Deaths rise in Armenia, lockdown extended

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Two more people have died in Armenia, raising the total to three of the deadly disease from the disease. Health Minister Arsen Torosyan said on Sunday, March 29. Torosyan said both victims, a 55-year-old woman and a 73-year-old man, also suffered from pre-existing medical conditions. Another victim was a 72-year-old woman.

“Doctors did everything to save their lives, but unfortunately they did not succeed,” he wrote on Facebook.

Armenia reported its first coronavirus-related death on Thursday, March 26. According to Torosyan, 13 COVID-19 patients were kept in the hospital's intensive care unit as of Saturday.

The government has extended a nationwide lockdown by at least ten days because of a continuing increase in coronavirus cases in the country, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Tuesday, March 31. The government imposed one-week restrictions on people's movements and ordered the closure of most businesses on March 24. Since then Armenians have only been allowed out to buy food, receive medical care or briefly exercise near their places of residence. The curfew does not apply to a limited number of public and private sector employees allowed to continue working.

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Despite these measures the virus has continued to spread. The Armenian Ministry of Health said on Tuesday morning that 50 private sector employees allowed to continue working.

By Aram Arken
Mirror-Spectator Staff

US and International Armenian Medical Associations Confront Coronavirus Crisis

NEW YORK/LOS ANGELES – Armenian medical associations in the United States and abroad have sprung into action in order to deal with the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Two of the most active in the United States have been the Armenian American Medical Society (AAMS) based in Los Angeles and the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) in New York and New Jersey and parts of Connecticut. Both organizations began to work to help Armenians in their local communities and in Armenia fairly early during the process of spread of the virus. The Armenian Medical International Committee (AMIC), a coordinating body of Armenian medical associations worldwide, to which both these American-Armenian groups belong, has been active in the same period internationally.

By Aram Arken
Mirror-Spectator Staff

State Symphony Honors Healthcare Workers

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The State Symphony Orchestra (ASSO) and its Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Sergey Smbatyan show their gratitude to health care workers across the county for their commitment and self-sacrifice.

“We are supporting you staying at home, trying to prevent the spread of coronavirus, thus reducing your workload. Stay healthy. May this performance encourage you and your families to stay healthy.”

Soldiers, Civilian Wounded Near Azeri Border

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Two soldiers guarding Armenia’s border with Azerbaijan and a teenage resident of an Armenian border village were reportedly wounded on the evening of Monday, March 30, in what Yerevan described as Azerbaijan ceasefire violations.

The Armenian Defense Ministry reported that the soldiers sustained light wounds as their unit repelled an Azerbaijani raid on its positions in the northern Tavush province bordering the Gagaxh district in western Azerbaijan.

A ministry statement said Azerbaijani forces also shot at two Armenian villages located in the area: Baghrami and Yosvekan. It said a boy in Yosvekan was wounded as a result.

Tavush’s governor, Hayk Chobanyan, said the boy was shot in the chest and rushed to hospital. His life is not at risk now, said Chobanyan.

“In order to stabilize the situation in the border zone and to counter the brazen actions by Azerbaijani forces, we must develop a coordinated approach,” the statement said.

Pashinyan Speaks with Belarussian President

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinian had a telephone conversation today with President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, the Armenian PM’s Office told Armenpress.

The officials exchanged information about the situation in the two countries caused by the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the actions of the governments in this respect.

Pashinian and Lukashenko also discussed issues relating to the mutual cooperation within the frames of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Both highlighted the necessity to hold regular consultations and take joint actions.

INSIDE

Coming to America
**Deaths Rise, Lockdown Extended**

President Sarkissian thanks Chinese President for help. Sarkissian congratulated Xi on the great progress recorded in the fight against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Armenian President said in the latter the epidemic was possible to restrain due to the decisive role of the Chinese authorities. He emphasized the need to attend the people's selflessness dedication.

Highlighting consistent strengthening and deepening of close cooperation with China, Sarkissian expressed his gratitude to China for the continuous assistance provided to Armenia to prevent and overcome the virus.

Considering China’s experience in preventing and effectively fighting the spread of the virus instructive for Armenia, Sarkissian also proposed to consider the experience of other Asian countries in providing equipment, necessary items, as well as in the form of professional support.

In late December 2019, Chinese authorities notified the World Health Organization (WHO) about an outbreak of a previously unknown pneumonia in the city of Wuhan, central China. WHO declared the outbreak of the novel coronavirus a global pandemic and named the virus COVID-19. Cases of coronavirus have been reported in over 195 countries.

**First Online Educational Platform Launched**

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – iUniversity, the first Armenian online educational platform, was launched by the National Polytechnic University of Armenia (NPUA) on March 23, the government told Armenpress.

iUniversity (https://iuniversity.am/home/) serves the NPUA, including the Gyumri, Kapan and Vanadzor branches, as well as the university’s college and high school.

The online platform allows to register all beneficiaries, create a list of subjects and homework for each group and class, study materials, e-library, enables to download video lectures, as well as allows students and schoolchildren to ask their questions to teachers and lecturers, etc.

It also allows to monitor the online study process to find shortcomings and gaps to control the process and propose new tools to improve the shortcomings.

The NPUA expressed readiness to provide all the opportunities and technical service of iUniversity to those educational facilities which need it.

**Teen Domestic Violence Victim Starts Walking**

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The 13-year-old girl who was subjected to domestic violence weeks ago in Gyumri and was hospitalized in critical condition has started to walk with the help of doctors, the spokesperson for burn and plastic surgery center of Gyumri, Dr. Arsen Torosyan, wrote on his Facebook page.

Derdzayan added that she remains under the supervision of the doctors and continues receiving relevant treatment.

The young girl was attacked on March 5 and was transported to a Yerevan hospital in critical condition. She underwent an emergency surgery in Gyumri on March 5, police officers were dispatched to the apartment where the incident had taken place. First responders found the child’s 43-year-old mother dead. Her body had traces of violence. Gyumri police said they arrested a 28-year-old suspect.

**Local Government Armen Simonyan**

The authorities have also suspended bus services between Yerevan and the rural areas of Armenia’s borders with Georgia and Turkey.

Opposition politicians have expressed serious concern about the plight of people involved in the informal sector of the Armenian economy. They have urged the government to take care of them as well.

Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan did not rule out the possibility of such assistance when he spoke at a news conference later on Monday.

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Armenians, Autism and the Emirates

By Muriel Mirk-Weisbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – It was February 17 in Zvartnots airport, and two young men shared a seat on the plane, both engaged with their phones and played with energy and passion. It was before the Coronavirus pandemic had brought international travel to a halt, and they were expressing their excitement about their imminent flight.

Raphael Martirosyan and Vardan Ayvazyan were among the six students who were travelling with their mothers to Shahrazad in the United Arab Emirates for a three-day stay. The students came from Armenian centers for people with disabilities: the Autism National Foundation’s My Way Educational, Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Day Care Center for Children and Teenagers with Autism, and the Yemen My Love Foundation’s Louse’ Center for Special Needs Children. The visit took place from February 17 to 20, and offered the Armenian students the opportunity to visit facilities of the Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services (SCHS), the host.

The SCHS is an independent organization in the Emirate of Sharjah dedicated to providing care for people with disabilities in the UAE. The Director General of the SCHS is Sheikh Jameela Al Qasimi, a person of exceptional capabilities and enthusiasm.

The invitation came at the end of last year, on the occasion of the UAE’s National Day (December 2, 2019), and in the framework of the Year of Tolerance. Upon the initiative of Mohamed Al Zaabi, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, the support of emirates companies in the Gulf region. In 1995 it became an independent organization in Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services (SCHS), their host.

The invitation came at the end of last year, on the occasion of the UAE’s National Day. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Al Zaabi, UAE invited the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian community toSharjah, the UAE to participate in the celebration of the UAE’s National Day on December 2, 2019.

Upon the invitation of Mohamed Al Zaabi, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, the support of emirates companies in the Gulf region.

Fotima Mohammad Al Haroon, SCHS International Relations Executive and Suzanna Petrosyan, My Way Vocational Training Program Manager and designed. Working on canvases, the mothers had various flowers and an owl as subjects for their renderings. An art therapist helped out with color selection and mixing the paints. In parallel the students received souvenirs made by the center’s students, ready frames, hand-made metal bracelets and unique metal bookmarks.

Then they all boarded a bus for a tour of the city in the evening, before sunset, enjoyed an Al Qasba Canal boat tour. The visitors from Yerevan were also treated to a tour of the Sharjah Aquarium.

In appreciation, the My Way center presented their Sharjah hosts with certificates of appreciation, to the SCHS “for the invaluable input, ongoing efforts and the constant approach in the sphere of providing services for children with intellectual disabilities and autistic spectrum disorders, for the warmest welcome and precious and useful pastime...” To the Embassy of the UAE in Armenia, My Way expressed its appreciation “for the longest fruitful cooperation with Autism National Fund Armenia, for the proactive support of its initiatives” and especially for making it possible for students and their mothers to visit the UAE, “a unique opportunity” to have such an informative and precious experience.

The hospitality extended to the students and their mothers went beyond all expectations, and the level of mutual understanding.

Artsakh Holds Elections

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – On March 31, 72.7 percent of the eligible citizens of Artsakh participated in the presidential and parliamentary elections of Artsakh, Chairperson of the Central Electoral Commission of Artsakh Sebou Arzumanian said in a press conference.

The 14 PPS’s potential hopefuls and 12 political parties striving to be represented in the National Assembly of Artsakh.

Armenian Doctor Dies of COVID-19 in Italy

SALOSSAPICCO TERME, Italy (Horizon.ca) – Armenian doctor Anna Mouradian, 42, died of COVID-19 in Northern Italy on March 29, ParmaToday.it reported. He caught the virus while working as a doctor.

More than 50 doctors and nurses reportedly died due to complications from coronavirus as the continent continues to struggle with the massive impact caused by the pandemic.

Italy’s National Federation of Orders of Surgeons and Dentists (FNOCMcT) released a list of names of the dead doctors which are vital for Yerevan.

Moscow announced on Saturday, March 28, that it will close all Russian border crossings on Monday, March 30, as part of its efforts to slow the spread of coronavirus.

The decision raised concerns in Armenia whose economy is heavily dependent on trade with Russia.

“I want to say that such worries are misplaced because that decision will not affect Armenian cargoes in any way,” Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said after speaking with his Russian counterpart by phone later on Saturday.

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“Full-scale quarantine is declared during the state of emergency. Starting from 21:00 to 06:00 people’s movement on foot or by transport is forbidden,” Gakharia said.

Under the regime of quarantine, people aged 70 or above are not allowed to go out. There will be exceptions only for the cases if the citizens goes to a grocery, pharmacy or medical facility nearby his house.

Armenia Reassures Armenia over Border Closure

MOSCOW (RE/RL) – Russia has assured Armenia that the coronavirus-related closure of its borders will not apply to cargo shipments between the two countries which are vital for Yerevan.

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We understand that the government of Russia has been reassured that the circumstances do not apply to Armenia,” Pashinyan said.

A readout of the phone call released by the Russian government said the prime ministers “stressed the importance of maintaining the flow of goods between Armenia and Russia in full.”

The statement said the two leaders discussed the coronavirus pandemic taken by their governments.

Russia is Armenia’s main trading partner and export market, which shipped $2.2 billion last year. Armenian exports to Russia rose by 10 percent to almost $735 million, according to official Armenian statistics.
SEC Warns of Risk Of Insider Trading During Coronavirus Market Turbulence

By Renae Merle

NEW YORK (Washington Post) – The Securities and Exchange Commission is warning of the risk of insider trading.

The commission has affected US markets in “unprecedented” ways, Stephanie Avakian and Steven Peikin, co-directors of the SEC’s Division of Enforcement, said in a sharply worded statement released late Monday, March 23.

Given those “dynamic circumstances, corporate insiders are regularly learning new material nonpublic information that may hold an even greater value than under normal circumstances,” the statement said.

In early March, the SEC temporarily lifted some requirements that publicly traded companies periodically alert shareholders to their financial health and quickly disclose significant corporate changes that could affect the stock price. Companies that can show they need extra time will be granted a reprieve for documents that should have been filed from March 1 to April 30, the SEC said.

Avakian said “given these unique circumstances, a greater number of people may have access to material nonpublic information than in less challenging times,” Avakian and Peikin said.

Corporate executives, directors, employees and consultants should remember to keep confidential corporate information private, they said. The SEC is committed to ensuring “our corporate insiders are regularly learning new material nonpublic information that may hold an even greater value than under normal circumstances,” the statement said.

The agency delivered its warning a week after stock sales by senators, including Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., raised questions about whether they were influenced by private briefings with federal officials, under the Stop Trading on Insiders’ Rights Act of 2012. Burr, a wealthy former physician and admits to stock transactions, said his stock trades were based solely on his public news reports and asked the Senate Ethics Committee to review the transactions.

Also under scrutiny are stock sales by Sen. Dianne Feinstein and her husband, Jeffrey F. Fieger, who sold holdings valued at between $1.28 million and $3.1 million in the weeks after a closed Senate briefing, saying the sales were based on her investment managers and she wasn’t involved.

Insider trading prohibitions apply to all numbers of Congress, congressional staff and other federal officials, under the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge (Stock) Act of 2012.

Fresno-Based Company Donates Respirator Masks To Community Hospital

By Frank Lopez

FRESNO (Business Journal) – ERI, an owrader recycler based in Fresno with locations all over the country, donated roughly 300 N95 respirator masks to Community Regional Medical Center in Downtown Fresno Thursday, March 26.

“There could be no greater honor than to make this donation to Community Hospital, the No. 1 hospital in the entire Central Valley, which serves all its way beyond Fresno,” Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of ERI John Shegerian said. “If these masks can protect the lives of over 300 people and potentially save some of these health care workers from becoming afflicted with COVID-19, then we’ve reached our goal.”

Shegerian said the idea for the donation came from an employee who has been with ERI for nearly 12 years. The company hopes to set an example with this donation to encourage other businesses to donate needed supplies to local health care providers.

David Revis, ERI director of environmental, health, safety and security, brought the idea to co-founders Kevin J. Dillon and Aaron Blum.

Revis said that he found the masks just sitting in a closet as excess inventory at one of the company’s locations. The company stocks up for the N95 masks for its employees who handle electronic waste.

Revis and Shegerian reached out to CRMC to set up the donation, which was met with excitement from the hospital staff.

A list will be published to inform the public on what the hospital needs. Revis said that many of the vendors ERI works with are running out of stock, but during the ongoing health crisis, he is seeing prices online going up to over $20 for a box, or even $20 for an individual mask.

Revis said that most of the vendors ERI works with are running out of stock, but encourages local businesses to donate to community medical centers.

“Call your local hospitals and physicians and see what kind of personal protection equipment they need,” Revis said. “From gowns, to face shields, to N95 respirators – I’ve already reached out to some of our other sites across the U.S. and asked them to donate any N95 respirators in their local communities.”

From left, Aaron Blum, David Revis, Kevin J. Dillon and John Shegerian present a donation of N95 masks to Community Regional Medical Center.

Former Colo. Prison Nurse Files Lawsuit against Private Prison Alleging Sex Discrimination

By Michael Karlik

DENVER (Colorado Politics) – A former employee of the private prison operator CoreCivic has filed a lawsuit alleging civil rights violations for gender-based discrimination and retaliation against her while working in a prison in Colorado.

Danielle Karapetian wrote in her complaint to the US District Court for Colorado that CoreCivic hired her as a licensed practical nurse in September 2017 to provide medical care to inmates at the Bent County Correctional Facility. She described how the nurses used nicknames while at work to prevent prisoners from learning their real identities.

When a coworker asked her how she chose her nickname, “Dani,” she responded that she had once competed in a bikini modeling competition and used that stage name.

After other employees heard the story, Karapetian said, “gossip and rumors” spread.

She noticed that her supervisor became “extremely and irrationally angry” at Karapetian and the supervisor allegedly “began constructing a story in her head that Ms. Karapetian was engaging in sex inappropriate flirting behavior with the inmates.”

In July 2018, Karapetian conversed with her concerns about prisoner care to her supervisor, but the supervisor purportedly became enraged and was “not threatening you. You’re staying away from the supervisor.”

Karapetian went through with the complaint. Subsequently, she alleges, the supervisor canceled routine blood sugar tests for diabetic inmates. When Karapetian said that the affected inmates were complaining about the new test performance and by making Ms. Karapetian fear for her safety so she would feel compelled to quit.

The supervisor eventually removed Karapetian from the work schedule, saying that her nursing license had expired despite a grace period for renewal. CoreCivic allegedly told her that it would conduct an investigation, but instead, the company never returned her to the work schedule, thus ending her employment.

Karapetian claims that CoreCivic discriminated against her on the basis of sex in violation of federal civil rights law and created a hostile work environment for her.

“After Plaintiff complained of discrimination and retaliation in writing in late July 2018, Defendants continued to retaliate against Plaintiff,” she wrote in her lawsuit, “including by subjecting Plaintiff to disproportionate scrutiny, holding Plaintiff to higher standards than her male peers, [and] holding Plaintiff to higher standards than female peers who conformed to sex stereotypes.”

Karapetian also cited retaliation after she raised concerns over patient care.

A spokesperson for CoreCivic responded that employees have multiple options to report the types of conduct Karapetian said she experienced, including by contacting human resources.

“We don’t see any specific pending litigation, CoreCivic does not tolerate any forms of sexual harassment and takes these allegations very seriously,” the spokesperson said.

The case is Danielle Karapetian v. CoreCivic, Inc.
**From a Distance, New State Rep. Lipper-Garabedian Is Sworn in**

By Chris Van Buskirk

BOSTON (Boston Globe) – State Rep. Kate Lipper-Garabedian’s swearing-in ceremony on Wednesday, March 25 was by all accounts a sign of the daily abnormalities brought on by the coronavirus.

Gov. Charlie Baker administered her oath of office on the State House’s Grand Staircase, an odd sight for veteran legislators like House Speaker Robert DeLeo and state Rep. Paul Donato, D-Medford. Under normal circumstances, the ceremony would have taken place during a formal House session with a great deal of pomp and circumstance.

“You have witnessed a historical moment in terms of being here as a representative and as a speaker. I thought I saw everything, but this is the first time I ever experienced anything like this,” DeLeo said. “We were talking about even doing it in the Governor’s Council chamber and this,” DeLeo said. “We were talking about even is the first time I ever experienced anything like a speaker. I thought I saw everything, but this

of circumstances, the ceremony would have taken place during a formal House session with a great deal of pomp and circumstance.

“YOU HAVE WITNESSED A HISTORICAL MOMENT IN TERMS OF BEING HERE AS A REPRESENTATIVE AND AS A SPEAKER. I THOUGHT I SAW EVERYTHING, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I EVER EXPERIENCED ANYTHING LIKE THIS,” DELeo SAID. “WE WERE TALKING ABOUT EVEN DOING IT IN THE GOVERNOR’S COUNCIL CHAMBER AND THIS,” DELeo SAID. “WE WERE TALKING ABOUT EVEN

people felt that was even too close.”

Lipper-Garabedian, a Democrat who had served as a Melrose city councilor, takes over the 32nd Middlesex District seat after Rep. Paul Brodeur resigned last fall to become mayor of Melrose. She received nearly 80 percent of the vote compared to the 18 percent garnered by her Republican challenger, Brandon Reid, dur- ing a special election earlier this month.

During the ceremony, Baker and Lipper- Garabedian were appropriately spaced apart by about 6 feet while Donato, DeLeo, state Sen. Jason Lewis, D-Winthorpe, and Councilor Terry Kennedy watched from a distance on the stair- case.

“I’ve never seen this before... I’ve never seen this in 19 years,” said Donato, who has served in the Legislature since 2001. “These are odd times.”

Lipper-Garabedian said she is grateful people found time to attend her ceremony during the crisis. Constituents in the district she repre- sents have reached out over the past several weeks with a number of concerns ranging from family safety to the impact on small businesses. Confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the state jumped to 1,838 on Wednesday, the largest daily increase to date, while deaths attributed to the virus climbed to 15. Middlesex County, which includes all of Lipper-Garabedian’s dis- trict, continues to be the leader among other counties in the state with 446 confirmed cases.

“I mean, there’s a lot of people who are wor- ried. What I’ve been able to say to many of them is every day, we’re putting in place a more robust framework to address these issues that are hap- pening,” she told the News Service in her first public comments as a state representative. “If we don’t have an answer right now, let’s work together to see if one is coming tomorrow.”

**Diocesan Cancellations And Closures**

NEW YORK — In the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, and in light of current concerns regarding New York City, the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America announced earlier this month that the Diocesan Center has been closed to the public as of March 16, and will remain so at least through April 12. The majority of Diocesan staffers are currently working from home, and are available to respond to inquiries via email. Voice messages left on the Diocesan phone lines will be forwarded via email to the relevant party.

Along with the Diocesan Center, the St. Vartan Bookstore is also closed to the public. Major gatherings have also been affected by the pandemic. The Eastern Diocese’s 118th Diocesan Assembly will not go forward as scheduled. The Women’s Guild Assembly, Clergy Conference, and social events surround- ing the assembly have also been cancelled. The annual gathering had been scheduled to convene April 30-May 3, 2020, hosted by the St. Sarkis Church of Carrollton, TX.

The Diocese has also announced the cancel- lation of the ACYOA General Assembly, former- ly scheduled for May 21-25, and to have been hosted by the St. Hagop Church of St. Petersburg, Fla.

Since the start of the crisis, gatherings throughout the parishes of the Eastern Diocese have been cancelled. Solitary clergy celebrate weekly services in an empty sanctuary closed to the public. Some parishes are broadcasting these services online, so worshippers can watch. Check the Eastern Diocese’s website and Facebook page for more.

These decisions were made and approved by the Diocesan Council under the presidency of Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan, after deliber- ation and consultation with government authorities, health professionals, and senior church leaders.

**Young Entrepreneur Will Donate to Food Bank for Each Bar Sold**

CONCORD, Mass. (Concord Journal) — The owner of the nutrition bar company fx foods is making a special donation offer that will benefit the Greater Boston Food Bank.

“During this challenging time amidst the COVID19 crisis, we would like to do our part in helping provide food to those in our com- munity,” Sophie Gechijian said in a letter to her customers. “For the next few weeks as the outbreak persists, we will donate one bar for every one bar purchased on our website to the Greater Boston Food Bank.”

Her company makes snacks to support personal health standards with zero artificial preservatives, flavors or dyes.

The Concord-Carlisle High School 2012 graduate is asking customers to send a box of bars to family members, friends, neighbors and more to help feed “those who are food- insecure in our community.”

To place an order, visit www.fxfoods.com.

The Concord-Carlisle High School 2012 graduate is asking customers to send a box of bars to family members, friends, neighbors and more to help feed “those who are food- insecure in our community.”

Sophie Gechijian

**The Long-Sought Forgotten Genocide Trials...**

Is there any justice after death? This unusual tale offers redemption for victims murdered by geno- cides. Genocide is an uncontrollable beast that devours all with no reverence for any religions, no respect for poverty, wealth, or the different colors of mankind’s skin. What about these evil- doers from Enver Pasha, Stalin, Saddam Hussein and many others that created havoc prematurely and many others that created havoc prematurely terminating victims by no fault of their own. Was justice measured? How would these evildoers seek redemption during their judgment? These are interesting questions....

Available from Amazon.com

P.A. Murad is an engineer and scientist. The author has found a star, and was part of the Apollo lunar explorations and written “The Demon’s Gate” trilogy, “A Magnificent Odyssey” and “America at Armageddon”.

Sophie Gechijian

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State Rep. Kate Lipper-Garabedian
Former French Minister Patrick Devedjian Dies of COVID-19

DEVEDJIAN, fro page 1

Devedjian, a married father of four, was in the private Antony hospital, south of Paris. He was not known to have any underlying medical condition.

“His condition deteriorated on Saturday,” said a family source. “Doctors decided to place him in an artificial coma, but he didn’t survive.”

Fellow politicians immediately paid tribute to the politician on Twitter.

Former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls praised Devedjian’s “local roots.”

“I liked Patrick Devedjian: his frank works, his humor, his local roots. He was affectionate and cultured,” he wrote on Twitter.

Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo tweeted her “great sadness.”

“I extend my condolences to his wife and family. I think of our Armenian friends who have lost a brother today.”

“Great emotion at the announcement of the death of Patrick Devedjian, former minister, President of the Hauts-de-Seine, committed republican, free spirit,” President of the National Assembly Richard Ferrand wrote. “My sincere condolences to his relatives and his family.”

Devedjian, a conservative Republican who held a number of ministerial positions under former President Nicolas Sarkozy, was one of a number of politicians across Europe who have contracted Covid-19.

They include a number in Britain, including Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

“He was the best of us,” said Philippe Juvin, head of the Republicans in the Hauts-de-Seine.

“He was one of those people who are believed to be invincible and eternal,” said Juvin, as he paid tribute to “this free, intelligent and very funny man – one who was an intellectual non-conformist.”

Devedjian came from a family who had escaped the Armenian Genocide.

He was born in Fontainebleau, also south of Paris, on August 26 1944, just as Nazis occupiers were being defeated during World War II.

Among his most high profile ministerial jobs was as chief of the Recovery Plan following the 2008 global financial crash.

“Great sadness at the death of Patrick Devedjian,” French Senate President Gerard Larcher wrote on Twitter. “Brave man and totally devoted to his city of Antony and to the Hauts-de-Seine. Condolences to his family and those close to him.”

Devedjian proposed an amendment to a proposed bill penalizing denial of the Armenian Genocide on October 9, 2006 that read, “These regulations do not apply to academic and scientific researches and studies.”

Devedjian added a statement to the amendment that according to media would “prevent any provocations and political demonstrations organized by a foreign country.”

Barour ‘Apar’ Baloumian
Victim of COVID-19

NEW YORK — Barouir “Apar” Baloumian (1930-2020) passed away on Monday, March 30, as a result of COVID-19, which exacerbated other underlying health issues.

He was admitted to New York Presbyterian Queens hospital on March 19.

His grandnephew Raffi Wartanian left a tribute to him on Facebook. He praised Devedjian’s “local roots.”

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Krzysztof Penderecki, Polish Composer With Cinematic Flair, Dies

PENDERECKI, from page 1

Penderecki’s grandfather, Robert Berger, was a highly talented painter and director of the local bank at the time of Penderecki’s birth. His grandmother was an Armenian from Istanbul, Iran.

Penderecki was regarded as Poland’s pre-eminent composer for more than half a century, and in all those years he never seemed to sit still. Beginning in the 1960s with radical ideas that placed him firmly in the avant-garde, he went on to produce dozens of compositions including eight symphonies, four operas, a requiem and other choral works, and several concertos he cheerfully described as being almost impossible to play.

Among those who could were the violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter and the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, whose recordings of the concertos he wrote for them won Grammy Awards in 1999 and 1998, respectively.

Penderecki was most widely known for choral compositions evoking Poland’s ardent Catholicism and history of foreign domination, and for his early experimental works, with their massive tone clusters and disregard for melody and harmony. Those ideas would reverberate for decades after he himself had pronounced them “more destructive than constructive” and changed course toward neoromanticism.

(His decision to move on was partly political: The Polish avant-garde movement had created an unhealthy illusion of freedom in a country living under Communism, he said. But it was also artistic: Experimentation had reached an impasse, he told a Canadian interviewer in 1998, because “we discovered everything!”)

Still, it was compositions from the wild first decade of his career, including Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima (1961) and the St. Luke Passion (1966) that announced them “more destructive than constructive.” But then, opera had been his most trouble-some genre. Even “The Devils of Loudun” (1969), his first opera and the most popular, got mixed reviews and two thumbs down from the Vatican, which tied in vain to keep the composer from going ahead with his interpretation of a 17th-century scandal in the church. On the podium, Penderecki was a powerful, bearded figure who conducted with sweeping gestures heightening his music. Consider the mighty forces required for his bawdy choral Seventh Symphony, subtitled Seven Gates of Jerusalem, written to commemorate the city’s third millennium in 1996. It calls for a huge orchestra, offstage brass and woodwinds, three choirs, five soloists and a narrator.

He seldom regarded his work as completely finished, adding new layers at will to old compositions. The Polish Requiem, for example, began with a single piece, the Lacrimosa, written for the unveiling of a statue at the Gdansk shipyard to honor those killed in the antigovernment riots in 1970. He expanded it into a largescale Mass, first performed in 1984; expanded it again in 1993; and in 2005 added a final Ciaccona in honor of Pope John Paul II. Whatever the form of Penderecki’s music, darkness was a constant. The New York Times critic Bernard Holland, writing about a Carnegie Hall concert in 1986 with Penderecki leading his Krakow Philharmonic, called the composer “our most skulking purveyor of anxi ety, foreboding and depression.” He found that strange that Shostakovich’s gloomy Sixth Symphony, the only work on the program not written by Penderecki, should end up being a...
DOCTOR S, from page 1

Najarian said, “This is an unprecedented crisis. It is a crisis we have to deal with on a government level, but even more so as individuals is so critical.” Consequently, he said that one of the most important steps that AAHPO has been taking is to disseminate all the information available in a way that the average person on the street, not a physician, can understand. It is reaching out to both individuals and other Armenian nonprofit organizations with email communications as well as through social media. How other organizations, including the churches, are distributing this information too.

AAHPO sends out weekly emails to its own list. It also has developed YouTube content and has given interviews with the Voice of Armenians television program, available also online (http://voiceofarmenians.com/) and the Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey (https://armenianaionline.net/) which also has a video or television component. AAHPO provides reliable information on the coronavirus pandemic, while debunking myths and misinformation. It is stressing proper behavior such as physical or social distancing, staying in place, frequent handwashing and disinfecting of surfaces, as well as not going directly to emergency rooms if sick. Najarian said, “All the churches and all the NGOs have responded in such a professional and sophisticated way, cancelling their meetings and events and using new technology. Churches, for example, have been livestreaming services and funerals. These actions that almost all of these Armenian organizations took very early on have saved lives. There is no doubt about it. Every organization needs to be complimented. They are dealing with facts and they knew how bad it was going to be.”

AAHPO advises the Armenian community and its members to watch out for the older people, and for the youth to be careful too. The latter are just as likely as others to get it, and while they may be more likely to recover, the former may be more vulnerable.

AAHPO has helped funnel information directly to and through these organizations in several ways. Its officials and experts have held sessions with leaders of various groups privately and are actively consulting with them. Najarian said, “It provides the information but each group is free to make its own decisions about how to act.”

A major form of cooperation and planning is through weekly virtual meetings which are being called “town hall meetings.” Every Thursday night for the last three weeks, the leaders of many major Armenian American organizations primarily on the East Coast, ranging from churches to philanthropic groups, have participated in conferences via the suddenly extremely popular Zoom software.

The diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh in the US, including ambassadors, also participate and provide direct information about conditions in the homeland. After this, specialists in public health and medicine like AAHPO board members Dr. Kim Hekimian of Columbia University and Dr. Tsoline Kojaoghlanian of Maimonides Hospital in Brooklyn speak about the strategies being used and their critiques. Physicians like Dr. Sharon Chekinyan, a specialist in emergency medicine at the New Haven Hospital (https://www.yalemedicine.com/doctors/shar on-chekinyan/) also reach out from the trenches. AMIC also has a representative at the meeting.

The meeting had 16 people participated. The second week it was 35, and the last one on March 26 had more than 60 people. Even more organizations are expected to partici- pate next week. Najarian said that it has grown into a big exchange of information which lasts around two hours. Basically, Najarian said, “We are giving facts for the leaders to make decisions. One of the comments we get is we come to the meetings and hear about it in the news 3 days later.”

Next week the meeting will focus more on the next stage of the spread of the disease. Going forward, a lot of psychosocial issues are to be expected.

Najarian said that while they were trying to prepare people for a situation that will definitely get a lot worse, it will eventually get better. In other words, he said, “we are trying to think we would be fine. Nevertheless, we geared up to educate the community in preparation.”

Unlike the New York area, where Seplian said he believed the community was more engaged in its various affinity organizations, there were huge masses which really were not connected to any Armenian body. Consequently, though AAMS kept the leader- ship of the organizations informed of what was done, and these organizations have been circulating the information AAMS prepares, Seplian said it primarily went directly to the masses.

Again, unlike the East Coast Armenian communities, it still has a large number of people who consume information primarily in Armenian, so AAMS notified Los Angeles public health departments, hospitals, and clinics of the urgency of producing such material. Consequently, many of the leaders of the various churches and instruct organizers at the meetings. He said, “Our role was being the conduit through which the county [of Los Angeles] can directly reach the representa- tives of the various churches and instruct them on the recommendations coming in from the state and the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention].” It also has participated in meetings of groups like the Pan Armenian Council of the Western United States. AAMS is connecting citizens of the Republic of Armenia who are stranded at pre- sent in Los Angeles and cannot return home with free clinics owned or run by AAMS members. It also helps visitors. AAMS is placing content on the coronavirus crisis on YouTube and on its website and Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/groups/372719016320628/). Seplian said that anybody in need locally or anywhere in the world can contact AAMS for direction concerning health care via email at info@aams.org and telephone (818) 980-7777.

Seplian commented that there is no indica- tion that the Armenian community in Los Angeles is being impacted in any way differ- ently than other groups. He did note that there are several factors at play. Armenians tend to be more of a communal society, he said, often with multiple generations living under the same roof. This is one reason why AAMS has been particularly promoting sensi- tivity to the need to protect the elderly and family members with preexisting medical conditions from the coronavirus due to their additional risk factors.

Secondly, he said that there is a high preva- lence of smoking in the community. There is some evidence that this may have a negative impact in this crisis and AAMS continues to ask Armenians to quit smoking. Many
Armenians also congregate in hookah lounges and bars. AAMS has from day one one of the spread told Armenians not to go to lounges and bars. AAMS has from day one one of the spread told Armenians not to go there.

Help for Armenia

AAMS is in touch directly with the Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles concerning aid, while AAMHO maintains direct communications with Armenia’s Ministry of Health and the office of the High Commissioner of the Diaspora. However, both organizations are also member societies of AMIC, which is important in maintaining relations with Armenia.

The idea of AMIC (http://www.amicnow.org/), an international coordinating committee, came up in 1973 in Beirut at the first Armenian Medical World Congress but was not created until 1990, with its main office established in Montreal, Canada. Subsequently, it was incorporated in Mountain View, Calif., in 2015. It has among other things supported the Armenian world congresses bringing together around 500 Armenian health providers from around the world.

Sepilian, its president, declared that AMIC has been having its own telephone conference meetings discussing the coronavirus crisis, with representatives of groups from places like Amsterdam, London, Paris, Lyon, Montreal, Philadelphia, Boston, New Jersey and California participating.

Sepilian noted that AAMHO is perhaps the most active organization in educating various Armenian organizational leaders. It has created a primer which AMIC is examining to see if it can be applicable to other diasporan communities, most of which are on lockdowns but still active, at least in the virtual realm. Sepilian in particular commended the efforts of Dr. Najarian as a charismatic leader who truly cares and has done an outstanding job.

Sepilian said that even a week or two before Armenia reported its first coronavirus case on February 29, AMIC was speaking about the need for preparation for prevention there. The first meetings with Armenia’s Ministry of Health and the office of the High Commissioner of the Diaspora began that actual weekend of the announcement of the case.

AMIC sent out a call for medical supplies requested from Armenia through various diasporan groups. Sepilian said to avoid duplication of efforts it was done through a group with representatives from the two aforementioned Armenian state bodies. The procurement and shipping of the equipment was undertaken by the Armenia Fund (www.armenianfund.org), itself having a number of Armenian-American organizations on its board. Together with the Chevy Chase Surgery Center (Maryland), Armenian American Relief Society, and several other groups, it was able to quickly send a one-ton shipment of urgent supplies such as masks, protective suits and thermometers from Los Angeles International Airport.

Since then, Sepilian said, some additional supplies or raw materials have been secured but AMIC is focusing more on providing transfer of knowledge to Armenia. For example, retrofitting various types of medical equipment like anesthesia machines to work as ventilators would be very useful for Armenia.

In general, Sepilian said, “We are trying to stay on top of the science. We are all learning from each other internationally.” A lot is rapidly changing in the US and Europe. AMIC is transferring information deemed credible as soon as it comes to it from its various sources or from the US and Europe. AMIC can decide whether it is applicable for use there. AMIC has regular chat groups with its fast-flung members which are helpful in this regard.

Sepilian said that AMIC explored seeing what Armenia’s capabilities might be to make some of the medications that are touted as medically effective. Armenia has already, for example, converted brandy factories to making hand sanitizer. The use of blood plasma with antibodies mentioned above is one of the things being explored for the Armenian bone marrow facility.

Telementoring and teleadvising is being organized to connect experts to Armenia. Regular lectures and question and answer sessions on specific cases and circumstances will be presented from all over the world, organized by the National Institute of Health in Armenia. The Armenian American Nurses Association in Los Angeles is ready to help teletrain nurses in Armenia to deal with the coronavirus. Sepilian remarked that many of those nurses were born and raised in Armenia and are bilingual.

AMIC is also creating a pan-Armenian diaspora resource list for Armenians traveling or in a situation of need. AAMS is also creating a list of provisions and accommodations where they can shelter in place, with electricity working, Internet, and all kinds of social media. Hopefully a vaccine and various effective remedies will be developed for COVID-19 soon.
Lorenzo Fusi to Curate Inaugural Yerevan Biennial

YELEVEN (Artforum.com) — Lorenzo Fusi has been named artistic director and chief curator of the inaugural Yerevan Biennial. The first iteration of the exhibition was scheduled to take place later this year in various venues across Armenia’s capital city. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the board of the Yerevan Biennial Art Foundation has postponed the event until next year. The new dates for the biennial are April 15–June 13, 2021.

“With the Yerevan Biennial, we aim to foster a broader appreciation of contemporary culture in Yerevan and the region, complementing the existing infrastructure and its cultural offerings,” said Fabio Lenzi, cofounder of the biennial foundation. “Most importantly, through our activity, we intend to empower today’s Armenian youth and create new professional paths for the future generations, particularly in the creative and cultural sector. We are planning numerous digital initiatives and projects designed to engage people of all ages, locally, nationally and internationally. We will focus on these elements until the physical experience of visiting an exhibition is safe again.”

Prior to appointment Fusi, served as the artistic director of PIAC (Prix International d’Art Contemporain) of the Fondation Prince de Monaco from 2014 to 2020; the visiting academic curator at the Alberti University of the Arts, where he directed the Biltmore Kerr Gallery between 2016 and 2018; and as director of Open Eye Gallery, one of the oldest not-for-profit photography galleries in the UK. He also previously worked as the international curator at the Liverpool Biennial, for which he curated the 2010 and 2012 editions, titled “Touched” and “The Unexpected Guest,” and as chief curator at Palazzo delle Papesse Contemporary Art Centre and contemporary art curator of the Santa Maria della Scala museum hub in Siena, Italy.

Commenting on his new role, Fusi said: “Armenia has declared a state of emergency due to the global COVID-19 crisis. As a consequence, we have decided to postpone the inaugural exhibition. However, it is our job to create and develop platforms for cultural exchange, dialogue and interaction that operate safely and yet connect people. With the lockdown in many countries, sociability, compassion, empathy, and solidarity are now more important than ever... It is difficult in these somber times to be joyful and celebratory, but I truly think this is an amazing opportunity for artists from the region to connect with their counterparts all over the world, and for the world to familiarize with this wonderful land holding significant religious and historical significance.”

Mardiros and Mariam

Newcomers to Rhode Island from the Ottoman Empire

By Ruth Bedevian

My maternal grandparents fell in love at an early age in the village of Stepanavan in Kharpert (Ancient Armenia) under Ottoman rule in the 1860s. While picking apples in the orchard one day Mariam saw Mardiros ride by on a horse, wearing his hat jauntily. She smiled at him and he tipped his hat. She was 14 and they were destined for each other. Mardiros Shamshobyan was the son of the moneychanger, Ropken, and was orphaned in childhood. With the inheritance that Ropken had left in trust with the local church, Mardiros was taken in by a “Yerpa” woman who had raised him and educated him well. He was proficient in reading and writing Armenian, Turkish, French and English.

Mariam was the daughter of Ohanes Ohanesian, a wise man who taught his daughter about plants, herbs and their medicinal uses. Mariam’s mother had died young and Ohanes had remarried. From his second marriage, there were ten daughters – Vartouch, Zmroukht, Bagaskhan and Berjouchi and two sons, Garabed and Haroutune (All four daughters perished in the Hamidian purges of 1894-96). Ohanes desired Mariam to marry whomever she wanted so he called a woman from the village to speak with her.

Mardiros earned a living by writing letters and preparing documents. A year earlier, on March 9, 1891, Mardiros had made his first journey to America as he recorded in the Family Bible from his first entry to the port of Boston, he assumed the surname Roupenian to honor his deceased father. He returned to marry Mariam shortly thereafter in November 1882. She was 17-years-old. Mardiros was 18. Mardiros was so in love with Mariam that he implored her never to marry another because he would die.

The couple was blessed with a baby girl, Surpoup. Two other babies were born before Surpoup who died during infancy. During the middle of the 1890s, Kharpert had more than 350 villages, almost all Armenian. Political tensions throughout the Ottoman Empire threatened the future for Armenians, causing Mardiros to leave a beloved wife and daughter and bear the pain of separation to seek a more secure future for his family. Mardiros returned to Pawtucket, RI in 1893 and worked at Royal Weaving, a huge textile factory. (Joseph Ott founded Royal Weaving and his company employed hundreds in Central Fall and Pawtucket for nearly a century.) To earn extra money, Mardiros wrote letters for people. Sometimes they paid him with a bottle of wine.

Massacres Reach Kharpert

It is 1895 and Mariam and Surpoup were in grave danger. News of the ruthless carnage upon Armenians in other areas of the Empire was spreading, quickly reaching the villages. In early November, violence reached the Kharpert Plain. Surpoup remembered Mariam put her in the tunic of the thought to return in case the stone tower built into the ground where lavash bread is baked. She admonished her youngster sharply to make no sounds, giving her a piece of hardback. Desperate to save her daughter, Mariam fervently prayed to God to send good people to find Surpoup.

By Daniel Varghese

NEW YORK (GQ) – We’ve all got too much damn time to fill, which means that formerly puzzle-averse people are discovering the hours-killing appeal of the best jigsaw puzzles. So much so that Americans are buying jigsaws too quickly for some manufacturers to keep up.

At Reddit, the jigsaw community has been ready and waiting for its favorite pametime to get a moment in the sun. More than 20,000 hang out on r/jigsaw-puzzlers where they swap strategies for speed puzzling, watch time-lapse videos of someone completing a 5,000-piece color gradient, or gaze in awe at the absolute commitment required by this completed 40,000-piece Disney puzzle.

Michael Giragosian, who created the subreddit in 2011, argues that doing puzzles isn’t busywork; it’s actually, maybe, self-care. “It’s just challenging enough to give your hands something to do, but it lets your brain kind of relax,” he says. “It gives you time to think and relax and just, like, take your mind off the shit of the day.”

Since you need something to do besides binge-watch shows, listen to music, and cook beans, we asked Giragosian and his fellow Puzzlers to help us pick the best jigsaw puzzles (still in stock as of the day we published) to fill your self-isolation days.

If you’ve got your puzzling sea legs, you can jump to the 1000- to 2000-piece range, which tend to get more (sometimes much more complicated) Factors to look for: defined colors and clear images. Things to avoid if you want to keep calm: lots of sky. “As long as you can identify where a piece goes in a section, you’ll be able to make a lot of progress quickly,” Giragosian says. The selections include options from megaretailers like eBay and well-respected independent producers like New York Puzzle Company and Pomegranate.
Mariam and Mardiros: Newcomers to Rhode Island from the Ottoman Empire

Grace from a Compassionate Stranger

Like many of the married men at that time who had left their families behind in order to work and send for their loved ones, Mardiros was vulnerable to deep loneliness and went with other men to drink. His boss whose name is lost to our family history saw goodness in Mardiros and gave him a large sum of money, introducing him to Mr. Fales, a lawyer. Money was needed not only for passage but oftentimes to bribe Turkish officials even though documents were properly prepared. With Mr. Fales’ help, Mardiros prepared a Petition for Naturalization (dated December 31, 1895) for himself which enabled him to very quickly bring Mariam and Surpoohy to America. The joy of reunion can only be imagined on February 2, 1896, when Mariam walked through the gates at Ellis Island holding 5-year-old Surpoohy’s hand.

Mr. Fales owned a building that he rented to Mardiros. Having free use of the empty rooms in the building, Mardiros, with Mariam’s help, opened a boarding house. It was located on Roosevelt Avenue in Central Falls. (Today trailer-trucks are stored on the site.) Rental income would cover their expenses. It was a promising livelihood requiring long hours of daily tasks, food shopping, quantity cooking, washing, and cleaning. Many Armenians from their pillaged homes found a comfortable shelter there until they settled themselves with jobs and their own households. Oftentimes, Mariam would mend clothing at boarders’ requests for additional income. She also was skilled in natural remedies and helped in delivering babies if Dr. Margosian did not arrive in time!

Family Begins to Grow in ‘Pawtucket, America’

Between 1899 and 1906 Mariam gave birth to Roupen (1899), Kurken (1901), Souren (1902), Vahan (1904) and the baby Almas (my mother, Alice) in 1906. (Sadly Kurken died at 3-years-old.) Mariam kept her promise to her father to watch over her younger brothers, bringing Garabed and Haroutune to America and looking after them even after they were married men. Garabed married Yeghsah a very jovial lady who was very fertile and gave him 7 children. These are the uncles, aunts, and cousins that comprised my mother’s large extended family.

Mardiros helped. Mariam with the cooking, cleaning and the myriad of duties the boarding house demands. She relied on Surpoohy to take the little one under her wing. My mother recalled, “My sister took dreamwalking, classes and taught me how to design and sew. She taught me to crochet and knit. I learned everything from my eyes.”

On December 3, 1911, in ‘Pawtucket, America’ as Mardiros recorded in the Bible, Surpoohy married Kerop Karian (Karavagorian). The wedding took place in the boarding house (Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Church in Providence had not yet been established). This was a joyful time, but sorrow was to over-shadow the Roupenians in 1914.

Mariam forbid her 10-year-old Vahan to play at the Dumps where his friends would scavenger for usable items they could repair or sell. Vahan disobeyed. Climbing over a very tall fence, he fell. Landing hard, he fainted. He did not tell his mother nor did his friends. He was in severe pain, running a high fever and vomiting. Dr. Margosian said, “Maybe appendicitis or an intestinal blockage.”

My mother was 5-years-old and remembers vividly, “Surpoohy came and wrapped my brother in a blanket. He was ashen, so pale. Vahan was rushed in a horse and buggy to the hospital. The diagnosis was a pierced intestine. The next morning, Mariam and Mardiros lost their fourth child to this imperfect world.

My mother wept, “Vahan was so handsome. He had auburn hair and hazel eyes. The entire city of Pawtucket grieved.”

Mariam was 50-years-old and Vahan’s death was a turning point. She wailed, “No more! Too busy working in this boarding house. No time to watch my child.” The boarding house closed. World War I had begun.

New Challenges

The Roupenians moved to a second-floor apartment on High Street over a Chinese laundry in Central Falls. With a partner, Mardiros opens a variety store, selling ice cream, candy, and fruit. The variety store was located on Central Avenue not far from the apartment. The partner was aggravated with his partner and his children because Mardiros saw nothing wrong with the children eating the candy and ice cream meant for sale. “He was so good-natured and loved his children,” my mother recalled with a smile. It was now 1916 and America was on the brink of entering World War I. The family was dependent on Roupen’s income from the light bulb factory. He returned home one day telling Mariam that he dropped a case of bulbs. The boss fired him, taking his pay to compensate for the cost of the broken bulbs.

Roupen was strong and muscular and took well to wrestling. He engaged in a wrestling match between the US Navy and the US Army on the USS George Washington in the presence of President Woodrow Wilson on the way to France for the peace talks. Roupen won the medal. Since Roupen, there have been 4 generations of Roupenian men who have proudly served in the US Navy! Indeed, Roupen became a man.

The USS George Washington was originally a captured German ship used for transport. It crossed the Atlantic 22 times during Roupen’s tour of duty, taking supplies and troops to battle-weary Europe. The news came that the ship had been torpedoed. Stunned, Mariam joined the American Red Cross, sewing pajamas, knitting socks, and all the while, praying, “Deghas yed bili ka.” (My son will come back.)

Without Roupen’s earnings and many customers on credit, Mardiros had a serious accounts receivable problem and sold out to the partner and started to work in Howard and Bullock’s Machine Shop. The USS Washington was originally a captured German ship used for transport. It crossed the Atlantic 22 times during Roupen’s tour of duty, taking supplies and troops to battle-weary Europe. The news came that the ship had been torpedoed. Stunned, Mariam joined the American Red Cross, sewing pajamas, knitting socks, and all the while, praying, “Deghas yed bili ka.” (My son will come back.)
Mardiros and Mariam

ROUPEIAN, from page 11
Mariam, aspiring to “move up on the hill,” managed to find an apartment at Pawtucket at 510 Broadway and arranged to take care of the landlord’s baby for a reduction in the rent. The Roupeians – Mardiros, Mariam, Souren and Alice lived there until 1923. It was during these years that Mardiros becomes a Bible Student. Souren also took an interest and father and son became loyal active members of the International Bible Students’ Association. Mariam said to Mardiros, “You are a man who changes colors. I am Loosaroghchagan. I will die Loosaroghchagan, but I will never refuse the word of God in my home.”

Together, Mardiros and Mariam triumphed over their forced exodus from their ancestral home, the struggle to carve a new life in a new world, the sorrows of loss, and World War I. Their dream was realized – a home of their own with new low-income housing for $17 a month. Eventually, she went to Surpoohy’s home. Forced to sell the house and move to a cold-water flat on Turner Street in South Attleboro. It had a coal stove, toilet, and no bathtub. Soon, however, their joy was filled with sorrow. When Mardiros passed into his eternal rest. He had lived the whole of his life trusting and helping others and respecting the word of God. Brother Mardirosian delivered the eulogy and officiated at the funerual home and burial. My mother said, “All of Pawtucket came to pay their respects to my father. He knew so many people and had been so good to everyone.”

With Mardiros’ passing in the first year of the depression, Mariam struggled to keep up the mortgage payments and taxes. Mariam was forced to sell the house and move to a cold-water flat on Turner Street in South Attleboro. She had a coal stove, toilet, and no bathtub. Soon, however, she was able to move down the street to brand new low-income housing for $17 a month. Eventually, she went to Surpoohy’s home. A mountain of strength and courage, loving wife and mother, Mariam surrendered her soul to her Creator and joined her beloved Mardiros in 1943. Gently they rest together in Walnut Creek Cemetery, Pawtucket, RI. May the Lord bless and keep you all. Amen.

Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian

Homemade Assorted Pickles (Armenian Tovshi)

Some say Armenian and Middle Eastern pickled vegetables (tovshi or toorshi) has been an effective way to preserve vegetables for thousands of years. Not only are homemade pickled vegetables simple to make, they can easily be customized and are a perfect addition to any meal, says Lena Tashjian, a writer and vegan recipe developer, and author of The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook (released in January 2020). Try this updated recipe to have a delicious jar full of crunchy goodness on hand any season of the year, and feel free to get creative. Make your own pickled vegetables with just a few minutes of preparation. Lena adds that the outcome of this recipe depends on the number of vegetables and the size of the jar you use, so use enough vegetables to completely fill up the jar of your choice.

INGREDIENTS:
A cup or handful of dried chickpeas
A few large cloves of garlic, peeled but left whole
Other optional seasonings: sprigs of parsley, dill, oregano, tarragon, thyme, etc.
Celery stalks, cut into wedges
Cauliflower, with florets separated, cut into chunks
Carrots, cut in half lengthwise, then cut into 3 or 4-inch pieces
Kirby cucumbers, sliced
Jalapenos or chili peppers, sliced (remove seeds if you find it too spicy)
Cabbage, cored, cut into small chunks
Green peppers (Italian fying peppers preferred, seeds removed, cut into chunks)
Crushed red pepper flakes, optional
Sliced lemon (peel or remove some of the rind to avoid a bitter flavor), optional

PREPARATION:
Sterilize the jar and lid. Add chickpeas to the jar first, and then toss in the peeled garlic cloves. Wash, slice or chop all vegetables and put them in a large bowl. Mix vegetables together in the bowl with your hands and transfer them into your jar. In the same bowl, pour in the 3 cups of water. In a separate bowl or cup, mix vinegar and salt until the salt completely dissolves. Add this to your water, and stir. Add in the citric acid and sugar, and stir. Taste the brine to ensure the vinegar/salt ratio is ideal. Pour brine into the jar of vegetables and use a spoon or thin plastic spatula to release air bubbles by pushing down the sides all around the jar. If more brine is needed, make another batch. Use leftover cabbage leaves or celery tops to keep the vegetables under the brine. Seal the jar. Label the jar and set it aside at room temperature for at least 1 1/2 weeks (or longer), then transfer the jar to the refrigerator. Shake jar a few times for the first couple of days to distribute spices. Pickled vegetables are easy to add to salads, and make a delicious addition to vegetable platters or served as a lunch or dinner appetizer.

Storage: Pickled vegetables should keep in the refrigerator for about 2 months. Towards the end, the water is a lot more cloudy, but the vegetables are still crisp though not quite as good as at the beginning. To see this recipe made, go to: https://youtu.be/gRKGPrG8bQU.

The Vegan Armenian Cookbook is $35. For more recipes or to order, visit www.veganarmeniankitchen.com. See:
https://www.instagram.com/veganarmeniankitchen/.
Global Film Festival Seeks to Raise Funds To Offset Costs of Program Cancellation

WALTHAM, Mass. — This year’s Global Cinema Film Festival of Boston (GCPF) had been slated to take place in March, however, now it has been cancelled.

Among the films that were slated to be shown was “Village of Women” by Tamara Stepanyan.

Organizers had originally decided to postpone the festival until May, before making the decision to cancel it altogether.

“Given the evolving situation, and per the extended federal and state guidelines, we have sadly arrived at the inevitable conclusion that we will now have to cancel this year’s event. Even though we are deeply saddened that we cannot host the festival in a financially vulnerable position,” the organizers said in a statement released this week.

“We know that we are not the only small business or event in Boston that has made this difficult decision, however, there are still bills and expenses that will need to be paid so that we are able to continue our work of bringing quality programing to our community once this global health crisis is over. The majority of our festival’s costs were spent in advance and unfortunately not recoverable. Substantial income from ticket sales has also been lost, leaving our festival in a financially vulnerable position,” they added.

The organization has created a GoFundMe page to help the GCPF continue its work and quality programing to our community once this global health crisis is over. For additional information, contact Sarah Selverian at sarah@soar-us.org or 215-514-0188 or Louise Kezian at italian@soar-us.org or 810-453-1857. To purchase tickets online, go to https://soar-us.org/event/crimson-and-crystal-celebration. For more information on the group, visit www.worldwidecinemaframes.com.

The Best Jigsaw Puzzles to Get You Through Quarantine PUZZLES, from page 10

If you have both a lot of time to kill and a spare table you won’t need for a week, you can jump up to giant and/or complex puzzles. Just remember that fewer pieces doesn’t mean easier. Over the course of three years, Giragosian was able to complete a 12,000 piece jigsaw puzzle; a 2,000-piece version of “Starry Night” eludes him to this day. “I mean easier. Over the course of three years, Giragosian was able to complete a 12,000 piece jigsaw puzzle; a 2,000-piece version of “Starry Night” eludes him to this day. “I

The Guardian quotes Narine Abgaryan as saying, “The thing that bothers me is how young people are leaving their elders behind.” Abgaryan, who now lives in Moscow, points to how the villagers in her novel spend their days “cultivating wine that nobody wants or needs.”

“Globalization has benefits, of course, but also negative side-effects, when national customs, the things which define people, are taken away.”

Andrzej Tichy (Sweden), Naoise Dolan (Ireland), Marieke Lucas Rijneveld (The Netherlands), Nausheen Shريف (Pakistan), Pauline Delabre-Allard (France) have also been included in the list.

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Turkey: Pressures, Attacks, and Discrimination Against Christians

By Uzay Bulut

URKES’ Association of Protestant Churches has released its 2019 “Human Rights and Minorities Report” detailing the state of religious freedom in the country. The report sheds light on problems Protestants faced in Turkey in 2019. These included barring foreign Protestants from entering Turkey for no other reason than their faith, as well as the inability of Christians to train their own religious workers.

One major difficulty for Protestant Christians in Turkey is that the Protestant community is not recognized as a legal entity. According to the report, the Protestant community has mostly tried to solve this problem by establishing associations or becoming a representative of an already existing association. Associations and foundations, however, are not accepted as a “church” or a “place of worship.” The Protestants, therefore, cannot legally acquire the advantageous rights and status of recognized places of worship. When Protestants introduce themselves to the authorities as a church, they receive warnings that they are not allowed to do so. They are closed down, even if they have served for many years. For example, a house church used by Iranian refugees was sealed off by the Bolu Governorate.

The laws in Turkey also do not allow training religious leaders or opening religious schools for the Protestant community. The Protestants were solving this problem by providing training apprenticeships, giving seminars within Turkey, sending students abroad or using support from a foreign clergy. In 2019, however, many members of the foreign clergy, as well as church members, were deported, refused residence permits or denied entry visas into Turkey— as in previous years.

In addition, the report disclosed, at least 35 foreign Protestants—including Americans, British, and Germans—were barred from entering Turkey. When family members were counted, more than 100 people have been affected by these bans. The report continued:

“These people have been resident in our country for many years, live here with their families, have many made investments in our country, sent their children to school, and all of them have no criminal record at all. This situation represents a major humanitarian problem. These entry bans, imposed with no forewarning, destroy the unity of the family and create chaos for all members of the individual’s family.

“In court cases opened to challenge this situation, the author- ities and courts have argued that these people are a threat to national security/terrorism. This year, the reason given for these entry bans was considered a “national threat” because the individual’s family. Revolutionary activities to the detriment of Turkey, have taken part in missionary activities and that some of them had attended the annual Family Conference which we have held for twenty years.”

In 2019, Christians across Turkey were exposed to hate crimes and hate speech, as well as to verbal and physical attacks. Examples include:

On February 13, a sign erected by the Istanbul Cankurtaran Church Association was dismantled by the Üsküdar Municipality without the knowledge of the Church authorities, on the grounds that it was too large, attracted notice and made those without the knowledge of the Church authorities, on the grounds that it was too large, attracted notice and made those who passed by on the street uncomfortable when seeing it. The teacher was transferred to a different school. According to the report, the teacher had been prevented from entering Turkey for a period of ten years. The teacher was removed from her post because her faith was reported in the media, and news outlets claimed that the teacher had been transferred to a different school because her faith was reported in the media. The teacher had been prevented from entering Turkey for a period of ten years.

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Turkey Ignores its Highest Court’s Verdict on Armenian Patriarch’s Election

By Harut Sassounian

Forum 18 News Service of Oslo, Norway, published a lengthy article by Dr. Mink Veldra on March 25, 2020, explaining the Turkish government's interference in the election of the Armenian Patriarch of Turkey, despite the ruling of the Constitutional Court that the government’s interference was not prescribed by law and therefore not in violation of the democratic and political rights.

Two Armenians from Istanbul, Levon Berj Kuzmekhian and Ohaness Garbis Balmumcyan, had initially filed a law-suit with the Administrative Court on March 27, 2012. The court rejected the lawsuit, stating that the Patriarchal election can only take place after the death or resignation of the Patriarch who was in a coma, even though the 1963 Ottoman-era regulations stated that the Armenian Patriarch’s election can take place in the case of "the death of the Patriarch, resignation and other."
The applicants appealed this decision, but the Court of Cassation rejected it on November 23, 2015.
The two Armenians then appealed to the Constitutional Court, claiming that the state’s refusal of their request for the election of a new Patriarch violated their right to freedom of religion. The court made its judgment in favor of the Armenian claimants, and its ruling is widely considered the win of the Armenian leaders who ignored the court’s decision. "While the judgment includes important findings related to the state’s unjustified interference in the internal affairs of the Armenian community, it also raises questions about whether the Constitutional Court is an effective domestic remedy or an actor that consistently bends applications to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, thus closing the door to international supervision," Dr. Veldra wrote. "The state had presented arguments in support of electing its new Patriarch in 2015, when the then Patriarch Mesroypet Musayri could no longer perform his duties due to illness, and 2019, when the community finally elected Bishop Sahak Mashalyan as the new Patriarch."

It is more than a coincidence that the Constitutional Court gave its verdict on May 22, 2019, following the state’s approval of the Patriarchal election after the March 8, 2019, passing away of Patriarch Musayri. The timing of the decision was intended to give the impression that the state was not interfering in the election of a new Patriarch and the Court was not telling the government what to do. In its ruling, the Constitutional Court referred to "the 1963 Regulation for the Armenian Milt (ethno-religious community) and international legal provisions, including the European Court on Human Rights (ECtHR) and the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty’s provisions on the protection of non-Muslims in Turkey," according to Dr. Veldra.

Throughout the existence of the Republic of Turkey, the government made some arbitrary changes during the 1950, 1961, 1996, 1998 and 2019 Patriarchal elections. “The election Directives were based on the Cabinet Decree of 18 September 1961 which had been issued only for that year’s Patriarchal election and which included no provisions for future elections. Despite this, the Interior Ministry has continued to use this Decree," Dr. Veldra wrote. The Interior Ministry’s submission to the Constitutional Court stated that "the measurement activities derived from the state’s positive obligation to organize the religious field."
The Constitutional Court countered that argument by ruling that the state’s verdict is based on the Turkish Constitution which protected religious freedom. Article 38 of the Lausanne Treaty which referred to the practice of religion, as well as the various rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court ruled that “the appointment of a Patriarchal Vicar-General (in 2010) occurred not as a result of a process that took place within the competing civilian and spiritual initiatives in the Armenian community, but as a result of state pressure that was underplayed by the Constitutional Court. The Constitutional Court found that the state has not been able to demonstrate a pressing social need that over- rides the ‘spirit of Armenian traditions’ and the Armenian community’s will. Therefore the interference in the appli- cants’ right to freedom of religion or belief by way of refusing the request to hold Patriarchal elections cannot be consis- ered compatible with the requirements of a democratic soci- ety, and Article 24 of the Constitution had thus been violat- ed.

However, even after the ruling of the Constitutional court, the state continued to interfere in the Patriarchal election. The Turkish Interior Ministry came up with a new restriction, ruling that only those Turkish Armenian bishops who were serving in Turkey at the time could be candidates for the Patriarchal election, thus reducing the number of eligible candidates to two. "This is 100% in contradiction to the Constitutional Court’s judgment," said Sebu Aslangil, the lawyer in the case. Nevertheless, the Armenian Steering Committee for the Patriarchal election decided not to contest the Interior Ministry’s ruling in order not to further delay the election of a new Patriarch. Dr. Veldra concluded: “The judgment raised the profile of the Constitutional Court as a high court delivering a judg- ment in line with ECHR jurisprudence. Yet, due to its timing, the judgment had no impact on rectifying the injustice that the Armenian community experienced. It also closed the door for future electionDirectives to be legally challenged.”

In its judgment, the Constitutional Court referred to "the 1963 Regulation for the Armenian Milt (ethno-religious community) and international legal provisions, including the European Court on Human Rights (ECtHR) and the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty’s provisions on the protection of non-Muslims in Turkey," according to Dr. Veldra.

Moscow Now Seeking to Make the Caspian Both a North-South and an East-West Hub

By Paul Goble

INC the collapse of the Soviet Union, discus- sions of trade routes in the Caucasus have mostly been premised on the conviction that the north-south route and the east-west route, backed by Moscow and the West, respectively, are complementary. Every positive development in one is treated as a defeat for the other eco- nomically and geopolitically.

For sure, compelling reasons exist for why this view endures. If the north-south route becomes predominant, the countries in the region will arguably continue to fall within Moscow’s orbit. Whereas, if the east-west route becomes more important, the Caucasus and Central Asian states will presumably have a ‘germane’ path to international mar- kets and will become more independent of their former imperial center. The former remains true, and Moscow is pushing hard to develop this link to Iran, India and the out- side world. The latter belief might now be called into ques- tion, however, because of Moscow’s efforts to develop alter- native east-west routes that will give it renewed influence over the other post-Soviet republics surrounding the Caspian Sea.

Increasingly, these countries may find them- selves forced by economics and politics to make use of the Russian east-west corridor.

The Russian government’s push to develop the north- south route has, in fact, accelerated in recent weeks. Moscow committed to helping Iran expand its rail lines as part of the intermodal transport network from Russia to the Indian Ocean. And five days ago (March 19), Russia Times trumpeted the fact the Iranian government had as- sisted multi-modal transport corridor through Iran would be a big push for the development of bilateral trade between Russia and India, something that will have not only economic, but geopolitical consequences. The new route will undercut Western sanctions on Iran and pull India away from the West, while offering significant benefits to the Eurasian Economic Union new international prospects (RT, March 19).

Use of the Caspian Sea will make shipping via this cor- ridor cheaper than the alternative rail routes from Central Asian countries favored by the United States. For this rea- son, its development, according to Russian analysts, will undercut US influence in the region, while simultaneously expanding Russia’s (Caspian Herald, March 24). In short, the north-south corridor will — perhaps to no one’s surprise, even in the West — finally begin to play the role that Russian President Vladimir Putin sketched out for it in 2012. After all, this is what Moscow hoped for and what the West mis- takenly thought it could block by sanctioning Tehran. Potentially far more important, Moscow’s move to insert itself into the east-west trade route that had histori- cally received support from Western countries.

For more than two decades, the West in general and the United States in particular have promoted trans-Caspian pipelines as well as both pipelines and railroads running from western Caspian ports through Georgia to Turkey.

Euraica portal, however, are already looking forward to a time when this water route could carry cargo from east to west in ways that will compete with Western-back railroads further south and give Moscow a new role in east-west trade, ride not only between Central Asia and China, but also between China and Europe as well. (Rhythm of Euraica, March 20).

The turn toward this east-west Russian route will not hap- pen anytime soon, given the difficulties Moscow will cer- tainly face in developing it into an attractive option. Other countries in the region, as Abdrakhman points out, will con- tinue to pursue alternative Caspian corridor indi- cations that for the first time, Moscow believes the Caspian can be both a north-south and an east-west corridor and that both will serve its interests. (This analysis was originally published by Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume. 17 Issue. 38.)
Armenian Authorities Allowed to Use Phone Data to Fight Coronavirus

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Ignoring strong opposition objections, Armenia’s parliament on Monday, March 30, allowed authorities to access personal data from people’s mobile phones for the purpose of stopping the spread of coronavirus in the country.

Under a government bill passed the National Assembly in the first reading, state bodies enforcing the coronavirus-related state of emergency will be able to track movements, phone calls and text messages of Armenians infected with the virus.

Presenting the bill to lawmakers, Justice Minister Rustam Badasyan said this will make it easier for them to identify and isolate those who have been exposed to infected individuals. He stressed that the authorities will not have access to the content of phone calls.

“The two parliamentary opposition parties rejected this explanation, saying that the extraordinary powers sought by the government constitute a politically dangerous violation of citizens’ privacy and will not help to contain the epidemic.”

“This is a regression of democracy,” claimed Naira Zohrabyan of the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK). “Mr. Minister, withdraw this bill. What you want to do is meaningless.”

Minister Badasyan said that many Armenians use online voice and text message systems to communicate with each other.

“People who have been in contact with virus carriers may have been infected in shops or on the street,” said Narek Zeynalian, the chairman of the street,” said Narek Zeynalian, the chairman of the parliamentary committee on healthcare.

“Phone calls are not the only indicators of people-to-person contact.”

Nevertheless, the parliament approved the bill by 57 votes to 24, with one abstention. Lilit Makunts, the parliamentary leader of the ruling party, said the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Armenia rose by 58 to 482 in the past day. (See related story on Page 1.)

Armenian health authorities’ capacity to monitor infections and detect the virus.

The EU is mobilizing its mobilized its major de-risking instrument worth €500 million, the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSFD). This will rapidly provide liquidity and can be urgently deployed by IFI partners to facilitate the provision of liquidity in the EU’s Neighbourhood including through working capital, trade finance, or moratoria on debt service.

The EU is also exploring to mobilize over €30 million from existing programs in coordination with the Armenian government.

In addition, in the current crisis the EU has mobilized its major de-risking instrument worth €500 million, the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSFD). This will rapidly provide liquidity and can be urgently deployed by IFI partners to facilitate the provision of liquidity in the EU’s Neighbourhood including through working capital, trade finance, or moratoria on debt service.

The EU is also reorienting ongoing support programs to address Armenia’s needs to respond to the pandemic. As a result, €1.75 million has already been disbursed under a Public Finance Policy Reform support program to provide immediate support to the government.

The Commission also stands ready to provide assistance to Armenia through TAIEX, its peer to peer instrument, by using EU Member States expertise, experience and examples of good practice on assessing emergency preparedness response scheme and health systems.

US Aid

The United States has pledged to provide Armenia with more than $1 million in aid designed to combat the coronavirus epidemic.

The funding will be part of a $174 million emergency aid package announced by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo late last week. Pompeo said it will help “64 of the world’s most at-risk countries” to better deal with the spread of coronavirus.

The assistance will be provided through international aid agencies, notably the World Health Organization.

“We are pleased that $1.1 million has been authorized for Armenia,” the US Embassy in Yerevan announced at the weekend.

The embassy told RFE/RL’s Armenia service afterwards that the assistance has already been transferred to relevant international organizations. It is aimed at strengthening Armenian health authorities’ capacity to monitor infections and detect the virus.