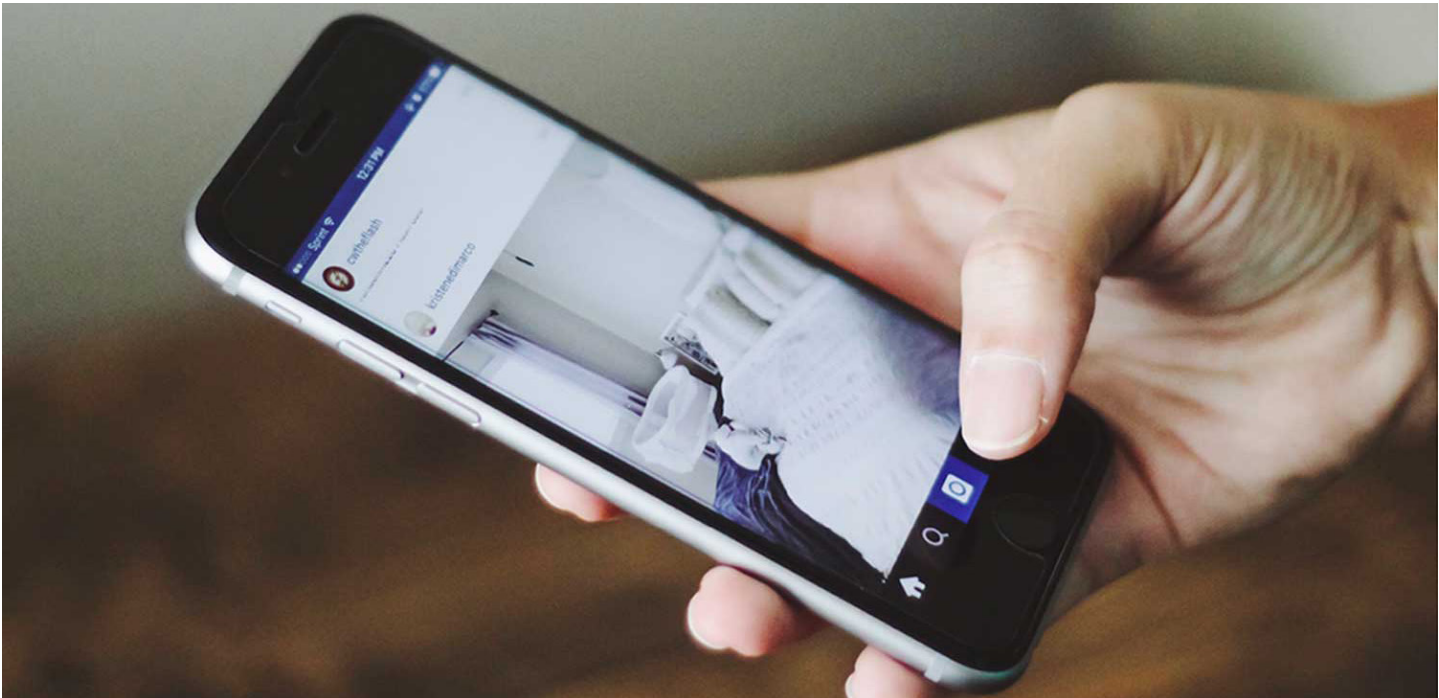


Armenian Government proposes using cell phone data to track contacts of COVID-19 patients



The Armenian National Assembly is considering legislation that would allow the authorities to use cell phone data to track the contacts of coronavirus patients. The draft has been tabled by the government.

The amendments envisage restrictions to the right to privacy and family life, freedom and privacy of communication under the state of emergency.

Should the draft pass, in case of a state of emergency caused by an epidemic, the operators of the public electronic communications networks shall be obliged to provide information on customer location and phone calls to the authorities and state-established legal entities (data processors).

Data processors will also be authorized to require information from health authorities on infected patients, persons with symptoms of illness, patients being treated and their contacts, inducing medical confidential data.

Data processing shall be carried out only until the end of the state of emergency. Personalized data shall be destroyed after the state of emergency is over.

The data provided and processed may be transmitted only to the bodies provided for by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Dear readers!

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Noyan Tapan Highlights will suspend its print edition until further notice
Also, a digital version of the print paper will be sent to you by email and appear each week on our page.
If you haven't provided us with your email address make sure to contact us.

<p>Russia's border restrictions not to affect cargo transportation to Armenia</p>	<p>Government approves comprehensive action plan to counter</p>	<p>US to provide \$1.1 million to help Armenia respond to COVID-19 crisis</p>	<p>French Armenian politician Patrick Devedjian dies of coronavirus</p>
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Russia's border restrictions not to affect cargo transportation to Armenia

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Mishustin.

The heads of government of the two countries discussed the process of organizing cargo transportation between Armenia and Russia, taking into account the decision by Russia to impose new restrictions on the borders.

Nikol Pashinyan and Mikhail Mishustin agreed that cargo



transportation from Russia to Armenia will continue on a regular basis and the above

restrictions will not affect the transportation of Armenian cargo.

The heads of government of the two countries also touched upon issues concerning the Armenian-Russian trade and economic cooperation and emphasized the importance of maintaining the full volume of cargo transportation between Armenia and Russia.

The interlocutors agreed to continue regular contacts to respond quickly to further issues.

France and Armenia lost one of their best sons: President Sarkissian on Patrick Devedjian's demise

France and Armenia lost one of their best sons, Armenia's President Armen Sarkissian said on the demise of French Armenian politician Patrick Devedjian.

"I am shocked at the death of Patrick Devedjian, a prominent French-Armenian politician, chairman of the Council of the Hauts-de-Seine department," the President said in a message.

"Patrick Devedjian was a bright politician and individual, upright, educated, responsible in his words and deeds. At the same time, he was a tireless advocate of the Armenian Cause, whose voice was heard



nationally and internationally," the President added.

He noted that after Armenia gained independence, Patrick Devedjian became one

of the architects of the privileged Armenian-French relationship.

"The development of Armenia was a priority for him, and he was contributing to it with specific programs and actions," Armen Sarkissian said.

He offered deepest condolences to Patrick Devedjian's wife, children and grandchildren, relatives, as well as the French-Armenians and the entire Armenian nation.

Patrick Devedjian passed away last night days after being diagnosed with coronavirus.

Two more servicemen test positive for coronavirus

Two more servicemen have tested positive for the coronavirus, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense Shushan Stepanyan informs.

Thirty-seven were tested after the coronavirus was confirmed in three servicemen at a military unit not involved in combat tasks.

The results of the other 35 tests were negative, the Spokesperson said.

The five servicemen have been hospitalized. None of them has pneumonia. One has fever, four others show no symptoms.

The close contacts of all five servicemen are isolated in an area equipped with everything necessary for full isolation.

The Ministry of Defense will keep providing information about the fight against COVID-19 in the army and the current situation, Shushan Stepanyan said.

The Spokesperson also organized live streaming on Facebook from the place of isolation.

Armenian Police enforce coronavirus lockdown



Police in Armenia stopped cars and pedestrians and warned other citizens to stay at home on March 25 as they began enforcing a nationwide lockdown aimed at stopping the spread of coronavirus.

Unprecedented restrictions on people's movement imposed by the Armenian government late on Tuesday mean that people are only allowed out to buy food, receive medical care or briefly exercise near their places of residence. The curfew does not apply to a limited number of public and private sector employees allowed to continue to go to work.

As is the case in France and other European countries, all citizens must not only carry valid IDs but also fill out a form specifying their reasons to leave their homes. The form must contain the carrier's name and birthdate. It can be downloaded from a government

website or drawn by hand.

As police began patrolling the largely deserted streets of Yerevan it emerged that many passersby did not fill out such forms. Some of them instead showed police officers their bags filled with groceries bought in supermarkets.

One elderly woman claimed to be unaware of the requirement. "Who is supposed to issue such papers?" she said.

"I don't know who and what should be written there," said another pensioner.

There seemed to be greater compliance with the rule in the center of Yerevan. "I'm taking my grandchild home," one woman there said after showing policemen a form which she said was filled out by her daughter.

A deputy chief of the Armenian police, Hayk Mheryan, said in the morning that officers will avoid fining or briefly detaining people in the first hours of the lockdown. "But we will be fully enforcing the law after 4 p.m.," he told reporters.

Under a government bill passed by the Armenian parliament on Monday, citizens defying quarantine or self-isolation orders issued by health authorities will face not only heavy fines but also up to five years in prison. There were more than 3,000 quarantined people in Armenia as of Tuesday evening, according to the authorities.

Another lockdown rule bans private cars from carrying more than one passenger at a time apart from the driver. Mheryan said police ordered 92 people out of cars for this reason at the start of the emergency street patrols across the country.

OSCE welcomes Armenian Government's move to amend rules for media under the state of emergency

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, welcomed on March 28 the swift reaction of the Armenian Government in addressing his concerns about the Decree on the State of Emergency, adopted on 23 March, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I welcome the 'Explanatory Memorandum on measures taken by the Government of Armenia in response to the Press Release of 24 March of the Representative on Freedom of the Media' that I received today from the authorities of Armenia," Désir said.

"I note, in particular, that the Government has decided to amend the Decree on the State of Emergency concerning the regulations of media activity in order to address my concerns, those of media advocacy NGOs and editors in Armenia, as well as the common position of the international mandates on freedom of expression expressed in our joint statement of 19 March," he added.

The Representative added: "I want to underline that the Memorandum stated that 'the Decree of the Government regulates only the publication of information of a medical and epidemiological nature, thus ensuring safeguards for the genuine freedom of media outside this narrow topical framework.'"

In his press statement of 24 March, the Representative raised his concerns on the State of emergency legislation and insisted that the Coronavirus response should not impede the work of the media in Armenia. The decree would have forbidden the media from publishing news on COVID-19 in Armenia from sources other than



those released by official government sources.

"I share the preoccupation of the Government of Armenia to combat the dissemination of false information related to the health crisis," the Representative said.

"At the same time, I recall the importance of ensuring the free flow of information, which is a key component for providing the public with information on the vital measures needed to contain the virus, as well as the respect for the right of the media to report on the pandemic and governmental policies," he added.

"We will continue to co-operate with the Armenian authorities in this endeavor during this emergency situation and thereafter by developing good practices and a strategy to combat 'fake news' and disinformation," concluded Désir.

Government approves comprehensive action plan to counter coronavirus impact and offset its economic consequences

In order to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, like many other countries, Armenia has restricted, or in some cases, even suspended the activities of a number of business entities. To provide maximum support to businesses and citizens in the current situation, the Government on March 26 approved a comprehensive action plan to counter the adverse coronavirus im-

pact and 5 measures to offset its economic consequences. The program is specifically aimed at addressing the liquidity-related risks for individual business entities, promoting sustainable economic development, identifying and assisting those people who have lost their jobs due to the virus, ensuring the safety of vulnerable groups and supporting their families, modernizing Armenia's healthcare system, providing efficient management of stocks of food, medical supplies, raw materials and other products.

Nikol Pashinyan stated in this connection: "The program not only seeks to support the competitive sectors and those social layers that suffered the first, but it has an ultimate goal of getting our society and citizens to build a competitive economy in the post-crisis period. We should in no way forget this agenda or the ensuing development scenario. We will have to shift from the logic of survival to the logic of development, strengthening and increasing the country's overall competitiveness. This is the most important premise that underpins the program."

The Prime Minister touched on the non-provision of cash receipts and noted: "With the recent increase in retail



sales, we have clear indications that the practice of not providing cash receipts is back as many think that cash receipts would be paid less attention amid the ongoing crisis. On the contrary, there is a crisis now, and, yes, more attention needs to be paid to it.

I expect that the State Revenue Committee will tighten measures, considering that many enterprises are not working and even many shops are closed at this point of time, and there are fewer facilities to inspect. I expect that the State Revenue Committee will identify and punish the offenders as there is no excuse for this, especially today, when the retail turnover has increased significantly.

Mediating retrospective analysis, we should expose all unscrupulous entities and impose appropriate sanctions. In general, we should not allow the past bad habits to resume during a crisis, especially in the field of tax discipline. Such irregularities should be ruled out and rooted out ahead. In a situation when entities work according to a different logic and in a different mode, the State Revenue Committee should be twice, three times as stricter with regard to tax evasion."

The proposed first measure consists in

assisting individual economic entities in the form of co-financing, refinancing and subsidizing interest rates. Only one type of assistance is available for each business entity. This will help them adapt to the changing market demand and new economic conditions, as well as to adjust and update their development strategies.

The second action suggests establishing a ze-

ro-interest rate for loans in order to boost the farming sector's potential through modern irrigation systems, hail-proof networks, intensive orchards, smart farms for high-blood animal husbandry, as well as for the lease of farm machinery and equipment.

The Premier emphasized that this program is currently the most obvious instance when the crisis is viewed as an opportunity. Prime Minister Pashinyan considered the program a historic opportunity to make a breakthrough the field of agriculture.

The third measure seeks to support those entities that posted an annual turnover of 24-500 million drams in 2019 in the form of credit insurance and interest rate subsidies.

The fourth measure offers assistance to such families with minor children under 14 as may be facing welfare bottlenecks due to the shrinking labor market.

The fifth activity is meant to help businesses preserve their effective jobs and continue operations. The program will target those entities that had from 2 to 50 full-time workers and a stable payroll in the period from 01/01/2020 to 01/01/2020/. A lump-sum grant will be provided under the program.

French Armenian politician Patrick Devedjian dies of coronavirus



France's President Emmanuel Macron, former Presidents Francois Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy have offered condolences over the demise of French-Armenian politician Patrick Devedjian.

"France loses a committed politician who put his great culture, his immense knowledge of the law and his passion for freedom at the service of its territory and the Nation," President Macron said in a message.

Born in Fontainebleau to a father who fled the Armenian genocide and a mother born in Boulogne-sur-Mer, Patrick Devedjian had a passion for ideas: his galleries, his works testify to the work of a free spirit who always wanted to think the right in nuance and complexity, the President noted.

"He who, never forgetting his origins, had Armenia at heart deeply loved France, its culture, its imagination, its public services: his last public words were for the nursing

staff who, until the end, helped him to fight against the virus and for the members of the Hauts-de-Seine department Council mobilized in the service of its citizens," Macron said.

Ex-President Francois Hollande said "Patrick Devedjian was a fighter."

"He had courageously overcome many trials. The one who won it was the most devious because the most invisible. I salute his memory and that of all the victims of this scourge. The struggle requires the greatest national unity," he said in a Twitter post.



Former President Nicolas Sarkozy described Patrick Devedjian as a passionate, sincere, committed man.

"He embodied politics as I like, with feelings, convictions, panache. I'm proud to have had him by my side. I want to express to my loved ones my deep emotion and my infinite sadness," Sarkozy said.

A lawyer by profession, Patrick Devedjian was a deputy for the 13th district of Hauts-de-Seine from 1986 to 2017, mayor of Antony from 1983 to 2002 and elected departmental councilor in 2004. He had chaired the department since 2007.

A close adviser of Nicolas Sarkozy since the 1990s, he was Minister under the Prime Minister in charge of the Implementation of the Recovery Plan, a special ministerial post created for two years after the global financial crisis of 2008, since December 2008.

Patrick Devedjian passed away last night days after being diagnosed with coronavirus.



Moderna's Noubar Afeyan hopes first results of COVID-19 vaccine testing to come in spring

Moderna Therapeutics co-founder and CEO Noubar Afeyan hopes the early results of COVID-19 vaccine testing will come in spring.

The first human trials started about two weeks ago. The first wave of testing involves 45 volunteers in three different dose groups, Afeyan said during the online webinar "COVID-19: Challenging General Fear."

He added that in the second stage they will be trying to establish what the ultimate dose of the vaccine should be.

Afeyan noted that the company had been working on coronavirus vaccines for two years, and when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, in the very early stage Moderna was asked to very rapidly to try to come up with a vaccine.

He said huge investments are needed, and they have already started making them, including through cooperation with different agencies and the US government to be able



to produce large quantities.

He hopes the company will be able to have enough material, should the need arise to provide some of these vaccines to front-line healthcare workers.

"It's very hard to avoid giving hope, when everyone wants hope. And we are very careful, and we say that we do hope that what we are doing and what everyone else is doing works and we are able to make enough vaccines to supply the world,"

Noubar Afeyan stated.

"This is absolutely not a competition between different companies, this is a competition between us and the virus," he stated.

He described the fight against the virus as kind of a war between a social animal and an invader that uses our social contact to transmit itself.

"It's an attack on our social being. If we were not social animals, if we were trees this would not have happened. We are not going to lose our socialness, but we are going to suffer casualties because of this," he states.

Aurora Prize Co-Founders Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan, Lord Ara Darzi, Armenia's Health Minister Arsen Torosyan, Managing Partner of McKinsey & Company André Andonian, WHO special envoy for COVID-19 Dr. David Nabarro participated in the online webinar "COVID-19: Challenging General Fear."

Armenian banks defer loan repayments

Armenian banks have agreed to suspend loan repayments for tens of thousands of individual borrowers and businesses hit hard by economic fallout from by the coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced on March 27.

“The volume of the restructured loans is around 200 billion drams (\$404 million),” Pashinyan wrote on Facebook. They were borrowed by around 97,000 individuals and nearly 3,400 local firms, he said.

The Armenian government last week imposed strict restrictions on people’s movement and ordered the closure of most firms to tackle the spread of coronavirus. The lockdown has left scores of Armenians facing a loss of jobs and income.

The government has faced opposition calls for imposing a blanket freeze on all



loan repayments. Pashinyan rejected those calls when he spoke in the parliament on Wednesday. He said the banks should deal with defaulting clients on a case-by-case basis.

Pashinyan also said on Wednesday that Armenia’s public utility companies have agreed not to cut off electricity, natural gas and water supplies to people failing to pay their bills because of the economic shutdown.

The national gas distribution network,

Gazprom-Armenia, confirmed on Friday that it will stop collecting gas fees for February at least until the state of emergency in the country ends on April 14.

In a statement, Gazprom-Armenia put the total amount of unpaid gas bills at 4.8 billion drams. It stressed that only about 7 percent of the sum is owed by low-income families receiving poverty benefits.

In a related development, Pashinyan’s government approved on Thursday a multimillion-dollar stimulus package designed to cushion the broader impact of coronavirus. It includes one-off cash payments to citizens who have lost their jobs this month as well as financial assistance or credit subsidies to businesses and farmers. Pashinyan said many banks will also benefit from the relief.

Over 690 million AMD donated in support of Armenia’s anti-coronavirus efforts

Over 690 million AMD has been transferred to the special treasury account set up to support the efforts to fight the coronavirus infection. A total of 2,802 payments have been made, the Ministry of Finance reports.

The Ministry of Finance has created the treasury account for supporting the measures aimed at preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus in the Republic of Armenia.

The money will be allocated to:

Healthcare needs such as:

- ✓ Bonuses for medical staff
- ✓ Medical supplies and equipment



- ✓ Improvement of conditions of medical facilities

Social safety net such as:

- ✓ Food, means of individual protection, and other essentials for socially vulnerable and risk groups, including those with disabilities

- ✓ Supplies required for the operation of volunteer support groups

- ✓ Transportation

To ensure public accountability and transparency, the public will be regularly informed about the amount of funds received and the areas covered.

While making a transaction, please, indicate the purpose as follows: “Support for the fight

against coronavirus disease.” The preferable area may also be indicated.

Recipient: Central Treasury of the Republic of Armenia

Treasury Account Number: 900005001947

US to provide \$1.1 million to help Armenia respond to COVID-19 crisis

The U.S. Department of State has assured that the global US COVID-19 emergency aid package – which will provide \$274 million in resources to 64 of the world's most at-risk countries will include \$1.1 million for Armenia, reports the Armenian National Committee of America.

“We welcome this first round of additional U.S. healthcare resources for Armenia related to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said ANCA Chairman Raffi Hamparian.

“The ANCA encourages the immediate re-programming of funds already appropriated by Congress for Armenia to help meet this crisis. As we have been from the beginning of this global pandemic, we will remain engaged with Executive and Legislative branch



leaders to support joint US-Armenia efforts to contain COVID-19 and to care for those suffering from this virus,” he added.

Earlier this week, ANCA Chairman Raffi Hamparian encouraged US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy “to ensure that needed US foreign assistance resources are directed to help Armenia deal with this health emergency, in cooperation with Armenia’s Minis-

try of Health and in support of other public health stakeholders, such as the American University of Armenia’s Center for Health Services Research and social service organizations like the Armenian Relief Society.”

Hamparian’s March 24th letter to Ambassador Tracy went on to note that “Funds appropriated by Congress can play a vital role at this crucial moment, as can US technical assistance in public health reporting, data collection, and capacity building.”

The additional US health assistance will help Armenia prepare laboratory systems, activate case finding and event-based surveillance, support technical experts for response and preparedness, and bolster risk communication.

Georgia, Russia to provide a “green zone” for Armenian freight - PM meets with large companies’ top executives

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan hosted a group of senior executives from large export and import companies on March 29.

Addressing those present, the Prime Minister said: “First of all, I want to thank you that despite all the difficulties, you continue to work as normally as possible. During this period, we will face the task of coordinating our efforts and possibly facilitate the exports and imports.

I can say that we have been working with our Georgian and Russian partners in recent days and yesterday we came to an agreement that both Georgia and Russia will provide a “green zone” for Armenia-bound EAEU freight, which means that a special corridor will be available through the territory of Georgia and the Upper Lars checkpoint. In the meantime, we will have to work hard in order give effect to the aforementioned agreements.

Also, since the Russian government may make quick decisions to impose different restrictions, which in turn can cause some panic in Armenia, it is particularly important



for consumers to note that we have already agreed that the proposed restrictions will not affect the EAEU space or at least Armenia.”

The Premier emphasized that the aforementioned arrangement is positive and final. Nikol Pashinyan pointed out that he keeps receiving import-related updates on a daily basis. He stressed that we have sufficient stocks of commodities available in the country.

“We also need to understand how we can coordinate export and import issues during this period so that the agreements we have had with the political leadership of Russia and Georgia could be implemented properly,” the Head of Government said.

Then, the businessmen in attendance reported back the problems faced in the current situation due to export and import problems, and came up with suggestions for their solution. In turn, Minister of Economy Tigran Khachatryan and State Revenue Committee Chairman David Ananyan gave clarifications on the matter at hand.

The Prime Minister told the Minister of Economy to develop a mechanism for keeping in close touch with businesses that will help respond as promptly as possible to their problems and find operative solutions.

Considering the foreign exchange and logistics-related bottlenecks, Nikol Pashinyan noted that the Government has approved several anti-crisis programs to share the risks faced by the business community through preferential loans, including zero-interest lending.

“Our political will is to do whatever we can to help the business community,” the Premier noted, stressing the importance of introducing such mechanisms as would enable the public and private sectors to act quickly and effectively in crisis situations.

‘An Eastern Partnership that delivers for all’

An op-ed by Josep Borrell, EU High Representative/Vice-President and Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement.

In this challenging time, marked by the coronavirus outbreak, we can see how important international cooperation is. Over the last decade, the Eastern Partnership has brought concrete benefits for people in Armenia and across the European Union's eastern neighborhood.

The European Union provides Armenian companies, which will be economically hit the hardest by the pandemics, with funding, training, and export support to new markets, through the EU4Business initiative. Since 2009, the European Union loaned the companies in Armenia €500 million, supported 25,000 enterprises and created 2,500 new jobs.

The European Union also supports one of the most growing industries in the country – tourism. For example, with our help the Dilijan Tourist Information Centre and Arts and Crafts Centres were established, together with 11 hiking trails in Dilijan National Park and 300 km trails in Syunik, Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor. The tourism projects in Armenia created over 100 new jobs for the local population and supported more than 300 local SMEs.

The Pilot Regional Development Programme Grant Scheme ‘EU4Regions: support to Regional Development in Armenia’ supported regional and local economic development and created 544 new jobs. Under the project, support was provided to 2,831 individuals to improve their employability, as well as to 719 enterprises. This allowed creating 460 new, sustainable jobs.

Over the past 14 years, the European Union has supported Armenian colleges' educational reforms, renovation and upgrading. Over 4,500 students have benefited from the reforms supported by the EU, and 17 colleges have been renovated. The ‘Organic Agriculture’ training module has been introduced in 15 colleges. Under Erasmus+ (2014-2020), over 1,800 students and academic staff from Armenia have studied or taught in Europe, and 885 Europeans went to Armenia. In addition, over 6,800 young people and youth workers took part in short-term exchanges, mobility, training and volunteering projects.



To ensure our partnership continues to deliver in the fast-changing world of today, we need to do even more and better. To shape our priorities, we consulted last year with people, businesses, organizations and governments of 33 countries from across our shared region. While there was an appreciation for the results achieved, there was also a clear expectation that we enhance our cooperation when it comes to jobs and prosperity, investments, connectivity, good governance and common challenges such as climate change and the digital transformation.

And now we presented our response to these consultations with long-term objectives for our policy beyond 2020. Our continued engagement with the Eastern Partnership countries remains a key priority for the European Union. Our proposals for the future are ambitious yet achievable. They build on existing cooperation but also identify areas where we need to go further. They are built on fundamental values at the heart of the EU project, such as the rule of law, protection of human rights and fight against corruption.

Concretely, we are proposing to our partners to work together on the following objectives:

--Together for resilient, sustainable and integrated economies: Strengthening the economy is key to meeting citizens' expectations and reducing inequality and for making our partnership a success. We will focus on job creation and economic opportunities, through increased trade, investments, stronger connectivity, in particular in transport and energy, and linking education, research and innovation better with private sector needs.

--Together for accountable institutions, the rule of law and security: Good governance and democratic institutions, the rule of law, successful anti-corruption policies

and security are essential for sustainable development and the consolidation of democracy. They are the backbone of resilient states and societies as well as strong economies.

--Together for environmental and climate resilience: To protect our world for generations to come, we all need to take responsibility. The EU will work with its partners to improve the resource-efficiency of economies, develop new green jobs and promote local and renewable sources of energy.

--Together for a resilient digital transformation: The EU will further invest in the digital transformation of our partners, aiming to extend the benefits of the Digital Single Market to partner countries. Our joint work will also focus on strengthening e-Governance, scaling up digital start-ups and supporting the cyber resilience of partner countries.

--Together for resilient, fair and inclusive societies: Free and fair elections together with transparent, citizen-centred and accountable public administrations are essential for democracy. The EU will continue to focus on these key areas, engaging with civil society, which needs to be given sufficient space, and supporting free, plural and independent media and human rights, as well as ensuring mobility and people-to-people contacts, all particularly important also due to growing disinformation against EU values.

Over the past decade, trade between the EU and its eastern partners has nearly doubled. Over 125,000 small and medium-sized businesses have directly benefited from EU funding, creating or sustaining more than 250,000 jobs. We are better connected thanks to improved transport links and easier access to high capacity broadband. And according to recent surveys, the EU is the most trusted international institution among Eastern Partnership citizens. We will keep this results-oriented approach and look to do much more together in the face of today's challenges, including when it comes to crises such as COVID-19 pandemic.

And through this we will build an even more ambitious Eastern Partnership that delivers for all and continues to bring our shared continent closer together.

Erdogan's Denial of Coronavirus Crisis Risks the Lives of 80 Million Turks



By Harut Sassounian

The world as we knew it changed dramatically in the last few weeks due to the unexpected spread of the deadly coronavirus. Hundreds of millions of people around the world are isolated in their homes, scared of coming in contact with anyone who might be carrying the virus.

Several autocratic heads of states were slow to react to the virus denying that it was a serious problem in their countries. Eventually, as more and more people were infected with the virus, these leaders finally saw the light and started to take urgent measures to protect their people.

One such irresponsible leader is the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Michael Rubin, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, wrote a lengthy article in the March 16, 2020 issue of *The National Interest*, titled: "Gambling with 80 Million Lives: Why Erdogan Lied about Coronavirus."

Rubin referred to Ergin Kocylidirim, a Turkish pediatric cardiothoracic surgeon at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Medicine, who described in an essay "both the Turkish government's claim to have established an effective testing kit and the fraudulence of its claims."

Even though the Turkish Health Minister initially denied that there were any coronavirus cases in Turkey, after widespread claims of the spread of the virus, Turkish authorities arrested the whistle-blowers. Another 64 Turks were jailed after being accused of disseminating false and provoc-

ative information. Furthermore, members of the state-controlled Turkish press panel insisted that "Turkish genes rendered most Turkic people immune," Rubin reported.

Rubin attributed Erdogan's lies about the absence of the coronavirus in Turkey to his "dangerous combination of arrogance and ignorance.... A larger motivation may be fear. While Turkey's demography is shifting in Erdogan's favor as conservative families from Turkey's Anatolian heartland grow relative to the Europeanized Turks from central Istanbul and the Mediterranean coast, the economy is faltering. In 2010, Erdogan promised that by Turkey's 2023 centennial, Turkey would be one of the world's top ten economies. Even before coronavirus, Turkey would be lucky to remain in the top 20 as corruption, nepotism, political interference in business, and broad mismanagement have combined to send confidence in Turkey's economy into the gutter."

Another reason Rubin gives for Erdogan's cover-up of the spread of the coronavirus in Turkey is his fear of the collapse of the tourism industry. "In 2018, the Turkish tourism industry accounted for nearly \$30 billion dollars. Just a year ago, Erdogan promised that Turkey would host 50 million tourists, raising that figure by at least 20 percent. Add into the mix Turkey's investment of approximately \$12 billion in a new Istanbul airport, expected to be the world's largest, and one in which Erdogan and his family are reportedly heavily invested. It seems Erdogan sought to downplay reports of coronavirus in order to encourage tourist dollars to continue to flow. In doing so, he sought not only to play Russians, Europeans, and Americans for fools, but also endangered their lives. Unfortunately for Turkey, it will be Turks who will most pay the price as Turkey threatens to become the virus' next big cluster. One Turkish doctor estimates that as many as 60 percent of Turks may now be infected and that Erdogan is retarding testing in order to prevent the scale of the catastrophe from becoming known. Deaths were inevitable, but Erdogan's dishonesty will likely cause many thousand additional deaths in his country added to the dozens Turkey reportedly has already experienced but will not officially

report."

To make matters worse, as in several other countries, the Turkish public has invented fake cures for the coronavirus. Nazlan Ertan wrote in the *Al-Monitor* website that Turks are now resorting to cannabis and sheep soup to fight the vicious virus.

Abdurrahman Dilipak, a prominent Islamist columnist for the daily *Yeni Akit* newspaper, suggested that cannabis "can create a major barrier to the global spread of the virus." Dilipak, who has 700,000 Twitter followers — about six times more than his newspaper's circulation, also urged his Turkish readers to avoid receiving any vaccines from overseas because they would likely contain sterilization agents, linking such vaccines to an Aryan plot.

After a Turkish professor suggested the 'kelle pacha' (sheep soup) cure, many Turks flocked to local restaurants preferring the soup to social distancing. "The outbreak of coronavirus led to high demand for kelle pacha," *Hurriyet* reported on March 16. "After the news articles, the kelle pacha orders both at the restaurant and as take-away have increased," said a waiter at *Ismet Usta*, a popular restaurant in downtown Izmir.

"All of these remedies — from gorging your throat with vinegar to whatever soup, has no use," Mehmet Ceylan, the president of the nongovernmental Infectious Diseases Association, said in an NTV news program on March 16. "These are unscientific and should not be spread [through the media or word of mouth]."

Fortunately, in recent days, there has been a turnaround in the approach of Turkish officials to the virus. They are now urging the population to stay indoors in self isolation to avoid more infections. I hope that these measures are not too late and millions of Turks are not already at risk. The announced numbers of 1236 infections and 30 deaths due to the coronavirus do not reflect the real figures.

At this critical time, we wish everyone good health, regardless of nationality, religion or skin color. We hope that this malicious disease has inadvertently helped to bring people and nations closer to fight together the common invisible enemy.

Online webinar on COVID-19: Challenging General Fear

Aurora Prize Co-Founders Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan, Lord Ara Darzi, Armenia's Health Minister Arsen Torosyan, Managing Partner of McKinsey & Company André Andonian, WHO special envoy for COVID-19 Dr. David Nabarro participated in an online webinar "COVID-19: Challenging General Fear."



The issues covered during the panel discussion ranges from the background to this new virus, the prevention of cross-infection in the community, the best and proven protection measures, computer modelling, the prospects of therapeutics and vaccinations, the capacity of the health systems in Armenia and around the world to tackle the pandemic, the fake news and the myths surrounding it to the scientific knowledge we could confidently rely on today and tomorrow.

The panelists shared their understanding of how the on-going pandemic affects various aspects of our present-day lives and discuss the unknown – the upcoming social, economic, political, demographic, behavioral, etc. changes we should anticipate and be ready to tackle together in the months and years to come.

Dr. David Nabarro attached importance to cooperation between nations is key to fighting the virus.

"Strong international cooperation is crucial but may be hard to achieve due to reasons that have nothing do to with COVID-19," he said.

He noted that base our projections for COVID-19 on our knowledge of other viruses, like Ebola, would be unwise, because it behaves differently.

Lord Ara Darzi, Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation at the London Imperial College, and Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee said "these are challenging times.

"Fear is not an issue that you can manage easily," he said, adding that "No healthcare system in the world, even the best one, has the capacity to deal with 15-20% of the

population who get a severe disease.

"The only thing we could do is get the balance right between the supply and demand. This virus does not know any boundaries, doesn't know anything about grace or religion, doesn't even know if you are a Prime Minister or not," he noted.

Noubar Afeyan said "this is nothing short of a global biological war – not something man-made but still a biological war."

"This is absolutely not a competition between different companies and different approaches. This is basically a competition between us and the virus," he added.

André Andonian said: "We are looking at the facts and developing different scenarios, and the scenarios depend on safeguarding lives and saving livelihood, the way of creating value, having jobs and so on."

Ruben Vardanyan added that "we need to understand this is not only the states' or international organizations' responsibility to solve this problem. Our entire society needs to be involved."

Health Minister Arsen Torosyan presented the measures Armenia is taking to deal with the spread of the virus.

Polish composer, conductor Krzysztof Penderecki dies at 86

Polish composer and conductors Krzysztof Penderecki has passed away aged 86, Poland's ministry of Culture informs.

"After a long and serious illness, Krzysztof Penderecki – one of the greatest Polish musicians, a world authority in the field of classical music died," Poland's Ministry of Culture said in a tweet.

Penderecki composed four operas, eight symphonies and other orchestral pieces, a variety of instrumental concertos, choral settings of mainly religious texts, as well as chamber and instrumental works.

Penderecki was born in Dębica, to Tadeusz Penderecki, a lawyer, and Zofia (née Wittgenstein). Penderecki's grandfather, Robert Berger, was a highly talented painter and director of the local bank at the time of Penderecki's birth. His grand-



mother was Armenian from Isfahan, Iran. Penderecki used to go to the Armenian Church in Kraków with her.

Penderecki studied music at Jagiellonian University and the Academy of Music in Kraków. He began his career as a composer in 1959 during the Warsaw Autumn festival.

Penderecki composed several of his most important works in remembrance of

catastrophes in the 20th century, most famously his Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima. His concerto for piano Resurrection, premiered at the Warsaw Autumn Festival in 2002, was written as a reaction to the terror attacks of 11 September 2001.

Penderecki has won many prestigious awards, including the Commander's Cross in 1964, the Prix Italia in 1967 and 1968, the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta in 1964, four Grammy Awards in 1987, 1998 (twice), and 2017, Wolf Prize in Arts in 1987 and the University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition in 1992.

In 2008 Penderecki was awarded the Golden Medal of the Minister of Culture of Armenia. In 2009 he was honored with the Order of Merit of Armenia.

Viva-MTS supports the first Armenian university online education platform developed by the Polytechnic University

Subscribers of Viva-MTS mobile network will be using the iUniversity platform without extra charges

are over 100 filmed lectures, more than 1000 learning materials to help the students of the university move to online learning in a unified step.

“The work on all of the materials, including the communication between faculty, students, teachers,



As mentioned during the live stream, the [iUniversity](#) platform is an opportunity designed for an educational institution to register its faculty, students, teachers, school kids, and management, create subject lists for each group and class, create home tasks, organize online testing sessions, upload educational materials, set up a library, upload video lectures, share questions with lecturers, teachers, and have a forum to discuss subjects and mark student progress.

With the current situation in Armenia in mind, Viva-MTS will not be charging extra when its subscriber students and school children use the educational platform.

*“The Polytechnic extends its gratitude to Viva-MTS, namely its Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian**, for supporting the university students in these trying times,”* Vice-Rector of the University, Head of Administration Gor Vardanyan said.

[iUniversity](#) platform is designed to provide an extensive and agile user friendly tools for universities, schools, and colleges (secondary professional education institutions) with an opportunity to set up independent educational environments for varying academic degrees, and has a potential to become a unified electronic learning network.



On March 23 the National Polytechnic University of Armenia launched the first Armenian university online educational platform. The Vice-Rector of the University, Head of Administration Gor Vardanyan, says, on March 13 the management of the National Polytechnic University of Armenia, namely, the institution's Rector, Professor Vostanik Marukhyan, made a decision on accelerating the creation and introduction of online learning tools.

“Due to the emergency situation the Polytechnic formed a task group, which shortly ensured coordination of development of a platform to digitize learning materials and organize online teaching processes,” Vardanyan said.

According to the provost now there

school kids, and the management had resumed by the task group [“Ulmh Sevuni”](#) of the Polytechnic before the emergency situation in the Republic of Armenia was declared. It had branded the platform as [iUniversity](#), and had implemented all the works,” Vardanyan mentioned.



Opera and Ballet House: Still #self_isolated and #ArtVsVirus



On 27 March General and Artistic Director of the AI. Spendiaryan National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre Maestro **Constantine G. Orbelian** published the following address:

"Dear Friends,

Today is the the International Theatre Day.

I cordially congratulate all our appreciators of the theatrical world and, of course, our theatrical spectators for whom

we work with utmost dedication and love.

Every year on this day, we were solemnly celebrating, attending the annual ARTAVAZD theatrical award.

By the way, this year ARTAVAZD was supposed to take place in the Yerevan Opera House. For obvious reasons we cannot celebrate International Theatre Day with special ceremony, but we must promise each other that, after a successful resolution of the situation, every day we will make the Theatre's day by the end of the year.



We are bound to feel and enjoy the miracle of the theatre every day as it makes each of us more purposeful and dignified.

Congratulations dear ARTIST!

Congratulations dear THEATRICAL WORKER!

Congratulations dear AUDIENCE!

*Cordially yours,
Constantine Orbelian"*



The Theatre also appealed to the audience:

"Dear Audience,

Let us congratulate you once more on this wonderful day, the International Theater Day.

In a couple of hours we will watch the most popular and beloved ANOUSH opera, but before that we suggest to post in a comments photos taken in our Theater.

Let's remember the unforgettable moments we have spent together in our Theater.

Looking forward to a non-virtual meeting

Still #self_isolated"

A.Tigranyan's ANOUSH opera:

ANOUSH: Hasmik Torosyan

SARO: Sargis Aghamalyan /Honored Artist of RA/

MOSY: Gevorg Hakobyan /Honored Artist of RA/

ANOUSH'S MOTHER:

Kristine Sahakyan /Honored Artist of RA/

SARO'S MOTHER: Greta Bagiyanyan

KYOKHVA: Zohrab Zohrabyan

OHAN: Ashot Ghantaryan

BEST MAN: Tigran Koninyan

JANITOR: Armen Grigoryan

PASSER: Armen Badalyan

FRIENDS: Arevik Gyulbudaghyan, Lusine Ordukhanyan, Tamara Dadoyan, Roza Hovsepyan, Anna Aylvazyan

Conductor: Karen Lavchyan

Stage director:

Gegham Griogoryan /People's Artist of RA and RL/

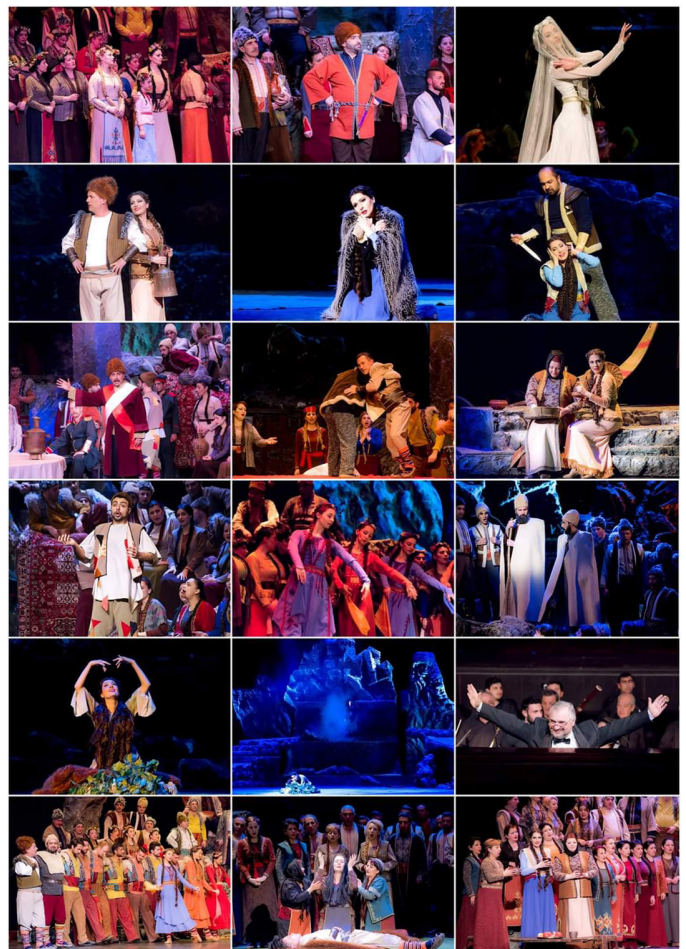
Set designer: Grisha Sahakyan /Honored Art Worker of RA/

Chief choirmaster: Hrach Boryan

Choreographer: Vilen Galstyan /People's Artist of RA/

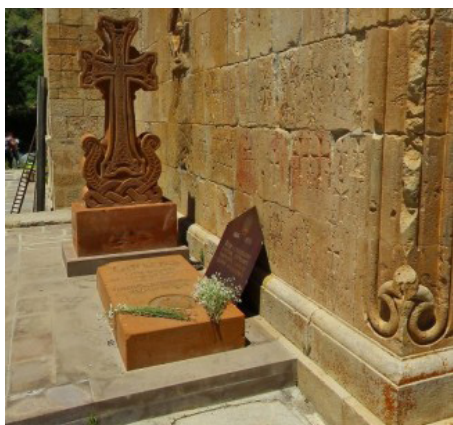
Artistic Director of the Theatre:

Constantine Orbelian /Honored Artist of RF/



Spitakavor Monastery: From the Unique Medieval Engraved Sculptures to the Great Garegin Njdeh Tombstone

By Gourgen James Khazhakian
Chief Correspondent



This complex is located 7km north of Vernashen village of Vayots Dzor Marz of Armenia, on the slope of a rock. It consists of St. Astvatsatsin (Mother Mary) Church, the narthex and the belfry which are built of white polished felzit stone that gave the name of the



Monastery.

According to inscription, the Church was founded by Prince Eatchee Proshyan in 1318, and after his death his son Amir-Hassan continued construction and completed it in 1321. It has

a dome-type hall design. The only entrance is from the west. The Church is distinguished by secular and spiritual plot icons. The entrance stone is engraved with the infant Jesus embracing the Mother Mary, the sculpture of Prince Eatchee and his son Amir-Hassan (at the Hermitage, St. Petersburg at present), and the sculpture of Amir-Hassan when hunting (at the History Museum of Armenia at present) are considered



to be among the best examples of the Armenian medieval sculpture.

The narthex is adjacent to the Church



from the west. It was built in 1321-1330. It is an arched structure with a square plan.

The belfry is attached to the west wall of the narthex. Built by Hovhannes and Tachn Proshyans couple in 1330. It is a three-storey, original structure. The first floor is solid, made of rough stone, the second is a rectangular hollow, and the third is a transverse vault crowned with a double roof. The remains of the late period fences, monk cells and cemetery were preserved near the Monastery.

From the second half of the XVth century until the XVIth c. St. Astvatsatsin Monastery was a cultural, educational and writing center.

In 1987 the relics of the great Armenian military figure, ideologist and statesman General **Garegin Njdeh** (who is considered as the Savior of Armenia fought successfully Turkish, Azeri and Bolshevik joint hordes in 1919-21) were buried at the yard of the Church. In 1989 a tombstone and a khachkar were installed solemnly at the Hero's grave, and now it is a place of pilgrimage for the old and the young, for many and many.

The monument was restored in 2007-2009 on the initiative of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia, and in 2012, under the patronage of benefactor **Vardan Harutyunyan**, a bell made in St. Petersburg (Russia) was placed in the belfry.



Life`s most persistent and urgent question is, “What are you doing for others?”



La salle du conseil de l'ORDRE des AVOCATS a été rénovée avec l'aide du philanthrope Raymond Yézéguelian

la Chambre des Avocats du BARREAU D'ARMENIE, rénovée avec le soutien du bienfaiteur Raymond Yézéguelian, a été re-ouverte.

Le président de la Chambre des avocats de la République d'Arménie Ara Zohrabyan BATONNIER DU BARREAU D'ARMENIE (2.000 avocats, dont 40%

ԲԱՐԵՐԱՐ ՌԱՅՍՈՆ ԵԶԵԳԵԼՅԱՆԻ ԱՁԱԿՑՈՒԹՅԱՄԲ ՆՈՐՈԳՎԵԼ Է ԽՈՐՀՐԴԻ ԴԱՀԼԻԾԸ

ՀՀ փաստաբանների պալատում վերաբացվել է Փարիզի փաստաբանների միության անդամ, բարերար Ռայմոն Եզեգելյանի աջակցությամբ նորոգված փաստաբանների պալատի խորհրդի դահլիճը:

ՀՀ փաստաբանների պալատի նախագահ Արա Չոհրաբյանը շնորհակալություն է հայտնել Եզեգելյանին մինչ օրս փաստաբանական



համայնքին ցուցաբերած աջակցության և համատեղ ծրագրեր իրականացնելու համար:

Ներկա խորհրդի անդամները, մասնավորապես՝ Մեղրակ Ասատրյանը, Արա Ղազարյանը, Կարեն Մեժլումյանը, Միմոն Բաբայանը, Մելանյա Առուստամյանը և Նելլի Հարությունյանը նույնպես իրենց շնորհակալական խոսքն են հայտնել պարոն Եզեգելյանին:

Ռայմոն Եզեգելյանը նշել է, որ ծրագրերը շարունակական են լինելու և պատրաստ է առաջիկայում քննարկելու նոր գաղափարների իրականացման հեռանկարները:



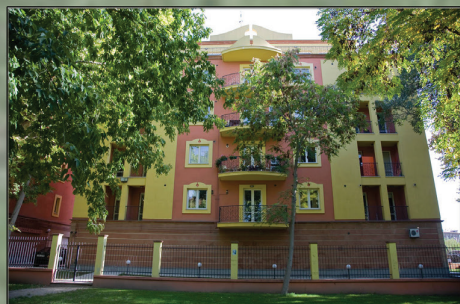
de femmes) a exprimé sa gratitude à Yezeguelian pour le soutien apporté à la communauté des défenseurs et aux programmes conjoints.

Les membres du conseil actuel, en particulier Sedrak Asatryan, Ara Ghazaryan, Karen Mezhlumyan, Simon Babayan, Melanya Arustamyan et Nelli Harutyunyan ont également remercié M. Yezegelian.

Mr Yezegelyan a ajoute que les programmes du Barreau d'Armenie dans l'avenir seront toujours soutenus et qu'il était prêt à discuter des perspectives d'avenir pour de nouvelles idées.

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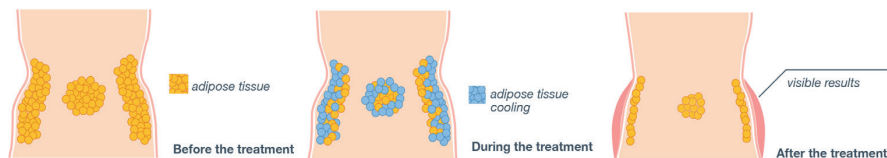
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