

Khamenei cautions Erdogan against any policy of blocking the border between Iran and Armenia



Iran - Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei meets with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, July 19, 2022.

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned against attempts to “block” Armenia’s border with his country when he met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Tehran on July 19.

Erdogan travelled to the Iranian capital for a trilateral meeting with his Iranian and Russian counterparts on the conflict in Syria. The conflict was reportedly the main focus of his conversation with Khamenei.

Khamenei, who has the final say on key state policies, also brought up the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at the meeting. According to Iranian news agencies, he “expressed his satisfaction with

Nagorno-Karabakh’s return to Azerbaijan” as a result of the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

He also said: “If there is an effort to block the border between Iran and Armenia, the Islamic Republic will oppose it because this border has been a communication route for thousands of years.”

The Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the war in Nagorno-Karabakh commits Armenia to opening rail and road links between Azerbaijan and its Nakhichevan exclave. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has claimed that it calls for an extraterritorial land corridor that would pass through Syunik, the sole Armenian province bordering Iran.

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Poland one of the important European partners of Armenia – FM

Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan, who is in Poland on an official visit, had a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of the country Jacek Sasin.

The interlocutors commended the development and existing dynamic of the interstate relations over the 30 years of diplomatic relations.

The Foreign Minister of Armenia underscored that Poland is one of the important European partners of Armenia.

Ararat Mirzoyan and Jacek Sasin discussed the prospects for the development of economic cooperation between the two countries, expressing readiness to make efforts towards the full realization of trade and economic potential, creation of investment opportunities and activation of business to business contacts.



Minister Mirzoyan noted that since 2018, the anti-corruption campaign, as well as reforms towards improving the business environment, have been widely implemented in Armenia, which creates good opportunities for the investors.

The sides emphasized the implementation of the agreement on the acquisition of

about 65 percent of the shares of the Armenian Stock Exchange by the Warsaw Stock Exchange, which will create new opportunities for cooperation in the capital market between Armenia and Poland.

The role of the Armenian-Polish Inter-governmental Commission of Economic Cooperation as an effective platform for discussing joint programs and outlining practical steps was highlighted. In this context, the interlocutors also emphasized mutual visits of business delegations and the holding of conferences.

At the meeting, Foreign Minister Mirzoyan also presented the position of the Armenian side regarding the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.



Armenian and Russian security services are working together to neutralize common “external threats” facing their countries, the head of Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), Sergei Naryshkin, said at the end of a visit to Yerevan on July 18.

Naryshkin praised the current state of Russian-Armenian relations after holding talks with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Armen Abazyan, the head of Armenia’s National Security Service.

Russia, Armenia ‘Tackling External Threats’

“I must say that cooperation of our countries is developing positively in the economic, military-political and humanitarian areas,” he told Russian media outlets afterwards. “Interaction between special services is part of that cooperation, and I obviously discussed with my [Armenian] counterpart exchange of intelligence information, joint actions for the purpose of identifying and forestalling a whole range of external threats to Russia and Armenia.”

“Our consultations will continue. We are drawing up a plan of joint work for the coming years,” he said.

Naryshkin did not specify those threats. But he did accuse “liberal-totalitarian regimes in the West” of trying to destabilize various parts of the world, including Ukraine, to preserve what he called an “un-

just” world order which is crumbling now.

Armenia has refrained from publicly criticizing the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The South Caucasus state has long maintained close military, political and economic ties with Russia. Its heavy dependence on Moscow for defense and security deepened further after the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pashinyan met Naryshkin three days after receiving William Burns, the director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. The Armenian government reported few details of those talks.

The Russian intelligence chief insisted that his visit to Armenia is “not connected” with Burns’s surprise trip. Washington has declined to comment on the trip.

European Parliament will continue efforts to ensure return of Armenian POWs, MEP David McAllister tells PM Pashinyan

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received the delegation led by David McAllister, chairman of the European Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET).

The Prime Minister emphasized close cooperation with the European Parliament and noted that the European Union is one of the most important partners in the effective implementation of Armenia’s democratic agenda. The Prime Minister emphasized cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership and noted that Armenia is leading among Eastern Partnership countries in terms of fight against corruption, freedom of speech, electoral reforms and other directions.

David McAllister thanked for the warm

reception and hailed the effective and close cooperation with the Armenian parliamentarians. He welcomed the democratic reforms being implemented in Armenia in various fields, adding that the European Union will continue to support the Armenian government on this path.

The interlocutors referred to the processes taking place in the South Caucasus region, the situation around Nagorno Karabakh, the possibilities of unblocking regional infrastructures, demarcation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Prime Minister Pashinyan presented in detail the position of the Armenian side on the above-mentioned directions.

The interlocutors emphasized the importance of ensuring regional

peace and stability, and the continuation of dialogue in that direction.

Nikol Pashinyan referred to the issue of Armenian prisoners of war still held in Azerbaijan. David McAllister noted that the European Parliament also attaches importance to ensuring their return and will continue efforts in that direction.

Issues related to the preservation of Armenian cultural heritage in the territories currently under Azerbaijani control were also discussed. Nikol Pashinyan and David McAllister emphasized the need to ensure the access of the UNESCO mission to the conflict zone of Nagorno-Karabakh and the implementation of consistent work for this purpose.

Germany interested in strengthening political dialogue with Armenia – PM Pashinyan receives Bundestag Vice President

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received Vice President of the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany Katrin Göring-Eckardt and the delegation led by her, Noyan Tapan was informed from the Office of the Prime Minister.

Nikol Pashinyan emphasized the importance of bilateral relations, which recently have been dynamically developing at the level of Governments, parliaments and local self-governments.

According to the Prime Minister, the Armenian-German partnership is based on political, economic and value system interests. “Armenia as a country that shifted to parliamentary system of government in 2018, is interested in exchanging experience with Germany, which has firm traditions of parliamentarianism. The FRG is the largest trade and economic partner of Armenia in the EU. We attach importance to the joint economic programs, as well as the support for Armenia’s democratic



agenda,” Prime Minister Pashinyan said.

The Vice President of the Bundestag thanked the Prime Minister of Armenia for appreciation and congratulated him on receiving the vote of the Armenian citizens for the implementation of democratic reforms. Katrin Göring-Eckardt emphasized that democracy and parliamentarism contribute to security, stability and development, and Germany is interested in strengthening the political dialogue with Armenia, implementing programs in vari-

ous sectors of the economy: information technology, renewable energy, etc.

The interlocutors exchanged ideas on the situation and security challenges in the South Caucasus region. The Vice President of the Bundestag noted that Germany attaches importance to regional peace and supports Armenia’s steps in that direction. The sides highlighted joint efforts aimed at preserving Christian cultural heritage.

Issues of mutual interest were discussed in the context of the Armenia-FRG economic agenda. Projects in the fields of solar energy and technology were considered promising. In this context, the willingness to continue cooperation was reaffirmed.

Nikol Pashinyan and Katrin Göring-Eckardt noted the importance of the Eastern Partnership format in the development of Armenian-German relations.

page 1 ➔ Turkish leaders and Erdogan in particular regularly echo Aliyev’s demands for the “Zangezur corridor.”

Armenia has rejected the demands, saying that Azerbaijani citizens and cargo cannot be exempt from Armenian border controls.

Tehran has effectively sided with Yerevan on the issue, repeatedly voicing support for Armenian sovereignty over transit roads passing through Armenia. Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, reaffirmed this stance during a July 7 visit to the Armenian capital.

Last October, an influential Iranian cleric accused Aliyev of trying to “cut Iran’s access to Armenia.”

While in Tehran, Erdogan also held separate talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The latter mentioned “the

settlement of the Karabakh problem” in his opening remarks at the talks.

Russia deployed soldiers and border guards to Syunik during and after the 2020 war to help the Armenian military defend the province against possible Azerbaijani attacks.

Visiting Yerevan last month, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov insisted that Armenia will control the planned road and railway that will connect Nakhichevan to the rest of Azerbaijan. Lavrov said the Armenian side will only simplify border crossing procedures.



France ready to resume dialogue in the Minsk Group format – Ambassador

France is performing its role as mediator in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict in its capacity as OSCE Minsk Group co-chair, on bilateral level, and as an EU member country, which is also making efforts to facilitate the possibility of dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France to Armenia Anne Louyot said in an interview with *Public Radio of Armenia*.

She said France welcomes the meeting of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers in Tbilisi on July 16.

“We believe that this direct exchange between the two countries can help establish peace. We will continue to support



these efforts,” the Ambassador said.

“We, as well as the USA, have already confirmed our commitment to the OSCE Minsk Group mediation format. However, unfortunately, Russia does not want to work in this format anymore. The Russian Foreign Minister has already made

statements in this regard. We are sorry for the fact, but we remain ready to resume the dialogue in the Minsk Group format,” Ambassador Louyot stated.

“We are determined to support the peace process both bilaterally and as an EU member state, because the EU is also making efforts in this direction. In any case, the dialogue

continues between the French and American co-chairs with a view to finding new means that could help further the peace process. We attach particular importance to maintaining security guarantees for the people of Karabakh,” the Ambassador said.

Turkey Reaffirms Conditions for Normalizing Ties with Armenia

(RFE/RL) - Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on Thursday made the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations conditional on Armenia negotiating a peace accord with Azerbaijan and opening a land corridor to its Nakhichevan exclave.

Cavusoglu complained that Yerevan has taken no “concrete steps” in that direction after four rounds of Turkish-Armenian normalization talks held this year.

“We don’t yet see clear steps from Armenia on the Zangezur [corridor] and other projects or the peace treaty,” he told Turkish state television. “Armenia’s leadership headed by Prime Minister Pashinyan should take positive steps for peace. Words alone are not enough.”

“Whether Armenia likes it or not, this is the reality,” said, pointing to the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance. “We are one nation and two states. That is why if there is to be peace in the region, everybody needs to take steps, including Georgia and Central Asian countries. We expect concrete steps from Armenia on this issue, be it



Zangezur, the comprehensive peace treaty or steps towards us.”

Cavusoglu has repeatedly made clear before that Ankara is coordinating the ongoing Turkish-Armenian dialogue with Baku. He stressed in February the importance of the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty which Baku says must commit Yerevan to recognizing Azerbaijani sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Armenian government has said, by contrast, that it wants an unconditional normalization of relations with Turkey. Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan complained in May that Ankara is “synchronizing” the normalization process with Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks.

Meeting in Vienna on July 1, special envoys of the two neighboring states agreed to open the Turkish-Armenian border to citizens of third countries and to allow mutual cargo shipments by air. The Turkish and Armenian foreign ministries said this will be done “at the earliest date possible.” But they set no concrete time frames.

Armenian opposition leaders have repeatedly accused Pashinyan of being ready to accept the Turkish preconditions. The prime minister’s political allies have denied that.

Pashinyan’s administration maintains that the possible peace accord with Azerbaijan must address the thorny issue of Karabakh’s status. It has also ruled out any extraterritorial corridors passing through Armenia’s internationally recognized territory and southeastern Syunik province in particular.

Syunik is the sole Armenian province bordering Iran. Tehran has repeatedly warned against attempts to strip it of the land border with Armenia.

Any precondition put forward by Turkey unacceptable for Armenia – Eduard Aghajanyan



Armenia's position on Armenian-Turkish relations remains unchanged, any precondition is unacceptable for the Armenian side, Chairman of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Foreign Relations, said at a joint press conference with David McAllister, chairman of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee.

Eduard Aghajanyan attached importance to the meetings of the delegation led by Mr. McAllister with Prime Minister

Nikol Pashinyan, Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan, Deputy Speaker Ruben Rubinyan, members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and representatives of political forces represented in the Parliament.

During the meetings reference was made to regional issues, in particular, the developments in the context of Armenian-Azerbaijani, Armenian-Turkish relations in the post-war period, the related problems and the ways to solve them, as well as the return of Armenian prisoners of war, preservation of historical and cultural heritage and many other issues.

Eduard Aghajanyan hailed the positive activity and influence of the European Parliament on the above processes, in particular, specific statements and resolutions

related to the Armenian cultural heritage in Nagorno Karabakh, the statement by the European Parliament regarding the prisoners of war held in Azerbaijan.

Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament, David McAllister, also emphasized the importance of the meetings held in Armenia, stressed the importance of the issues discussed. He also emphasized the active role of the European Parliament in the work towards the settlement of regional problems.

David McAllister reminded that the European Parliament has called on both countries to return the prisoners of war. He also noted that the European Parliament will continue to be in contact with Armenian partners in any case.

Mourad Papazian denied entry to Armenia over “2021 attack on Pashinyan’s motorcade” in Paris, PM’s Office says

French-Armenian community leader Mourad Papazian was denied entry to Armenia over a “2021 attack on Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s motorcade in Paris,” the Prime Minister’s Office said in comments to *Armenpress*.

Chairman of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France (CCAF), ARF Bureau member Mourad Frank Papazian was deported upon his Armenia in Armenia on July 13.

The Prime Minister’s Office clarified that he was denied entry into the Republic of Armenia based on Clause G and Z, Article 8 of the Law on Foreign Nationals.

“This person is one of the organizers of the attack on the official motorcade – displaying the state flag of Armenia – of the

governmental delegation led by the Prime Minister near the Armenian Embassy in France on June 1 last year. Various objects and items were thrown in the direction of the motorcade. The official Armenian flag-bearing car carrying the Prime Minister was attacked and the situation was resolved only as a result of intervention by French police and security forces,” the statement reads.

The PM’s Office said “information showing what happened has been published by many media outlets, and the footage is available online. The other active participants of the attack were also denied entry to Armenia. Moreover, the Republic of Armenia does not have any reservations



against any participant of peaceful rallies, while those who organized the attacks and took part in them were banned from entering the Republic of Armenia by law.”

Article 8 of the Law on Foreign Nationals envisages the grounds for denying a foreign national an entry visa, revoking a visa or banning from entering the country.



Bilateral consultations were held in Moscow on July 19 under the chairmanship of Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Mnatsakan Safaryan and Russian Deputy

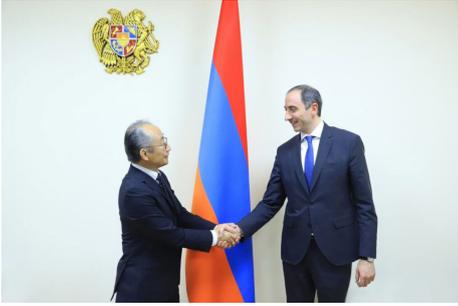
Armenian, Russian diplomats discuss “North-South” international transport corridor

Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov.

During the negotiations, the parties exchanged ideas on a wide range of issues related to relations with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, prospects for the development of multilateral cooperation in the Eurasian area, cooperation with the SCO, as well as issues related to

the “North-South” international transport corridor. The importance of combining approaches in the Asian direction was emphasized.

Mnatsakan Safaryan and Igor Morgulov emphasized the continuation of the practice of conducting consultations on issues of bilateral interest.



Armenian Minister of High-tech Industry, Robert Khachatryan, received the delegation of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Russia company, headed by Director General Yasushi Kakitsuka.

Minister Khachatryan briefed the

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Russia planning to launch activities in Armenia

guests on the current state, developments and challenges of Armenia's high-tech industry, pointed out possible ways of cooperation.

Yasushi Kakitsuka, in turn, detailed the directions and areas of the company's activity, outlined possible scenarios of interaction.

During the meeting, a number of issues of bilateral interest were discussed. The parties emphasized that cooperation can be

a serious bridge for the formation of new business ties and development of activities. Opinions were also exchanged regarding the possibilities of organizing meetings with technology companies and holding discussions on projects.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Russia intends to outline ways of cooperation with the Armenian government, and launch activities in Armenia.

Grape processing problems and ways to solve them discussed at Government

During the consultation held at Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, the problems related to grape processing during the current year and the possibilities of their solution were discussed, Noyan Tapan was informed from the Office of the Prime Minister.

It was reported that during the last years, the volume of exports of bottled brandy from our country has continuously increased. A similar trend is present in the case of grape wine. The volume of consumption of the latter is also increasing in the territory of the country.

In this context, reference was made to the volume of harvest expected this year, the organization of the procurement process, the course of work with farms and

companies.

It was noted that within the framework of the state subsidy program, a contract for procurement of about 97 thousand tons of grapes has been signed between producers and suppliers, the process is continuous.

The implementation of daily consistent activities in the direction of solving possible problems and providing assistance to procurement companies within the framework of the government tools in order to increase export volumes were highlighted.

In this regard, it was emphasized that the Government plans to take an initiative to optimize the payment of duties in the



export process in the near future.

Prime Minister Pashinyan emphasized the consistent increase in the volume of exports of bottled brandy and wines from our country and noted that the Executive will continue to keep the issue in the center of attention.

Economist says importers in Armenia are in the best situation now amid appreciation of dram

Economist Tatul Manaseryan says that importers are now in the best situation during the current appreciation of the Armenian dram and depreciation of foreign currency.

"Today, importers, not manufacturers and those establishing production, are in the most favorable, in the best situation. And this is, first of all, connected with the "cheap" dollar and the appreciated dram", he said at a press conference today.

He said that importers are now paying cheaper for the same goods and make a big



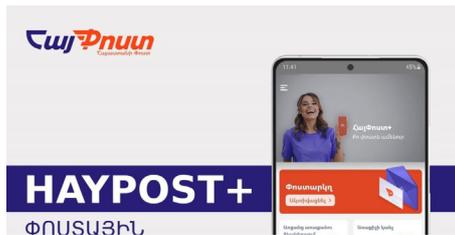
profit.

"When a national currency is appreciated in the economy, it almost automatically leads to the decline in prices. When

we are a country with import direction, we also import the prices of the global market. When the dram is appreciated, these prices, expressed in dram, should fall a bit, which is not taking place", he said.

In this sense he sees need for proper state control of prices. He notes that today importers have an appreciated national currency in their hands, even there is a high demand despite the high prices, no matter how much the prices rise, the demand is not declining.

HayPost launched HayPost+ app visiting the post, in particular:



thanks to which a number of postal operations of the company will turn digital. HayPost announced about the app launch during a concert show with the participation of Reincarnation band, Boing Orchestra and DJ Donz.

By downloading HayPost+ app, the clients will be able to use a series of postal services offered by post offices without

- fast and easy receipt of notifications from state authorities (for the moment, only from Judicial Acts Compulsory Enforcement Service)
- tracking of items via their tracking number and receipt of further updates on the search
- postal calculators
- online queuing in order to visit the branch without waiting in line
- presentation of postal services, etc.

As the CEO of HayPost **Hayk Karapetyan** mentions, «Today is a really important day for us, as with the launch of HayPost+ app we establish a completely new level of provision of postal services:

we finish the key phase of the service digitalization process which is one of the most important goals of our strategy. The app will allow our customers to exchange juridically certified mails/messages when implementing business or other function-related procedures».

HayPost+ app's version 1.0 is already available in [AppStore](#) and [Google-Play](#) markets.

The next 2.0 version to be introduced soon will include:

- online registration of letters and items
- courier's request
- a wider range of institutions delivering notifications via the app.

Eurozone raises interest rates for first time in 11 years



The European Central Bank (ECB) has raised interest rates for the first time

in more than 11 years as it tries to control soaring eurozone inflation, the [BBC](#) reports.

The ECB increased its key interest rate by 0.5 percentage points to 0.0% and plans further increases this year.

The rate has been negative since 2014 in a bid to boost the bloc's economies after years of weak growth.

But inflation – the rate at which prices

rise – is now at a record 8.6% as food, fuel and energy costs soar.

That is well above the bank's 2% target.

Explaining its decision, ECB president Christine Lagarde said: “Economic activity [in the eurozone] is slowing. Russia's unjustified aggression towards Ukraine is an ongoing drag on growth.”

Healthcare Minister doesn't rule out need to re-impose restrictions if COVID-19 cases continue rising

A rise in COVID-19 cases is recorded in Armenia over the past month, Healthcare Minister Anahit Avanesyan warned July 21.

Avanesyan said the rise is connected with travel.

“As you know the wave is rising rather actively in European countries, and we were predicting that parallel with activation of travel some infiltration could happen into our country. We are closely following the developments and our



healthcare system stands ready for any scenario,” the minister said.

The next two weeks will show whether or not this current wave has the tendency to

spread or stabilize, she said.

Avanesyan did not rule out that there will be the need to re-impose certain restrictions in the event of the situation getting worse.

“We advise people to wear masks in hospitals. Those you've received two doses of the vaccine are advised to get the booster shot by September, in order for them to be ready for the autumn waves. The summer heat is not a contraindication for getting the vaccine,” she said.



ARMENPRESS. - Companies exporting from Armenia complain over the recent appreciation of the dram. They say they greatly suffer, plus inflation is also creating difficulties because the price of raw material purchased for a good prepared for export has also increased. In addition, they also mention logistic problems.

The dram appreciation and the dollar depreciation in Armenia are impacting exporters as the contracts for export are mostly signed in dollars.

The main export destination of Arnavir Fruit processing agricultural goods is the United States. The company is exporting canned fruits and vegetables, dried fruits and other products to the USA. The company founder Hayk Manukyan told Armenpress that at this moment their main problem is the fluctuation of the foreign currency and the appreciation of the dram. Thanks to state assistance programs, people have started to build orchards, greenhouse farms, and the volumes have increased.

“But when have a problem, it is automatically transferred to rural people. Under dram appreciation we are not able to process that volume. In terms of price, our agreement with our foreign partners has a history of years, it changes very little over the years. For instance, 8-9 years were required for positioning in the US market and selling a product. And now, if we change, increase the price, we will lose a market”, he said.

He says they cannot raise the price of exported good, even if they raise the price, they will lose competitiveness in that market. Under the conditions of dollar decrease by around 20%, exporting some goods is even not beneficial for a company now, however, this year, they continue exporting in order not to lose a market, but the company founder emphasizes that they are losing financial resources.

Logistic company Spinnaker Group co-founder Norayr Gevorgyan states that

From dram appreciation to logistic issues: What problems Armenian exporters face?

the fluctuation of the foreign currency is a problem for all exporters. “At this moment absolutely, all exporters suffer from the fluctuation of the foreign currency and the appreciation of the dram. The dram appreciation, of course, is not something bad. But when it happens immediately, it is a problem”, he said.

He said that the prices in the field of cargo transportation are calculated in dollars, adding that this leads to price increase as most of the expenditures in Armenia is in drams.

The Central Bank, however, believes that the artificial depreciation of the dram will cause serious problems. CBA Governor Martin Galstyan earlier commented on the proposals to artificially depreciate the dram and stated that in that case they will create a new inflationary wave that will impact all citizens of Armenia, including exporters.

As for the logistic problems, the Upper Lars border checkpoint is also a problem for exporters as the checkpoint is regularly shutting down because of bad weather and there are major queues there, particularly Armenian cargo trucks were greatly suffering.

Arnavir Fruit is also exporting goods to Russia, but not in a bigger scale. “We will soon have major agreements with the partners of the Russian market. So, the problem of Lars checkpoint is going to be very relevant for us. We also make imports for reprocessing, and face problems in this sense as well”, Hayk Manukyan said.

He says that Lars is very important for each exporter because they have contracts. “If the problem of Lars is not solved, it means we should have reserves in Russia in order not to violate the contract”, he said.

Spinnaker Group co-founder Norayr Gevorgyan also mentioned the problem of Lars. “The problem of Lars is not something new. Everyone, who has worked in this direction, knows that it is always problematic, there are problems both in winter and summer. But this year this problem was supplemented by the major flow of vehicles from other countries which cannot travel to Russia via Europe, therefore, Lars served as an alternative route for them. But

Lars doesn't have that capacity to serve so many cars”, he said.

The company has not exported apricot this year. “We knew that we won't be able to quickly pass Georgia as there are queues. There were other reasons as well”, he added.

In order to mitigate the problem of Lars, a ferry communication is expected to launch. Its launch was expected to be on June 15th, but it is being delayed because the Dutch company, the Poti port operator, has not granted permission yet and this company has also imposed sanctions against Russia.

Both companies believe that the ferry transfer will mitigate the problem, but note that this is not a solution because much more goods are exported from Armenia and it's impossible to transfer all of them via a ferry.

Many countries, including Armenia, are facing inflation. Hayk Manukyan states that despite the decline of foreign currency the prices are not falling. He says that the dram depreciation could negatively affect the economy from inflation perspective. He proposes to provide support to exporting companies, particularly compensation.

Meanwhile, Spinnaker Group founder Norayr Gevorgyan says that the fluctuation of a foreign currency is a global problem and does not depend on Armenia only. However, he states that exporters suffer from this, and a respective approach should be provided to them.

“If there is no compensation for suffering sectors, they will appear in a very difficult situation. There should be a sectoral assistance to exporting companies, to those which have contracts in dollar”, he said.

Reporting by Anna Grigoryan



Reforms in Armenia envisage integrity check for all judges, prosecutors, investigators

The Cabinet approved the 2022-2026 Judicial and Legal Reforms Strategy and its Action Plan.

Speaking at the Cabinet meeting, Minister of Justice Karen Andreasyan said that it is the continuation of the 2019 strategy.

He said that many of the works in the new strategy are inherited from the previous one and are being perfected and improved.

“Certain areas were unfortunately not implemented due to the pandemic and the war. Some other areas are almost ready and we will implement them in the next months,” he said.

The first provision in the strategy is the judiciary reforms. The full chain of the Anti-Corruption Courts will be launched. The system is nearly completed.



The other important direction is the digitization of court proceedings, and then integrity check.

Andreasyan said the integrity check will concern not only the judges. “Today, only newly appointed judges are passing an integrity check, whereas the strategy envisages that soon all active judges will pass the integrity check. This will become a very serious instrument in fighting cor-

ruption,” Andreasyan said, adding that they envisage the integrity check also for prosecutors, investigators, prison staff and in some other areas as well.

The other emphasis in the strategy is the chance to appeal the Supreme Judicial Council’s disciplinary decisions.

Reforms are also envisaged in law practice. Andreasyan said they’ve worked together with the bar association and the lawyers in developing the amendments and they’ve reached a consensus.

Reforms are planned in the bankruptcy field, as well as the compulsory enforcement system.

The system of alternative solution of disputes is also an important direction in the strategy.

PM Pashinyan comments on criticism over judicial reforms

During the Cabinet meeting on July 21 Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan commented on the criticism made over judicial reforms.

Pashinyan said that he as well is not satisfied and has raised this issue, but stated that major work has been done in a number of directions and it has been recorded by Armenia’s international partners.

“When we talk about the carried out reforms, we are criticized over the reforms in the judiciary. They say that works have not had enough success and intensity. I have also recorded this, yes, I am not satisfied, but let me make a record. Recently I was reading the report of the EU’s Eastern Partnership program, and I recorded that Armenia is in leading positions in a number of directions among the Eastern Partnership countries. This list also includes the subtitle independent judiciary. What I want to say is that, of course, on the one hand, it’s good that we demand more from ourselves, but on the other hand let’s notice that the international partners have recorded a very major progress. Among Eastern Partnership countries, we are leading in a number of directions, including credibility of elections, fight against corruption and freedom of speech”, the PM said.

Pashinyan stated that a large part of the judicial reforms is directly linked with the digital agenda. He says a separate digitization in the field cannot happen, a systematic work is needed. The key principle is the mutual partnership, according to the PM. In other words, if there is a digital platform in a state system, that platform should exist in the other state systems as well.

“During the discussions we recorded that there are numerous digital platforms in Armenia, but these electronic files are not functional. The information needed for the structures of other agencies is not available

in digital version. It’s very important for the digital formulas to be functional and be available by law to the respective structures”, the PM said.

He said that major digital reforms are expected also in the notary services and judicial processes. At the beginning, the cases, notifications and document circulation will be carried out in a digital way, later it is necessary to achieve the point that trials must take place in written procedures, there should be no need to go to court.



Human rights groups criticize EU's Azerbaijan gas deal



Human rights groups have criticized an EU deal to ramp up gas supplies from Azerbaijan, as Europe scrambles to secure non-Russian sources of energy, *The Guardian* reports.

The European commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, on Monday hailed Azerbaijan as a “crucial” and “reliable” energy supplier, as she announced an agreement with Baku to expand the southern gas corridor, the 3,500km pipeline taking Caspian Sea gas to Europe.

Standing alongside Azerbaijan’s president, Ilham Aliyev, Von der Leyen said the EU was diversifying away from Russia and turning “towards more reliable,

trustworthy partners”, adding she was glad to count Azerbaijan among them.

Under the agreement, gas supplies to the EU from Azerbaijan are forecast to reach 20bn cubic meters a year in 2027, up from 8bn currently. Supplies are set to increase to 12bn by 2023.

Human Rights Watch said the EU should not have signed the memorandum, nor enter a mooted new bilateral agreement, without insisting on political reforms: the release of scores of political prisoners and changes to laws that heavily restrict non-governmental organizations and the media.

Azerbaijan uses oil and gas “to silence the EU on fundamental rights issues,” said Philippe Dam, acting EU director at Human Rights Watch. “The reality is that Azerbaijan authorities have been famous for cracking down on civil society activists investigating corruption, especially when it comes to oil and gas.”

“The EU should not say a country is re-

liable when it is restricting the activities of civil society groups and crushing political dissent,” Dam said.

Other campaigners accused the EU of undermining its climate goals, while enriching autocrats. “It is extraordinary that the EU seems intent on not learning from its current predicament, and is pushing to build more pipelines which would lock us into gas in the long term,” said Barnaby Pace, a senior gas campaigner at *Global Witness*. “A rapid boost for renewable energy and home insulation should be the obvious answer to the crises Europe is starting at – and certainly not repeating the mistakes that have taken us to this point.”

Eve Geddie, director of *Amnesty International’s* Brussels office, said “repressive and unaccountable regimes are rarely reliable partners” and added that “privileging short-term objectives at the expense of human rights is a recipe for disaster.”

Armenian Ombudswoman addresses repatriation of PoWs at meeting with Bundestag Vice President



Human Rights Defender Kristinne Grigoryan held a meeting with the Vice President of Bundestag – Germany’s parliament - Katrin Göring-Eckardt, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the German Embassy in Armenia Markus Tschan, Heinrich Böll Foundation South Caucasus Regional Director Sonja Schiffers and Ar-

menia project coordinator Evia Hovhannisyan.

Upon Katrin Göring-Eckardt’s request, the Human Rights Defender presented the main challenges in the human rights area, especially the humanitarian issues in the post-war period, including the issues of repatriating the PoWs who are still held in Azerbaijan, social protection and psychological assistance to the families of the PoWs and those missing, security of border towns and other issues, as well as issues related to fighting discrimination and the political and economic empowerment of women.

Katrin Göring-Eckardt also inquired on the guarantees of the Human Rights Defender’s independence, issues of cooperation between the Human Rights Defender and the Government, international organizations. Grigoryan presented the cooperation mechanisms with the government and the main directions and joint programs implemented with international organizations.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation representatives addressed the programs they are implementing in Armenia and in the region, main directions of their work and their priorities in Armenia.

More than 1000 families provided with apartments in one year in Artsakh amid major construction projects

More than 1000 families in the Republic of Artsakh received apartments from the government in between 2021 and July of 2022.

377 of the 1000 apartments are newly built ones, mostly in Stepanakert City, which were built with funds from the Artsakh state budget, the state budget of Armenia and the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, the government said in a video posted by President of Artsakh Arayik Harutyunyan on social media.

The apartments are being built as part

of large-scale construction projects after the 2020 war.

Apartments and houses were given to families of fallen troops, displaced persons, military veterans with disabilities, active and reserve military servicemembers of the Defense Army, families with five or more children, families with status of refugees and families who lost parents.

Around 600 apartments and houses, mostly in regions of Artsakh, will be commissioned in 2022.



Around 1300 apartments are now under construction in Stepanakert.

1500 apartments are under construction in the regions.

The construction of another 1000 apartments will begin soon.

8500 families are registered on the waiting list, and the local authorities are hopeful to resolve the housing issue entirely in the coming years.



Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Artur Martirosyan received Ambassador of Albania to Armenia Luella Hajdaraga (residence in Athens, Greece), the ministry said.

Congratulating the Ambassador on appointment, the Armenian Deputy Minister wished her a productive work for the benefit of the development of the Armenian-Albanian ties. He expressed confidence that the Ambassador will contribute to further strengthening and deepening the relations between Armenia and Albania.

The Ambassador of Albania thanked for the reception and stated that there are many commonalities between Armenia and

Armenia expects Albania's support in preventing Azerbaijan from distorting cultural heritage

Albania, and the close cooperation in educational, cultural and a number of other directions has a very big potential.

Deputy Minister Martirosyan in turn noted that the cooperation with Albania is also special in a sense that being a transitional country it has significant achievements that could be taken into consideration in the context of developing Armenia's education, cultural, science and other sectors.

The sides discussed the bilateral and multilateral cooperation prospects in education, culture and youth spheres and expressed readiness to encourage the agencies operating in these areas to expand the partnership. As a first step they highlighted the opportunity of inter-university cooperation within Erasmus+, Horizon Europe programs, the cultural mutual visits and the

partnership between youth structures.

The Deputy Minister of Culture drew the attention of the Ambassador to the issue of preservation of Armenian cultural heritage in the territories under the Azerbaijani control, stating that the Armenian side is expecting the support of the international community, including Albania, so that Azerbaijan refrains from destroying and distorting the Armenian cultural heritage.

In response the Ambassador said that the government of Albania is well aware of the current situation and expressed readiness to convey these concerns to the Albanian government.

Artur Martirosyan invited the Ambassador to attend the STARMUS VI festival in Armenia on September 5-10.

Blinken releases Trafficking in Persons Report: Armenia on Tier 2 for second year running



On July 19, 2022, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken released the [2022 Trafficking in Persons Report](#). For the second year in a row, Armenia is on Tier 2, in

recognition of its overall increasing efforts towards the elimination of trafficking as compared with the previous reporting period.

These efforts included prosecuting more traffickers and identifying more victims. Courts convicted a labor trafficker for the first time since 2014. The government adopted screening indicators for use by social workers, amended procedures to standardize data collection and informa-

tion sharing, and provided comprehensive training to relevant staff.

The report also notes that Armenia does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and suggests areas for future improvement, particularly in victim identification and labor trafficking. The United States is committed to partnering with Armenia to advance its anti-trafficking efforts.

Armenia ahead in anti-corruption, judicial independence areas compared to other Eastern Partnership countries

Deputy Minister of Justice Yeranuhi Tumanyants participated in the final conference on Judiciary Reforms and Access to Justice organized by the EU, the IRZ (German Foundation for International Legal Cooperation) and the Latvian Judicial Administration as part of the Consolidation of the Justice System in Armenia.

In opening remarks, Tumanyants thanked the EU and the IRZ, the Consolidation of the Justice System in Armenia

Team leader Peter Gjortler and other international partners for the productive cooperation and positive results.

The final meeting of the program's steering committee was held on the same day.

Deputy Minister Tumanyants underscored the importance of the work aimed at establishing an Arbitration Center and a new Correctional Facility in Armenia with close cooperation and support from the EU.

Tumanyants noted that by the 2020-2021 Eastern Partnership index, as a result

of cooperation with the EU and the implemented reforms Armenia recorded positive progress in the areas of anti-corruption and judicial independence, surpassing all other Eastern Partnership countries.

The Deputy Minister said that parallel with the adoption of the Judicial-Legal Strategy, the Ministry of Justice will be consistent in implementing the outlined actions under the Consolidation of the Justice System in Armenia program and the strategy.

Charles Aznavour's statue to be installed in France

Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia Artur Martirosyan received the representatives of the Aznavour Foundation led by Director Kristina Aznavour (Sarkissian), the ministry said.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the 2024 program of events dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the late French-Armenian legendary singer Charles Aznavour.

Kristina Aznavour informed that the French side is preparing for the events, and the statue of Charles Aznavour will be installed in France by 2024. The design is ready, there are plans to hold a large-scale concert and an exhibition about Aznavour. The issue of installing Aznavour's statue also in Armenia is being discussed with the Yerevan City Hall. The Director of the Aznavour Foundation proposed to hold all events in parallel with France, including the installation of the statue.



In turn Deputy Minister Martirosyan said that the Armenian side will cooperate with the Foundation with pleasure in implementing the program of events, adding that the jubilee of the legendary singer will be celebrated in Armenia as bright as in France.

“We are responsible that the Armenian-French agenda doesn't suffer in any matter”, Artur Martirosyan said.

During the meeting the sides decided to establish an inter-agency commission

to coordinate the expected events.

Artur Martirosyan informed that a coordinating working group has been set up for more effectively organizing and holding the program initiatives between all role-players of Francophonie. The first meeting of the group is scheduled on July 28, and French Ambassador to Armenia Anne Louyot is also invited to the meeting.

The Foundation representatives also presented the problems faced by the Yerevan State College of Culture and Art named after Charles Aznavour, the volume of investments and future plans. The Foundation invested 12,5 million drams for the college. The college is regularly holding master classes and inviting international specialists.

“Our goal is to open a path for children with a great potential to global stages and contribute to the development of their talent”, Kristina Aznavour said.

Gyumri getting ready for tourism boom ahead of festivals



Gyumri is getting ready to celebrate Gyumri Day on August 27.

Before that, the second largest city of Armenia will also host a Beer Festival on August 20.

Guest homes and hotels are already being booked by many tourists.

Gyumri Mayor Vardges Samsonyan told ARMENPRESS that his city has become a tourism center over the past years,

but there's still a lot to be done, such as solving the unemployment issues, repairing roads and resolving the makeshift shelter issue.

Currently large-scale road construction works are underway, with 22 streets included in subvention programs this year.

As part of the subvention program, the city is implementing a thermal insulation program of buildings in the districts of Ani and Mush. The renovation of the garden near the station and the plaza is nearing completion.

14 apartments will be renovated and donated to homeless families – those who live in makeshift shelters.

A new kindergarten is also being built in the city.

Works are implemented in the city

also with funds from the World Bank, the EBRD and the KfW.

Various private companies are already constructing hotels and apartments. “We have many offers, many are interested in the prospects of building hotels in various parts of Gyumri, and we really need new hotels, the demand is seen especially during holidays and festivals,” the mayor said.

There are still nearly 2700 makeshift shelters/structures in Gyumri. But 500 of them are vacant, the mayor said.

In terms of solving the unemployment issue, the mayor said some businesses have brought forward proposals and the City Hall has offered to support in providing spaces.

\$1.2 million from Kachigian family trust establishes UCLA lectureship in Armenian studies

The UCLA Division of Humanities has received a \$1.2 million bequest from the estate of siblings George and Alice Kachigian to support the Armenian studies program in the department of Near Eastern languages and cultures. As part of the gift, the department created the Kachigian Family Lectureship in Armenian Language and Culture.

The inaugural holder of the lectureship will be Hagop Kouloujian, a UCLA scholar and instructor who specializes in Western Armenian, a language that since the Armenian Genocide of the early 20th century has been spoken almost exclusively by people in the diaspora. Kouloujian was instrumental in having it designated an endangered language by UNESCO in 2010.

“We are grateful for the kindness and visionary support of the Kachigian family,” said David Schaberg, dean of humanities and senior dean of the UCLA College. “Their generosity will contribute to the vitality of this endangered language and culture.”

Los Angeles, with the largest Armenian-speaking population outside Armenia itself, and UCLA are natural settings for such scholarship. Since the launch of the Armenian studies program in 1969, UCLA has been a destination for students interested in the field, and the creation of the UCLA Promise Armenian Institute in 2019 cemented the university’s leadership role in Armenian research and public impact programs.

Kouloujian’s ongoing Language in Ac-

tion project at UCLA, funded by the Portugal-based Calouse Gulbenkian Foundation, exemplifies his “creative literacy” approach, which focuses on teaching students by encouraging their own creative output. His students have produced hundreds of pieces, ranging from creative works to nonfiction, with the goal of contributing to the vitality of Western Armenian language and culture.

In May 2022, for example, the department of Near Eastern languages and cultures held an event to celebrate the publication of “Girkov useloo, inchoo hos em?” (“To Say With Passion, Why Am I Here?”), a full-length volume of poetry written in Western Armenian by the late Tenny Arlen, a 2013 UCLA comparative literature graduate who learned the language and wrote most of the collection in Kouloujian’s courses.

Donors George and Alice Kachigian, for whom the lectureship is named, were active members and generous supporters of the Los Angeles Armenian community. Although they moved to Oregon 30 years ago following the deaths of their parents and brother Harold, they continued to support UCLA’s Armenian studies program throughout their lives, providing research funding for faculty in the divisions of social sciences and humanities.

Alice died in 2017, and after George’s death in 2019, the siblings’ estate left generous funding to the Armenian studies program and the department of neurology at UCLA.



“The Kachigian family were friends to all, donated to many causes and counseled anyone who requested their help. They lived lives of goodness and kindness,” said Rafe Aharonian, trustee of the Kachigian Living Trust. “George, Alice and Harold wanted to help the youth learn more about Armenian heritage, and courses like Dr. Kouloujian’s encourage connections between UCLA students of Armenian heritage who might otherwise not have met.”

The Kachigians’ legacy will live on in all those at UCLA and elsewhere who, through the family’s generosity, have developed a deep connection to and appreciation for Armenian culture and language, said Kouloujian, who will hold the lectureship for five years.

“My aspiration for this lectureship is to continue to enhance UCLA’s Armenian work with forward-looking activities and community impact projects that will help invigorate the future of this language and culture,” he said. “I want to share the enduring, evolving beauty and power of Armenian with as many people as possible.”

Greek-Armenian actor Paul Chepikian set to appear in upcoming Steven Spielberg film



Greek Armenian actor Paul Chepikian is set to appear in Steven Spielberg’s upcoming film, the *Armenian Film Society* reports.

The film has completed production and is scheduled for a limited theatrical release in the United States on November 11, before expanding wide on November 23.

The Fabelmans is a semi-autobiographical film and is a portrait of the formative years of Steven Spielberg, before he became a celebrated director. The film stars Michelle Williams, Seth Rogen, Paul Dano, and Gabriel LaBelle.

Paul Chepikian is credited in the film as “Pinnacle Peak Owner.” Pinnacle Peak

Patio Steakhouse was a restaurant in Scottsdale, Arizona, where Steven Spielberg shot his first film, *The Last Gunfight*, at the age of 11. The young Steven Spielberg fulfilled his request for the photography merit badge by filming the nine-minute film. The director and his family moved to Phoenix, Arizona in 1957, where Steven Spielberg grew up. The restaurant closed in 2015.

Paul Chepikian is a Greek-Armenian actor born in Saudi Arabia. In 1963, he moved to New Jersey at the age of 8.

Netflix to acquire Zareh Nalbandian's animation studio Animal Logic

Netflix is acquiring Australian animation studio Animal Logic, which is producing films for the streamer including “The Magician’s Elephant,” directed by Wendy Rogers, and “The Shrinking of the Tree-horns,” directed by Ron Howard, *Variety* reports.

Animal Logic co-founded by Zareh Nalbandian has about 800 employees, mostly based in Sydney and Vancouver. The acquisition “will help us accelerate the development of our animation production capabilities and reinforces our commitment to build a world-class animation studio,” Netflix said in its Q2 letter to shareholders.

The company did not disclose the purchase price for Animal Logic but said it will fund the acquisition from cash on hand. Netflix expects to close the later this year, subject to certain regulatory approvals.

“Together, we’ll create an animation studio that will produce some of our largest animated feature films,” Netflix said in the shareholder letter.

Founded in 1991, Animal Logic’s film work has included The Lego movies, the two “Peter Rabbit” films, “Legend of the



Guardians: The Owls of Ga’Hoole” and “Happy Feet.” The studio also has produced visual effects for movies including “The Matrix,” “Moulin Rouge!”, “300” and “The Great Gatsby” and “Captain Marvel.”

Netflix said Animal Logic, led by CEO and co-founder Zareh Nalbandian, will continue operating under the Animal Logic brand and will “fulfill production of existing and ongoing commitments and continue to collaborate and work with longstanding studio partners.”

Nalbandian said in a statement provided by Netflix, “After 30 years of producing great work with great people, this is the perfect next chapter for Animal Logic. Our values and aspirations could not be more aligned with Netflix, in working with diverse content makers, producing innovative and engaging stories for audiences around the world. Our collective experience and talent will open new doors for all our teams and will empower a new level of creativity in animation.”

Starmus VI: European Southern Astronomy joins the science and art festival in Armenia

Xavier Barcons, Director General of the European Southern Astronomy (ESO), is one of the confirmed speakers at the Starmus VI festival, joining a star-studded line-up that includes no less than eight Nobel Prize laureates, five astronauts, and prominent artists and thinkers.

The Starmus Festival is an artistic and scientific celebration of the wonders of the Universe and science communication. Conferences, speeches, presentations, the Stephen Hawking Science Medal award and other events are a part of the programme.

The sixth edition of the Starmus festival will take place from 5 to 10 September 2022 in Yerevan, Armenia. This edition is



set to be the biggest yet and the theme is a dedication to the planet Mars.

Speakers at Starmus VI will include world-renowned astronauts, including Chris Hadfield and former NASA Administrator, Charles Bolden Jr. In addition,

Starmus will feature a wide selection of Nobel Laureate scientists such as Kip Thorne, Emmanuelle Charpentier and Donna Strickland, as well as physicist and science communicator Brian Greene. Musicians will include rock band Sons of Apollo, legendary keyboardist Rick Wakeman, Serj Tankian, the Armenian-American singer of System of a Down, amongst other celebrities and renowned scientists.

The Starmus Festival was created by Garik Israelian, a researcher at the Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands (IAC), and Brian May, astrophysicist and the lead guitarist of the iconic rock band Queen.

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Yezequelian@aol.com

Paris Office: 34 Avenue des Champs Elysees
Phone: 011 33 1 43 59 66 72
Yerevan Address: 8, Khorenatsi St.



Armenian Identity Card

The goal of the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) non-profit organization is to unify Armenians worldwide in a common platform so that through contacts, queries and referenda they can express their views and positions regarding issues of general interest to Armenians around the world and issues of particular interest to Armenian communities in various countries.

Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) also makes it possible to establish business networks, the cardholder can participate in various charitable projects, and can obtain discounts from Armenian and non-Armenian businesses all over the world. Armenians should feel themselves to be full-fledged "citizens" of a reborn Armenia and the Armenian Identity Card is the «passport» for all Armenians.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID)

network is an effective environment where Armenians can implement various projects and pan-Armenian programs. At the heart of HyeID is the creation of an Armenian database which will become the reliable and objective basis to realize the potential of all Armenians around the world. Based on that database, it will be possible to implement various permanent and temporary initiatives through the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) organization.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) worldwide network enables cardholders to elect and get elected to the leadership of The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) network structures.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can benefit from the possibility of discounts intended for HyeID cardholders when shopping for products and services in various countries of the world.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can participate in queries and referenda initiated by the HyeID network and vote on issues of national interest to Armenians.

Ensure the security and privacy of The Armenian Identification Card (HyeID) cardholders.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders who live in the Diaspora intend to utilize the possibilities made available through HyeID to form a Diaspora representative body — Diaspora Armenian Parliament — through democratic elections.

Armenia Office of the Armenian Identification Card (HyeID) Organization

Address: 1 Amiryar str., Yerevan, RA, 0001 (In Armenia Marriott Hotel)

Phone: +374 55 509050, +374 91777739:

E-mail: armenia@hyeid.org, Website: armenia.hyeid.org



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 Maiz
Phone No: +374 93 40 40 62
Fax: +374 93 40 34 40



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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