

Construction of 250 MW power plant kicks off in Yerevan



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attended the launch of the construction of a 250 MW combined-cycle gas turbine power plant in Yerevan. The project is implemented by the Italian Renko company with an investment of about USD 250 million. The Italian state-run Cimest and German Siemens companies, as well as international financial organizations are involved in the investment program.

The construction is due to be completed within 26 months after the start of construction. The cost of electricity generated by the new power plant will be lower - 27.4 drams per kilowatt / hour - as compared to the price of electricity generated by thermal power plants.

The Prime Minister was told that 1000-1200 people will be involved during the construction stage with an average salary of 250-300 thousand drams, while some 230 jobs will be made available during the operation. The expected efficiency is 53 percent. The new generating capacity will be used in regional projects, in particular, as part of the Armenia-Iran energy swap program.

A relevant framework agreement was signed as early as on April 27, 2017. Later on, the new Armenian government resumed the talks, as a result of which the Amended and Redefined Framework Agreement and the supplementary agreement to the Amended and Redefined Framework Agreement on construction of a 250 MW combined-cycle gas plant in Yerevan were signed on November 13, 2018.

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Anti-Corruption Policy Council holds first session chaired by Armenia PM

The Anti-Corruption Policy Council held on July 12 its first session chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, as reported the Department of Information and Public Relations of the Government of Armenia.

Prime Minister Pashinyan delivered his opening remarks and stated the following:

“Today the Anti-Corruption Policy Council is holding its first session, but before we move to the agenda, I would like to emphasize a couple of things.

Overall, what is the main problem in the fight against corruption in the Republic of Armenia? The problem is there have been a lot of talks about it, but the reality hasn't changed. There have been many reasons for this, and I believe the most important reason has been the lack of political will.

Today, the Government of Armenia unequivocally has the highest level of political will to lead a fundamental struggle against corruption, but even today, the fight against corruption in Armenia is not being led at the level of effectiveness that would correspond to the political will of the Government of Armenia.

It is safe to say that this is due to the absence of well-established institutional mechanisms. Today, our objective is to create mechanisms that will make the fight against corruption in Armenia correspond to the political will of the government and the majority of Armenia's parliament.

Of course, in this context, we also face certain challenges, and for me, the major challenge is the organizing of the fight against corruption in such a way that it



doesn't cause harm to the image of democracy in Armenia.

These are also very important objectives that we are setting and must set forth for ourselves, but one thing is clear and unequivocal: leading the roughest fight against corruption is unquestionable for the government and the parliamentary majority of Armenia.

I would like to express gratitude to our partners in parliament, the Human Rights Defender and representatives of non-governmental organizations who are involved in this process upon their consent, and I hope we succeed in making these efforts truly successful.”

Minister of Justice Rustam Badasyan presented the draft of the Anti-Corruption Strategy of the Republic of Armenia and the Action Plan (posted on e-draft.am) and stated that discussions with civil society representatives and representatives of NGOs continue.

Presenting the Strategy, the minister stated that consistent implementation of the conceptual provisions and principles of the Government of Armenia is prescribed

as the main goal of the Anti-Corruption Strategy. According to Rustam Badasyan, the establishment of two main institutions — Commission for Prevention of Corruption and Anti-Corruption Committee — are being considered in the sense of the anti-corruption institutional model for implementation of the anti-corruption policy.

The minister also presented the main conceptual directions of the 2019-2023 Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms in the Republic of Armenia and said the reforms will be made in two stages, including short-term and long-term.

The justice minister's speech was followed by an exchange of ideas. Issues related to the scope of competence, status and functions of the Anti-Corruption Committee, replenishment of specialists of the Committee; the powers of the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption; the fight against systemic corruption; the system of declaration; the monitoring of results of the fight against corruption; the integrity of judges; the properties of officials, specification of the mechanisms for verifying the transparency of their revenues and their integrity and other issues were discussed, and several recommendations were made.

Prime Minister Pashinyan assigned the justice minister to continue discussions on the recommendations on the Anti-Corruption Strategy with interested state organizations and non-governmental organizations and submit the revised draft for consideration during the next session of the Council.”

Pashinyan, Rouhani discuss bilateral ties, regional developments



Pashinyan held a telephone conversation with President Hassan Rouhani of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The conversation focused on a number of issues of bilateral cooperation. The sides evoked with satisfaction the recent meeting of the Armenian-Iranian intergovernmental commission in Tehran.

They highlighted the need for implementing the agreements reached at the commission sitting.

The two heads of state discussed the prospects of cooperation between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union. Views were exchanged on regional developments.

Nikol Pashinyan, Donald Tusk discuss prospects for development of EU-Armenia relations



Donald Tusk, the outgoing head of the European Union's top decision-making body, again praised the Armenian government's reform agenda when he visited Armenia on July 10.

Tusk noted "positive dynamics" in the country after holding talks with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. "I am encouraged by the progress under your leadership," he told Pashinyan at a joint news briefing.

Tusk, who will be succeeded by Belgium's Charles Michel as president of the European Council in November, specifically reaffirmed EU support for ongoing efforts to reform Armenia's judicial system.

"The EU welcomes the focus on creating an independent, efficient and accountable judicial system," Tusk told reporters. "A solid judiciary is an essential element of a mature democracy and for economic and social development. Also, here the EU will continue to support with expertise and mobilize further resources."

"In recognition of the government's reform efforts, the EU has almost doubled

our support to Armenia in 2019," he added. "These funds will help to implement priority projects, including infrastructure and environment."

The EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, announced last month that the 28-nation bloc will provide 25 million euros (\$28 million) in additional aid to Armenia this year. She hailed "democratic reforms"



implemented by Pashinyan's government after chairing, together with Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, a second session of the EU-Armenia Partnership Council.

The council is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the landmark Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agree-

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The construction of a new power station in Yerevan with the capacity of 250 MW is the greatest and strategic project of the Italian Renco S.p.A. in Armenia, Simone Giovannini, Resident Branch Director at Renco S.p.A. for Armenia, told reporters on July 12.

"We are proud of our activities in Armenia. This is our greatest investment in Armenia, although we operate here for already 20 years", he said, adding that the first works over the project launched back in 2016.

Simone Giovannini said this is not going to be the last project, they also plan to implement more programs in Armenia in next 30-40 years.

ment (CEPA) signed by the two sides in 2017. The CEPA commits Yerevan to gradually "approximating" Armenian economic laws and regulations to the EU's legal framework.

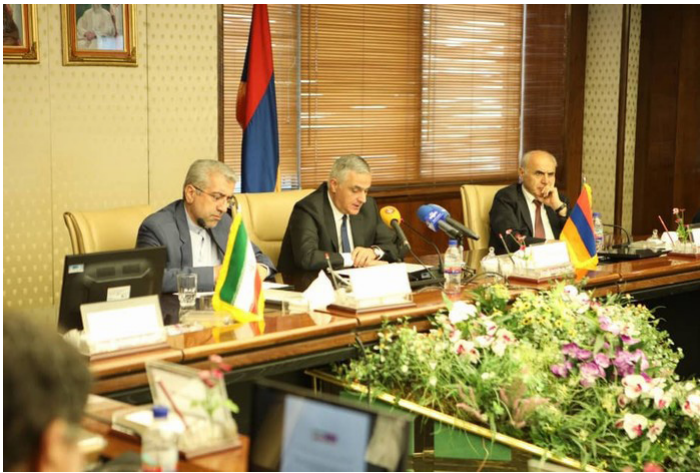
Pashinyan stressed the importance of the 350-page accord after the meeting with Tusk. He said the CEPA will not only lead to closer ties between Armenia and the EU but also "assist in the implementation of the Armenian authorities' reform agenda."

The unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was also high on the agenda of the talks. Tusk urged the parties to the conflict to "take measures to restore an atmosphere conducive to peace and real talks."

"The conflict does not have a military solution and needs a political settlement in accordance with international law and principles ... The EU is already supporting peace-building activities and is ready to further support measures to prepare the populations for peace," said the top EU official.

Tusk made similar comments on the Karabakh issue after meeting with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev in Baku on July 9. "gate violence must be held accountable," he said.

Iran looks to boost gas supplies to Armenia



The Armenian and Iranian governments are exploring the possibility of expanding a swap arrangement allowing Armenia to import Iranian natural gas, Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan said on July 9.

Under the commercial scheme launched a decade ago, Iran has supplied up to 500 million cubic meters of gas to Armenia annually. The latter pays for it with electricity delivered to the Islamic Republic.

The rest of Armenia's gas imports totaling roughly 2 billion cubic meters per annum come from Russia. According to the current and former Armenian governments, Russian gas has been cheaper, in monetary terms, for the South Caucasus state than Iranian gas.

Speaking after talks with Grigoryan held in Tehran last week, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said that his country is

ready to increase the gas supplies and also accept other Armenian "goods" in payment for them.

Grigoryan confirmed that the Iranian side floated the idea during the talks. "Such an issue was discussed and negotiations regarding this will certainly continue," he told RFE/RL's Armenian service. "We expect that a group of Iranian specialists will visit Yerevan soon and I think that discussions on this issue will continue."

"This topic needs further elaboration because it is quite interesting in itself," said the Armenian vice-premier.

Grigoryan said the Armenian government is interested in greater gas supplies from Iran because it believes they could cut domestic prices of gas and electricity. He made clear that "the most desirable option" for Yerevan is to continue to pay for Iranian gas with electricity, rather than other goods.

Armenia is currently building a third high-voltage transmission line that will connect Armenian and Iranian power grids. The new line, slated for completion next year, will allow it to almost triple power supplies to Iran.

While in Tehran, Grigoryan also met with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. The latter told him that the two neighboring nations should deepen their relations despite the U.S. economic sanctions against Tehran.

The gas issue was high on the agenda of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's February 2018 visit to Iran. Speaking after talks with Pashinyan, Rouhani expressed Tehran's readiness to sell more gas to Armenia.

Armenian parliamentary delegation raised issue of visa liberalization during visit in Poland

On the sidelines of the visit to Poland, the delegation of the Armenian parliamentary standing committee on foreign affairs raised the issue of the visa liberalization during the joint session with the foreign affairs committee of the Polish Senate and other meetings. The Armenian parliamentary delegation members had different impressions from these discussions.

During a press conference in Yerevan on July 11, member of the delegation, Bright Armenia faction MP Arman Babajanyan said the Polish partners will not help Armenia on the visa liberalization. "They have concrete questions on our foreign policy and commitments. Therefore, the expectations should be more restrained", he said.

Another member of the delegation, My Step faction MP Sos Avetisyan stated that there was a clear message during the discussion of the visa liberalization issue. "The message was that Armenia's visa liberalization issue should not be linked with cases which happened after the visa liberalization of other country. In other words, we should understand that each country should be examined with



a unique face and case", he said, considering this a very good message.

He also attached importance to the discussion of issue on expressing balanced opinions over the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The MP considered this format important for the development of the Armenian-Polish relations.

The Armenian parliamentary delegation visited Warsaw on July 2-4.

Arrest warrant issued for former Yerevan hospital chief



doctor whose once influential son Mikael is Armenia - Ara Minasyan (L), the director of Surb Grigor Lusavorich Medical Center, and parliament speaker Ara Babloyan talk to reporters in Yerevan, April 2, 2018

(Yerevan – RFE/RL)- An Armenian court issued has an arrest warrant for the former head of a Yerevan hospital related to former President Serzh Sargsyan after a law-enforcement body brought more corruption charges against him.

The suspect, Ara Minasyan, is a renowned doctor whose once influential son Mikael is married to one of Sarkisian's daughters. He was sacked as executive director of the state-owned Surb Grigor Lusavorich Med-

ical Center in July 2018 after the Armenian Health Ministry accused the hospital management of embezzling around 545 million drams (\$1.1 million) worth of government funds allocated for free examinations and treatment of civil servants.

Minasyan not only rejected the accusations but also filed a defamation suit against Health Minister Arsen Torosyan. Earlier this year a district court in Yerevan ordered Torosyan to apologize to the plaintiff. The minister challenged the ruling in the Court of Appeals.

Minasyan appeared to have gone into hiding before being formally charged with embezzlement and forgery of documents in November. A court in Yerevan refused to allow investigators to arrest him at the time.

Armenia's Investigative Committee said on Friday that another court allowed Minasyan's arrest this time around after it widened the criminal case against him. It said he now stands accused of embezzling

908 million drams in addition to "wasting" 72 million drams in hospital funds.

"Given that A. Minasyan is hiding from the investigation and his whereabouts are not known, a hunt has been declared for the latter," read a statement released by the Investigative Committee.

Minasyan's lawyer, Ara Ghazaryan, declined to comment on the development. He claimed that he has not seen the committee statement yet.

The suspect's son, Mikael Minasyan, enjoyed considerable political and economic influence in Armenia until nationwide mass protests brought down Sarkisian in April 2008. He was sacked as the country ambassador to the Vatican in November.

The current Armenian authorities have promised a tough fight against corruption. Individuals targeted by their ongoing criminal investigations also include Sarkisian's two brothers, two nephews and former chief bodyguard.

OSCE PA calls for intensified dialogue between Armenia, Azerbaijan



The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly encourages Armenia and Azerbaijan to intensify dialogue in the context of the mediation led by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and to take "specific and tangible measures to reach a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict."

The Luxembourg Declaration adopted by OSCE parliamentarians on Monday acknowledges the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship aimed at achieving a peaceful and lasting settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and welcomes the recent constructive dialogue between

the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan aimed at establishing an environment conducive to peace and undertaking measures in the humanitarian field.

The OSCE parliamentarians encourage the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to intensify their dialogue in the context of the mediation led by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship and to take specific and tangible measures to reach a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of the core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, including in particular refraining from the use or threat of force, and respect for territorial integrity and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

The declaration also welcomes the recent recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Italian Chamber of Deputies, as well as the designation by France of 24 April as the day for the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, as measures which promote awareness and contribute to the eradication of such atrocities, and calling on other national parliaments to follow suit.

Armenian PM receives Amber Capital company representatives

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received CEO of Amber Capital LLP Joseph Oughourlian and head of the company's Armenia Office Karen Arabyan, the PM's Office told Armenpress. Amber Capital is the founder of the first private mutual investment fund in Armenia. The official launch of the fund is expected to be held in Autumn 2019, in particular September-October.

The Armenian PM and the company representatives discussed issues relating to the co-operation, in particular the investment programs directions and prospective areas to be funded by the Fund.

Pashinyan said the govern-



ment's goal is to make Armenia's economy competitive, transferring from raw material producing industry to reprocessing industry and boost production, IT, tourism, Hi-Tech industry which are priority areas for economic growth. The

PM said according to the data of Eurostat, Armenia is leading in Europe in terms of the GDP growth rate in the first quarter of 2019, the evidence of which are the economy's development dynamics and the positive expectations over the economic

climate. He also highlighted the activity of the investment fund in terms of introducing corporate governance culture in Armenia and developing capital markets.

Joseph Oughourlian said the Amber Capital is interested in conducting activity in Armenia and is ready for mutually beneficial partnership.

The sides exchanged views on implementation of programs in small and medium business development, improvement of business climate, organization of educational programs for SME representatives, development of youth sport and on raising the transparency level of corporate governance.

Energy diversification level will allow to find solutions in case of any scenario - deputy PM

The level of diversification of Armenia's energy system is such that in case of any scenario the representatives of the field will find solutions, Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan told reporters in the Parliament.

Asked whether Armenia has a reserve option to avoid problems in energy system if US imposes sanctions on Iran and problems emerge, the deputy PM said: "I think our energy diversification level is such today that the representatives of the sector will find solutions in case of any scenario".



In response to the question whether the energy system may suffer fluctuations due to the neighbor state, he said technical risks, of course, exist, they always exist and have nothing to do with our political relations. The deputy PM assured that there are mecha-

nisms which restrain these risks. "The recent events showed that the energy system is technically equipped enough to neutralize certain technical shocks", he said.

Asked what Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan means by saying that one of the two versions linked with the problem is external, Grigoryan said the talk is about the external technical circumstances.

"The energy systems of the countries are not turned off and are not local. They are interconnected with at least the countries in the region. And when a technical fluctuation occurs in one of these countries, this, of course, has a certain technical impact on the system of the next country. At the moment there is a preliminary version according to which a technical fluctuation occurred in our neighbor country which also affected the overall technical situation of our energy system. But I cannot give a final answer yet because a working group has been formed to examine the issue, let's wait for the conclusions and then will discuss this issue", he said.

On July 10, at around 13:00, power fluctuations were recorded across the Republic.

Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Tigran Avinyan informed that an accident has been registered in the energy system. "Yerevan Thermal Power Plant and the 5th energy block of Hrazdan TPP are switched off. Electricity shutdowns are possible across the Republic. Works are being done to solve the problem till 19:00", he said.

Government to raise pensions



The Armenian government has decided to raise national pensions by 10 percent, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced on July 11.

Pashinyan said the decision stems from a three-year public spending plan adopted by the government on Wednesday. The pension increase will come into force on January 1, he told a cabinet meeting in Yerevan.

The measure will presumably be part of Armenia's 2020 state budget that will be drafted by the government and submitted to the parliament this fall.

The average monthly amount of pensions paid to some 497,000 Armenians aged 65 and older currently stands at roughly 41,000 drams (\$86). Nearly 7 percent of pensioners received as little as 16,000 per month until the government decided in November to raise the minimum pension to 25,000 drams.

The government also moved late last month to increase the minimum wage in Armenia by more than 23 percent, 68,000 drams. This increase too will take effect in January in the likely event of being approved by the parliament controlled by Pashinyan's My Step alliance. Officials say it will benefit 80,000 people.

In March, the government announced 10 percent pay rises for military personnel and schoolchildren. Pashinyan said the measure was made possible by better-than-expected tax collection.

The State Revenue Committee reported on Tuesday a nearly 25 percent rise in taxes and other duties collected by it in the first half of this year.

Abu Dhabi's Masdar to pursue renewable energy opportunities in Armenia

The Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar) is pursuing renewable energy opportunities in the Republic of Armenia, a country with considerable potential for solar and wind energy development, the Armenian National Interest Fund reports.

Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi, Chief Executive Officer of Masdar, and David Papazian, Chief Executive Officer of the Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF), signed on July 13 a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to explore collaboration in solar photovoltaic (PV) energy (200MW), onshore wind power (200MW), and floating solar power (100MW).

Addressing a high-level audience of government, business and media, Al Ramahi said: "It is a great honor to be in Yerevan to discuss the bright renewable energy future of Armenia, and to establish formal ties with the Armenian National Interests Fund."

"As the fastest growing economy in the Eurasian Economic Union, backed by an increasingly open and supportive regulatory environment, Armenia is a promising location for investment in both solar and wind energy," he added.

"At Masdar, as the renewable energy company of both Abu Dhabi and Mubadala Investment Company, we are excited to have this opportunity to further strengthen the relationship between Armenia and the



UAE, and to share with our hosts our 13 years of experience delivering renewable energy projects around the world," Al Ramahi added. "We look forward to supporting Armenia in the realization of its bold sustainability targets."

"This agreement is the first of many on a government-to-government level between the UAE and Armenia," said David Papazian of the Armenian National Interests Fund.

"Mr Al Ramahi and his team are not only our guests; we are giving them a home away from home in Armenia, as we have to His Excellency Ahmad Al Sayegh, Minister of State to the UAE," Papazian continued.

"Since elevating the relationship between the UAE and Armenia in January, it is symbolic that our first investment agreement is about renewables," Papazian added. "Whilst there has been a long-standing diplomatic relationship, this Armenian government is intent on renewing and deepening

its ties with our friends in the UAE. This agreement is a testament to our joint commitment to carry out this ambition."

Armenia is already a significant producer of hydroelectric power, and many of the country's more than 200 rivers and lakes are suitable for floating solar power projects. With wind speeds of 8.5 metres per second and above, much of Armenia is also ideal for wind farm development, while the country receives an estimated 1,720 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of solar energy per square metre, compared with an average of 1,000 kWh per square metre in Europe.

A full member of the Abu Dhabi-headquartered International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) since 2010, Armenia aspires to generate more than a quarter (26%) of its domestic power needs from renewable energy sources by 2025, and hopes to cap its carbon emissions at 633 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent between 2015 and 2050, according to Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

His Excellency Armen Sarkissian, President of Armenia, conducted a state visit to the UAE in January. Further underlining Armenia's commitment to diversify its energy mix, President Sarkissian also delivered a keynote speech at Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week 2019, the world's largest sustainability gathering.

Trump is About to Damage U.S. Interests Just to Please Erdogan

By Harut Sassounian

President Donald Trump is on the verge of making a serious mistake. If he decides not to sanction Turkey for purchasing Russian S-400 missiles, which are incompatible with NATO military systems and expose the operational secrets of the latest F-35 U.S. air force jets, he puts the security of the United States and other NATO members in jeopardy.

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed three resolutions warning Turkey not to purchase the Russian missiles and has threatened to block the sale of F-35 jets to Turkey. In addition, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security officials have publicly announced that the United States will impose severe sanctions on Turkey for purchasing the Russian missiles. Trump, an indecisive man who is fond of all dictators, in particular Turkey's despotic President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is on the verge of ignoring all his top advisers and the majority of Congress, allowing Turkey to violate the U.S. sanctions law.

On June 29, when the leaders of G-20 countries met in Osaka, Japan, Erdogan had a final chance to convince Trump not to punish Turkey for the purchase of the Russian missiles.

Here are excerpts of the alarming statements Trump made during his meeting with Erdogan in the presence of journalists:

President Trump: "... It's my honor to be with a friend of mine, somebody I've become very close to, in many respects, and he's doing a very good job: the President of Turkey. And we have a meeting largely to do with trade. We're doing more and more business, and we expect to be able to quadruple that business with Turkey. We think it will be great. They're great craftsmen. They have great product. And we're opening it up. We also do military trading, and they buy a lot of our military equipment. And it's an honor to be with you, Mr. President."

Then pointing to Erdogan's entourage in the room, Trump said: "And look at these people, how nice they are. Look at them. They're so easy to deal with. Look at them. Central casting. There's no Hollywood set

where you could produce people that look like them."

President Erdogan responded: "Mr. President, first, I would like to express that it's very meaningful for us to come together here at the Osaka Summit. And we are currently going towards fulfilling the goal of a \$75 billion trade volume. And there are many steps that we need to take within the defense industry area, but, more importantly, we have a strategic partnership. And the strategic partnership also encourages us to create solidarity across many areas, and I have full belief that our solidarity will continue throughout the strategic partnership."

After these introductory remarks, Trump responded to reporters' questions:

Reporter: "Mr. President, what will you do about the S-400s? Is the U.S. going to have to impose sanctions if he takes possession?"

President Trump: "Well, we're discussing it. We have a complicated situation, because the President was not allowed to buy the Patriot missiles. So when he bought the other ones—the S-200s or 400s—when he bought them, he wanted to do this, but he wasn't allowed by the Obama administration to buy them until after he made a deal to buy other missiles. So, he buys the other missile and then, all of a sudden, they say, 'Well, you can now buy our missile.' You don't—you can't, do business that way. It's not good. It's not good."

R: "Does that mean there is a way...will you [impose sanctions]?"

P.T.: "We're looking at different solutions. It's a problem, there's no question about it. We're looking at different solutions. But he was prohibited from buying until he said he bought something else. And then, as soon as he buys something else, everybody says, 'Okay. You can buy it.' You can't do business that way. Turkey has been a friend of ours and they've done—we've done great things together. We're a big trading partner. We're going to be much bigger. I think the \$75 billion is small. I think it's going to be well over \$100 billion soon. You can't treat people that way, like the Obama administration did..."

R: "Will the U.S. impose sanctions against Turkey on S-400 purchase?"

P.T.: "We're looking at it. But it's a double—it's a two-way street. They wouldn't sell to the President—they wouldn't let him—they wouldn't let him buy the missile that he wanted to buy, which is the Patriot. And then, after he buys from somebody else, he says 'Now we'll sell you the Patriot.' So, I have to tell you, he's a NATO member. He's somebody that I have become friendly with. And you have to treat people fairly. You understand that. You have to treat people fairly. And I don't think he was treated fairly. I don't think he was treated fairly."

R: "The ball is in your court, though, now, Mr. President. Will you? You're the one who makes the decision. Will you impose the sanctions?"

P.T.: "So, we'll see you at the hotel at 3:30..."

R: "Mr. President, are you going to Turkey in July? Will you be going to Turkey in July, Mr. President? When are you going to Turkey?"

P.T.: "I will, at some point, be going to Turkey. I've been invited, and I will be. I will be going to Turkey, yes."

R: "This year, Mr. President? Will you go to Turkey this year? Will you go in July?"

P.T.: "We haven't set a date."

It is shocking that Trump is siding with the Turkish leader against former President Barack Obama, the U.S. Congress and his own national security officials. Secondly, it is a lie that Obama had refused to sell Turkey U.S. Patriot missiles. Turkey did not accept the terms of the sale.

Just like in many of his decisions, Trump seems to be putting his personal interests—several million dollars of income for having his name on two Trump buildings in Istanbul—ahead of U.S. national interests. Why would he repeatedly praise Erdogan, a dictator and a major human rights violator?

At the time of writing this article, the Russian missiles were already on their way to Turkey. What will be Trump's final decision on sanctions? Will he damage NATO's and U.S. national interests just to please Erdogan? If he does, I hope no Armenian-American or anyone else will vote for Trump in 2020!

Changing charity with development programs: Pashinyan visits COAF SMART Center in Lori province



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited the COAF SMART Center of the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) in Debed village of Lori province.

The PM toured the Center, got acquainted with the investment program and the works carried out so far.

COAF SMART is an informal education environment, providing equal opportunities to 150,000 young and elderly peoples of villages.

In his remarks the Armenian PM said it's a great honor for him to visit the Center, adding that he planned this visit long ago because he has repeatedly heard about this successful project.

"I really expected what I saw here. I want to specifically thank for the efforts made as a result of which we have such a center of revival in Armenia's heart which is the birthplace of Tumanyan", Pashinyan said.

Talking about the revolution the PM said in reality the revolution in Armenia started

earlier than it took place. Of course, political processes launched in 2018, but developments were taken place earlier which were not perceived by many as revolutionary and the economic foundation of the revolution. Pashinyan said the economic base of the revolution are the people who implemented new ideas in the business, science and economy, as well as programs being out of the traditional oligarchic circles.

"We see that there are various initiatives. And we also see the change of attitude of several figures of the Diaspora on the actions in Armenia", he said, adding that



today the situation is different, the perception among the Diaspora has changed and

people came to the conclusion that the logic of charity should change into a logic of development. "That is to implement programs which will change the people", he noted.

According to him, the new formula should be the following: programs must be implemented so that people will believe in themselves. This is the formula of the revolution that took place in Armenia, according to the PM. Pashinyan said previously people were believing in the political leaders, had hopes with them. But in 2018 they believed in themselves and understood that they are a decisive force.

The Armenian PM stated that this process started long ago. "The revolution tells children the following: you can change the world. This is the key point of these programs –to help the people to believe in their strengths. So you see that a person aged 40



or 50 studies with a child in the same room. When I was a lawmaker, I studied English together with 9th grades school-children at the American University of Armenia", he said.

Pashinyan highlighted that today it is necessary to build the highway of hope. He emphasized the presence of such educational Centers through which the child prepares for tomorrow.

COAF SMART is the world's most innovative initiative for the advancement of rural communities. COAF SMART seeks to empower Armenia's village youth through resources and opportunities to explore their intellectual curiosities and push the boundaries of the fields of study that compel them.

U.S. House adopts amendment blocking Azerbaijan's offensive airstrike capabilities



The U.S. House of Representatives has approved a powerful amendment introduced by Congressman Brad Sherman (D-CA) to block the transfer of U.S. defense articles to Baku that could potentially be used by the Azerbaijani government to act upon its threat to shoot down civilian aircraft operating out of Artsakh's Stepanakert Airport, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

The ANCA-backed amendment, offered to Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, was cosponsored by Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Jackie Speier (D-CA) and Vice-Chair Adam Schiff (D-CA). The House adopted the measure with a vote of 234 to 195.

"I thank my House colleagues for advancing and voting in favor of my amendment to the NDAA to require that the President must certify to Congress that any defense articles provided to Azerbaijan pose no threat to civilian aviation," Rep. Sherman told the ANCA upon passage of the measure. "However, you feel about the political status of Artsakh, threats to shoot down civilian aircraft are unacceptable. I thank my colleagues again for ensuring that we do

not abet the Azeris in this menacing behavior."

"The people's house took a solid stand for peace today," said ANCA Chairman Raffi Hamparian. "The adoption of the Sherman Amendment sends a powerful message that the United States will not tolerate Azerbaijan's threats against civilian aircraft or its use of violence to resolve outstanding status and security issues with the Artsakh Republic. We are deeply grateful to Congressman Sherman for his strong leadership, value the support of Rules Committee Chairman McGovern, and thank each and every legislator – from both sides of the aisle – who voted for this historic measure."

During House floor debate of the amendment, Rep. Sherman argued, "If there is one thing that this House can agree on, it is that we are opposed to shooting down, especially deliberately shooting down, civilian aircraft. And yet, the government of Azerbaijan has stated with regard to flights going into Stepanakert Airport, that they envision the physical destruction of airplanes landing in that territory." Rep. Sherman went even further, noting, "After 23 years of studying this issue on the Foreign Affairs Committee, I'm not convinced that

we should transfer any weapons, under any circumstances, to the government of Azerbaijan until it comes to the table, and resolves the Artsakh dispute."

Rep. Sherman concluded his remarks, explaining, "I would point out that the Stepanakert Airport is located in the Republic of Artsakh, previously known as the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh, and historically Armenian territory that was lumped in with Azerbaijan by no less than Joseph Stalin in a deliberate effort to create ethnic tensions in the Caucasus to the benefit of the Soviet Union and in an effort to punish the Armenian people."

The people of Artsakh established their independence decades ago and whatever your view as to the status of that territory, you should support this amendment, unless you believe it is appropriate to shoot down civilian aircraft. I urge my colleagues to support the amendment and I reserve the balance of my time."

The sole speaker against the Sherman amendment was Congressman Ron Wright (R-TX), who recited a series of standard pro-Azerbaijan talking points, avoiding any mention of Azerbaijan's threats to shoot down civilian aircraft.

Four U.S. presidential candidates now co-sponsor the Armenian Genocide Resolution

Four U.S. presidential candidates now co-sponsor the Armenian Genocide Resolution, the Armenian national Committee of America (ANCA) reports.

“With U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar coming on board today, four of the top six Senators seeking the Democratic Presidential nomination have cosponsored S.Res.150, bipartisan legislation locking in permanent U.S. recognition and remembrance of the Armenian Genocide,” ANCA said in a Facebook post.

The legislation reaffirming proper U.S. recognition and remembrance of this crime and rejecting U.S. complicity in its denial was introduced to the US Senate earlier this



year by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Democrat Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and former presidential candidate Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX).

The Armenian Genocide Resolution notes that the U.S. has, as early as 1951, officially recognized the Armenian Genocide through a filing with the International Court of Justice, followed by House legislation adopted

in 1975, and 1984 and President Ronald Reagan’s Proclamation in 1984.

The resolution resolves that it is the policy of the United States to:

- 1) Commemorate the Armenian Genocide through official recognition and remembrance;
- 2) Reject efforts to enlist, engage, or otherwise associate the U.S. Government with denial of the Armenian Genocide or any other genocide; and
- 3) Encourage education and public understanding of the facts of the Armenian Genocide, including the U.S. role in the humanitarian relief effort, and the relevance of the Armenian Genocide to modern-day crimes against humanity.v

PwC FinTech & Crypto Leader Henri Arslanian to address World IT Congress in Armenia

Henri Arslanian, PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) FinTech & Crypto Leader and the Chairman of the FinTech Association of Hong Kong, will attend the World Congress on IT (WCIT 2019) in Armenia.

Arslanian is going to be a panel moderator during WCIT2019. With over 500,000 LinkedIn followers, Henri is recognized as one of the global LinkedIn Top Voices in Economy and Finance and has been awarded many industry and academic awards over the years.

Henri is also a TEDx speaker, a published author, and currently sits on several finance, academic, government, civil society, and FinTech related boards and advisory boards globally.

Before joining PwC, Henri was with a FinTech start-up and previously spent many



years with UBS Investment Bank in Hong Kong. He started his career as a financial markets and funds lawyer in Canada and Hong Kong.

Henri speaks five languages including English, French, Armenian, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese.

He holds a Masters in Chinese Law from

Tsinghua University; a joint Global Executive MBA from Columbia Business School, London Business School, and Hong Kong University; a Masters in Transnational Law from the University of Sherbrooke; and a Bachelor of Law from the University of Montreal (Dean’s List of Excellence).

WCIT 2019 will be held in Yerevan on October 6-9, 2019. The Congress is hosted by Armenia with the support and under the high patronage of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

The World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) was established by the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA). Its main organizing body is the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE).

16TH GOLDEN APRICOT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCED ITS WINNER FILMS



The 16th Golden Arpicot International Film Festival summed up. On July 13, the closing ceremony of the festival took place at Moscow Cinema.



During the closing ceremony the jury announced the winners. "Ray & Liz" by Richard Billingham won "Golden Apricot" in Full-Length Films Competition. "Beanpole" by Kantemir Balagov was awarded "Silver Apricot" in the same competition. "Midnight traveller" by Hassan Fazili gained jury's special mention.

"Driving lessons" by Marziyeh Riahi won "Golden Apricot" in Regional Short Film Competition. "Prisoner of society" by Rati Tsiteladze was awarded "Silver Apricot" in the same competition. Genadzi Melqonyan special prize was awarded to the "Baina" by Lilit Petrosyan.

"Horizon" by Tinatin Kajrishvili was

awarded FIPRESCI prize in Regional Panorama Competition.

Prime minister's award (GAIFF Pro, the industry platform within Golden Apricot



IFF) was awarded to the "Trap" by Tatev Hakobyan.

This year the 16th IFF has received over 740 films from different countries and has selected a number of films from prestigious international film festivals such as the festivals in Cannes, Berlin, Rotterdam, for the program.

The jury president of the 16th GAIFF In-

ternational Long-Term Competition Program was Aleksandr Mindadze. The jury consists of director Nicolas Wadimoff (Switzerland), director, Tehran International Film Festival President Reza Mirkarimi (Iran), producer, Executive Director of Tribeca Film Festival Amy Hobby (USA), producer Elizabeth Karlsen (UK), film critic Paolo Bertolin (Italy), actress, director Nino Kirtadze (France).

The jury president of the regional short film competition was director Pippo Mezzapesa (Italy). The jury also included operator Norayr Kasper (Canada) and Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival Program Director Georges Bollon.

The best film of the full length films competition was presented during the closing ceremony of the IFF.



Constantine Orbelian + Hasmik Grigorian = a New Masterpiece that “Blasted” the Hall ...

By Gourgen James Khazhakian,
Chief Correspondent



As it has already been announced, on 10 July concert of the world-famous soprano, winner of the International Opera Competition 2019 in the Best Opera Singer nomination **Hasmik (Asmik) Grigorian** took place at the Alexander Spendiarian Opera and Ballet National Academic Theater. The concert was organized under the auspices of the President of Armenia **Armen Sarkissian** and Mrs. **Nouneh Sarkissian** and was dedicated to the memory of the singer's father, RA People's Artist, Lithuania's Honored Artist **Gegham Grigorian**. President Sarkissian attended the concert.

Forwarding ahead, it should be stressed that the general opinion on the concert after it ended was that such a high European level solo concert had not been seen a long.

After this glorious concert, we talked a bit to Maestro **Constantine Orbelian**. In his words, *“the voice, the dedication to the texts and inflection and transmission of the ‘meaning’ of each word (even when you don't speak the language) is beyond belief !!!! Glorious voice - impeccable technique and amazing musical intuition make this a totally unique and incomparable artist. Not to mention that she is extremely beautiful with the figure of a top model!”*

The repertoire that Hasmik chose for the first half of the program - the songs of Richard Strauss showed us a deep understanding of this remarkable music which obviously Asmik has a very strong connection.

The most famous opera festival in the world, the Salzburg Festival presented Hasmik in Strauss' incredible opera Salome. Given that the opera world's greatest stars (**Anna Netrebko**, **Diana Damrau**, **Ildar Abdrazakov**, and others - is was Asmik's interpretation of Salome which was awarded the BEST operatic performance of

the past season and she will continue her triumphal March to stardom with performances of Salome this coming August in Salzburg.

In Maestro Orbelian's words, *“her interpretation of Tatiana's letter scene in the concert last night was the most vivid and thoughtful interpretation I have ever heard. In her “reading” - one feels the vulnerable Tatiana who has fallen in love for the first time in her life and has to muster the tremendous courage to write a letter to her beloved Onegin. From the first words we feel her trepidation and shyness and as the*



aria progresses we feel her grow and become a woman who knows exactly what she wants and will be following her heart to the end...”

The vocally impeccable, emotionally captivating performance was met with ova-



tions and screams of numerous “bravo!” and “encore!” from the audience of the sold out Yerevan Opera House.

Grigorian's Signature aria - Dvorak's Song to the Moon from Rusalka was performed in an idiomatic manner with all of the beautiful nuance of this glorious aria which have made it a favorite of audiences.

Naturally, especially important for us the Armenians was Hasmik's interpretation of Anush's aria from Tigranian's same name opera; every Armenian music lover knows

this aria by heart and has their favorite performances that they are used to...In Constantine Orbelian's opinion, *“...I am sure that the new favorite performance of this aria will be the new benchmark of this beautiful aria. Her interpretation is the*



most sincere and deep interpretation I have experienced”.

Needless to say that non-stop bravo and the standing ovations “blasted” the audience.

After four curtain calls finally Hasmik gave the audience the encores they were asking for: there were a beautiful interpretation of Lauretta's aria from Puccini's Gianni Schicchi and, finally, the concert finished with Puccini touching Un Bel Di (Madame Butterfly's Aria) to screams of bravo and standing ovations, one could say – universal euphoria!

As a frequent spectators of the Opera House, UN Resident Ambassador to Armenia Ambassador **Shombi Sharp** who was accompanied as usual by his spouse **Sarah Watterson**, posted in his Facebook page, *“...An absolutely stunning, touching performance by Asmik Grigorian, words cannot describe! The 2019 International Opera Awards top female singer, Asmik brought her very best to a packed Armenian National Opera, receiving endless standing ovations. Congratulations to Maestro Constantine Orbelian for another masterpiece!”*

And...

President Armen Sarkissian hosted the world-famous soprano Hasmik Grigorian

President Armen Sarkissian hosted today the world-famous soprano, winner of the International Musical Competition 2019 in the Best opera singer nomination Hasmik

VivaCell-MTS: Coordinated Work in Different Communities

page 13



The housing problem remains unsolved in various regions of the republic and needs solution. Consistently and selflessly, VivaCell-MTS and the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia have been implementing a housing project demonstrating a responsible approach. Their work encompasses identification of beneficiary families across the republic, needs assessment and organization of construction works.

The number of houses built over the years with the efforts of volunteers exceeds one hundred and is growing. This



time, the construction works are underway in Tsovinar village in Gegharkunik.

The big family of **Ter-Sahakyans** has spent 10 winters in a half-built house and had to overcome multiple problems. For many years, Mher, and his young family, lived in the basement of his father's house. The determination to seek a way out of the unbearable housing conditions has thrown him a new challenge; the young man has started the construction of a new house, but ten years of efforts haven't given a result. The semi-constructed building has not become a home yet.

"We had to move to the half-built house. The 10 years spent here have been years of inconveniences and lack of basic housing conditions. All at-

tempts to finish the construction were vain. Now, as I see the dedication and volunteering of the supporting organizations, I believe that one day my family will have an opportunity to live a comfortable life," said **Mher**, the father of the family.

The heads and staff of the partner organizations, VivaCell-MTS and the



Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, visited the Ter-Sahakyans to assist and give a hand to the family through volunteering in roof insulation on the site.

"We have built many houses and talked to many families. Each of them is unique, yet there is a lot that they have in common – they are hardworking, optimistic, and have a strong willpower. Those of us here on the construction site working hand in hand are different, too, yet we are united by the desire to volunteer. And this program helps to make everyone feel good: home owners feel they are not alone, and get everyone's positive vibes, and those who are here to work with them, including me,



are happy to do some physical work away from office. Having all of us joining in for construction is a major achievement," VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said.

"This project implemented with Viva-

Grigorian and the Artistic Director of the A. Spendiarian Opera and Ballet National Academic Theater Constantine Orbelian.

Armen Sarkissian congratulated Hasmik Grigorian on her recent solo concert at the A. Spendiarian Opera and Ballet National Academic Theater which was dedicated to the memory of the singer's father, RA People's Artist, Honored Artist of Lithuania Gegham Grigorian. The President underscored that had been seeing Gegham Grigorian often, had a personal friendship with him. He said that G. Grigorian's art and excellence was appreciated not only in Armenia and by the Armenians but also internationally.

Hasmik Grigorian expressed thanks for the warm welcome and noted that her father's contribution to her professional choice and to her distinction as a singer was great. The singer spoke also about her forthcoming plans and projects.

The interlocutors discussed the possibilities of new concerts in Armenia with the participation of H. Grigorian.

Photographs by Tigran Araqelyan

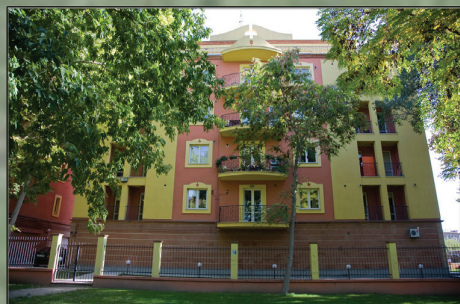


Cell-MTS aims to awaken hope in people and keep them away from the idea of leaving their homes and their country. It is also a way to solve a major social problem. The family, who builds its house with own hands, has closer emotional ties to its country. The Ter-Sahakyans have been deprived of the pleasure of having their home for many years. They have tried to find solutions but have faced obstacles. I am glad to state that this family will have their home construction finished by the end of the year," **Ashot Yeghiazaryan**, Fuller Center for Housing Armenia President, said.

The partners try to solve the problems in tight timeframes

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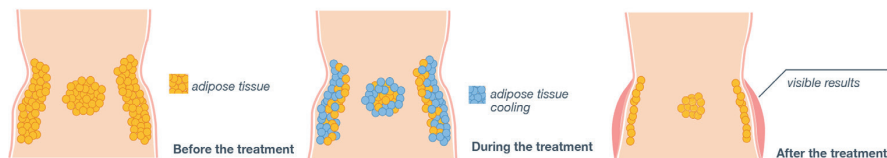
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AZAD

AZAD Pharma AG AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Switzerland

AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Durachweg 15
CH-8200 Schaffhausen
Phone No: +41 52 632 09 10
Fax: +41 52 632 09 11

AZAD Pharma AG

Bahnhofstrasse 9
CH-3125 Toffen
Phone No: +41 31 810 40 10
Fax: +41 31 810 40 11

Canada

AZAD Fine Chemicals Ltd.

1895 - 55th Avenue
Dorval, Qc H9P 1G9
Phone No: +1 514 636 19 99
Fax: +1 514 636 75 55

Atlit Inc.

16 Westminster Ave.,
Suite 306A
Montreal, Qc H4X 1Z1
Phone No: +1 514 369 25 91
Fax: +1 514 369 81 67

China

Hangzhou Representative Office of AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Room 801-087, Lixin Plaza,
#102 Moganshan Road
310051 -Hangzhou China

Phone +86-571-8761 5336
Mobile +86-153-5505-0903
Fax: +86-571- 8895 8963

Germany

AZAD Pharma GmbH

Fritz-Reichle-Ring 6a
DE-78315 Radolfzell
Phone No: +49 7732 939101510
Fax: +49 7732 9391016

Armenia

AZAD Pharmaceuticals LLC

Vanahovit 8, Proshian
Ashtarak Ave., Kotayk Marz
Phone No: +374 93 40 40 62
Fax: +374 93 40 34 40



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E-mail: contact@nt.am
URL: www.nt.am

Address in Armenia:

28 Isahakian Str., Yerevan, 0009, RA
Tel.: (+374 60) 35-11-22 (+374 60) 35-11-24

Address in France:

Masion De L'Armenie,
Paris 17e-95, Bld. Gouvion, France
Tel.: (+33) 01 43 59 66 72

Address in USA:

1146 E. Lexington Dr., #112,
Glendale, CA, USA, 91206
Tel.: +1 (818) 646 10 72

Հասցե՝

Իսահակյան 28, Երևան, ՀՀ, 0009