan that is completely one-sided and meets all of Israel's demands, but none of Palestinians!

The proposed peace plan actually promotes neither the interests of Israelis nor Palestinians. The terms of Trump's plan is dictated by Israel under the guise of preserving its security. It “legitimizes” the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and prolongs their existence. These settlements inside the borders of a future Palestinian

state create a considerable risk to the security of Israeli settlers, continuing the conflict and bloodshed. The proposed Palestinian state is surrounded on all four sides by Israel maintaining total military control over Palestinians. Furthermore, the status of Jerusalem remains unresolved. Israel is supposed to take over the entirety of Jerusalem, restricting Palestine's capital to a village in the outskirts of the city. This is totally unacceptable not only to Palestinians, but all Arabs and Muslims in the world, as well as all those who believe in peaceful settlement through international law.

Trump's peace plan provides a window of four years for negotiations between the two parties. However, right at the bat, the plan places Palestinians in a losing situation depriving them of their sovereign rights in a weak and diminished area, as Israel will shortly declare the Jewish settlements in the West Bank as Israeli territory.

No Palestinian leader attended the January 28 White House ceremony. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas rejected the “deal of the century,” calling it the “slap of the century.” He also refused to accept the \$50 billion investment plan offered by the White House. Abbas said, “Trump, Jerusalem is not for sale. Our rights are not for sale.” Out of 22 Arab States, only the Ambassadors of Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates attended the White House ceremony.

On February 1, the foreign ministers of the Arab League's member states unanimously adopted a resolution rejecting the Trump Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, stating that “it does not satisfy the minimum of the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people.”

In a rare sign of unity, Abbas met last Tuesday with the leaders of Hamas, Palestine Liberation Organization and Islamic Jihad to form a common stand against Trump's peace plan. If anything, this peace plan has served to unite the diverse and often conflicting Palestinian groups.

At the conclusion of the White House ceremony last week, Mosques in the West Bank and East Jerusalem began broadcasting a verse from the Koran that warns, “Do not obey the disbelievers and the hypocrites.”

Twelve Democratic Senators signed a

joint letter to the White House criticizing the peace plan as “one-sided [and] not a legitimate attempt to advance peace. It is a recipe for renewed division and conflict in the region.” All Democratic Presidential candidates objected to Trump's peace plan, criticizing it as being a “unilateral move” leaving out the Palestinians. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter also denounced the peace plan, noting, “The unilateral annexation to Israel of a large piece of the occupied Palestinian territories offers the Palestinians fragmented statehood, without control of their borders.... The plan violates the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders....”

The peace plan is actually contrary to Israel's national interests, according to many American Jews and Israelis who were harshly critical of Trump's plan. Israel's leaders do not seem to understand that the more they antagonize the Palestinians, the more they prolong the hostilities and continue to live under a state of war and terror!

“Peace Now,” Israel's largest and longest-standing movement advocating for peace through public pressure, announced on its website that Trump's peace plan “not only neglects to advance peace, but also has the potential to severely harm prospects for a genuine peace plan for both parties.”

The American Jewish liberal advocacy group “J Street” denounced the peace deal as having “zero chance of serving as the basis for renewed diplomacy.... It was the logical culmination of repeated bad-faith steps this administration has taken to validate the agenda of the Israeli right.”

The Jewish-led “Americans for Peace Now” declared the peace plan “a recipe for disaster, for annexation, for the perpetuation of Israel's occupation of the West Bank, for the perpetuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, [and] for misery and bloodshed.”

Trump's peace plan will hopefully never see the light of day. Both Israelis and Palestinians should denounce violence and sit at the negotiating table to find a peaceful solution to their long-standing conflict. They should both avoid the intervention of mediators who are more interested in their own self-interests than the interests of Arabs or Israelis!

Behind the Scenes with President Reagan

Ken Khachigian: The Armenian who wrote speeches for Nixon and Reagan

Presidential speech writer Ken Khachigian was a guest at the Men's Forum of St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church in Pasadena on January 30, Massis Post reports.

During a lecture titled "Behind the Scenes with President Reagan," Mr. Khachigian said that he was not a speech writer, rather a speech collaborator, as the drafts that he presented to the President were edited before a final draft was prepared.

He said that his involvement with politics and political campaigns had started with a letter sent to Presidential candidate Richard Nixon in 1967, requesting to volunteer in his campaign, and the rest is history. His experience working for Mr. Nixon then led to his career work in 9 presidential campaigns. He has served in the White House



for 3 U.S. Presidents and was instrumental in guiding George Deukmejian to victory as Governor of the State of California.

One of Mr. Khachigian's most memorable achievements, as a chief speech writer, senior political adviser, and special consultant to President Reagan, was the "Holocaust Proclamation," signed by the President on April 22, 1981. It says, "Like the Genocide of the Armenians before it, and the Genocide of the Cambodians which followed it – and the too many other such persecutions of too many other people – the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten."

Mr. Khachigian admitted that he had cleared this speech with two senior members of the National Security Agency before presenting it to the President. Such measures were necessary, he noted, to make sure that there were no international political repercussions harmful to the United States.

In the course of his professional work with President Reagan, Mr. Khachigian was a frequent visitor of Camp David. He also once visited the President's famous Santa Barbara ranch, which President Reagan used for rest and relaxation.

During the question and answer session that followed the lecture, Mr. Khachigian anticipated one question raised by a member of the audience and answered right away, saying; no, I was not the author of the famous line "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall."

'Rolls-Royce' designed by Armenian businessman to be auctioned off

A car designed by an Armenian tycoon which was then rejected by Rolls-Royce is expected to fetch £30,000 at auction, The Daily Mail reports.

Nubar Gulbenkian, who was known for his off-the-cuff nature, designed the 1947 Silver Wraith and then approached Rolls-Royce with the design.

The businessman's idea was rejected, so he went directly to Rolls-Royce coach builders Hoopers and commissioned them to build it.

The 73-year-old car has unusual bars across the head lights, a curved body and a striking square windscreen. Even the businessman himself admitted that he was unsure about the finished product.

Speaking in 1965, he said: "I felt that a modern car should be streamlined, curved and look like it had been designed by someone who had never seen horse drawn carriages and had been presented for the very first time with the task of building a body around an internal combustion engine."



"Rolls-Royce were less than enthusiastic about the way I discarded their beautiful bonnet and I am sorry to say that the effect I achieved, while certainly striking and distinctive, was not an unmitigated success," he added.

Gulbenkian moved to the UK at just a few weeks old and was educated at Harrow and then Cambridge University.

During WWI he organized an underground network to repatriate British airman who became stranded in France.

He was later left £2.5m in his late father's will and gained further wealth through his

own oil dealings.

The car itself is one of many Gulbenkian had made and has recently undergone significant restoration costing around £200,000.

It has been given a new ash frame and comprehensive fabrication work but still requires a whole new interior.

The current owner is not in a position to complete the work and has offered the vehicle for sale through auctioneers Historics of Iwer, Buckinghamshire.

They are expecting bids of around £30,000 for it.

Stewart Banks, of Historics said: "We are honoured to be offering this hugely important car for sale so the restoration can be completed and it can be seen and driven in all its original glory."

The motor is being sold alongside an enormous bundle of paperwork documenting its long and fascinating history. The sale takes place on March 7.

UNWTO: Armenia among world's fastest growing tourism destinations

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) lists Armenia among the 20 fastest growing tourism destinations in the world, The Independent reports.

According to UNWTO, France remained the most-visited country with more than 90 million visitors, followed by Spain's 83.8 million in 2019.

But the most interesting stats related to the countries that saw the highest jump in visitor numbers year-on-year.

Top of the pack was Myanmar, which saw a 40.2 per cent increase in visitors, followed by Puerto Rico (31.2 per cent) and Iran (27.9 per cent), although this last is likely to suffer a drop in 2020 given the current political climate.

Winter sun destinations previously hit



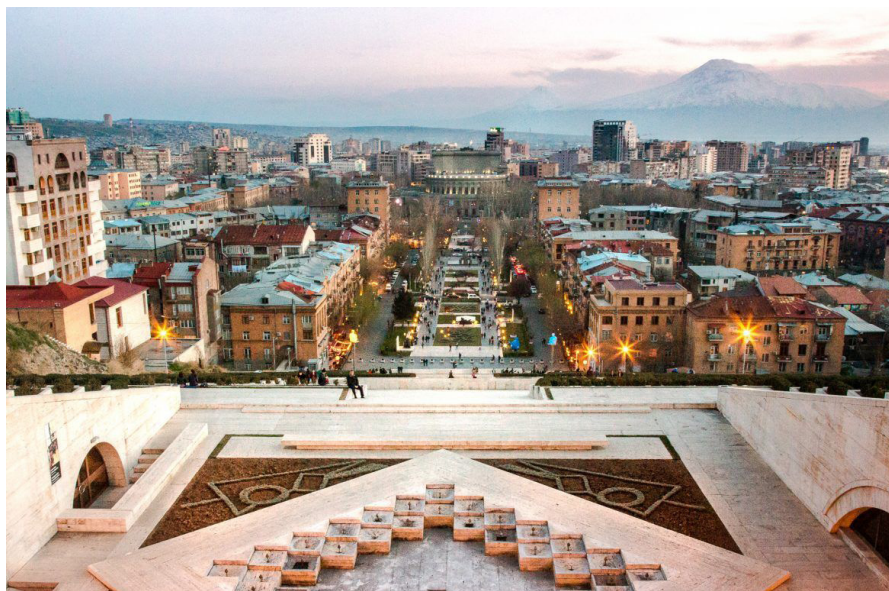
by terror attacks also saw a comeback last year, with Egypt seeing a 21.1 per cent increase in visitor numbers, Turkey a 14 per cent rise, and Tunisia up 13.6 per cent.

The Caribbean also saw a return to favor having recovered from the devastating effects of Hurricane Irma in 2017 – visits to Anguilla, St Maarten, Dominica and the US Virgin Islands all rose significantly.

Sri Lanka experienced an 18 per cent drop in tourist numbers, due in large part to the terror attacks over Easter. Hong Kong saw an 18.8 per cent decrease following protests and social unrest.

Featured in the list of fastest growing countries for tourism are Myanmar (40.2%), Puerto Rico (31.2%), Iran (27.9%), Uzbekistan (27.3%), Montenegro (21.4%), Egypt (21.1%), Vietnam (16.2%), Philippines (15.1%), Maldives (14.9%), Bahamas (14.6%), Qatar (14.5%), Armenia (14.4%), South Korea (14.4%), Turkey (14.0%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (13.7%), Tunisia 13.6%), Laos (11.5%), Azerbaijan (11.4%), Israel (10.5%), Lithuania (10.1%) and Kazakhstan (10.0%).

Yerevan on National Geographic's 2020 travel Cool List



The National Geographic has put Armenia's capital Yerevan on its 2020 Cool List of destinations worth traveling to.

It notes that new routes are opening up to the Armenian capital, one of the world's oldest continually inhabited cities.

"In recent years, radical adventure tour company The Travel Scientists has offered one of the most impractical ways to get to

the Silk Road-era city — driving a second-hand banger all the way there from Istanbul on its Caucasian Challenge. Thankfully, 2020 will welcome another option: simply flying from Italy," the National Geographic notes.

Launched in January, Ryanair's new routes mean that the Armenian capital can be reached from London for under £100 with that one simple connection — and there's chatter that fellow budget carrier Wizz Air will soon follow suit with a rival route.

The journal informs that Black Tomato and G Adventures have launched tours, both focusing not only on Yerevan's rich past, but also its distinctive cuisine and millennia-old wine traditions, capitalising on a growing interest in the Silk Road.

The list also includes Namibia, Baja California, Lebanon, Cumbria, Slovenia, Wales, Panama, Brisbane, Salt Lake City, Lyon, Ethiopia, Cairo, Los Angeles, Puerto Rico, Pakistan, Galway, Vietnam, Tel Aviv and Rio de Janeiro.

Armenia celebrates the Feast of St. Sarkis, Patron of Love and Youth

By the order of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, the Feast of St. Sarkis the Captain and his soldiers-companions is proclaimed day of blessing of the youth.

Captain St. Sarkis is one of the most beloved saints among the Armenian nation. Together with his 14 soldiers-companions he was martyred for the sake of Christian faith.

During the period of reign of the king Kōstandianos the Great (285-337) St. Sarkis, being very courageous, was appointed the prince and General in chief of the region of Cappadocia bordering Armenia. When during the period of reign of the king Julianos the Betrayer (360-363) the persecutions against Christians started by God's will St. Sarkis and his only son – Martyros, came to live in Armenia, and the Armenian king Tiran, grandson of Tiridates, received them very well. From Armenia St. Sarkis and his son went to Persia, and started serving in the army of the Persian king Shapouh as the captain of regiments.

Learning that Sarkis was Christian the king Shapouh ordered him to worship the fire and offer sacrifice to the heathen gods. But the captain immediately refused to obey the order saying, "We should worship one God – the Holy Trinity, which has created the earth and the heaven. Whereas fire or idols are not gods and the human being may destroy them."

After these words the saint destroyed the temple. The annoyed crowd fell on the saint and his son. First the son of the saint was martyred. The saint was put into prison and remaining unshaken in his faith was beheaded. After the martyrdom of the saint light appeared over his body. 14 soldiers-companions of the saint also were



martyred for the sake of Christian faith.

For the Armenian nation St. Sarkis is one of the most beloved. It isn't casual that St. Mesrop Mashtots brought the relics of the saint to the village Karbi (Ashtarak Region) and the Church of St. Sarkis was built over his relics.

St. Sarkis, Patron of Youth and love

In Armenia it is accepted to celebrate the Feast of St. Sarkis not only according to church rites and prayer, but also according to various folk traditions. St. Sarkis the Captain is the patron of youth. Many miracles happen thanks to his intercession. On the day of the feast young people pray the saint asking him to make their prayers audible to God. St. Sarkis is the realizer of the love longings.

There are many legends about St. Sarkis and one of them is the following.

Poor bard Gharib loved Shah-Sanam who was the daughter of a very rich man. Shah-Sanam loved him, too, but because the bard was poor, the Shah-Sanam's father was against their marriage as he wished to marry his daughter to a rich man.

Bard Gharib decided to go to foreign countries to earn money and to accumulate wealth. But before leaving for foreign countries bard Gharib asked Shah-Sanam to promise to wait for him for seven years providing that if he were late even for one day the young woman might marry accord-

ing to her father's will.

That seven-year-period was a very difficult period for bard Gharib. He couldn't see his beloved, had no news of her, and nevertheless, he wasn't disappointed and waited for the time when they would meet, make up family and live together all their life.

Working day and night for seven years bard Gharib accumulated

wealth and started his way back to the motherland. However, on his way back he faced many difficulties and hardships. It seemed to him that he wouldn't be able to reach his beloved. So, he prayed with honest heart and righteous mind for the help of St. Sarkis asking.

Listening the prayer of the bard St. Sarkis immediately appeared sitting on his white horse, seated him on the back of the horse and in one moment brought him to Shah-Sanam. Seeing the bard's strong will, their sincere and deep love and devotion, Shah-Sanam's father blessed their union.

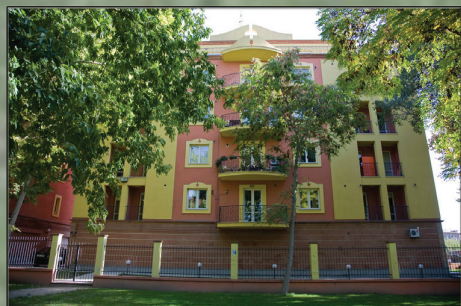
Fast of Catechumens established by St. Gregory the Illuminator precedes the feast. On the eve of the feast, in the evening, young people eat salty cookies and relate the appearance of their future bride or bridegroom in their dream to eating of the salty cookie. Also, on the night preceding the feast of St. Sarkis the faithful people place a tray full of gruel before the door believing that while passing near their door at dawn St. Sarkis will leave his footprint on the gruel symbolizing the fulfillment of their dreams.

People in love present each other cards, flowers or sweets on the occasion of the feast.

Source: Qahana.am

ARMENIA

Yezeguelian Hotel & Residence



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

**In the Center
of Yerevan**



Warm Welcome
24/7 Security
Free Cafe & Bar

All Conveniences
Air Conditioned
Apartments



Kitchen, Refrigerator
Safe, TV, Internet



Modern
Rest Rooms

RESERVATIONS:

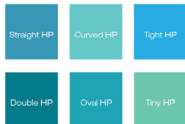
011 374 91 57 01 70
011 374 91 73 91 91

Yezeguelian@aol.com

Paris Office: 34 Avenue des Champs Elysees
Phone: 011 33 1 43 59 66 72
Yerevan Address: 8, Khorenatsi St.

cooltech®

The latest in non-invasive full body contouring.



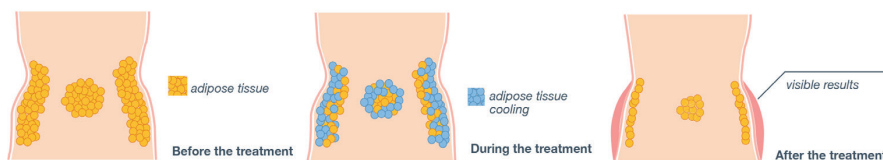
Full body contouring



Vacuum criolipolysis is the new technology for the non-surgical fat reduction:

Very effective!
Pain free!
Safe and easy!

Each procedure 70 min,
30-40 % reduction in treated area
in 2 month



The address: Baghramyan 1st DL, 2-nd building, 2-nd floor.
Call +374 60 536 536. www.cityspa.am



AZAD

AZAD Pharma AG AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Switzerland

AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Durachweg 15
CH-8200 Schaffhausen
Phone No: +41 52 632 09 10
Fax: +41 52 632 09 11

AZAD Pharma AG

Bahnhofstrasse 9
CH-3125 Toffen
Phone No: +41 31 810 40 10
Fax: +41 31 810 40 11

Canada

AZAD Fine Chemicals Ltd.

1895 - 55th Avenue
Dorval, Qc H9P 1G9
Phone No: +1 514 636 19 99
Fax: +1 514 636 75 55

Atlit Inc.

16 Westminster Ave.,
Suite 306A
Montreal, Qc H4X 1Z1
Phone No: +1 514 369 25 91
Fax: +1 514 369 81 67

China

Hangzhou Representative Office of AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Room 801-087, Lixin Plaza,
#102 Moganshan Road
310051 -Hangzhou China

Phone +86-571-8761 5336
Mobile +86-153-5505-0903
Fax: +86-571- 8895 8963

Germany

AZAD Pharma GmbH

Fritz-Reichle-Ring 6a
DE-78315 Radolfzell
Phone No: +49 7732 939101510
Fax: +49 7732 9391016

Armenia

AZAD Pharmaceuticals LLC

Vanahovit 8, Proshian
Ashtarak Ave., Kotayk Marz
Phone No: +374 93 40 40 62
Fax: +374 93 40 34 40



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

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

Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993

President of the NT Media Holding:
TIGRAN HARUTYUNYAN
Editor-in-Chief of the Media Holding:
GAYANEH ARAKELYAN
Director of the weekly:
MARINA HARUTYUNYAN
Chief Correspondent: **GOURGEN KHAZHAKIAN**
Computer Design: **Ashot Khalapyan**
Համարի թող. պատ.՝ Մ.Հարությունյան

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

E-mail: contact@nt.am
URL: www.nt.am

Address in Armenia:
28 Isahakian Str., Yerevan, 0009, RA
Tel.: (+374 60) 35-11-22 (+374 60) 35-11-24

Address in France: Masion De L'Armenie,
Paris 17e-95, Bld. Gouvion, France
Tel.: (+33) 01 43 59 66 72

Address in USA: 1146 E. Lexington Dr., #112,
Glendale, CA, USA, 91206
Tel.: +1 (818) 646 10 72

Հասցե՝ Խահակյան 28, Երևան, ՀՀ, 0009