

Armenia's Constitutional amendments come into force



The Constitutional amendments entered into force, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan said on Facebook.

“Starting from now Hrayr Tovmasyan is no longer the President of the Constitutional Court, and Felix Tokhyan, Hrant Nazaryan and Alvina Gyulumyan are not members or judges of the Court.

Three new judges of the Constitutional Court must be elected within two months.

“All state bodies of Armenia are obliged to take note of this reality and be guided by it,” the Prime Minister said.

On June 22 the National Assembly voted unanimously to pass bill on Constitutional amendments with 89 votes in favor. The two opposition factions – Prosperous Armenia and Bright Armenia – did not participate in the voting.

The judges who have not yet completed a term of office of 12 years will stay in office until completion of this term, while the tenure of the judges who have already served a term of 12 years will be terminated.

It was earlier planned to hold a referendum on Constitutional amendments, but it was cancelled because of the state of emergency declared due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Arsen V. Ghazaryan, President of UMBA: For Armenia's Economy Restart New Investments Needed

*By Gourgen James Khazhakian,
Chief Correspondent*



On 25 May RA President Armen Sarkissian met with a group of Armenian entrepreneurs - members of the Board of the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia, UMBA. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss difficulties and problems in the economic area created by the pandemic, avenues to address them, and opportunities for development. The



meeting was attended by **Arsen V. Ghazaryan**, President of the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia, Board members Norayr Khachatryan (Imex Group), Armen Mkoyan

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PM Receives WHO Mission Head

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on June 24 received Special Advisor to the WHO Europe Regional Director Michel Thieren who is heading a mission to explore the coronavirus situation in Armenia and present corresponding recommendations.

Prime Minister Pashinyan appreciated the ongoing close cooperation between the Armenian government and the World Health Organization, as well as the Organization's technical support in the fight against the novel coronavirus. Nikol Pashinyan highlighted the fact of close partnership with the international partners in this process and stated that the crisis will be possible to overcome through joint efforts.

Michel Thieren conveyed his impressions from the visits paid to Armenia's hospitals. He stressed that he was impressed by the



ongoing anti-crisis campaign and the conditions available in Armenia's hospitals.

Mr. Thieren noted that the information about the pandemic is not complete in the world, which makes specialists and experts present not so similar views on the fight against the pandemic. In this context, he highlighted the need and effectiveness of wearing face masks, practicing social dis-

tancing and washing hands frequently. He underscored that people should avoid mass gatherings and indoor events.

The WHO mission head said there should be no choice between putting the economy into a lockdown and re-opening it: experience shows that people should get used to living in such conditions by observing the prescribed behavioral rules for tackling COVID-19. He called for closer cooperation between government agencies and local authorities in the fight against the pandemic in terms of taking steps aimed at detecting and managing the infection.

At the end of the meeting, Prime Minister Pashinyan highlighted the need for continued exchange of experience between the Armenian Healthcare Ministry and the World Health Organization.

Speaker of Parliament receives acting President of Constitutional Court



Speaker of Parliament of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan met with Ashot Khachatryan

who is temporarily fulfilling the duties of the President of the Constitutional Court, the Parliament said in a press release.

The Speaker told Ashot Khachatryan that based on the Constitutional amendments which entered into force on June 26 the powers of Court judges Hrant Nazaryan, Felix Tokhyan and Alvina Gyulumyan have been suspended as they have served more than 12 years in their positions.

The Speaker also informed that the power of Hrayr Tovmasyan as Constitutional Court President has also been suspended.

Ararat Mirzoyan congratulated Ashot Khachatryan on temporarily assuming the duties of the CC President.

In turn Ashot Khachatryan assured that he will continue ensuring the supremacy of the Constitution, as well as will act independently and impartially.

Democratic changes in Armenia are threat for Azerbaijani authorities – MFA Armenia

Spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry of Armenia Anna Naghdalyan commented on the remarks of Azerbaijani president during the opening ceremony of a military regiment. As Noyan Tapan was informed from the press service of the MFA Armenia, Anna Naghdalyan said,

“The remarks by the President of Azerbaijan during the opening of the N military unit clearly indicates that the authorities of that country view the ongoing democratic changes in Armenia as a threat to their power.

It is obvious, the decades-long power of

single family, which will be remembered in the history by bring Azerbaijan to the leading positions in the global index on corruption, the infamous case of laundromat, oppression of freedom of speech and other freedoms of its own people, has all grounds to demonstrate strong prejudice towards the democratic changes in Armenia.

We believe that the Aliyev dynasty, which seeks its legitimacy in manipulating the conflict and promoting enmity between the peoples, instead of revealing its class antagonism towards the Armenian authorities formed as a result of democratic processes,



should at least accept that Azerbaijani people also deserve democracy.

We are convinced that not the authorities who inherited power, but those formed by people and accountable before the people can contribute towards the reconciliation, regional peace and stability”.

PM: “No alternative to stricter anti-epidemic rules”

The Commandant's Office has discussed the situation over COVID-19 pandemic and reached the conclusion that there is no alternative and will toughen anti-pandemic measures in the near future, PM Pashinyan said following a session at the Commandant's Office.

According to the Prime Minister, breaches of the anti-epidemic rules have become more pronounced in the country. “You may know that we have a criminal case of violation of anti-epidemic rules, when an infected citizen continued to provide taxi services; the law enforcement agencies recorded it and initiated a criminal case on this fact,” the Head of Government said.

The Prime Minister noted with regret that Armenia is setting new anti-records in terms of the coronavirus epidemic.

“Armenia holds a leading position in the world in the number of infected per 1 million inhabitants and the number of new



daily infections. This is a big problem for all of us, but there is another, much more important problem, from which, in our opinion, this second problem arises: there is no adequate public awareness of the situation: I mean that the country's three million citizens should have been fighting the epidemic on a daily basis,” said Nikol Pashinyan.

The Premier noted that the procedure of administrative offenses initiated in connection with lockdown violations is approaching the stage when the fines imposed for

failure to wear a face mask should be levied. “We are also discussing the possibility of introducing such legislative changes as may reduce the time from the imposition of a fine to the time of its collection. I repeat that we are not taking these measures in order to fine citizens, God forbid, our task is not to fine anyone. We just want to say that each of us has the opportunity and even insurance against not being fined, and this insurance is compliance with anti-epidemic rules,” the Prime Minister said.

By 11:00, June 28 a total of 24,645 cases have been confirmed in Armenia. 13,116 have recovered, 10,964 are active cases. The death toll has reached 426, another 139 patients with coronavirus have died because of other diseases.

State of emergency has been prolonged until July 13.

“Our country's actions cause panic to Azerbaijani President” – Armenian MP

Head of the ruling My Step faction of the Armenian Parliament Lilit Makunts commented on the statement of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, stating that in his recent remarks dictator Aliyev made such comments about the legitimate leadership of Armenia which are typical exclusively to his leadership.

“First of all, Aliyev forgets that he is talking about a victorious country which defended the right of the Artsakh people to freely live in their own homeland. Secondly, within our country we can have different approaches with different political forces on the path to strengthening democracy, up to completely contradicting approaches, but it's not the first time we have proved that we do not



have obstacles on the path to protecting our people's and homeland's security and right to live and are acting with a united front”, Lilit Makunts said on Facebook.

Makunts said that Aliyev, who avoids direct communication with his own people, is trying to downplay the role and meaning of real democracy to justify his dictatorship

based on disinformation, which, certainly, is being noticed by both some circles of the Azerbaijani society criticizing Aliyev and the international community.

“With this step Aliyev shows his all fears towards the democratic processes. In fact, one can make a conclusion from Aliyev's speech that our country's actions aimed at strengthening the security, Army and democracy cause a deep concern and panic to the Azerbaijani President, and from this he must understand clearly that there is no alternative to peace, and any encroachment and provocation by Azerbaijan will receive more than adequate counterattack”, Lilit Makunts said.

Opposition Party appeals to Constitutional Court

(RFE/RL) - In an appeal dismissed by the government as null and void, the opposition Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) on Friday asked the Constitutional Court to invalidate constitutional changes mandating the immediate removal of three of its nine judges.

Under Armenian law, such appeals have to be signed by at least one-third of the 132 members of the National Assembly. The BHK, which controls 25 seats, submitted 26 signatures in support of its court challenge against the legality of controversial amendments passed by the parliament earlier this week.

Government officials and lawmaker representing Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's My Step bloc insisted that the BHK needed at least 27 signatures. Bright Armenia (LHK), the second parliamentary opposition party, agreed, saying that the Constitutional Court cannot consider the appeal.

The LHK refused to join the BHK initiative despite opposing the constitutional changes engineered by Pashinyan.

"The legal community is divided over this issue," Naira Zohrabyan, a senior BHK member, said after handing the appeal to court officials in the morning.

"The Constitutional Court will decide whether or not to accept it," Zohrabyan told reporters. "I will not comment on the issue anymore."

The opposition politician also said that the court will announce that decision within the next two weeks.

The BHK move came just hours after the entry into force of the amendments that bar current and future Constitutional Court



judges from serving more than 12 years.

The 12-year term limit was already included in the constitution when it was previously amended in April 2018. But it did not apply to the judges already serving.

A clause in the amended constitution allowed these judges to retain their positions until reaching retirement age. The latest amendments scrapped the clause, requiring the immediate resignation of three of the nine members of the high court. They also stipulate that Hrayr Tovmasyan must quit as court chairman but remain a judge.

Tovmasyan and the three affected judges refused to step down, however. In a joint statement issued on Thursday, they argued that the authorities have not made similar changes to a separate law on the Constitutional Court which also exempts them from the 12-year term limit.

Justice Minister Rustam Badasyan dismissed their objections, saying that the constitution takes precedence over the law cited by them. For his part, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced shortly after midnight Tovmasyan is not the court's chairman and the three other judges -- Alvina Gyulumyan, Felix Tokhyan and Hrant Nazaryan -- its members anymore.

Nevertheless, Gyulumyan reported for work in the morning. She insisted that she

remains a Constitutional Court judge.

It also emerged that Tovmasyan decided to formally go on vacation late on Thursday, just hours before the amendments came into force. Gyulumyan said that she will head the court in his absence.

Meanwhile, another high court justice, Vahe Grigoryan, who was appointed by the current Armenian parliament a year ago, hailed the constitutional changes as "historic." "This is a solution to the Constitutional Court crisis," he said.

In a written opinion made public on June 22, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe largely backed the proposed changes. But it said it "regrets" the Armenian authorities' refusal to introduce a transitional period that would "allow for a gradual change in the composition of the court in order to avoid any abrupt and immediate change endangering the independence of this institution."

The Strasbourg-based commission also said that the authorities should not rush to have Tovmasyan replaced by another Constitutional Court chairman.

Tovmasyan, Gyulumyan and five other judges have been under strong government pressure to step down over the past year. Pashinyan has accused them of maintaining close ties to the country's former government and impeding his judicial reforms.

Tovmasyan and opposition figures have dismissed Pashinyan's claims and in turn accused the prime minister of seeking to take control of the Constitutional Court.

Pashinyan lambastes Opposition

(RFE/RL) - Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan lashed out on June 25 at his political opponents accusing him of stifling dissent, mishandling the coronavirus crisis and failing to address its socioeconomic consequences.

Pashinyan said that they stand no chance of coming to power despite exploiting the pandemic for political aims.

"The political bacteria think that they have got a chance to revive themselves," he said, speaking in the Armenian parliament. "Now they are talking of famine, social revolts ... You should be afraid of that social revolt because if it happens, we have nothing to become victims of a social revolt."

"It's your illegally built mansions and Bentleys that will first and foremost become victims of a social revolt. Do you want a social revolt? Provoke a social revolt. We'll see where you will end up as a result of that social revolt."

Pashinyan went on to predict that only those political forces that "unequivocally support the values" of the 2018 "Velvet Revolution" will be represented in Arme-



nia's next parliament, which is due to be elected in 2023.

Although the premier did not name anyone, Gagik Tsarukyan, the leader of the main opposition Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK), was clearly one of the targets of his harsh criticism.

The parliament controlled by Pashinyan's My Step bloc last week allowed law-enforcement authorities to arrest and prosecute Tsarukyan on vote buying charges rejected by him and his party as politically motivated. BHK lawmakers have seen boycotted parliament sessions in protest.

Pashinyan defended the indictment of Tsarukyan, who called for the Armenian government's resignation earlier in June. He also said that vote buying by the BHK

is a widely known fact.

A senior BHK member, Mikael Melkumyan, hit back at Pashinyan later in the day, repeating Tsarukyan's claims that the government has failed "in all spheres." "Who is responsible for the [coronavirus-related] deaths of our fellow citizens: the opposition or the authorities?" Melkumyan added in a Facebook post.

In his speech, Pashinyan also rounded on Mikael Minasyan, former President Serzh Sargsyan's fugitive son-in-law also prosecuted on corruption charges. Minasyan has repeatedly alleged in recent weeks that the premier and his relatives themselves are illegally enriching themselves.

"Since they want to carry out a revolution, they want to portray me through 'free' media as Serzh Sargsyan ... as a disgusting figure like them," stated Pashinyan.

"There must be no doubt that we will subject that corrupt system, all of them in a single basket, to capitulation because there is only one thing behind us, on our minds and in our hearts: the truth," he added.

No other way out: Armenia's Health Minister calls for "conscious" lockdown

Armenia's Minister of Health Arsen Torosyan calls for conscious, voluntary lockdown, instead of imposed one. In a Facebook message, the Minister said:

"We all need to restrict our non-essential contacts, movements, visits, events, meetings.

We must stay at home as much as possible.

On weekends we should also stay at home, not go to parties, picnics with.

Group or even individual visits to various attractions should be stopped, now is not the time.

We should stop celebrating various occasions, such as the birth of a child, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, etc., including in your own homes.

Participation in funeral events should be limited as much as possible, practically stopped. Condolences offered over phone



in this epidemic situation should be considered more valuable.

In the evening we should also stay at home, avoid going out and communicating with neighbors. It's simply necessary not to meet, not to communicate, stay away from each other, avoid drinking coffee together, etc.

Children, no matter how difficult it may

be, need to be kept at home as long as possible. It's necessary to think of other activities for the children so that they don't go to play in the yard.

Do not visit your relatives, if there is no vital need, contact them remotely. That sacrifice is needed to save their lives.

Stop visiting cafes and restaurants, it is the only place where it is possible to be without a mask and infect each other. If you want to get food from that restaurant, order it and eat alone.

Don't go out for walk in the evening. We must be able to withstand that temptation and comply with this important demand until the situation improves.

In all other cases, it's necessary to wear a mask correctly, keep a distance of 1.5-2 m, and often disinfect the hands.

There is simply no other way out of this situation."

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... For Armenia's Economy Restart New Investments Needed

(Elit Group), Vahagn Mkrtchyan (Armenia Wine Factory), Armen Ter-Tachatyan (Ter-Tachatyan Legal and Business Consulting).

"It is obvious that because of the pandemic, the economy will be having hard times... There are expected problems against the general backdrop of the existing difficulties, especially in the economic area and labor market," the President said. "I worry for all – for those who work from home, unregistered workers, and future workers. We have to try to help individual entrepreneurs and large companies which have great responsibility..."

A. Sarkissian noted that in the world altered by the pandemic, the roles and markets will be redistributed. *"We need to face the reality and be able to find solutions – in the domestic and foreign areas."* In this context, he spoke about Presidential initiatives, particularly ATOM (Advanced Tomorrow) which is aimed at creating locomotives for the industrial development. It relates to modern technologies and artificial intelligence. Preliminary agreements have already been reached with more than 15 companies. The President noted that another Presidential initiative related to the creation of food security "corridor". *"I use my personal ties and try to create a food security 'corridor'... The purpose is the following: in cooperation with UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, and other countries to open a new corridor so that we have not only the big Russian market but also markets in the South..."*

The entrepreneurs presented to Sarkissian various problems existing in their areas, ranging from legal to reform related as well as their approaches and ideas for the resolution of the existing problems.

Arsen V. Ghazarian, Chairman of the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia spoke in particular about the importance of having a vision for Armenia's development and creation of a group which will provide fast response to the inquiries of investors. He noted that this topic is raised also in the UNCTAD report prepared at the proposal of the President and related to Armenia's investment policies. Responding to the raised questions, President Sarkissian underscored that it is necessary to have a precise vision for development and emanating strategy and program. *"You've mentioned our works with UNCTAD. Soon that document will be augmented with a section related to coro-*

navirus; it was prepared jointly with the Presidential Administration," the President said. "And, yes, the creation of a group of fast response at this moment is a must, since one is compelled to reintroduce oneself in this new world, presenting who you are and what you've got. It is significant while starting something to see the future of that process, to be able to see what will happen 10, 20 years from now. It is also important that each successive program is



aimed into the future."

Based on the presidential press service news release

Editor's note: It is a quite strange thing that in the video of the meeting (captured by presidential press service) only President's remarks can be heard, while no single word is heard from the UMBA reps...

So in his short interview with The Highlights Mr Arsen V. Ghazaryan said the following:

"...We attached great importance to the talks on the Armenia's development vision – a new vision in an already new world, for 20-30 years, with lot of IT, and for this international cooperation brave ideas, experience exchange, development of new directions development, where both AI and small countries' ambitions to become frontrunners are in need..."

The new points included in the draft law "On Amendments and Addenda to the RA Tax Code" were discussed at the online enlarged session of the Board of the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia held on June 24. Emphasizing the urgency of the reform, the Board members presented their observations and approaches. *"The issue of improving the tax administration is on the agenda. Especially under the current conditions imposed by the COVID19 pandemic, there should not be any problem in the tax sphere that hinders business. Any issue should become a subject of discussion and be duly resolved,"* Arsen V.

Ghazaryan, UMBA President stressed. The President of the Union presented the results of a recent meeting of the UMBA delegation with the RA Deputy Prime Minister **Mher Grigoryan** that was attended by the RA Minister of Finance **Atom Janjughazyan** and the RA Minister of Economy **Tigran Khachatryan**.

Mr Ghazaryan highlighted the agreement reached during the meeting, according to which similar meetings will be regular ones – sphere by sphere. He called the members of the Union to be active in shaping the agendas of those meetings, presenting the urgent issues. In particular, the agenda of the forthcoming meeting with the RA Minister of Economy was worked out at the Board session.

The businessmen also examined the current situation around the construction of the "Firdusi" district of Yerevan, emphasizing that in the current situation it is necessary to encourage any investment program. *"Attracting investments especially under current situation remains the starting point for economic reconstruction,"* Arsen Ghazaryan stressed and then added: *"In that sense, naturally, we cannot be indifferent to some delays in the implementation of this construction program."*



Emphasizing the importance of the problem, the businessmen considered it necessary to apply to the relevant instances, preserving the urban development and required standards, to proceed with this large-scale project.

The session also touched upon the process of safe organization of economic processes in the conditions of the state of emergency. Stressing the strict observance of security standards, businessmen drew attention to the fact that the relevant authorities, in case of even the slightest omission, suspend the activities of the economic entity, often ignoring the socio-economic consequences. On the agenda of the session was also the issue of the admission of a new member of the Union of Writers of Armenia, "Gajegorts" (Plasterer) CJSC.

EBRD and UNWTO to boost tourism recovery in Armenia

The rapid spread of coronavirus has had a massive impact on many sectors of the global economy, with tourism being among the hardest hit. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) are joining forces to boost the recovery of the tourism sector across the 38 economies where the Bank invests.

According to analysis by UNWTO, all worldwide destinations introduced restrictions on travel in response to Covid-19 – an unprecedented act. While some destinations are starting to ease restrictions, the crisis is far from over and this lockdown has led to a massive fall in international tourist arrivals.

In light of such unprecedented events, the EBRD and UNWTO have agreed to take immediate action to facilitate the recovery of tourism. The support

is currently envisaged for a number of countries, including Albania, Armenia, Croatia, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

The immediate response was designed along the three pillars of the UNWTO's Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package. It includes measurement of the impact of Covid-19, recovery plans with incentives to revive the tourism sector, protocols to ensure the enhanced safety, hygiene and security of tourists and employees, marketing of measures that can boost tourism demand, capacity-building for tourism officials and training for tourism sector enterprises in adopting the new protocols. A key element is to preserve human capital as well as to adapt and strengthen inclusion.

The two organizations are longstanding partners and signed a first Memorandum

of Understanding for cooperation in 2015, which they renewed in 2019.

This cooperation expands the existing partnership and builds on the UNWTO's recently adopted Covid-19 Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package, which includes three pillars through which the organization plans to assist the sector: 1) economic recovery, 2) marketing and promotion and 3) institutional strengthening and the building of resilience.

The EBRD is committing all of its activity in 2020-21 to helping its regions counter the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, with investment expected to reach up to €21 billion. The Bank will target all sectors of the economy, including tourism and hospitality which were particularly affected by the Covid-19 crisis.

Italian doctors arrive in Armenia to help fight Covid-19



Eleven Italian medics from the Emergency Response Coordination Center (ERCC) have arrived in Armenia to help

fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

"This humanitarian step is more than valuable these days, when friendly Italy has not yet fully overcome this epidemic that has plagued the world," the Armenian Embassy in Italy said.

"Italian doctors are coming to Armenia not fully recovered from the great physical and psychological burden have experienced in recent months," the Embassy added.

Medical supplies necessary for the implementation of the mission have also been

transported on the same flight.

At the airport the medics were welcomed by Deputy Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan, Deputy Foreign Minister Avet Adonts, Italy's Ambassador to Armenia Vincenzo Del Monaco, Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia Andreas Victorin, Head of the Armenia-Italy Friendship Group at the National Assembly Maria Karapetyan.

The mission will spend three weeks in Armenia.

Mortars and shells: Made in Armenia

Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan has shared photos of mortars and shells produced in Armenia.

"Made in Armenia with pride," the Minister captioned the photos.



Denying Nagorno Karabakh a role in talks will delay peace, Armenian Ambassador tells US Congressmen

In a letter to Members of Congress, Armenia's Ambassador to the U.S. Varuzhan Nerisyan has highlighted the importance of Nagorno Karabakh's participation in the negotiations.

"Denying it a role in peace will delay peace and prolong uncertainty. Nagorno Karabakh has a tradition of representative government and legislature, elected through free and fair voting," the Ambassador said.

"I hope that you will join your colleagues in the U.S. Congress and support U.S. mediation that encourages the direct participation of Nagorno-Karabakh in the peace talks, and enables an outcome that is most closely aligned with the founding principles of the American Republic – the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," Amb. Nerisyan added.

The full text of the letter is provided below:

Dear Representative,

This year marks the centennial of the establishment of Armenia-United States diplomatic relations. Our century-long friendship, strengthened and sustained by the civic engagement of Americans with Armenian heritage, is steadily growing, based on our shared history, democratic values and global vision for a peaceful future in our region and the world.

I am pleased to inform that, following the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, our bilateral ties have been elevated to the level of a Strategic Dialogue, encompassing increased cooperation across a broad array of regional, trade, energy, technology, defense, and humanitarian issues. We are particularly encouraged about the U.S. House Democracy Partnership constructive engagement between the U.S. Congress and the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia. Also noteworthy is Armenia's recent membership in the U.S. led International Religious Freedom Alliance – a coalition of nations working to promote religious freedom and tolerance around the world.

Among the many groups praising Armenia's progress is Freedom House, which



recognized our remarkable recent advancements in democracy and human rights as the largest two-year improvement any country has ever recorded since the monitoring began.

In addition to all this, Armenia continues its contribution to NATO-led peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo.

Today I would like to update you on the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process – an international framework to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The United States is a key mediator in these negotiations, conducted under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Russia and France are co-mediators.

The U.S. has been one of the first countries to express its support for the aspirations of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to self-determination, and to peaceful and fair settlement of the conflict back in November 1989 through the Senate Resolution 178.

This Resolution encouraged the Soviet authorities to "...engage in meaningful discussions with elected representatives of the people of Nagorno-Karabagh regarding their demands of reunification with the Armenian homeland."

The Nagorno-Karabakh peace process started in May 1994, when a ceasefire was established among the three parties to the conflict – Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh. The ceasefire was achieved followed several years of war, in which the people of Nagorno-Karabakh defended their right to life and self-determination against massive and atrocious use of

force by Azerbaijan.

Since the mid-1990s, the parties have generally adhered to the ceasefire, without any international peacekeepers to separate them along the line of contact. However, in April 2016, Azerbaijan initiated a large scale military offensive which was marked by new atrocities against the civilian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. Since then, the peace process evolved around building an environment conducive to peace and reducing the risks of resumption

of military activities and ceasefire violations.

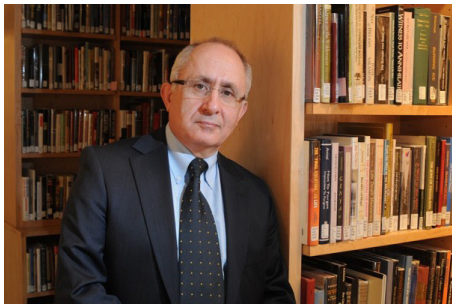
In May 2016 in Vienna, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to establish an investigative mechanism into ceasefire violations and expand OSCE presence in the conflict area, with the strong support of the U.S. Secretary of State and the other high representatives of OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing countries.

However, Azerbaijan refused to implement these agreements and continues to adhere to the policy of war threats and constant provocations on the line of contact. The recent large scale military exercises by Azerbaijan undertaken amid the COVID-19 pandemic and in violation of the OSCE Vienna document is a case in point.

The self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh remains a foundation of the peace process. The Minsk Group Co-Chairs recognized equal rights and self-determination as one of the key principles of the conflict resolution, and further elaborated on the realization of these rights in their Basic Principles of conflict resolution. Their proposal clearly establishes the path to realizing self-determination, which entails legally binding expression of will without any limitation, when it comes to the future status and choice of the people. Azerbaijan, which today portrays itself as a guardian of the Basic Principles, in fact is the party who had rejected an agreement on those very principles in the 2011 Kazan Summit.

Azerbaijan rejects the right of self-determination in the interpretation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-

Dr. Taner Akçam stresses the need to “institutionalize” Armenian Genocide research



In an op-ed, Turkish historian Taner Akcam has slammed Erdogan’s decision to set up a commission to “respond to accusations of genocide” and stressed the need to “institutionalize” Armenian Genocide research.

According to a report in the June 23, 2020 edition of *Hürriyet*, Turkey has taken the decision to establish “a new autonomous and civil institution” in order “to respond to the accusations of genocide and to develop a strategy [to counter them].” The decision was taken at the 5-hour meeting of the President’s High Advisory Board on June 16, 2020.

At the meeting it was determined that Turkey’s principal failing in this regard was that it did not possess a single institution to deal directly with the Armenian claims and develop a [counter-argument] and strategy” and that it “had not developed a comprehensive strategy”.

Therefore, it was decided to form a new institution to address this shortcoming. The

“sole task” of this new organization would be to “view the various dimensions of the topic—such culture, history, propaganda, and law, not merely politics—as a whole.” Additionally, as part of the decision it was also stated that “the institution would be an autonomous and civil [society] initiative without direct connection to the government or state”.

Ultimately, this news must be greeted with the acknowledgment of another, bitter truth: Today, in all of North America there does not exist a single research center or academic program at a University that deals solely or directly with the Armenian genocide or that has been created for this purpose.

There are approximately 250 programs at American universities devoted to studying the Holocaust. Some of these are simply research institutes. Against this background, the complete absence of such programs—research or otherwise—that deal directly and exclusively with the Armenian genocide is all the more marked and a bitter pill to swallow.

Let us again stress: apart from the devoted and priceless efforts of various independent and civil society Armenian institutions and individual scholars that make valuable contributions to Armenian Studies, including the study of the Armenian Genocide, there is no institutionalization within American academia of this field, and a relative pau-

city of research and studies. The biggest challenge for the further advancement of this field is the absence of institutional structures within American universities.

In the last years, at all events to which I have been invited, at all opportunities I have had to speak publicly I have dwelled at length on the need to “institutionalize” Armenian genocide research. I have highlighted the impossibility of responding effectively to the Turkey’s extensive and well-funded “denialist industry” without the existence of competing organizations or institutions. It would be foolish to assume that merely because we have the truth of historical facts on our side that this is the only factor determining who will prevail in the long run.

I wish I could say that my pleas have thus far fallen on fertile ground, but it has not been the case. Perhaps this latest initiative by the Turkish government will finally set off an alarm bell, one that allows others to see the critical importance of this matter.

Let’s hope that Ankara’s action will somehow drive home the urgency of the matter and rouse those concerned from their complacency. One of the most important ways to counter Turkish denialism and Turkey’s new initiative is precisely this: the institutionalization of Armenian genocide research within an academic setting.

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Chairs and tries to frame its rejection in a very misleading formula of “accepting but with strong and deep reservations”.

While the Basic Principles did not pre-judge the outcome of the peace process and enables the majority of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh to determine their future without any limitation, Azerbaijan admits only one outcome of a peaceful resolution, that is Nagorno-Karabakh within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. As long as Azerbaijan insists on its “strong and deep reservations” towards proposals of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs and to its maximalist positions, it will not be possible to register substantial progress in the peace process.

Azerbaijan does not merely reject the right of self-determination, but it refuses to talk to the elected representatives of

Nagorno-Karabakh whose role in conflict resolution was recognized by the OSCE in founding documents of the Minsk Process, as well by the US Senate. Azerbaijan’s position is counterproductive and detrimental to the international effort to bring peace to this region.

For over a quarter of a century since the end of the war, Nagorno-Karabakh has been a key player in maintaining the ceasefire with Azerbaijan, without any international peacekeepers. It has therefore earned its right to take its place at the negotiating table and help convert the ceasefire into a lasting peace. Denying it a role in peace will delay peace and prolong uncertainty.

Nagorno Karabakh has a tradition of representative government and legislature, elected through free and fair voting. Its demonstrated ability to provide for a peaceful constitutional transition of power stands

in stark contrast with Azerbaijan, where the power has remained in the hands of a single family, passing down from father to son, in a manner that defies democratic choice and perpetuates autocracy.

I hope that you will join your colleagues in the U.S. Congress and support U.S. mediation that encourages the direct participation of Nagorno-Karabakh in the peace talks, and enables an outcome that is most closely aligned with the founding principles of the American Republic – the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

I will be pleased to have a follow-up phone call or meeting with you, as the conditions permit, and look forward to being of assistance with information regarding Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Thank you for your support of the U.S.-Armenia relationship.

U.S. has warned Azerbaijan over war games

In response to a Congressional Armenian Caucus inquiry regarding Azerbaijan's May 18-22 war games, the State Department, this week, revealed that it has warned Azerbaijan regarding its lack of transparency regarding large-scale military exercises, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

"We welcome the news that the State Department has warned Azerbaijan over its large-scale military exercises and encourage increased U.S. vigilance against Baku's reckless arms build-up, military escalation, and cross-border attacks against both Artsakh and Armenia," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian.

"However, in light of President Aliyev's own stated intentions, the fungible nature of security assistance, and the resources that U.S. aid frees up in Baku's military budget, we do take strong issues with the patently false assertion that the \$120 million U.S. aid package to Azerbaijan does not violate Section 907 by contributing to its offensive capabilities. The U.S. military aid package to Azerbaijan represents a clear-cut violation of Section 907."

The June 23rd Department of State letter, signed by Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Mary Elizabeth Taylor, states that "The United States has conveyed its concerns to Azerbaijan previously about the lack of transparency regarding large-scale exercises and will continue to highlight with Azerbaijan, bilaterally and at OSCE meetings, the importance of complete and timely notification of military activities in accordance with VD11 commitments, particularly annual notification of at least one exercise or activity in the absence of any that exceed Chapter V thresholds."

However, the letter notes that "after reviewing the available information, to date the United States has not determined that the Azerbaijani military exercises that concluded on May 22 at any point exceeded VD 11 notification thresholds."

Further still, the letter discounts con-

cerns about the possible use U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan against Armenia, stating, "The United States reviews such assistance thoroughly to ensure it will not undermine or hamper ongoing efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan and will not be used for offensive purposes against Armenia."

Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone (D-NJ) disputed that assertion in a May 20th letter, addressed to both the State Department and Pentagon, that raised alarms about Baku's reckless escalation during the global COVID-19 pandemic. "The aid appears to have allowed Azerbaijan to shift resources toward offensive capabilities and further threaten Armenian lives and regional stability as the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues warned in letters sent to you in September and November of 2019. We cannot allow Azerbaijan to use the global coronavirus pandemic as cover for these dangerous military operations," stated the Congressional Armenian Caucus letter, which, in addition to Rep. Pallone, was cosigned by Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Jackie Speier (D-CA), Vice-Chairs Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Adam Schiff (D-CA) and Representatives Judy Chu (D-CA), Katherine Clark (D-MA), Jim Costa (D-CA), T.J. Cox (D-CA), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), James Langevin (D-RI), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Linda Sanchez (D-CA), Albio Sires (D-NJ), Tom Suozzi (D-NY), and Juan Vargas (D-CA). A separate letter on this same subject was sent to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

Azerbaijan's Armed Forces held large-scale "offensive" tactical military exercises from May 18th to 22nd, featuring, according of official announcements, "massive artillery, air, and high-precision weapons." The Armenian Defense Ministry condemned the exercises noting that they "exacerbate the security environment

in the region, under the conditions of a global imperative for joint actions against the COVID-19 pandemic and despite the call for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to establish a global ceasefire."

In May of this year, the ANCA issued an online call to action urging Americans to contact Congress to raise concerns that Baku risks starting a regional war amid a global pandemic with these actions and ongoing sniper attacks along the Artsakh and Armenia lines of contact.

The full text of the letter is provided below.

State Department Response to Congressional Armenian Caucus Letter Regarding Azerbaijani Military Exercises

June 23, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Pallone:

Thank you for your May 20 letter regarding military exercises conducted by the Republic of Azerbaijan from May 18-22, 2020. As a co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, the United States remains strongly committed to helping the opposing sides achieve a lasting, peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, based on the Helsinki Final Act principles of refraining from the threat or use of force, the territorial integrity of states and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

Maintaining stability along the Line of Contact separating Armenian and Azerbaijani forces, as well as the Armenia-Azerbaijan international border, remains a key focus of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs' discussions with the sides. In their recent public statements and ongoing consultations, including video conferences with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers April 20-21, 2020, and May 18-19, 2020, the United States and other

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Minsk Group Co-Chairs stressed the importance of observing the ceasefire strictly and refraining from provocative actions in the current environment. They also called on the sides to take concrete measures to reduce tensions further. U.S. officials in Washington and in the South Caucasus region also have emphasized these points directly with Armenian and Azerbaijani interlocutors.

The United States is a strong proponent of adherence to arms control agreements and arrangements, including the commitments set out in the 2011 Vienna Document on Confidence-Building and Security-Building Measures (VD11). The value of arms control agreements and arrangements is diminished if participating States do not implement their obligations and commitments fully. After reviewing the available information, to date the United States has not determined that the Azerbaijani military exercises that concluded on May 22 at any point exceeded VD 11 notification thresholds. The State Department, in coordination with the Department of Defense, will continue to address any concerns regarding the actions of partners and co-participants in such agreements and arrangements through diplomatic engagement and will detail its findings in the Report on Adherence to and

Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments, submitted to Congress annually pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2593a. The United States has conveyed its concerns to Azerbaijan previously about the lack of transparency regarding large-scale exercises and will continue to highlight with Azerbaijan, bilaterally and at OSCE meetings, the importance of complete and timely notification of military activities in accordance with VD11 commitments, particularly annual notification of at least one exercise or activity in the absence of any that exceed Chapter V thresholds.

The United States attaches great importance to strengthening its partnerships with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. These partnerships have advanced U.S. national security priorities, including the Resolute Support Mission, where Armenian and Azerbaijani forces serve alongside NATO forces in Afghanistan and for which Azerbaijan provides critical overflight access. The DoD maritime and border security cooperation programs with Azerbaijan, funded through a U.S. Building Partner Capacity program, are in the national interests of the United States, Azerbaijan, and other partners in the region as these borders are areas of significant concern for potential movement of terrorists, weapons

of mass destruction, illicit narcotics, and other unlawful trafficking. Moreover, these programs increase Azerbaijan's capability to counter threats to its critical energy infrastructure, which provides a critical alternative to Russian and Iranian energy resources for Western markets. The United States reviews such assistance thoroughly to ensure it will not undermine or hamper ongoing efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan and will not be used for offensive purposes against Armenia. These program activities do not occur at or near the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan or the Line of Contact. The nature of the training and equipment provided (e.g., radars, patrol boats, diving gear, x-ray scanners, underwater surveillance, and visit, board, search, and seizure capabilities), is such that it does not contribute to the offensive capabilities of Azerbaijan and cannot be misused to threaten Armenia or regional stability.

The people of the region deserve to live in peace and security. The U.S. commitment to helping the sides achieve a lasting, peaceful settlement to this long-standing conflict is resolute, and we will remain actively engaged through the Minsk Group process.

Armenia issues new stamp on 75th anniversary of WWII Victory



A new stamp dedicated to the 75th anni-

versary of the Victory in World War Second was cancelled and put into circulation on June 26.

Gor Melikyan, First Deputy Minister of High Technological Industry, Makar Ghambaryan, Deputy Minister of Defense, Hayk Karapetyan, General Director of Haypost CJSC, and Hovik Musayelyan, President of the Union of

Philatelists of Armenia, participated in the ceremony.

The stamp depicts a shelled wall with the words "Let's enter Berlin" written in charcoal. In the upper right corner of the stamp, the number "75" is depicted, symbolizing the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War.

The stamp with a face value of 280 AMD was printed in 40,000 copies at Cartor printing house in France. The author of the stamp design is David Dovlatyan, the designer of "HayPost" CJSC.

Aznavour Foundation and Armenia's Ministry of Education announce a collaboration

The Aznavour Foundation and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia announce a collaboration aimed at creating new opportunities for young and talented people who choose art as their career path. In 2018 the Aznavour Foundation and Aznavour family members received requests for the naming of the Yerevan State College of Culture after Charles Aznavour. The Foundation's Chairman Nicolas Aznavour and CEO Kristina Aznavour visited the college in 2018, had meetings with the management and students. After those meetings and discussions, the permission letter was signed.

Later it was announced that the Yerevan State College of Culture will be merged with the Yerevan State College of Pop and Jazz Art. On April 23 2020, during the Armenian Government's Cabinet meeting, the decision was approved and on June 22 the newly established institution was officially named "Yerevan State College of Culture and Arts".

"We are happy to cooperate with the Min-



istry and bring changes to the lives of thousands of young people. I am sure that thanks to this collaboration the College will become more attractive and successful. Charles Aznavour's career path was full of obstacles and challenges, but his determination and hard work brought him to the highest levels in his field. I want our younger generation to be inspired by his example and always strive for excellence", says Kristina Aznavour, CEO of the Aznavour Foundation.

"By uniting these two colleges, the Armenian Government aims to significantly improve the quality and efficiency of education, increase the transparency and accountability of the management of the joint

institution, and provide the best opportunities and creative environment for young people who see their future in art. We are confident that cooperation with the Aznavour Foundation will be a key guarantee for the development of artistic and cultural education," said Zhanna Andreasyan, Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia.

For the Aznavour Foundation, it is essential that the newly established college creates values and opportunities for the new generations of young artists. In order to outline and develop the best solutions, the Foundation and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia plan to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, which will establish the readiness to work together on the College's development strategy, to initiate the naming of the institution after the National hero of the Republic of Armenia Charles Aznavour, as well as agenda related to further cooperation between the Foundation and the newly established college.

Turkey intends to rebuild the historic Bridge of Ani

Turkey intends to rebuild the historic Bridge of Ani (Silk Road Bridge) on the Armenian-Turkish border on the Akhuryan River. The statement came from Ahmet Arslan, a former Turkish Minister of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications and now a Member of Parliament from Kars, Ermenihaber.am reports.

In an interview with Gazete Kars, he said that at the moment the 18th Department of the Turkish Land Roads in Kars is organizing a tender for the repair of the bridge, and the construction work will begin soon.



Arslan noted that the ruins of Ani are very important.

"One of the important features of Ani is that it is located on the Silk Road. God

willing, the General Department of Land Roads will rebuild this historic bridge over Akhuryan, which closes the Silk Road and crosses the Armenian-Turkish border, just as it rebuilt the other historic bridges. The work will start soon," the Turkish MP said. However, the MP did not provide any other details about the restoration of the bridge. It's not known whether any agreement has been reached with Armenia on the issue, as one of the two pillars (legs) of the bridge is located on the Armenian coast of Akhuryan.

Viva-MTS: Strengthening the Native Land...

The works to replace the dilapidated roof with a new one launched in Khashtarak



The Gulakyans, living in Khashtarak village of Tavush region, have got rid of the roof which was on the verge of collapse. The family had to feel the consequence of possible danger. One day, the roof of the house, built over half a century ago, “went down” under the weight of the soil moistened by spring rains. Fortunately, no one was in the kitchen at that moment.

Harutyun, who has been living in his aunt's house for 17 years with his wife and three daughters has to leave his family alone from time to time for work and is seriously worried about what may happen while he is away. Now that the works have started, those worries will soon be gone. Harutyun has completely dismantled the collapsing roof. The construction of the new roof has started within the framework of the housing program implemented by Viva-MTS and the “Fuller Center for Housing Armenia”.

“The old roof is gone! It was really dilapidated. We got rid of it. We are doing important work now. Now only memories remain of the old roof. The new one will be properly done,” said the father of the family, **Harutyun Gulakyan**.

Due to the situation in the Republic, the

partner organizations do not participate in the volunteer work, but the project remains in the center of their attention. New technologies have become the main means of communication between the parties.

“Harut, I have not seen your family, but I am well informed about you owing to the remote communication with our teams. You do not live in a borderland village, yet you stay on guard of our fatherland like a true soldier. We, in our turn, do our best to offer logistical support, which is why we implement programs like this one. I am on a video call with you now, but I hope we will meet when the virus gets contained and we overcome the current situation,” Viva-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said during the video call. With the funding from Viva-MTS and the support of the “Fuller Center for Housing Armenia”, another family living in a remote region will soon get of the problem of years.

Target program implemented in borderland village of Voskepar

It has been eight months now a system of energy-efficient LED lamps have been installed in the borderland village of Voskepar. 40 LED lamps were installed and a whole district was illuminated, embracing some 1,5 km territory. The modernization of community infrastructure was supported by Viva-MTS and the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC). Noyemberyan administration has contributed to the project, too. Voskepar has already seen the positive impact of the “Eco Villages Network” program, and the partner organizations have decided to continue and finally solve the problem of lighting. The start of the second phase of the long-run program has been announced. By the end of the year, it is planned to broaden the area of lighted streets in the village by 1250 m. Along with the above mentioned, the impact of the long-term and target programs in the borderland villages was discussed. Organizations are confident that the program will allow people in frontier villages to increase their safety and reduce community expenses.

“I am far from you physically, but it is the result that matters. Our approach to borderland villages remains unchanged. We strive to ensure investments year after year so that you stay confident that we are separated only by distance and that you

are not alone. Developing infrastructures through programs like this has always been and remains one of our most vital purposes. Stay healthy and strong and keep our borders strong,” Viva-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said.

“The lighting system is of most importance for the borders. It's already 4 years you support us to tackle the issue. Your work encourages the villagers who proudly protect the land. By settling this issue, we ensure the security of our people during night hours and save the community's funds,” said **Karen Abazyan**, head of the Noyemberyan community.

“For the second stage of the program, the organizational work is being carried out. The location of the pillars has been chosen, the pillars and the lights have been ordered already. Construction will begin soon. Once we finish this stage, we can say for sure that in Voskepar will be illuminated by 95%,” said the program coordinator **Martin Maralchyan**.

Serob Makhsudyan, the administrative head of the settlement, and the residents also stress the importance of the program achievements. For the sake of environ-



mental protection, energy efficiency, and community development, Viva-MTS and FPWC, long-time partners, see the modern technology to be extremely important, as it is addressed to four components of sustainability: environmental, economic, cultural and social. Environment-friendly and energy-efficient LED lamps to consume 80%



less electricity and serve up to 50 times longer. The streets in the village will be illuminated every day until 01:00 AM.



Opera and Ballet Theater Recognized One of the Leaders in Online Activities

By Gourgen James Khazhakian,
Chief Correspondent

This statement was done by **Ara Khzma-lyan**, Deputy Education, Science, Culture and Sports Minister in his interview with a local media outlet.

Constantine G. Orbelian, Theater General and Artistic Director, Russian Federation Honored Artist, four times Grammy nominee said in a telephone chat with The Highlights they would continue such online presentations with more energy and diverse ideas.

Notably, Maestro Orbelian is in daily online contact with Deputy Director Karineh Kirakosyan and the staff of the Opera and Ballet House (and signing all the documents submitted for his approval).

Below we present the Theater recent activities:

Armenian Opera and Ballet Theater announces online exhibition contest on the occasion of the International Children's Day



Within several days, the young reps of the Theater audience took part in an online competition for paintings on opera and ballet themes. On 13 June awards in a number of nominations were handed over the winners of the competition at the outskirts of the Opera and Ballet Theater of Armenia.

As a Theater rep said, "During all this time, the Armenian Opera and Ballet Theater has been presenting online programs, and we are using this platform to try not to cut ties with the audience. An unprecedented number of views have already been registered on the Theater's Facebook page. Our online screenings and various projects have had more than 5 million views. And on the eve of 1 June, upon an initiative of the Theater aimed to draw special attention to our younger spectators and to involve them in our

online programs through a competition-exhibition of paintings was launched. The Armenian Opera and Ballet Theater has always been very interested in the work of our future audience, and one of the active steps taken in that direction was this competition. We are really amazed with the talent, activity and interest of the children towards the opera and ballet. We have a bright generation who have no doubt that they be tomorrow's worthy audience of the Theater.

The results of the competition were summarized on the official Facebook page of the Theater. And it has already been mentioned, the first place was taken by the work that gained maximal "likes". Since the difference in the number of likes of **Vardges Mkrtchyan's** and **Armine Avetisyan's** works was very small, it was decided to share the first place between the two participants."

"Thank You Doctors": The Culture Against Pandemic

Al. Spendaryan National Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet artists expressed their gratitude to the medical staff through an online concert

"At the concert on June 18, on behalf of the entire staff, we would like to thank all our medical professionals for their unwavering dedication and the job done that is worth of the highest appreciation..."



Let's fill ourselves with the cultural spirit and fight the pandemic all together," a post of the Theater says. Excerpts exclusively from Puccini's best works were performed at the concert, i.e. operas "La Bohem", "Manon Lesco", "Madame Butterfly", "Sister Angelica" and "Tosca". Musical Director of the Project was **Mkrtich Babajanyan**, renowned opera singer/director who is the Deputy Artistic Director of the Al. Spendaryan Opera and Ballet Theater. To note, maestro Babajanyan delivered opening remarks that night.

5 June is the memory day of the Armenia's People's Artist, opera singer and director, cinema actor and director Tigran Levonyan

For me, multifunctional theater is a model of life," said Tigran Levonyan. And... "This harmonious and uncoordinated, this peaceful and contradictory, cohesive and unified, this model of a happy and tragic world."

Tigran Levonyan studied the art of singing from his future wife, a legendary soprano, Soviet Union People's Artist **Gohar M. Gasparyan**.

He was trained at the famous "La Scala" theater in Milan.

For many years, Tigran Levonyan was an inseparable part of the Armenian Opera and Ballet Theater, as a key roles' player, director of performances, General and Artistic Director of the Theater.

Upon initiative of Maestro Constantine G. Orbelian the Theater pays tribute to the Great Patriotic War' victims with Mozart's Requiem

Al. Spendaryan National Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet, honoring the memory of the victims of the Great Patriotic War, shown Mozart's "Requiem" on the online platform.

The video of the concert program was presented on the official Facebook page of the Theater on 22 June at 20:00. Concert was held with the participation of the Theater soloists, orchestra

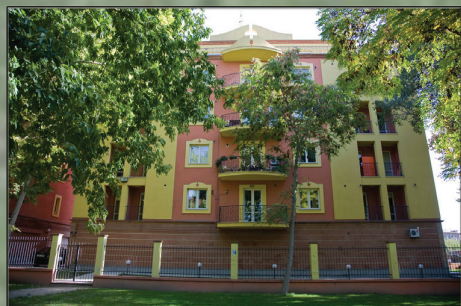


and Kaunas State Choir / Artistic Director and Chief Conductor **Petras Bingelis**. and Conductor: Constantine Orbelian The evening held in the last year's November was dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the Kaunas State Choir.

The project was initiated by Maestro Orbelian and supported by the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

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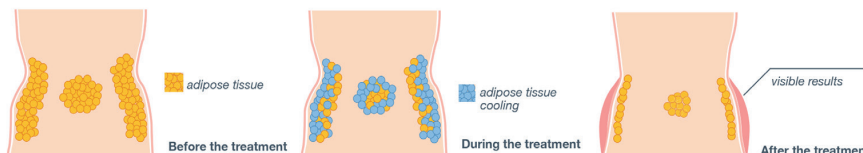
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The publisher: NT Holding LTD
Լրատվական գործունեություն իրականացնող՝
ԼՏ Հոլդինգ ՍՊԸ

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

Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993

President of the NT Media Holding:

TIGRAN HARUTYUNYAN

Editor-in-Chief of the Media Holding:

GAYANEH ARAKELYAN

Director of the weekly:

MARINA HARUTYUNYAN

Chief Correspondent: **GOURGEN KHAZHAKIAN**

Computer Design: **Ashot Khalapyan**

Համարի թող. պատ.՝ Մ.Հարությունյան

ISSN 1829-0604

Գրանցման վկայականի համարը՝

03U898368, տրված՝ 11.01.2013թ.

Registration certificate and the date:

273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

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