

## Armenian Parliament allows prosecution of prominent Ex-General



Armenia’s parliament on June 19 allowed law-enforcement authorities to prosecute one of its members, retired General Manvel Grigoryan, and to keep him in pre-trial detention on charges of illegal arms possession and embezzlement.

Grigoryan, who represents former President Serzh Sargsyan’s Republican Party (HHK) in the parliament, was arrested on Saturday immediately after security forces raided his expensive properties in and around the town of Echmiadzin. They claimed

to have found illegally acquired weapons and stockpiles of food and other supplies meant for Armenian army soldiers.

The HHK initially condemned Grigoryan’s arrest as politically motivated and demanded his release. But it swiftly changed its stance after the National Security Service (NSS) released on Sunday an extremely embarrassing video of searches conducted in the ex-general’s villas.

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## Pashinyan, Putin meet in Moscow

On a working visit to Russia, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin.

The leaders of the two countries discussed issues on the agenda of cooperation in bilateral and multi-lateral formats.

“We have seen each other not so long ago.. However, given the strategic nature of our relations and the wide variety of areas of cooperation, I think our meetings are always helpful. Thank you for coming. Now, we can talk about bilateral affairs as part of this international sporting event,” Vladimir Putin said as he welcomed the Armenian PM.

“The only thing I would like to say at the outset is that Russia is Armenia’s top trading partner. We are the number one partner in trade and economic relations. Last year, our trade grew by more than 30 percent, and this year is



also showing strong growth,” he added.

Putin noted that Armenia’s accession to the EAEU had a positive effect and voiced hope the countries would continue to move in that direction.

Nikol Pashinyan first congratulated Putin on the recent national holiday, Russia Day, as well as the World Cup,

“We met for the first time a month ago, and the fact that we

are meeting again 30 days later, I think, is indicative of the special relations between Armenia and Russia. I think that this also shows that the statements made a month ago were not just fully justified, but are now being acted on,” Pashinyan said.

“Of course, Armenia and Russia enjoy a special relationship. I am confident that relations will continue to be special, and will become even more special. Of

course, it is very important for us, Armenia and the government of Armenia, which represents the people of Armenia, to enjoy such a reception in Russia, both in Sochi and Moscow,” he added.

“Of course, this underscores the atmosphere which we managed to create over these months. And I think that everyone – both in Armenia and Russia – is happy with this progress. Also, everyone is hopeful that progress in relations will be facilitated by respect between the two peoples, the two states and by respect for the interests and the sovereignty of our respective countries. It is very important,” the Armenian PM stressed.

“We hope for a positive and constructive dialogue,” Pashinyan stated.

Nikol Pashinyan has been invited to Moscow to attend the opening ceremony of the 2018 FIFA World Cup.



## OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs issue statement after Armenia visit

The Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stephane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America) together with the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk, met with Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan, and President Armen Sarkissian during an introductory visit to Yerevan on 12-14 June.

The Co-Chairs and the Armenian officials reviewed the status of negotiations and discussed next steps to move the process for-

ward, including a ministerial meeting in the near future. They also exchanged views on the current situation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and the line of contact, underscoring the importance of maintaining a constructive environment.†

The Co-Chairs reiterated their commitment to helping the sides find a peaceful solution to the conflict based on the core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, including the non-use or threat of force, territorial integrity, and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

Armenian officials expressed their support for the work of the OSCE Minsk Group and



Personal Representative and their willingness to continue working productively under the auspices of the Co-Chairs.



## Armenian Court frees radical oppositionist

Armenia's Court of Appeals on June 13 freed Zhirayr Sefilian, a radical opposition figure who was arrested two years ago on charges of plotting an armed revolt against the government.

It also ordered the release from custody of six other men who were tried together with Sefilian and convicted by a lower court earlier this year.

The Court of Appeals refused to acquit any of the defendants. It only shortened their prison sentences and granted them parole. In particular, Sefilian's jail term was reduced from 10.5 to 5.5 years.

The court agreed to free the Lebanese-born leader of the Founding Parliament movement after 12 Armenian parliamentarians guaranteed in writing his "proper behavior" and cooperation with judicial and law-enforcement authorities. Each of the lawmakers representing the Tsarukyan Bloc also had to post bail worth 500,000 drams (just over \$1,000).

Sefilian was charged with forming an armed group to attack "strategic" facilities, including a military base just outside Yerevan. He also allegedly planned to organize riots in Yerevan during



the April 2015 commemorations of the centenary of the Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey.

Sefilian and all but one of the other defendants denied these accusations as politically motivated during their high-profile trial that ended in March. Their lawyers appealed against the resulting guilty verdicts.

Sefilian, 51, was arrested in June 2016 less than a month before three dozen members and supporters of Founding Parliament seized a police compound in Yerevan's Erebuni district to demand his release and then President Serzh Sargsyan's resignation. The

gunmen laid down their weapons after a two-week standoff with security forces which left three police officers dead. They are now standing three separate trials.

Over the past week at least five of the jailed militants have been set freed pending the outcome of those trials. These developments are widely attributed to the recent change of the country's government which followed weeks of massive street protests led by Nikol Pashinyan. The latter was elected Armenia's prime minister on May 8.

District courts in Yerevan began releasing the militants on June 6

the day after they and the other arrested members of the armed group issued a statement voicing support for Pashinyan's government. They also said that they are renouncing violent methods of political struggle.

The statement sharply contrasted with harsh criticism of Pashinyan voiced by the armed group's leader Varuzhan Avetisyan and Sefilian in late May. In a joint statement, they warned Pashinyan that their continued imprisonment could have "severe consequences" for Armenia. The premier rejected "the threats of violence."

A well-known veteran of the 1991-1994 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, Sefilian has been a vocal critic of both Serzh Sargsyan and the previous Armenian president, Robert Kocharyan. In 2006, he was arrested shortly after setting up a union of fellow war veterans opposed to any territorial concessions to Azerbaijan. The authorities claimed that they planned to mount an armed uprising against Kocharyan.

Sefilian was cleared of the coup charge during his subsequent trial. Still, he spent 18 months in prison for illegal arms possession.

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The televised footage caused widespread shock and anger in the country. It showed NSS officers discovering large amounts of underwear, medication and field rations for soldiers provided by the Armenian Defense Ministry as well as other food donated by ordinary Armenians at a sprawling compound in Grigoryan's native village, Arshaluys.

The NSS claimed that he used the canned food to feed tigers, bears and other wild animals kept in his private zoo located inside the compound. It also demonstrated various types of weaponry, including anti-tank guns and rocket-propelled grenades, and ammunition allegedly stashed there.

The HHK called the revelations "outrageous" and said it will not hamper the criminal proceedings. Its parliamentary leader, Vahram Baghdasaryan, explained

on Tuesday that the NSS video "totally changed the situation."

Voting twice in secret ballot, the parliament overwhelmingly sanctioned Grigoryan's arrest and prosecution. Only three members of the 105-seat National Assembly voted against that. Seventy-seven others voted for allowing law-enforcement authorities to keep him behind bars pending investigation.

Prosecutor-General Artur Davtyan assured lawmakers before the votes that there is sufficient evidence to press the criminal charges against the prominent veteran of the 1991-1994 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The vote was also preceded by angry speeches delivered by several parliamentarians. Naira Zohrabyan of the Tsarukyan Bloc charged that Grigoryan is an "ordinary thief" who benefited from "years of lawlessness" at the behest of the Sargsyan administration.

"There are many Manvel Grigoryans in our country and they all must be held accountable," she said.

"This is really a disgrace and blasphemy," said Armen Rustamyan, a leader of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. "We need to seriously think about eliminating consequences of that."

Grigoryan himself refused to show up for the debate on his fate. In an open letter released on Monday, he urged the HHK's parliamentary faction to give the green light to his prosecution. He said he will prove his innocence and "clear my name" during the investigation.

Grigoryan, 61, served as Armenia's deputy defense minister from 2000-2008. He is also the chairman of the Yerkrapah Union of Karabakh war veterans, an organization which was particularly influential in the 1990s and the early 2000s. He was reelected to the parliament on the HHK ticket in 2017.

## Mediators meet new Armenian leaders on Karabakh

Seeking to restart the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process, U.S., Russian and French mediators have held their first talks with Armenia's new leadership in Yerevan.

The three diplomats co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Wednesday more than one month after he swept to power in a wave of mass protests that brought down the country's previous government.

A statement by Pashinyan's office said they discussed steps "to form a favorable atmosphere for advancing the negotiation process." It said they stressed the importance of implementing confidence-building agreements that were reached by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and his former Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan at their last three meetings held in 2016 and 2017.

The agreements called for specific measures to bolster the shaky ceasefire regime along the Karabakh "line of contact" and on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. Those include the deployment of more truce monitors by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Baku has been reluctant to implement these safeguards against deadly fighting, saying that they could cement the status quo.

The statement cited Pashinyan as expressing confidence about his "productive cooperation" with the mediating troika. It gave no other details of his meeting with Andrew Schofer of the United States, Russia's Igor Popov and France's Stephane Visconti. Andrzej Kasprzyk, the longtime head of a small OSCE mission monitoring the ceasefire regime in the Karabakh conflict zone, was also present at the talks.

The mediators met with Armenia's recently appointed Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan on Tuesday. The Armenian Foreign Ministry said they held a detailed discussion on how to end the conflict but did not elaborate.

The Minsk Group co-chairs met with Azer-



*Armenia - Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (R) meets with the U.S., Russian and French co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in Yerevan, 13 June 2018.*

baijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov in Paris on May 15. In a joint statement they said Mammadyarov "expressed Azerbaijan's readiness to resume active negotiations as soon as possible."

Pashinyan has repeatedly called for Karabakh representatives' direct involvement in Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks. Speaking in the Armenian parliament last week, the premier again claimed that he has no mandate to "negotiate on behalf of the Karabakh people." But he said at the same time that he is ready to meet with Aliyev.

Mammadyarov and other Azerbaijani officials have made clear that Baku will not directly negotiate with the "separatist regime" in Karabakh. They maintain that Karabakh is an Azerbaijani territory occupied by Armenia.

Senior Armenian diplomats have indicated that Pashinyan's public statements are not a precondition for resuming peace talks. Deputy Foreign Minister Ruben Rubinyan insisted on Monday that there are "no big differences"

between the new and former Armenian governments' positions on a Karabakh settlement.

Pashinyan has yet to publicly clarify his view on a framework peace accord that has been advanced by U.S., Russian and French mediators for more than a decade. It calls for a phased settlement that would start with the liberation of virtually all seven districts around Karabakh which were fully or partly occupied by Karabakh Armenian forces during the 1991-1994 war. In return, Karabakh's predominantly ethnic Armenian population would determine the territory's internationally recognized status in a future referendum.

Serzh Sargsyan's government said all along that this compromise peace formula is largely acceptable to Yerevan.

Sargsyan and Aliyev pledged to revive the stalled peace process at their last face-to-face meeting held in Geneva in October 2017. Their foreign ministers held what they described as "positive" follow-up talks in December and January.

## Ex-Presidents stripped of Gyumri titles

Gyumri's municipal council voted on June 18 to strip former Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan of the titles of honorary citizens of Armenia's second largest city.

The Gyumri municipality bestowed the title on Kocharyan in 2002 when he was president of the country. It cited his contribution to the reconstruction of the city devastated by a 1988 earthquake.

The reconstruction was mainly financed by Armenian-American philanthropist Kirk

Kerkorian. Hundreds of new apartments were built in Gyumri and provided to local families free of charge in the early 2000s.

Sargsyan became an honorary citizen of Gyumri in 2006. He was Armenia's defense minister at the time.

The motion to revoke Sargsyan's and Kocharyan's titles was put by the Gyumri-based Gala political alliance which was in opposition to Armenia's former government. Gala said that neither ex-president deserved to receive such an honor in the

first place.

The council backed the motion. Its largest faction is led by Mayor Samvel Balasanyan, who has for years been allied to Sargsyan's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK).

The Gyumri council also stripped Sargsyan's brother Levon of the same title. The latter had received it as the founder of a charity that organized cultural events in the city. A local councilor representing Gala argued that participants were charged for being able to take part in those festivals.



## Samvel Babayan freed by high court

(Yerevan – RFE/RL) Samvel Babayan, a retired army general critical of Armenia's former leadership, was set free on June 15 more than six months after being controversially sentenced to six years in prison for illegal arms acquisition and money laundering.

The Court of Cassation, the highest body of criminal justice in the country, overturned the guilty verdict that was upheld by a lower appeals court in February and said the case must be investigated anew. In the meantime, it said, Babayan must be released from custody.

The high court also freed two other men who were tried with Babayan and sentenced to three and two years' imprisonment last November.

The court cited letters from more than a dozen Armenian parliamentarians guaranteeing that Babayan will cooperate with law-enforcement and judicial authorities if set free. Each of those lawmakers also posted bail worth 500,000 drams (just over \$1,000).

Babayan, 52, was the commander of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenian-backed army during and after the 1991-1994 war with Azerbaijan. He was widely regarded as the unrecognized republic's most powerful man at that



time.

Babayan was arrested in 2000 and subsequently sentenced to 14 years in prison for allegedly masterminding a botched attempt on the life of the then Karabakh president, Arkady Ghukasyan. He was set free in 2004.

Babayan criticized the authorities in Yerevan and Stepanakert after returning to Armenia in May 2016 from Russia where he lived for five years.

The once powerful general was again arrested in March 2017 after Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) claimed to have confiscated a surface-to-air rocket system smuggled to the country.

The arrest came about two weeks before Armenia's last parliamentary elections. Babayan unofficially coordinated

the election campaign of the ORO alliance led by former Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan and two other opposition politicians. ORO condemned the criminal case as politically motivated.

Babayan repeatedly denied prosecutors' claims that he promised to pay his longtime associate Sanasar Gabrielyan \$50,000 for the delivery of the shoulder-fired Igla rocket. Gabrielyan, who received the three-year prison sentence, claimed that he wanted to donate the launcher along with its shoulder-fired rockets to the Karabakh army.

Babayan was greeted by several dozen supporters when he emerged from a prison in downtown Yerevan in the afternoon. Speaking to reporters, he said that he was jailed

because former President Serzh Sargsyan sought to prevent ORO from winning any seats in the parliament.

Law-enforcement authorities have until now denied political motives behind the case. They never explained why Babayan would seek to get hold of the rocket designed to shoot down planes and helicopters.

Babayan's release from prison was clearly made possible by the recent change of Armenia's government. The country's new Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has pledged to help free all "political prisoners."

The retired general claimed that Sargsyan's representatives approached him during the massive anti-government demonstrations launched by Pashinyan in April. He said they asked him to call for an end to the protests and promised that he would be freed in return. He said he rejected the offer.

Babayan also said that he has no plans to return to Karabakh. He warned against attempts to "destabilize" the situation there.

The authorities in Stepanakert have faced street protests and even some calls for their resignation in recent weeks.

## Artak Asatryan to replace Gevorg Kostanyan as Armenia's Representative to ECHR



Deputy Minister of Justice Artak Asatryan will replace Gevorg Kostanyan as Armenia's Representative to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

According to a government decision, Armenia's Representative to ECHR shall henceforth be appointed and dismissed by the Prime Minister at the proposal of the Minister of Justice.

According to the decision, an eligible candidate for Representatives to ECHR should have a strong knowledge of Armenia's human rights legislation and international acts, speak English or French.

Gevorg Kostanyan earlier announced his resignation, saying that the new government should have an opportunity to freely present its stance in the European Court and not be restrained by positions expressed earlier.

## Armenian agricultural exports jump in 2018

Armenia's exports of fresh fruits and vegetables have doubled so far this year, with Russia remaining their principal destination, the Ministry of Agriculture said on June 15.

Figures released by the ministry show that they totaled almost 67,300 metric tons as of June 15, compared with 33,820 in the same period of 2017.

The National Statistical Service (NSS) reported earlier that Armenian agricultural exports more than doubled in monetary terms in the first four months of 2018. They fell by as much as 30 percent in 2017, to \$71 mil-

lion, due to poor harvests.

Weather conditions have been more favorable this year. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Armenia has exported 14,752 tons of apricots since the beginning of this year, sharply up from just 26 tons in the year-earlier period.

The ministry figures also show that over 95 percent of the 2018 agricultural exports went to Russia. Armenian exporters enjoy tariff-free access to the Russia because of their country's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

Russian President Vladimir Putin noted rising Armenian exports to Russia when he met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in the Kremlin on Wednesday. Putin attributed that to Armenia's membership in the Russian-led trade bloc.

Pashinyan described his trip to Moscow as "productive" on Friday. "The government and its bodies must work hard so that we fully realize the potential for [greater] fruit and vegetable exports because the Russian market needs that," he told a cabinet meeting in Yerevan.

## Armenia, Iran keen to develop economic relations

Armenian President Armen Sarkissian received on June 15 Iran's Ambassador to Armenia Seid Ali Saghaian.

The President noted that Armenia attaches great importance to the high-level relations built upon centuries-old friendship between the two peoples, which open up perspectives for mutually beneficial cooperation.



The interlocutors agreed that there is a huge unused potential for the development of the Armenian-Iranian economic relations and attached importance to maintaining efforts for its effective utilization.

The parties emphasized the importance of intensification of economic programs and the temporary free trade agreement between Iran and EAEU.

## Armenia Elected to the UN Economic and Social Council

On 13 June, at the elections held during the plenary meeting of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Armenia became member of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for a three-year term starting January 2019.

One of the principal organs of the UN the ECOSOC is responsible for coordinating the economic, social, environmental and related work of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes, the functional

commissions and the regional commissions of the United Nations. The ECOSOC with a membership of 54 countries serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and to the United Nations.

By gaining the seat for the second time (previously served for the term 2004-2006), Armenia is renewing its commitment to support the global efforts to-



wards sustainable development and to contribute on the na-

tional level to the works of the Council.

## More Armenian customs brokers accused of tax fraud

Two more customs brokerage firms operating in Armenia have been accused of evading of millions of dollars in taxes, it emerged on June 15.

The State Revenue Committee (SRC) said its investigators have raided the Yerevan offices of the two private firms, Sargsyan Import and Arm And Man, mainly engaged in commercial cargo

shipments from China, Turkey and other nations. They have confiscated financial documents and summoned "many individuals" for questioning as part of a criminal investigation into of "large-scale" tax evasion," the government agency said in a statement.

"According to preliminary calculations, damage inflicted on the state exceeds 2

billion drams (\$4.1 million)," read the statement. It did not specify whether anyone has been formally charged yet.

Many Armenian companies as well as individual entrepreneurs have traditionally hired brokerage firms to pay import and other duties at the border. Widespread corruption within the national customs service, which is part of the SRC, has





only added to their dependence on such middlemen. Customs officers have long enjoyed discretionary powers to estimate the market value of goods imported from non-Western countries and tax them accordingly.

It was not clear whether the two firms accept the fraud accusations. According to the SRC statement, one of them is controlled by Bagrat Navoyan, a wealthy

businessman who owns a travel agency and a public transport company. Navoyan is also the owner of a major Armenian football club, FC Alashkert.

A similar criminal case was brought late last month against another, larger customs brokerage firm reportedly linked to the former head of the SRC, Vartan Harutiunyan. Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) claimed that the compa-

ny, Norfolk Consulting, has evaded \$7 million in taxes since being set up last summer and obtaining exclusive rights to process imports from China, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey.

Norfolk's executive director, Armen Unanyan, and two chief accountants were arrested on May 27. They all were released from custody on June 5.

In a statement reported by Aysor.am last week, Unanyan admitted to tax evasion and said he has already paid an equivalent of \$3 million to the government. He said he will also compensate the state for the rest of the tax shortfall alleged by the NSS.

A figure close to former Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan, Harutiunyan resigned as head of the SRC shortly after Nikol Pashinyan was elected prime minister on May 8. The new SRC chief, Davit Ananyan, has promised a tougher crackdown on companies and individuals underreporting their earnings.

Ananyan said on May 24 that Armenia's tax revenue will be "substantially higher than planned" this year. It rose by more than 7 percent in 2017.

## Eurasian Union good for Armenian economy, says Russian PM

Membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is one of the factors behind economic growth in Armenia, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said on June 14 during talks with his visiting Armenian counterpart Nikol Pashinyan.

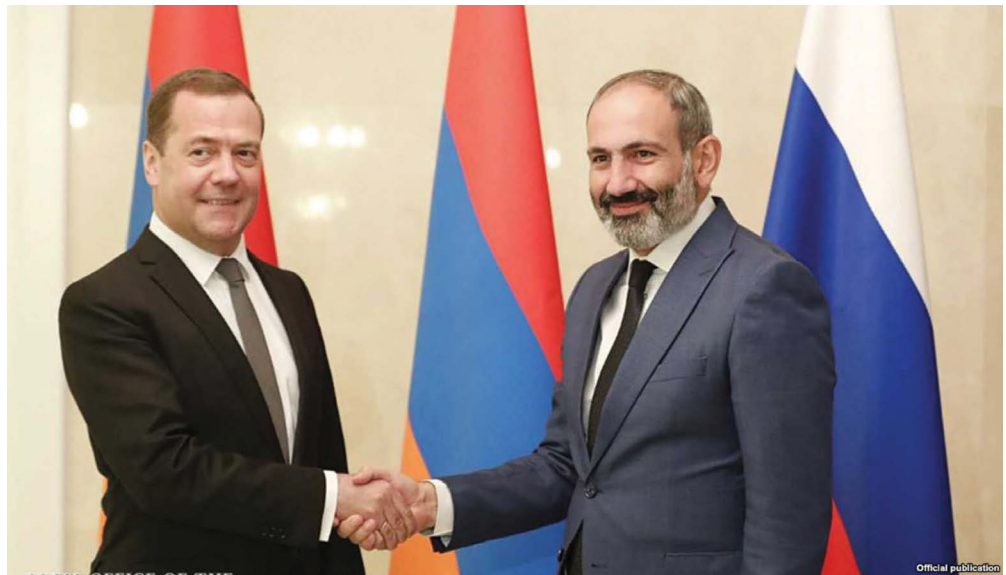
"On the whole our relations are developing steadily and dynamically," Medvedev told Pashinyan at the start of their meeting in Moscow. "This is also connected with the fact that your country's economic development figures have been rather good lately. Our economy is also developing."

"This is the result, among other things, of work done within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union," he said.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin also said Armenia's economy has benefited from being part of the Russian-led trade bloc when he met with Pashinyan on Wednesday. Putin pointed to rising Armenian agricultural exports to Russia.

Pashinyan criticized Armenia's accession to the EEU and even called for its withdrawal from the bloc as recently as last November. He was an opposition parliamentarian at the time.

Pashinyan made clear that he will not pull his country out of the EEU or the



Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) after a protest movement led by him brought down the previous Armenian government in late April.

Pashinyan told Medvedev that his government is keen to make Armenia's membership in the EEU "more effective." "We are certainly ready to work in this direction," he said.

"I think that everything in our relations is now developing very positively ... We

have many common interests," added the Armenian premier.

According to official statistics, the Armenian economy grew by 7.5 percent last year and this growth continued practically unabated in the first quarter of this year.

Russia remained Armenia's number one trading partner in 2017, accounting for about 27 percent of its foreign trade. Armenian exports to Russia rose by almost 45 percent to more than \$541 million.



## Recent News from the Defence Ministry

### In Artsakh...

Armenian Defence Minister **Davit Tonoyan** accompanied Prime Minister **Nikol Pashinyan** in his working visit to the Artsakh Republic on a working visit on June 16, joined Artsakh President **Bako Sahakyan** to visit the Defense Army Headquarters, where a consultation was held.

Artsakh's Defense Minister, Commander-in-Chief of the Defense Army Lieutenant-General **Levon Mnatsakanyan** reported progress in the army building process. The furtherance and strengthening of military cooperation between Armenia and Artsakh, and the use of improved mechanisms for curbing the enemy were discussed during the consultation.

The leaders of the two Armenian States were presented the engineering facilities and infrastructures, as well as the new technologies introduced in a bid to enhance Artsakh's defensive capacity.

Addressing the servicemen and commanders on duty, Prime Minister Pashinyan thanked them for dedicated service and wished them robust health and a peaceful army service.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Artsakh Republic President Bako Sahakyan met on the same day in the Office of Artsakh President, attended by heads of government departments from the two Armenian States.

Prime Minister Pashinyan first congratulated Artsakh Republic's new Cabinet members on their appointment, expressing his appreciation of Bako Sahakyan's

discussed a wide range of issues related to army building, economy and a number of other spheres, highlighting the need for exchange of experience and close cooperation between the relevant departments.

### Minister of Defence Davit Tonoyan received on 13 June UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Permanent Representative in Armenia Shombi Sharp...

The parties discussed the progress of the cooperation between the UN Development Programme and the Armenian Defence Ministry Department and the ongoing projects.



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan joined Artsakh Republic President Bako Sahakyan to inspect the Defense Army positions in the eastern regions of Artsakh. The Heads of State were accompanied by RA Defense Minister **Davit Tonoyan** and AR Defense Minister Levon Mnatsakanyan, as well as **Artak Davtyan**, Head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, and **Movses Hakobyan**, Chief Military Inspector of the Republic of Armenia.

willingness to initiate practical and substantial changes in the country.

*"In this regard, I would like to assure our partners and President Bako Sahakyan of our strong support. The Armenian government unconditionally supports your political course,"* Nikol Pashinyan stated.

The parties discussed ways of expanding cooperation between the two Armenian States. The Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of Artsakh

Tonoyan praised the projects implemented in the Armed Forces by the UNDP aimed at protection of the rights and fundamental freedoms of the servicemen, the involvement of women in the armed forces, awareness raising, and protection of equal rights.

Sharp praised the high level of cooperation with the Ministry of Defence and reaffirmed the UNDP's commitment to continued support of projects implemented in Armenia.



## DM Receives OSCE Co-Chairs...

Defence Minister Davit Tonoyan received on 13 June OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs **Igor Popov**, **Andrew Schofer** and **Stephane Visconti**, who are visiting Armenia as part of their regional visit. Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office **Andrzej Kasprzyk** was also present at the meeting.



At the request of the guests, Minister Tonoyan briefed them on the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the line of contact between the Artsakh and Azerbaijani forces.

He noted that Azerbaijan regularly destabilizes the situation on the contact line, using snipers, in particular, which leaves new victims. He also spoke about the recent moves of positions by Azerbaijani armed forces in Nakhichevan.

Tonoyan underscored that Armenia continues to support the unconditional maintenance of the ceasefire along the contact line by introduction of comprehensive confidence-building measures. At the same time it was noted that the Armenian Armed Forces are watching the situation and monitoring any movement.

## The meeting of the Servicemen Insurance Fund Board of Trustees...

...chaired by Defence Minister Davit Tonoyan, was held at the Ministry of Defence on 14 June.

**Varoujan Avetikyan**, the Executive Director of the Fund, made a summary re-

port on the compensation and donations made since March, detailing that 11 compensation payments have been made to families, including nine to the families of killed servicemen and two to the families of disabled servicemen.

He said that the sum collected by now already exceeds AMD 9 billion, and the total compensation stand at AMD 523 million. The programme is successfully working on the principle of accountabili-

site: [www.1000plus.am](http://www.1000plus.am).

The Board of Trustees approved a new programme during the meeting. Under it, if a serviceman receives a disability during the defence of the homeland, he/she is entitled to receive AMD 100,000 a month to take care of certain expenses even before his/her disability is confirmed in a legal procedure.

The Board also discussed the 2018 action plan and the "Ambassadors of the Fund" project, envisaging that there the Fund would have individuals who would be actively working with the Armenian Diaspora organisations in the cities with a large Armenian community all around the world.

## Levon Ayvazyan, Head of Defence Ministry's Defence Policy Department, received on 14 June Brig. Gen. Allan Richmond, the commander of UK Armed Forces 160th Infantry Brigade

who was accompanied by UK Military Attaché, Lt. Col. **David Ethell**.



The 160th Brigade is the main cooperation partner of various units of the Armenian Armed Forces, and every year, a number of events are held both in Armenia and UK with the participation of the Brigade's personnel, such as tactical exercises, experience exchange, etc.

During the meeting, the parties discussed issues related to events to be held this year under bilateral cooperation.

The 160th Brigade's orchestra is currently in Armenia to give a joint open-air concert with the Armenian Armed Forces orchestra in Yerevan on 15 June.

ty and high transparency. Avetikyan also presented the new donation ways that have already been dubbed as "In memory of" and "In honour of". The details and procedures are posted on the Fund's web-



# The Yerevan Celebration of the Official Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II' 2018



Compiled by  
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On June 14, the British Embassy in Yerevan celebrated the Official Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth

II.

HM Ambassador **Judith Farnworth** and the British Embassy team were honoured to host the President of Armenia **Armen Sargsian** (fmr long time Armenian Ambassador to the UK) and Mrs **Nouneh Sargsian** at the Ambassador's Residence.

President Sargsian congratulated

Ambassador Farnworth and the Embassy team on the day. He wished success, attaching great importance to further development of the Armenian-British cooperation in various areas and reiterating good will to deepen and expand relations between the two nations.

Later that day, the British Embas-





sy hosted guests from the Government of Armenia (including Ministers **Artak Zeynalyan** and **Artsvik Minassyan**), the National Assembly, the British community in Armenia, members of the diplomatic corps and friends of the UK (including The Highlights Chief Correspondent who studied in the UK and

worked for BBC))) ) at The Queen's Birthday Party held at the traditional venue, The Best Western Congress Caribbean Pool. As usual, the national anthems of two countries were performed.

As last year, *The Salamanca Band* and *Bugles of The Rifles* of the UK Armed Forces performed at the

party, this time joined by the excellent Armenian Armed Forces Song'n'Dance Ensemble (headed by Colonel **Armen Poghosyan**). Along with the popular jazz/pop music (especially legendary The Beatles songs) performed by both ensembles, the guests enjoyed traditional British food and drinks (starring

famous whisky labels) including regional cheeses, fish and chips and scones with cream and jam.

And the next day evening both ensembles gave an absolutely wonderful concert at the Yerevan Charles Aznavour Square.

**Source: British Embassy Yerevan FB page**





## Recent News From the Armenian Leading Telecom Operator...

### Fuller Center for Housing Armenia is celebrating its 10th Anniversary

This year the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia marks the 10th anniversary of its operation; years of providing the families in housing need with simple, decent and affordable homes. Over the years, the organization has supported more than 650 families in all the regions of Armenia, as well as in Artsakh.

The 10th anniversary ceremony took place on June 15, 2018 at Best Western Congress Hotel Yerevan Hotel, which is the exclusive sponsor of the event.

Fuller Center for Housing Inc. President David Snell, VivaCell-MTS Founding

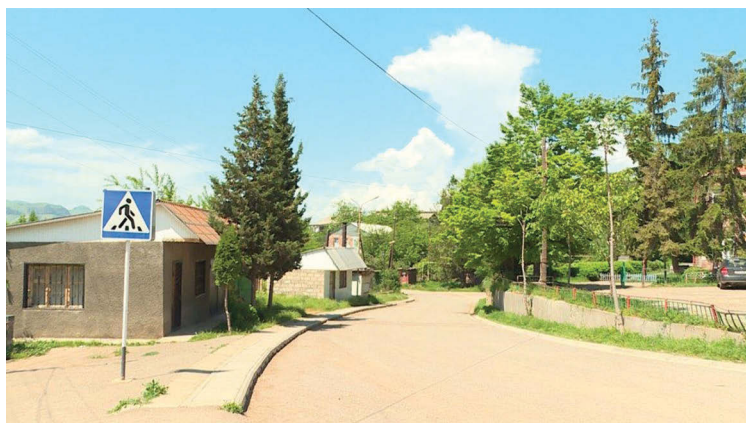
comes from a partner organization and the families, which have long strived and have eventually reached their dreams. Years ago, when we started our work in Armenia and chose corporate responsibility, we translated a message to various organizations and the society in general. It sounded like a call not to be indifferent, a call for action. I am glad to say that our partner, the "Fuller Center for Housing", shares our values. I am proud to be partners with you," VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph Yirikian said.

"We have seen many tears of joy, but it has not become a habit for us. Our support, in fact, is just an incentive for a family to believe in their own strength, become optimistic and be filled with faith in the future. We

uation, people try to continue live their regular life and practice agriculture. The lack of infrastructure, though, is a challenge, which complicates the life of this borderland community. There are many problems needing urgent solution, but the outdoor lighting system is a priority for Chinari.

Residents of Chinari say the evening is the best time of the day for field works: irrigation is easier then. Yet the problem of outdoor lighting is a matter of security. The head of the local administration says the village has 14 km community roads that need lighting, but the south-north direction of the main road is a priority.

"Unlike Chinari, the neighboring villages are illuminated in the night time. Lighting the main road will encourage people, will help



General Manager Ralph C. Yirikian, representatives from International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), USAID representatives, ARDA Charitable Foundation Director Hrahat Stepanyan, Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan General Manager Catalina Susan, other honorable guests, partners, international and local volunteers attended the event.

"The Fuller Center for Housing is an international coalition of local partners all dedicated to the vision of eliminating poverty housing. Nowhere, though, has this vision seen greater success than in Armenia. As we celebrate the 10th Anniversary of The Fuller Center Armenia we are pleased to report that, under the direction of an outstanding leadership team and with support from local sponsors and generous friends in the Armenian diaspora community, over 650 Armenian families now have a decent place to call home. Together we can make the dream of no more domiks a reality," said David Snell, the President of Fuller Center for Housing, Inc.

During the 5th Anniversary event certificate awarding ceremony took place.

"I am grateful for this certificate. This is not just a document: it is an appreciation that

thank all our partners for being part of our mission over these years and sharing our success," said Ashot Yeghiazaryan, Fuller Center for Housing Armenia President.

Over the past ten years, more than 3,500 lives have been changed for the better irreversibly getting them out of the poverty chain.

In addition to the housing program, the organization has also implemented various small and large scale projects aiming to increase rural employment by tackling constraints to rural economic development in select rural communities of Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Lori and Tavush regions of Armenia in the framework of ARDI program funded by USAID.

### By the end of the year the borderland Chinari will have LED outdoor lighting infrastructure

Chinari in Tavush region is surrounded by the adversary on three sides. The shortest direct distance from the state border in some locations reaches 600 meters. Despite the sit-

uation, people try to continue live their regular life and practice agriculture. The lack of infrastructure, though, is a challenge, which complicates the life of this borderland community. There are many problems needing urgent solution, but the outdoor lighting system is a priority for Chinari.

Borderland villages have always been in the focus of attention for VivaCell-MTS, and they remain so today. The company's interest in these villages goes beyond the purely commercial interests. Hand in hand with its partner organization, the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets, the Company continuously leads by responsible attitude, clearly understanding that the approach it has chosen is the true path of contributing to the long-term development of the country. The proof of that are the investments made in recent years into social projects. The parties have committed to implement yet another program in Chinari by end of this year, and build a LED outdoor lighting system in the village.

"We have started the social programs planned for this year. We stay committed to the priorities we have worked on for years. Development of infrastructures in remote regions and borderland communities is once again in the focus of our investment programs," VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph C. Yirikian said.



## Smithsonian Folklife festival to highlight Armenian food and craft

Visitors to the 2018 Smithsonian Folklife Festival will have a unique opportunity to experience the cultural heritage of Armenia, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage reports.

The 2018 Festival, which runs from June 27 to July 1 and July 4 to 8, will feature hundreds of artisans, designers, musicians, and cooks from Armenia, Catalonia, and other locations to highlight the importance of cultural heritage enterprise in the face of change.

Presented through ten days of workshops, demonstrations, participatory experiences, and discussion sessions, the Armenia: Creating Home program on gastronomic and



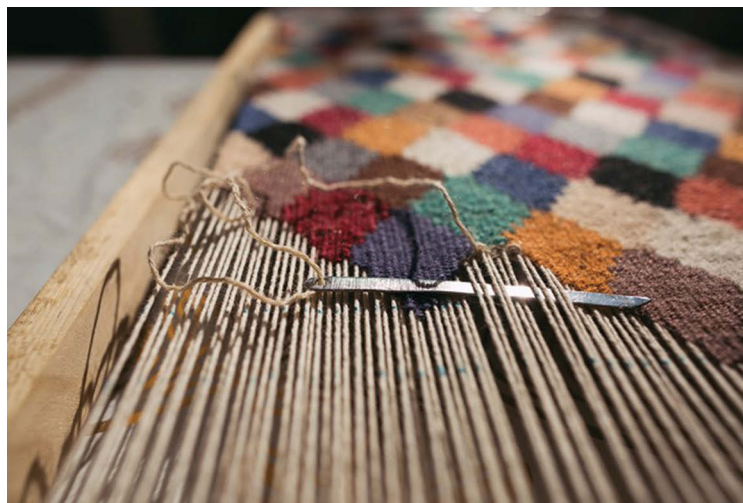
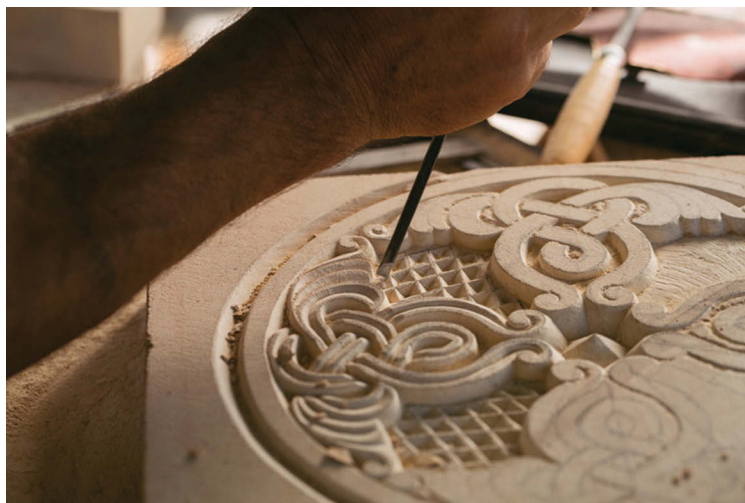
artisan craft traditions will allow visitors to learn about how Armenian communities have integrated heritage into their own strategies for economic and cultural hospitality of Armenian cooking, eating, and drinking is a source of cultural pride,” said Halle Butvin, one of the program’s curators. “We

hope to convey how it’s deep history, a tradition of feasting and innovations in technique are energizing Armenia’s food scene.”

Visitors will learn to make the staples of an Armenian feast: breads, cheeses, and barbecued meats (khorovats). While tasting and toasting

Armenian wines, visitors will learn about the recent discovery of a 6,100-year-old winery in a cave in Armenia, and how winemakers in that same region are reinvigorating the industry through their production, from cultivating ancient varietals and aging wine in traditional clay pots (karas), to a winery incubator model encouraging the growth of small labels.

Participants will share their experiences with traditional Armenian recipes and the ways in which food- and wine-related enterprises have shaped their cultural identity and created a pathway for exchange—both within Armenia’s boundaries and across its many diasporas.



## Cellist Jonathan Swensen of Denmark named winner of 14th Khachaturian International Competition



Cellist Jonathan Swensen of Denmark became the winner of the 14th Khachaturian International Competition. The winner was announced during the gala concert held at the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall in Yerevan on June 14.

Swensen was presented with

the \$15,000 first prize, the second prize went to Russian cellist Fedor Amosov. Rustem Khamidullin (Russia) and Chae-Won Hong (South Korea) shared the third place.

Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki presented the awards.

## Zodiac Weekly Forecast



**Aries (March 20–April 19)**

You have intense aspects during this period, particularly related to romance, spending, play, and/or children. You are subject to major dramas in these areas, and they may be both positive and negative. One way to do this is to break up with one person while falling head over heels for another.



**Taurus (April 20 – May 20)**

A relationship or friendship that began with gusto in late March arrives at a point of evaluation. The question of commitment may always be an issue in this situation. The Bulls are careful about commitment because they mean it. Some of the other signs are not so persevering. Watch your step.



**Gemini (May 20–June 20)**

You may have unexpected expenses this week. Or it might be a difference of opinion with your partner about how to manage joint resources. If the disagreement is not readily resolved, you may do better to set it aside for now and come back to the issue when you have had more time to consider it.



**Cancer (June 21–July 21)**

This is not your smoothest week. Details may nag your mind and your time like pecking ducks. You and significant others are not having the best of communications right now. You may be in the mood to nit-pick others. Probably you will feel generally better if you work alone.



**Leo (July 22–August 21)**

Either you or others in your life are behaving erratically. It is difficult to make firm plans or sustain a solid conversation. This sometimes generates a rift between you and another because one of you needs to be alone. Don't fight it. Just let it be. It is temporary. Take it with a spoonful of generosity and humor.



**Virgo (August 22–September 22)**

Beware of the tendency to obsess and worry over matters that may never happen. You are tempted to see the world through a dark lens this week and you may think that is the true version. It's more likely that the pessimistic view is extreme. Don't ruminate. Do what you can and then let it go.



**Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)**

Intensity in relationships is the theme of the week. If you are not conscious, you could be pulled into schemes of manipulation or compulsive behaviors. Existing relationships could re-experience the pain of old wounds. You have a choice of whether to work it through or act it out in the same ways as the first time. If things feel "icky", someone is manipulating.



**Scorpio (October 23–November 21)**

Love life may be intensely creative, or it may just be intense and challenging. It depends on the foundation of trust in the relationship. This is a good time to be honest with each other, but do be kind about it, Scorpions. Sometimes your voice sounds like judge, jury and executioner, especially if you feel threatened.



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

A family member or a close friend may offer you a meaningful gift this week. Activities involving travel, collecting past debts, and arranging the details of your estate are favored. You and a partner are sympatico now and intimate conversations are productive.



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

Relationship to partner(s), whether business or personal, are strained at present. If you feel discomfort, look for the assumption or the illusion that is cracking. It is painful. The relationship will ultimately be improved or broken by the quality of your honesty together. Either way, you will be in better condition long term.



**Aquarius (January 20–February 17)**

Your significant other may be acting like a horse's patootie right now, but you don't have to follow suit and play in the same court. Neither of you is being served by sharp words and irritable behavior. "Prove it if you love me" is a game left over from the cave people. Leave it alone.



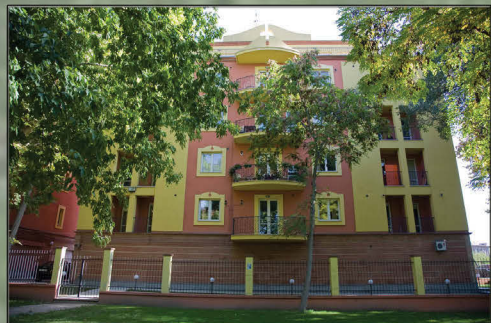
**Pisces (February 18–March 19)**

Unsettling news or information comes your way this month. It is hard to separate fact from fiction. Don't act upon it unless you are certain of its veracity. The cosmos is full of tricks right now. Stay in touch with a trusted associate who can help you as you travel through the maze.



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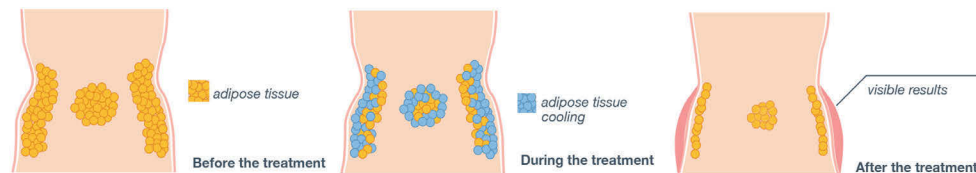
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