

Armenia, Hungary sign memorandum of cooperation in culture, education and science



As part of the official visit of the President of the Republic of Armenia Vahagn Khachaturyan to Hungary, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia and the Ministry of Culture and Innovation of Hungary on cooperation in the fields of culture, higher education, secondary vocational education, training and innovation, scientific-technical activities.

According to the press service of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia, the memorandum was signed by the Armenian Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Artur Martirosyan and Hungarian State Secretary for Innovation

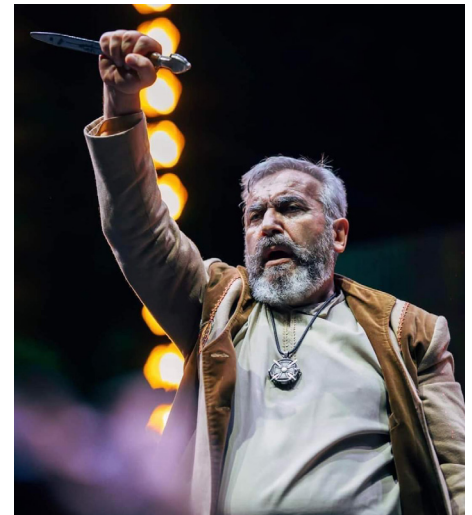
and Higher Education Balázs Hankó.

According to the source, Hungarian President Katalin Novák also attended the memorandum signing ceremony.

According to the memorandum, the parties will cooperate within the framework of programs financed by the international organizations (UNESCO, OECD, Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)) and the European Union to promote cultural, educational and research cooperation between Armenia and Hungary.

This includes implementing joint cultural, educational and research programs through the creation of new platforms for exchanging experiences.

Universal Grief, Pain and Sorrow Enwrapped World-Spread Armenians: Nowadays Njdeh, Warrior/ Combat Officer, Ideologist and Traditional Dance Master Gagik Ginosyan, 58, Left the Nation Whom He Devoted All his Life...



By Gourgen James Khazhakian
 Chief Correspondent

...Your's truly, being a vet of Armenian life at least for the last 35-40 years, absolutely can not remember such a HUGE crowd came to pay tribute to one of the BEST sons of the Nation, and many of them, even aged combattant fellows of Capt. Ginosyan, were crying loudly...

In the text you could find below by the moment I'm able to put just some pieces...YET...

Gagik Ginosyan in his last way was accompanied by the "Karin" Traditional Dance Troupe (founded by Ginosyan) Youngsters' Performing ◀ page 7

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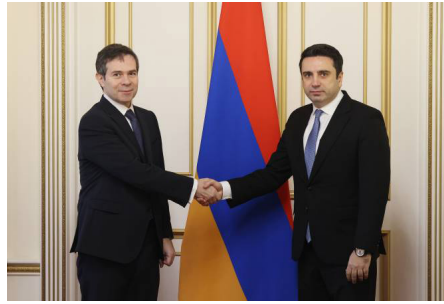
Greece ready to support Armenia's peace efforts, says envoy

Greece welcomes and supports Armenia's approach in establishing peace because it is based on international law, Greek Ambassador to Armenia Christos Sofianopoulos has said.

The new Greek Ambassador met with Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan on February 7.

During the meeting Ambassador Sofianopoulos praised Armenia's policy in context of establishing regional peace.

"Greece welcomes and supports Armenia's approach in the process of establishing peace because it is based on international law, jurisdiction and is carried out diplomatically. We are ready to support Armenia by all means in establishing peace," the Greek ambassador said, according to a readout issued by the



parliament's press service.

Speaker Simonyan congratulated the ambassador on his appointment and wished him good luck. He highlighted the strong, friendly relations between Armenia and Greece based on age-old brotherhood, mutual support and common values between the Armenian and Greek peoples.

Citing the high-level interstate ties between the two countries, the Speaker

called for an intensification of interparliamentary cooperation in order to utilize the untapped potential.

Speaker Simonyan attached importance to close cooperation in international parliamentary organizations. He highly appreciated cooperation with Greece as part of the EU-Armenia CEPA, as well as the Greek support to the Armenian parliament through the Twinning program.

The Armenia-Greece-Cyprus trilateral cooperation format was also discussed.

The Armenia-EU ties, the security issues in the South Caucasus, namely the humanitarian issues resulting from the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace talks were also discussed.

Armenia, Switzerland hold political consultations

The Armenian and Swiss foreign ministries have held political consultations in Yerevan, the Armenian foreign ministry said in a press release.

Armenia was represented by Foreign Ministry Department of Europe Director Samvel Mkrtychyan and Switzerland was represented by Swiss Foreign Ministry Eurasia Division Director Muriel Penevreyre.

"The parties were pleased to note the high level of political dialogue between Armenia and Switzerland and discussed

a broad range of issues pertaining to the bilateral relations agenda. Both sides underscored the need for developing the existing cooperation in the economy, high-tech, culture, tourism and other sectors," the foreign ministry said in a press release.

The effective partnership in international platforms and possibilities for mutual support within this framework were also discussed.

The Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization process was also discussed. Mkrtychyan presented the Armenian government's

Crossroads of Peace project. Views were exchanged on regional and international security issues.



Embodied founder Paolo Pirjanian sees potential for development of robotics and artificial intelligence in Armenia



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received Paolo Pirjanian, founder of

Embodied, Inc. Company operating in the field of robotics and artificial intelligence. The company created the Moxie AI robot.

The Prime Minister welcomed Mr. Pirjanian's visit to Armenia and emphasized that the Armenian government attaches great importance to the development of information technology and artificial intelligence. In that context, Nikol Pashinyan also emphasized the need for close cooperation with our compatriots operating in the field and realizing the existing

potential.

Paolo Pirjanian noted that he sees great potential for the development of robotics and artificial intelligence in Armenia and is ready to contribute to the further development and progress of the field.

Issues related to the implementation of new programs in the fields of artificial intelligence and robotics in Armenia, development of capacities were discussed.

World changed since the adoption of the current Constitution: Prime Minister



During the question-and-answer session with the government in the National Assembly on February 7, the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan noted that a thesis is being developed that changing the Constitution is being done to sign a peace treaty.

“In terms of the signing of the peace treaty, even if such problems exist, they have been resolved. There is an agreed article in the text of the peace treaty stating that the parties cannot refer to their own legislation to avoid fulfilling any of their

obligations under this treaty. The issue here is not and cannot be about the peace treaty at all,” said Pashinyan.

The Prime Minister noted that while the Constitution primarily governs internal affairs, it also regulates foreign relations, as is the case with the Constitution of any country. The current Armenian Constitution also provides guidelines for foreign relations.

“Every Constitution also has external effects. But connections there work completely differently,” said Pashinyan.

The Prime Minister emphasized that Armenia should think about its relations with the external world in new conditions.

“Nothing in the world is the same as it was under the conditions of the adoption of the current Constitution; no foreign relations are the same,” Pashinyan said, adding that this is not only about Armenia.

According to the Prime Minister, none of the Constitutions adopted until now have been enacted by the free will of the people; it was always the elite who imposed how they should live.

“However, one of the most important issues is to become more resilient and better protected in the external environment. But how?” noted the Prime Minister. Pashinyan reiterated that in terms of providing a security component, he had frequently mentioned the army and foreign relations. However, there is also a need for a third component.

“The army and foreign relations should serve the legitimate interests of the given state within its internationally recognized territory. This is a step aimed at elevating the level of security by one level,” said the Prime Minister.

FM Mirzoyan presents Armenia’s vision for regional stability to Dutch lawmakers

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan on Wednesday met with the chairman of the Dutch parliament’s Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Raymond de Roon and the committee members representing the majority of parliamentary parties, in The Hague, the foreign ministry said.

Mirzoyan noted that Armenia is advancing on the path of democratic reforms, which has led to the current achievements being reflected in relevant international indicators.

Touching upon the security situation in the South Caucasus, Mirzoyan informed the Dutch lawmakers about Armenia’s vision and efforts to establish stability and peace in its region.

The FM noted that Armenia’s constructive approaches do not always receive a proper response and emphasized the need for Azerbaijan to show appropriate



political will and clear commitment in this regard.

Additionally, Mirzoyan stressed the key principles in the process of normalizing Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, including the importance of unconditional respect for territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders. In the context of unblocking regional transport and economic communications, Ararat Mirzoyan highlighted that the principles of sovereignty, jurisdiction, reciprocity, and equality, which are essential to Armenia, are represented in the

Crossroads of Peace project initiated by the Armenian government. He also mentioned that the project has been presented and received attention from international partners.

Afterwards, the Armenian Foreign Minister addressed questions from Dutch lawmakers concerning Armenia’s regional developments, including the rights and needs of Armenians forcibly displaced due to ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, enhancing the Armenia-EU partnership, and various other topics of mutual interest.

During the meeting, there was an emphasis on the willingness to further enhance cooperation between Armenia and the Netherlands, both at the parliamentary level and within the Armenia-EU framework, to contribute to regional stability and ensure the well-being of Armenian citizens.

The Rome Statute holds real potential to prevent further escalation in the region: Armenian FM

In 1998, the international community made a historic decision to put an end to the most serious international crimes by adopting the Rome Statute, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said at the official welcoming ceremony for Armenia as the 124th State Party to Rome Statute.

"In 2023, Armenia ratified the Rome Statute with a sincere belief in its high power to eliminate the most serious crimes and end the impunity. On the 1st of February, the Rome Statute entered into force for Armenia. A fundamentally important occasion that brings us here today. I am grateful to each of you for sharing this special day with us," the Minister said.

"The Nuremberg Tribunal stated at its time "crimes against international law are committed by men, not abstract entities, and only by punishing individuals who commit such crimes can the provisions of international law be enforced". As we embark on this journey, let us embrace the responsibility that comes with ensuring that no one is above the law. Today, the International Criminal Court stands as a bastion against the horrors of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression. In this regard, Armenia's consistent cooperative approach to the ICC is based on the following major objectives: 1) preventing the most serious crimes which are of concern to

the international community as a whole, 2) strengthening the rule of law in the international community, 3) achieving more universality of the ICC," Minister Mirzoyan added.

"Armenia believes that it is extremely important to establish an international judicial system which ensures punishment for persons who have committed genocide and other serious crimes. For decades, Armenia has been an initiator and pioneer in the processes of prevention and condemnation of the crime of genocide, both within the framework of the United Nations and other international organizations and forums long before acceding to the International Criminal Court," he added.

"ICC's role in crime prevention and ensuring fair and impartial justice process for peaceful resolution of conflicts is significant. Unfortunately, in our region, we were confronted not only by complete unwillingness to resolve the issue by peaceful means but also with a clear intent to proliferate war, hatred and terror. Continued aggressions against the Republic of Armenia and occupation of our sovereign territories, heinous atrocity crimes perpetrated against Armenians, ethnic cleansing of Nagorno Karabakh, as a result of which over 100.000 Armenians had to escape their homes to find shelter

in Armenia, had devastating humanitarian consequences and continue to pose imminent risks for our region. In this context, we are convinced that the Rome Statute among other mechanisms has real potential to prevent any further escalation and atrocities, becoming a milestone towards stability and sustainable peace in our region," Ararat Mirzoyan stated.

"We highlight the Court's important role for delivering justice to victims of unimaginable atrocities, giving them a voice by enabling them to participate in its proceedings, providing assistance and awarding reparations. There is no doubt that the Rome Statute and the ICC, in the quest for accountability, have contributed greatly to the effective functioning of the international criminal justice system," he said.

"Today, let us celebrate not only Armenia's commitment but also the shared vision of a world where justice prevails, and the dignity of every individual is protected. As a new State Party to the Rome Statute Armenia will be an active member of the Court and will significantly contribute to the works of the Assembly of the States Parties. Together, we move forward in solidarity, bound by the ideals of the Rome Statute, as we strive for a future defined by fairness and the rule of law," Ararat Mirzoyan concluded.

Gegharkunik Governor receives French Ambassador to Armenia

The Governor of Armenia's Gegharkunik province Karen Sargsyan on February 8 met with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the French Republic to Armenia, Olivier Decottignies and First Counselor at the French Embassy in Armenia, Christoph Katsakhyan.

During the meeting, the parties discussed issues aimed at deepening and enhancing the ongoing cooperation in the security, economic, health, educational and cultural spheres.

At the outset of the meeting, Karen Sargsyan presented to the Ambassador the frameworks, results, and upcoming tasks of the cooperation programs established between Gegharkunik region and the Isère Department of the French Republic.

He noted that thanks to the efforts of both parties numerous and diverse programs had been implemented over the years in the fields of education, culture,

tourism and healthcare. Karen Sargsyan noted that the long-term cooperation has evolved into a strong friendship.

"France has demonstrated its sincere friendship and assistance to the population of Gegharkunik, Republic of Armenia, not only during times of peace but also amidst external threats and difficult days we have faced in recent years, for which we express our heartfelt gratitude.

Now the same cooperation, assistance, friendly and sincere attitude continues," said Sargsyan.

In his turn, Olivier Decottignies highly appreciated the results of the Gegharkunik-Isère cooperation and the unbreakable friendship achieved, emphasizing the further expansion of economic and cultural ties and the implementation of new projects.

"We are ready to cooperate in the fields of culture, education, healthcare,



agriculture, urban development and other areas, to provide support in many vital projects, especially pertaining to the strengthening and development of border settlements," said the Ambassador.

The governor also presented the programs of the Armenian government that have been implemented and those that are yet to be implemented in the Gegharkunik region.

Iran Has ‘Clearly Demonstrated’ It Will Not Tolerate ‘Geopolitical Changes’

Official Tehran, once again, emphasized its opposition to the so-called “corridor” scheme being advanced by Baku and Ankara, who are pushing for a land route through Armenia to Nakhichevan.

Iran’s Ambassador to Armenia, Mehdi Sobhani, told a meeting of experts and journalists in Yerevan on February 6 that while in general political terms such a “corridor” is an opportunity for advancing transportation capabilities.

“However,” he emphasized, “this is perceived completely differently.”

“Tehran has demonstrated through its actions that it will not tolerate any geopolitical changes in this region,” Sobhani said, emphasizing the Iranian government’s long-held position that any changes to the existing borders in the region would be a red line for the Islamic Republic, whose supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has conveyed this message, in no uncertain terms, to the leaders of Azerbaijan and Turkey.

“The common border between

Armenia and Iran has been the safest and has served as a guarantee for expanding ties and contacts between the two sides, as well as ensuring the well-being of both peoples,” said Sobhani.

“We welcome the unblocking of all roads and communications, if it happens based on the interests of countries and under their sovereignty. We support the strengthening of Armenia and the establishment of peace and stability. Therefore, only the balance of forces in our region will contribute to all of this. We are ready to provide any assistance that Armenia will need for further development,” Sobhani assured.

“Today, Iran is pursuing the most independent domestic and foreign policy, and without Tehran, not a single equation in the region can be resolved. Our country is part of the solution to the crises and problems of the region. Despite the pressure and conspiracies against Iran over the past 45 years, our country has made significant progress and, despite

the sanctions imposed on us, has achieved remarkable advancements in all areas,” Sobhani emphasized.

According to the Ambassador, Iran is conducting a balanced policy with the countries of the region, with particular emphasis on its neighboring states. In particular, relations between Armenia and Iran have consistently developed since their establishment.

“The peoples of Iran and Armenia have always stood side by side amidst moments of joy and sorrow. Today, Iran supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia and, as before, is ready to leverage all its resources to develop cooperation,” the Iranian envoy said.

“If there are escalations and conflicts in our region, they have a negative impact on all the countries of the region; therefore, they should become guarantors of solving the problems with joint efforts. It is necessary to be guided by sincere motives and be consistent in establishing real peace and stable security,” Sobhani added.

Armenia-Georgia agreement reflects mutual will - Pashinyan

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan believes that the agreement on strategic partnership between Armenia and Georgia reflects the determination of both countries’ governments to advance their entire agenda of relations.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said while answering the question of Alkhas Ghazaryan, an MP of the ruling majority faction, during question-and-answer session on February 7 with the government



at the National Assembly of Armenia.

“Regarding the declaration on strategic

cooperation and dialogue signed with Georgia, I can say that, in fact, all the aspects are carefully planned. This demonstrates the mutual determination of both countries’ governments to advance this entire agenda,” noted the Prime Minister.

Armenia and Georgia signed an agreement on strategic partnership on January 26. The signing of the agreement took place within the framework of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s visit to Georgia.

ICRC visits Armenian captives in Azerbaijan

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) representatives visited Armenian detainees in Azerbaijan in the end of January and in the beginning of February this year, ICRC Armenia representative Zara Amatuni told Armenpress.

She said that ICRC visited the captives who are acknowledged by Azerbaijan.

“These are regular visits which are agreed upon with the authorities of the

given country,’ she said.

The ICRC personnel reviewed the detention conditions and health of the captives and enabled them to contact their families.

A top law enforcement official in Armenia earlier [said](#) that 55 Armenians are currently held captive in Azerbaijan but Baku has so far acknowledged only 23 of them.



Authorities seek to introduce export duty for gold, platinum and palladium bullions

Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan on February 6 introduced to lawmakers a bill seeking to set a state duty for the exports of gold, platinum and palladium bullions.

“With this bill we are setting an exports duty on gold, platinum and palladium bullions, taking into consideration that companies engaged in this business should have some participation in the Armenian budget,” Kerobyan told lawmakers at the plenary session.

The duty will be set in the range of 0,8-1% of market price of the bullions. The law on state duty envisages a fixed



amount, for example for 1kg gold the duty is about 200,000 drams, which is approximately 1%. “This trade grew significantly in the recent period. And there’s a need to swiftly regulate it,” the minister added.

In response to a question from

Hayastan faction MP Artur Khachatryan, Kerobyan said that Armenia doesn’t produce gold bullions, and instead the gold mines are exporting unrefined gold. He added, however, that ‘probably we will have some news in this direction.’

Some 10 companies are engaged in the gold, palladium and platinum foreign trade in Armenia. “If there’s an opportunity to create an environment to enable the companies working in Armenia to engage in international commerce, then we are not closing that opportunity, but at the same time with this bill we are duly taxing it,” the minister said.

Perspectives of economic cooperation between Armenia and Greece discussed in Athens



Armenian Ambassador Extraordinary

and Plenipotentiary to Greece Tigran Mkrtchyan met with the President of the Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mrs. Sophia Kounenaki-Efracimoglou.

During the meeting, the opportunities for the development of economic cooperation between Armenia and Greece, the target areas of bilateral commercial

interest, as well as the implementation of new ideas to expand the scope of contacts in the economic sphere were discussed.

The parties agreed to organize a meeting of representatives of the business sector, mutual visits in the near future, and considered the possibilities of holding a new business forum.

Armenian exports to EEU countries grow but drop to EU

Armenia exported goods worth over \$8,4 billion in 2023, a 55,3% growth compared to 2022.

Exports to fellow Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) countries grew, while exports to EU countries dropped, according to the Statistical Committee.

Armenian exports to EEU countries grew 40,8% and comprised over \$3,6 billion, and exports to EU countries dropped 8,2%, comprising \$709,5 million.

Most of the exports went to Russia (\$3,4 billion, an increase of 38,8%).

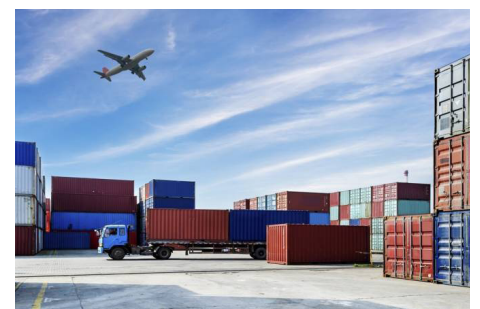
Exports to other EEU countries also

grew; exports to Kyrgyzstan stood at \$27,3 million (4,8 times growth), exports to Kazakhstan stood at \$71,3 million (3,8 times growth), and exports to Belarus stood at \$91,9 million (19,5% growth).

Despite the overall drop, exports to individual EU countries grew significantly. The Netherlands is Armenia’s 4th top export destination (after Russia, UAE and China), with exports comprising \$234,1 million (9% growth).

Armenian exports to Slovakia stood at \$42,9 million (75,8% growth). Exports to Lithuania doubled and stood at \$22,6

million. Exports to Spain, Cyprus, Hungary, Czechia, Sweden and Portugal also grew. However, exports to France dropped 3,2% and stood at \$9,5 million. Armenian exports to Germany dropped 17,4% and comprised \$87,5 million. Exports to Italy and Poland also dropped in 2023.



page 1 ➔ "Yarkhushta", Armenian old military dance, songs and poetry.

...As a Warrior, he was buried at the "Yerablur" Military Panteon with all military honors.

In various schools in Yerevan as well as in Marzes students were paying tribute to the Great Armenian by dancing/singing under big portrait of Ginosyan...

Tsovinar Ginosyan, Gagik's younger daughter says:

"I'm with who is dancing 'cause of pain..."

...From now on my dance will be accompanied with non-stop lose' pain, but meanwhile with pride..."

And..."My Dad's Mission will be continued, 'cause we have no right to get weaker..."

...As a friend of Armenian/Artsakh Army Captain Ginosyan's **Karo Vardanyan** said at the National Hero (no matter granted it from the Govt. or not) funeral: *"...After all, we should be comforted that Ginosyan left us with his endless faith and hope ..."*

In their condolence letter **Zinvari Tun** (House of Wounded Hero Soldiers) Rehabilitation Center write: *"...Mr Ginosyan was not only All-Armenian dance teacher and patriot soldier (officer), but also the great devotee of all the national values..."*

From the very first day of the Zinvari Tun foundation he was with us..."

(There is a video of dancing Gagik Ginosyan with handicapped warriors of the House).

...Famous orientalist, Honorary Colonel

of the Artsakh Defence Army Professor **Gourgen Melikyan** was not able to hold back tears when speaking for cameras on his long time comrade in arms Gagik Ginosyan...

US Embassy expressed their condolences as well:

"It is with great sorrow that we have learned of the passing of Gagik Ginosyan, a long-time partner of the U.S. Embassy in Armenia. In 2010 Mr. Ginosyan undertook the preservation of Armenian traditional dances under the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation program.

The U.S. Embassy would like to offer sincere condolences to Mr. Ginosyan's family, friends, and colleagues."

...Oh Great Garegin Njdeh, your best sons leaving us...

Over 3,6 mln drams to Armenian Mothers: In February, Cancer Awareness Month, The Power of One Dram goes to City of Smile

IDBank and Idram sum up the January program of the Power of One Dram initiative. The amount gathered during January, AMD 3,665,972 was directed to the "Armenian Mothers" charity fund.

This time "The Power of One Dram" provided support not only to the fund but also to beneficiaries directly. 20 beneficiaries of the "Armenian Mothers" fund received idplus gift cards in the amount of AMD 50,000 each, with which they are able to make purchases at all the points where there is an opportunity to pay with Idram&IDBank app, that is, around 20,000 points of sale.

The amount gathered during February will be directed to the "City of Smile" charitable fund to support people with cancer and blood diseases.

According to Tatevik Vardevanyan, the head of the communication unit of ID-Bank and Idram, supporting children with

cancer is the constant focus of companies. "As February is considered the Cancer Awareness Month, we decided right now to stand with them and once again remind them that cancer is not a death sentence. The trust and optimism of each of us is important, and of course the realization that big problems can be solved with even small investments. By paying with the Idram&IDBank application, our users also indirectly participate in a good cause and contribute to the transfer of more money to our beneficiaries at the end of the month," said Tatevik Vardevanyan.

According to Esther Demirchyan, director of the "City of Smile" charitable foundation, they highly value cooperation with IDBank and Idram, which has already become a tradition, within the framework of the "The Power of a Dram" initiative. "The participation of thousands of people with this initiative turns into

a big donation, supporting children and young people fighting cancer in Armenia. Thanks to the participation of many people and initiatives like IDBank and Idram that hundreds of beneficiaries of the "City of Smile" fund receive the best treatment available in Armenia without spending "a single dram". "City of Smile" charitable fund is extremely grateful to IDBank and Idram for being by the side of children and young people who are constantly fighting cancer," said Esther Demirchyan.

Becoming a goodwill ambassador is easy and costs nothing. For that, you just need to make all your payments with the Idram&IDBank application, IDBanking. am online platform, through Idram and IDBank terminals, and for each payment you make, the companies will donate one dram to good causes.

COMPANIES ARE SUPERVISED BY CBA

USAID provides \$1 million in additional assistance for the displaced people from Nagorno-Karabakh

USAID provides \$1 million in additional assistance for the displaced people from Nagorno-Karabakh.

Due to this funding, 19,300 displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh sheltered in Ararat, Kotayk, Lori, Shirak, Syunik, Tavush provinces, and Yerevan will receive humanitarian support under the Protection, Inclusion, and Empowerment program funded by the United States Agency for International Development and implemented by Democracy International.

This initiative kicked off in Kanaker-Zeytun district, Yerevan during which displaced persons received food and hygiene packages. USAID/Armenia's Acting Deputy Mission Director Matthew Laird along with Anna Zhamakochyan, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, and Liesbeth Zonneveld, Country Director of Democracy International Armenia joined the volunteers and the team to participate in the event.

"Since late September 2023, USAID

has provided \$9.27 million to support those impacted by the hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh. These funds are used to provide everything from food to psychosocial support to help address trauma caused by the violence and mass displacement," said USAID/Armenia's Acting Deputy Mission Director Matthew Laird in his meeting with the displaced persons.

USAID remains committed to helping displaced persons through its programs.

Financial system ready for sustainable development, economy financing, quality service: Central Bank Deputy Chairman



The Armenian banks concluded the last year with high capital and liquidity reserves, which are prerequisites for guaranteeing the resilience of the financial system against possible future shocks. Currently, the financial system has all the prerequisites for further sustainable development, financing the economy, and providing quality service, Hovhannes Khachatryan, Deputy Chairman of the Armenian Central Bank, told Armenpress.

In the interview, Khachatryan addressed the problems of the financial system in the past year, discussing indicators of inflation and economic growth, loans and deposits, the effects on the dram exchange rate, forecasts for the current year and other topics.

- Mr. Khachatryan, what factors primarily influenced the financial system of Armenia in 2023, both positively and negatively? To what extent were the challenges addressed? Which problems do you rule out from the financial system this year?"

- Despite all the difficulties, we can consider the previous year a period of stable development for the financial system. The main challenge was related to geopolitical and regional events. We should note that the Armenian banks concluded the last year with high capital and liquidity reserves, which are prerequisites for guaranteeing the resilience of the financial system against possible future shocks. In addition, the banking sector recorded sufficient profitability, providing an additional impetus for both the expansion of

capital stock and regular lending to the economy. As for 2024, the financial system has all the prerequisites for further sustainable development, financing the economy and ensuring quality service.

-What was the recorded inflation in the Republic last year, and what is the reason for this indicator? How does it compare with the previous year, and what are your predictions for this year?

-According to official statistics, in December 2023, deflation of 0.6 percent per year was recorded in the Republic of Armenia. In its discussions, the Board of the Central Bank has repeatedly noted that deflationary effects transferred from the external sector have been significant in recent inflation developments.

They are manifested mainly in terms of imported food products as well as non-food products. For example, as of December 2023, the prices of imported food decreased by 7.9 percent, while non-food items experienced an inflation rate of 0.1 percent. This also reflects a gradual decline from the very high price levels of previous years. In the post-pandemic period, we had a situation where international commodity markets encountered a sharp rise in prices due to disruptions in global value chains, which were further exacerbated by increased geopolitical tensions. As a result of the gradual restoration of value chains and the implementation of restraining monetary policy in the main partner countries, prices in the international markets gradually decreased, which was also reflected in the Armenian inflation indicators of 2023.

It is also important to note that high demand has played a significant role in the development of Armenian inflation in recent years. Starting from 2022, this was mainly due to the high foreign demand generated by a large inflow of international visitors, which somewhat weakened in 2023. Additionally, in 2023, the

acceleration of domestic demand in the construction and services sectors became essential. Throughout this period, the actions of the Central Bank were aimed at regulating excess demand and preventing the manifestation of potential unmooring of inflationary expectations. According to the Central Bank's estimates, inflation will gradually increase starting in 2024 and approach the target level of 4 percent in the 3-year horizon.

The published monetary policy program also presents various scenarios for the development of the macroeconomic situation in the Republic of Armenia, which may result in the formation of either a higher inflationary or lower inflationary environment. However, in any scenario, one thing is clear: the Central Bank, regardless of developments, will be ready and consistent in implementing the inflation target and ensuring price stability in the country over the medium term.

- Mr. Khachatryan, what were the exchange rates of the dram last year, and what factors influenced them?

- During 2023, although at a milder pace, the trends observed since 2022 continued due to the significant inflow of international visitors and tourists, as well as financial and capital. These influences were also reflected in the trends of the dram exchange rate. In September-October 2023, against the backdrop of Artsakh events, a certain increase in uncertainty and concerns was recorded in the market, which was further reflected by a specific rise in volatility in the currency market. The latter, in fact, settled when the background of uncertainties somewhat eased, leading to the stabilization of the dram exchange rate.

- In general, what significant changes did 2023 have in terms of financial stability and risks? To what extent was it possible to overcome the existing problems in that regard and end the year with positive

results? What to expect this year? What are the steps taken by the Central Bank towards financial stability and what are the predictions for the new year?

- In addressing the risks threatening financial stability, it is necessary to underscore the factor of geopolitical uncertainties. Another risk, the Central Bank referred to in its publications for many times, pertains to potential overheating trends in the real estate market in recent years. To mitigate these risks, the Central Bank has incrementally raised the capital requirements for the banking system throughout the year, establishing the countercyclical capital buffer rate at 1.5 percent starting from August 2023. To mitigate mortgage credit risks, maximum limits for the loan-to-collateral ratio (set at 90 percent for dram loans) were introduced in 2022.

It is significant to note the amendments made in 2023 to the Law 'On Currency Regulation and Currency Control,' of the Republic of Armenia which prohibited the provision of foreign currency mortgage loans to residents. Additionally, minimum requirements were implemented for the balances of special development accounts. In 2024, the Central Bank's actions aimed at ensuring the stability of the financial system will be guided by macro-financial conditions, uncertainties and systemic risks.

- What changes and indicators were observed in terms of loans and deposits in 2023 compared to 2022 and what do these indicators signify?

- As of the end of December 2023, the credit portfolio of the banking system amounted to about 4.7 trillion drams, increasing by about 797 billion drams or 20.4 percent compared to the previous year. Deposits (demand and term) amounted to about 5.1 trillion drams, increasing by about 429.3 billion drams or 9.2 percent compared to the previous year. These indicators affirm that the banking system is evolving at a dynamic pace, contributing

significantly to both the accumulation of savings and the financing of the Armenian economy through lending.

- What was the economic growth index concluding 2023, and how does it compare with the previous year? Additionally, what is the forecast for this year?

- In 2023, according to the estimates from the Central Bank, annual economic growth is anticipated to be at a level higher than 8 percent, and in 2024, high growth is also expected within the framework of 6 percent. It is crucial to consider the factors influencing economic growth. In 2022, as mentioned, the primary driver of growth was high external demand, while in the last year, growth fueled by domestic demand in the construction and services sector became significant. The latter is also estimated to gradually weaken, and in 2024, we are expected to approach our long-term potential growth level of 5 percent. It is essential to emphasize that the entire toolkit of the Armenian Government, from the implementation of capital investments to various initiatives and measures aimed at improving the private investment environment, will be directed towards increasing potential growth in the coming years, with the goal of achieving the 7 percent indicator targeted by the Government.

- Mr. Khachatryan, do you anticipate the possibility of sudden sharp fluctuations in the foreign exchange market this year? What are the prospects for sustainability in that regard?

- Firstly, it is important to note that the exchange rate in Armenia is free-floating, determined by a combination of market factors, and the Central Bank does not consider it as a goal. It is noteworthy that various scenarios of economic development, encompassing factors such as tourism, money transfer, other financial flows, as well as potential changes in exports and domestic demand, could lead to scenarios involving both appreciation and depreciation of the exchange rate. It should also be noted that in certain situations, characterized by large-scale financial flows

and rapid changes in market expectations, an increase in volatility might occur in the currency market. The Central Bank adheres to the principles of a floating exchange rate and is prepared to intervene to ensure the normal functioning of the market only in the event of risks that could disrupt the regular operation of the financial markets.

- Considering the processes and developments of the past year, what will be the priorities of the Central Bank's activities this year?

- Among other priorities, it is worth noting that on January 12, the Central Bank officially presented its new and improved Monetary Policy Development and Decision-Making System (FPAS MARK II). Starting this year, the Central Bank of RA will structure monetary policy decision-making under multiple scenarios and enhance risk management. The latter also signifies significant changes in the areas of transparency and communication of monetary decisions. Regarding the development of the financial system, the priorities of the Central Bank of the Republic of Armenia are outlined in its strategy. Our focus will be on the digital transformation of the financial system, the development of payment systems, the creation and enhancement of modern infrastructure, reducing the sensitivity of the financial system to climate risks, combating money laundering and terrorist financing (AML/CFT), and improving the compliance function, along with the continuous adoption of modern regulatory standards. In addition, we have initiated an institutional transformation program at the Central Bank. As a result, we will be reviewing the bank's management, decision-making, project implementation, budgeting, procurement, personnel management, IT infrastructure, and systems modernization, among other processes. This is important, as the effectiveness of our operations is fundamental to fulfilling the Central Bank's mission.

Van Novikov

Scoring Victories: Armenia Pushes Back Against Baku in PACE

Insights with Eric Hacopian, a political analyst, look at the main events of the week in and around Armenia. (CivilNet)

Welcome to this week's episode of Insights. During this week's show, we're going to cover three topics. The first one is going to be an update on the Azeri delegation's expulsion from PACE. The second one is going to be an update on our illegally held political prisoners and POWs in the dungeons of Baku. And lastly, we're going to cover the issue of labor migration from India and other places to Armenia. Now what is PACE?

Let's give you an explanation of what that organization is. PACE is the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It's the parliamentary arm of the Council of Europe, actually. The Council of Europe is a 46-nation international organization, which is primarily dedicated to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

So what actually happened at PACE is that the Parliament Assembly of the Council of Europe refused to ratify the credentials of the Azeri delegation, citing the country's poor human rights records and democracy records, anticipating this result that they're going to be thrown out of PACE. The Azeri delegation itself withdrew from PACE a few hours before the vote was going to happen for them not to be allowed in. The reasons given by PACE for the expulsion of the Azeri delegation was the following.

The body had concluded that the country had not fulfilled major commitments stemming from its joining the council in 2001. PACE had serious concerns about Azerbaijan's ability to conduct free and fair elections. The lack of an independent judiciary and respect for human rights, illustrated, which has been illustrated by numerous European Court of Human Rights opinions that have come out against the country.

And most importantly for us, they spoke about the illegal blockade of Artsakh last year and the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh in September of last year. Now,

what was the Aliev's regime response to all this? They blamed their expulsion on three things. The first one is that they're victims of Islamophobia and they're also victims of racism on behalf of Western European countries. And lastly, their claim that the Council of Europe is demanding that their country turn gay.

Now, going over the Azeri responses on the first point about Islamophobia being the cause of their expulsion, what's interesting is that the regime in Baku actually at this point probably has a lot more Islamic activists in prison than they actually do Armenians. On the second matter of note, any charges of racism coming from the regime in Baku are quite rich because part of this delegation and their foreign ministry parliamentary delegation actually went as far as calling Armenians in Europe the tumors of Europe.

And lastly, when it comes to the charges of their demand of the Council of Europe to turn gay, we've actually found no evidence with this, and the only thing I could imagine is that maybe the Council of Europe demanded that they change the national anthem to the Village People's YMCA, but then I don't think the Council of Europe would do that because for all of their artistic faults, civilized people actually brought a lot of joy to people.

Now what does all of this mean in real terms? One which should not exaggerate its importance because the Council of Europe is actually the junior cousin to the European Union so it's actually not as important. It is however a very important first step in the targeting of the delegitimization of the regime in Baku. In fact, historically, if you want the EU to move towards sanctions and other actions against a regime, you actually start in the Council of Europe. There's actually history of that. What this also means is that we need to double down on all of our attacks and demonization of the regime in Baku, both in the Council of Europe, which actually should be a lot easier because they're not even there to defend themselves, and in all other European and international bodies.

Now we're going to move on to our second topic of the week, which is an update

on our illegally held political prisoners in POWs in Baku. Last week the regime released these photos of the former Artsakh presidents looking happy in prison, reading books, comfortable in their rooms.

And what can we say about this? These are actually lies from the pits of hell. Alexander Lapshin, the Israeli blogger that was illegally kidnapped by the regime in Baku, said that he was kept actually in the same prison and he was forced to take similar pictures with essentially being threatened with retribution if he did not smile for the camera and have photos of him taken looking happy. On the same front, when it comes to the case of Ruben Vardanyan, the regime actually extended his illegal pre-detention before trial by four months.

I supposed to give them more time to fabricate crimes that he's never committed. I'll actually make it easier for the prosecutors in Baku if you actually want to charge Mr. Vardanyan with something that he's guilty of. Actually, you can use what I call, what is the LWA statute under Azeri law. And you might ask, what is LWA? UA and that is living while Armenian which is in truth is actually illegal to be an Armenian in Azerbaijan or in areas like Artsakh which is occupied by the regime in Baku.

Now we're going to move on to the third topic of the week which is the issue of labor migration and specifically Indian labor migration to Armenia. You know last year outside of the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh, this was probably the biggest story coming out of Armenia. It is reported that over 60,000 Indian labor migrants actually moved to Armenia over the last couple of years, and that number is actually expected to double over the next few years.

These individuals work in agriculture, in the service industry, construction, now pretty much at all parts of the service economy. They're obviously not the only labor migrants to this country. We have labor migrants in Russia, Iran, Syria, and as far away as West Africa. And these individuals actually work on all levels, from some of the highest paying jobs to

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OSCE raises concerns over fairness of Azerbaijan election

The presidential elections in Azerbaijan lacked genuine pluralism and critical voices were continuously stifled, international observers said in a [statement](#) on February 8.

“Longstanding restrictions on freedoms of association and expression were reinforced by recent legal amendments and resulted in legislation not in line with international democratic standards,” they said.

The joint observation mission from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) concluded that while the election code is detailed and regulates all aspects of the electoral process, recent amendments left previous ODIHR recommendations unaddressed.

“The early presidential election was held in a restrictive environment, and while it was efficiently prepared, critical voices and political alternatives were largely absent. Regrettably, previous recommendations to bring the legal framework closer in line with international standards for democratic elections have remained unaddressed, and numerous restrictions in law and practice continue to exist,” said Artur Gerasymov, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observers.

“The campaign remained low key throughout, lacked any meaningful public



engagement and was not competitive. While six other candidates participated in the campaign, none of them convincingly challenged the incumbent president’s policies in their campaigns, leaving voters without any genuine alternative. Civil society and opposition representatives noted that the legal framework and its implementation makes it difficult to enjoy their right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to hold public gatherings, both in the run-up to the election and outside the campaign period,” the observers said in the statement.

“In observing this election, I have noticed the strong absence of an engaged and informative public campaign between political alternatives, while the media environment remained extremely constrained, leaving voters without the possibility to meaningfully inform themselves about the options on voting day,” said Daniela De Ridder, Head of the OSCE PA delegation. “Women remain vastly under-represented in political life, although they shoulder the majority of the organizational work on election day. This demonstrates the need

to introduce laws that guarantee equal participation in politics.”

“Highly restrictive media legislation as well as recent arrests of critical journalists have hindered the media from operating freely and led to widespread self-censorship, limiting the scope for independent journalism and critical debate. Minimal coverage of the candidates and campaign reduced the opportunity for voters to learn about the contestants and their programmes in order to make an informed choice on election day,” the observers stated.

“In this important election for the country, none of the candidates challenged the incumbent convincingly, and some opposition parties did not take part at all, claiming a lack of adequate democratic conditions,” said Eoghan Murphy, who headed ODIHR’s election observation mission. “While preparations for the election were efficient and professional, including the training of precinct commissioners, on Election Day important safeguards were often disregarded and we observed substantial procedural errors throughout the day.”

The international election observation mission to the early presidential election in Azerbaijan totaled 335 observers from 42 countries, comprising 256 ODIHR-deployed experts and long-term and short-term observers, and 79 from the OSCE PA.

page 10  some of the lowest.

What is the driving force of this migration? There’s a few things. The first one is continued economic growth. The second one are large-scale labor shortages. And lastly, which is more of a cultural phenomenon, is now there’s actually jobs in Armenia that Armenians are no longer willing to do.

Now, in analyzing this, what can we say? First and foremost, in the modern world, there’s really no such thing as mono-ethnic countries anymore. So this is actually quite the norm in the world. Secondly, any kind of economic development anywhere in the world actually draws in

labor migrants. That’s just the way the world economy works.

But what is necessary for us not to have issues and problems is that if these people are actually going to stay, and we’re not sure if this is the case and how this is going to work out, I’m sure that some of them will, that what you have is you have integration, not ghettoization. What’s important is that all of this is done within some scale of limits, and that you actually preserve local cultural dominance over the long run and that people who are staying here and living here actually add to the cultural commons rather than deducting from it.

In conclusion, what’s important here is that one of the things that we need to learn is that we need to understand the difference between ethnicity and citizenship. In the future, there’s going to be significant numbers of people that are actually citizens of the Republic of Armenia who are not ethnically Armenian. Now what is interesting is that given our people’s history around the world, this is something that is actually should come quite naturally for us, because that is our story from around the world, where we’re actually one thing, we’re Armenian while at the same time we have a citizenship of nationality of another country.

HSBC Announces exit from Armenia

HSBC, Europe's biggest bank, has announced the sale of its Armenian subsidiary which will end its nearly 30-year presence in Armenia.

In a statement issued late on February 6, the British bank said it has agreed to sell the HSBC Armenia unit to the country's leading bank, Ardshinbank, in line with its "strategy to redeploy capital from less strategic or low-connectivity businesses into higher-growth opportunities globally."

Ardshinbank confirmed the agreement in a separate statement. Neither side disclosed the terms of the deal subject to regulatory approvals.

"Ardshinbank looks forward to welcoming HSBC Armenia customers onto our award-winning platform and to further

delivering on its strategy to accelerate growth and expand product offering for clients," said the bank's chairman, Artak Ananyan. He promised a "smooth and fluid transition" for the 30,000 or so customers.

Reuters reported last May that HSBC is considering a possible exit from as many as a dozen countries after earlier announcements about selling off parts or all of its activities in France, Canada, Russia and Greece. HSBC completed the sale of its French retail business to CCF on January 1 days after Canada approved the acquisition of the bank's Canadian business by Royal Bank of Canada.

Established in 1996, HSBC Armenia is the only local commercial bank controlled

by a major Western banking group. It currently has total assets worth 290 billion drams (\$720 million) and around 200 billion drams in customer deposits.

HSBC Armenia's net profit rose from 8 billion drams in 2022 to over 11 billion drams (\$27 million) last year. By comparison, Ardshinbank reported nearly 63 billion drams in earnings in 2023.

The 18 banks operating in Armenia nearly tripled their combined profits, to a record 253 billion drams, in 2022 amid a dramatic increase in cash flows from Russia which followed the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The figure fell by 9 percent in 2023, according to the Hetq.am publication.

Armenia records 6.4% decrease in tumor disease mortality over 4 years, says National Oncology Center Director



Mortality from tumor diseases in Armenia decreased by 6.4 percent in the last 4 years. Narek Manukyan, the Director of the National Oncology Center, shared this information in his speech at the fourth Armenian Oncology Congress held in Jermuk.

"In the last 4 years, mortality from

tumor diseases in Armenia decreased by 6.4 percent. However, I want us to understand that we have achieved such success as a result of the daily hard work of three important links, both separately and together," said the director of the center.

According to Manukyan, the first factor contributing to the progress is the continuous training of oncologists. The director of the center also emphasized the role of the government, particularly the Ministry of Health.

"Since 2019, surgery and radiation treatment of malignant tumors have been carried out within the framework of the state order, and drug treatment is provided based on the principle of co-payment.

Patients, knowing that the treatment is free, have started to consult oncologists more frequently when needed. In the past, a significant number of patients did not seek treatment after being diagnosed due to the lack of funds. Now, the number of such cases has sharply decreased," he said.

According to him, such results have been influenced by the additional large sums of money provided by the state.

Director of the National Oncology Center noted that such results had been influenced by the additional large sums of money provided by the state.

Manukyan identified the third contributing factor as the increased attention of medical institutions to oncology.

Armenian Ambassador, Mayor of Brussels discuss perspectives of decentralized cooperation

On February 5, Ambassador Tigran Balayan had a meeting with Bourgmestre of Brussels Philippe Close.

While welcoming Ambassador Balayan, Bourgmestre hailed the exemplary integration of the Armenian community in Brussels and their overall contribution to the development of the city of Brussels.

The interlocutors discussed the possibilities of decentralized cooperation



and the implementation of joint cultural projects.

At the request of Mr Close, Ambassador Balayan presented the current conditions and needs of the forcibly displaced Armenians as a result of the ethnic cleansing committed by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, stressing the need to implement the legally binding rulings of the International Court of Justice.

Civic Museum of Bari hosts event on Saint Blaise and Armenian Saints



The event *San Biagio: un Santo, una Storia, un popolo* ("San Biagio: a saint, a story, a people") took place on 3 February at 10.30 am at the Civic Museum of Bari (Puglia, Italy). It was a conference focusing on Armenian Saints in Italy, particularly about Saint Blaise, (Sourp Vlas) bishop and martyr of Sebaste.

The event was organized by the Presidency Council Commission on Culture of the Municipality of Bari in collaboration with the Armenian Community of Bari. The event commenced with opening remarks by the president of Commission, Dr. Giuseppe Cascella, the Mayor's delegate for the pandemic emergency, Dr. Loredana Battista, and Dr. Dario Rupen Timurian, the representative of the Armenian Community in Bari. Timurian announced next set of conferences dedicated to Armenian culture.

Mr. Timurian read a message from the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to Italy H. E. Tsovinar Hambardzumyan.

In her message, the Ambassador emphasized that 'the events connecting Puglia and Armenia are always numerous and cover various areas of interest.' She expressed her desire to be present with a message at this event dedicated to the memory of Saint Blaise, whom she defined as 'one of the most famous figures linked to Armenian culture in Italy.' The ambassador recalled the testimony of Saint Blaise's coherent life, his complete adherence to civil and religious values, and the suffering he endured for these reasons, similar to the Armenian people in various periods of history.

In conclusion, the ambassador sent greetings to the speakers. She referred

to the families of our compatriots, Timurian and Lilosian, who have lived in Bari for a hundred years, and she mentioned the Armenian citizen prof. Carlo Coppola. Finally she conveyed her regards to the descendants of Father Francesco Divittorio from Rutigliano (near Bari), a Franciscan killed in Mujukderesi (near Marash) on 23 January 1920 while defended 20 Armenian orphans entrusted to him. The



representatives of Divittorio family were present at the event together with the mayor of Rutigliano Municipality, Dr. Giuseppe Valenzano who recalled the life of the martyr and publicly invited Armenian



authorities to visit his city.

After the introduction, the illustrious speakers explained to the audience the importance of San Biagio and the Armenian Saints in Italy over the centuries, encompassing religious, historical, artistic, and scientific perspectives.

The first speaker was the prof. Aldo

Luisi, a well-known Latinist and professor emeritus of the University of Bari. He discussed the Latin and Eastern hagiographic tradition. Prof. Nicola Cutino analyzed the cultural and popular tradition about Saint Blaise in Puglia and South of Italy. Our compatriot prof. Carlo Coppola, provided a brief overview of Armenian saints in Italy, covering ancient and contemporary times.

The conference was concluded by two reports on the presence of Saint Blaise in Art and Science: Dr. Siranush Quaranta spoke about of Saint Blaise in Puglia and in particular, the frescoed rock church of Saint Blaise in San Vito dei Normanni (near Brindisi). Prof. Dr. Matteo Gelardi, president of the Italian Academy of Nasal Cytology, the representative of the illustrious Italian Society of Otolaryngology, told about the relationships between the otolaryngologist and his patron saints Saint Biagio and Saint Cono.

The meeting, which lasted over 2 hours, ended with a convivial moment open to the over 60 guests in attendance.

The attendees had the opportunity to taste the renowned "Panettone di San Biagio" and expressed a desire to delve deeper into specific themes of Armenian culture. Following the success of the event, the organizers are now preparing a new program for the upcoming months.

Concert in Cannes marks the start of Aznavour's Centennial year in France

Charles Aznavour's Centennial year officially began in France on February 4th with the Aznavour Classique concert at the Palace of Festivals and Congresses of Cannes, the Aznavour Foundation informs.

The evening, devoted to Charles Aznavour's timeless



music, unfolded with performances by the National Orchestra of Cannes under the direction of Philippe Béran, featuring soloist Kristina Aznavour and pianist Erik Berchot.

The Aznavour Foundation expressed gratitude to the audience for the warm welcome and standing ovation.

Armenia permanent population grows

Armenia's permanent population stood at 2,990,900 as of January 1, 2024, which is an increase by 53,4 thousand compared to the same period of 2023, according to official data released by the Statistical Committee.

According to preliminary data, by January 1, 2024, 41,4 thousand people

registered in the state population registry (including forcibly displaced persons of NK). Whereas the natural population growth in 2023 comprised 12,000.

Yerevan's population is 1,104,200 (increase by 15,6 thousand).

The most populated province is Kotayk with 278,000 people, followed by

Armavir (259,4 thousand), Ararat (255,8 thousand), Shirak (237,9 thousand), Lori (225,3 thousand), Gegharkunik (213,2 thousand), Aragatsotn (131,5 thousand), Syunik (119,5 thousand), Tavush (117,1 thousand) and Vayots Dzor (49 thousand).

"Repository of Dishes" created to preserve Armenian national dishes



A new subsection has been added in the "Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Armenia" database under the title "[Dishes Database](#)," which has been compiled as a result of the preliminary inventory of dishes in Armenian communities.

160 beneficiaries of 40 settlements, 20 villages and 7 cities of 50 communities of 10 regions of Armenia participated in the

currently viable national dishes in Armenian communities, not only to ensure the preservation and transmission of this form of heritage, but

process. About 250 elements of Armenian and Yezidi national dishes were inventoried. State and non-governmental organizations, private food industry enterprises and individuals participated in the process.

The purpose of the inventory was to collect

also its viability, dissemination and popularization. It will also contribute to the economic progress and sustainability of gastro tourism and communities.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the process, the "Dishes Database" will be continuously updated with new elements and videos about dishes, contributing to public awareness, preservation and use of national dishes.



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