

Armenia-EU Agreement to enter into force on March 1, ratification completed



Belgium - EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian sign the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement in Brussels, 24Nov2017.

On February 10, 2021, the European Union notified the Republic of Armenia about the completion of the ratification process by the EU and its Member States of the Armenia-European Union Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement. The Agreement will fully enter into force on March 1, 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs.

The agreement, which was signed in the framework of the Eastern Partnership Summit held in Brussels on 24 November 2017, takes the bilateral relations between Armenia and the European Union to a new, partnership level and regulates the dialogue in the political and economic spheres, as well as sectoral cooperation and trade relations.

The CEPA is an inclusive document, which creates a solid legal basis for the Armenia-EU partnership, outlining cooperation in various spheres, spanning from justice, security, economy, agriculture and infrastructures to environment and climate, education

and science, culture, health, etc.

“The effective implementation of the Agreement will bring tangible results to our citizens by promoting democracy, political, economic and social stability through extensive reforms, thus improving quality of life of our citizens,” the Foreign Ministry says.

The CEPA addresses the issue of the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, reaffirming the EU’s stated commitment to support the efforts and approaches of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, particularly on the basis of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

The Government of Armenia has constantly reaffirmed its commitment to the effective implementation of the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, which is fully in line with Armenia’s broad reform agenda.

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Armenia has not reconsidered its assessment of Turkey's destructive involvement in the region -MFA

Armenia has not reconsidered its assessment of Turkey's destructive involvement in the region, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan said in a statement.

The comments come after the Armenian National Committee – International issued a statement expressing concerns over regional issues, particularly Armenia's approach to Turkey.

"We highly appreciate the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the offices and committees of the Armenian National Committee, which has always been aimed at advancing the pan-Armenian agenda," Naghdalyan said.

She added that the concerns contained in the statement of the ARF Hay Dat Central Office are based on the comments made by Minister Aivazian during his question-and-answer session with the government in the National Assembly, which, she said, are made outside the general context, and in no way reflect Armenia's assessment and approaches to Turkey's involvement in the region.

"Armenia has not reconsidered its assessment of Turkey's destructive involve-

ment in the region, and those concerns were clearly stated in the question-and-answer session, in particular, regarding the conduct of joint Turkish-Azerbaijani military exercises near the Armenian border. At the same time, the Armenian Foreign Minister referred to Turkey's policy of illegal blockade of Armenia, insisting that at present there is not even an excuse referring to the fact that Turkey has closed its border with Armenia for decades," she added,

The Spokesperson emphasized that all the governments of the Republic of Armenia, as well as the leading organizations of the Diaspora, have always considered the blockade illegal, and have acted from the position of ending it.

"The position of the Republic of Armenia on this issue has not changed, neither has the determination to pursue the priorities of the foreign policy of the Republic of Armenia. We are convinced that Turkey's direct involvement in the war unleashed by Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh, the war crimes committed against the people of Artsakh and other mass crimes make the international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide more ur-



gent in order to prevent the reoccurrence of such crimes in the future," Naghdalyan stated.

She stressed that Armenia will continue its close cooperation with respected Diaspora Armenian organizations.

She further emphasized that the Foreign Minister has noted on various occasions that "we will consider Turkey's actions, not statements," and added that to date, these actions have not been constructive.

"In this regard, we would like to quote the position of the Foreign Minister, expressed during the same question-and-answer session, that "a favorable atmosphere should be created around Armenia, our diplomacy and our people, naturally, without breaking the red lines, protecting our state-national interests."

Armenian PM congratulates Iranian leaders on 42nd anniversary of Islamic Revolution

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has sent congratulatory messages to President Hassan Rouhani of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei on the occasion of the 42nd anniversary of the Victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The congratulatory message addressed to President Hassan Rouhani reads:

"Excellency,

I warmly congratulate you and the friendly people of Iran on the 42nd anniversary of the Victory of the Islamic Revolution. The centuries-old friendship and the deep-rooted traditions are the best pledge for developing and deepening mutually beneficial cooperation between Armenia and Iran.

The complicated geopolitical situation



in the region gives greater importance to the speedy and full implementation of mutually beneficial programs for the benefit of our two nations.

I wish you good health and every success, as well as peace and prosperity – to the friendly people of Iran."

The congratulatory message addressed to Supreme Leader of the Islamic

Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei reads:

"Your Majesty,

I warmly congratulate you and the friendly people of Iran on the 42nd anniversary of the Victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The complicated regional situation highlights the friendship and mutual respect between our two peoples and calls for deeper cooperation.

Armenia is firmly determined to promote mutually beneficial cooperation with friendly Iran to the benefit of our peoples and the region, in general. I wish Your Majesty robust health and personal wellbeing, as well as peace and progress – to the friendly people of Iran."

Armenian, French FMs discuss issues of regional stability and security

Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian had a telephone conversation with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. In the follow-up to the previous contacts, the Foreign Ministers had a comprehensive discussion on regional stability and security issues, referred to the steps taken to address the humanitarian situation in Artsakh and the challenges facing the Armenians of Artsakh.

In the context of urgent humanitarian issues, the Armenian Foreign Minister stressed the repatriation of Armenian prisoners of war and civilians, emphasizing the inadmissibility of Azerbaijan to create obstacles in that process. In this regard,



Foreign Minister Aivazian thanked his French counterpart for always keeping the issue high on the agenda.

The Foreign Ministers stressed the need to address the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship, and

exchanged views on the upcoming schedule of the Co-Chairs' activities.

The foreign ministers of Armenia and France also discussed issues on the bilateral agenda. The interlocutors highly assessed the recent visit of the delegation of the Secretary of State Jean-Baptiste Lemoine to Armenia on the instruction of the President of France Emmanuel Macron to discuss the prospects of cooperation in spheres of mutual interest, exchange views on further steps to be taken.

Foreign Ministers Aivazyan and Le Drian attached importance to the continuation of consultations and consultations at different levels.

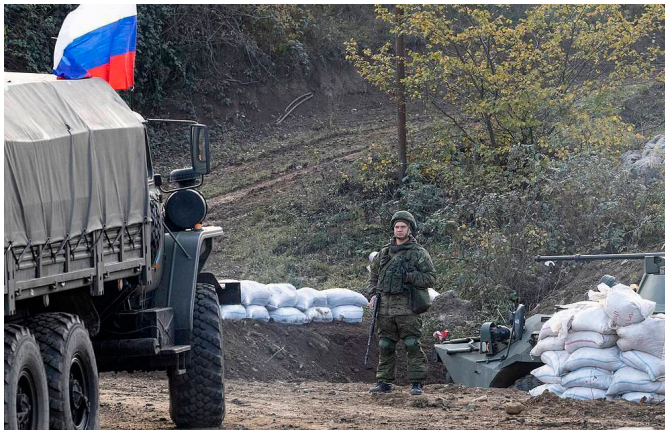
Security of Goris-Davit Bek road section provided by Russian and Armenian border guards

Security on the Goris-Davit Bek road section is provided by Russian and Armenian border guards, the Armenian Defense Ministry said in a statement.

To ensure the safety of citizens' movement, vehicles and cargo transportation on the Goris-Davit Bek road, border guards of the Armenian and Russian border services have been deployed on the highway, the Ministry said in a response to a number of inquiries of media representatives.

The Ministry reminds that back on December 19 it shared a statement saying that an agreement was reached between the Defense Ministers of Armenia and Russia to ensure the security control of the above-mentioned roads by the Russian border guards.

According to the agreement reached, Russian border guards are stationed on the



Goris-David Bek road section to ensure uninterrupted traffic.

The security of the 21 km long section of the Goris-Kapan highway, which passes through the disputed area, will be ensured by the Russian border guards.

Armenian border troops are deployed on the Armenian side, Azerbaijani border troops are on the Azerbaijani side.

Necessary complex measures are being taken to ensure the safety of the mentioned

road section.

Thus, in order to ensure the safety of citizens' movement, vehicles and cargo, the border guards of Armenia and Russia were deployed on the highway. An agreement was reached between the "Russian Defense Ministers" of the Republic of Armenia to ensure the security control of the above-mentioned roads by the Russian border guards.

Thus, the Ministry says, to ensure the safety of citizens' movement, vehicles and cargo, the border guards of Armenia and Russia have been deployed on the highway.

An agreement was reached between the Armenian and Russian Defense Ministries to ensure the security control of the above-mentioned roads by the Russian border guards.

OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair's activity should continue – Russian Deputy FM

The activities of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs should be continued, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko said in an interview with *TASS*.

“They made an important contribution to the development of basic principles for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, many of which were reflected in the statement of November 9, 2020. This also applies to the return to Azerbaijan of the regions located around Nagorno-Karabakh, the return of refugees, the preservation of the corridor linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, security, peacekeeping operations, unblocking all economic and transport links in the region,” he said.



“The task of achieving a comprehensive political settlement, which, in accordance with the decisions of the OSCE Budapest summit (1994), is entrusted to the Minsk Group co-chairs, remains in demand. The “Troika” has strong international support and can be useful in developing mutually

acceptable approaches to further steps, including on the issue of status, but carefully and slowly, when the time comes,” the Deputy FM said.

According to him, now the OSCE Minsk Group and its co-chairs could be active in strengthening confidence-building measures between Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

“The development of dialogue within the framework of civil society will contribute to the general improvement of the situation in the region and the creation of prerequisites for further steps on the political track,” Rudenko said.

No reason for Turkey to keep Armenia border closed – FM

There is no reason for Turkey to keep the Armenian border closed, Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian said at a Q&A session at the National Assembly.

He reminded that the blockade was imposed because of the status quo in Artsakh, which has now changed through use of force.

As for the joint Azerbaijani-Turkish drills in Kars, he said any military exercise a cause of concern. “On one side we see such manifestations, on the other hand we see different messages coming from Tur-



key. While it's accepted practice in diplomacy to speak through messages, I think it's to proceed from messages to actions,” the Foreign Minister said.

According to him, the new post-war situation poses new challenges, but also opens up new opportunities.

“As a state, as a government and as a society we should strive to deescalate the situation, which will, in turn, contribute to the strengthening of the security environment,” he noted.

Minister Aivazian stressed that the strengthening of the security environment in Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh the priority for us has been and remains a priority.

Armenian PM congratulates China's President, Premier of State Council on Spring Festival

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan sent congratulatory letters to China's President Xi Jinping and Premier of the State Council Li Keqiang on the Chinese New Year – the Spring Festival.

The letter addressed to the Chinese President reads:

“Your Excellency,

On behalf of the Armenian people and myself personally I address my warm congratulations and wishes to you and the good people of China on the occasion of the Chinese New Year – the Spring Festival. I wish that the Spring Festival brings peace and welfare to all families.

Armenia attaches great importance to the consistent development and strengthening of the traditional friendly relations with China.

Your Excellency, please accept my best wishes of good health and success”.

The Armenian PM's letter addressed to the Premier of the State Council of China reads:

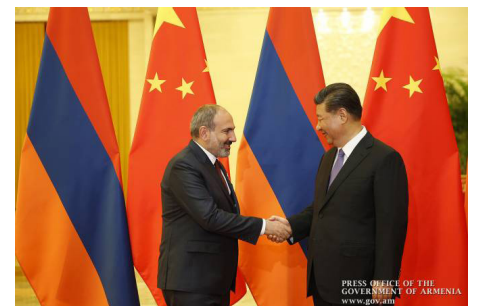
“Your Excellency,

On behalf of the Armenian government, I address my warm congratulations and wishes to you and the State Council of China on the Chinese New Year – the Spring Festival. Let the Spring Festival

bring peace, welfare and fulfillment of the set goals.

Armenia highlights the consistent development of the traditional friendly relations and practical cooperation with China.

I wish you and your family good health and all the best”.



Opposition Leader Looks Forward to Renewed Protests

(RFE/RL - Yerevan) - An alliance of 17 Armenian opposition parties will step up its campaign for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's resignation with an upcoming rally in Yerevan, one of its leaders said on February 12.

The alliance called the Homeland Salvation Movement blames Pashinyan for Armenia's defeat in the war with Azerbaijan stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire on November 10. It staged a series of demonstrations later in November and December in a bid to force him to hand over power to an interim government.

The protests did not attract large crowds, leading Pashinyan to insist that he still has a popular mandate to govern the country.

Representatives of the alliance said last week that the protests will resume soon. The movement coordinator, Ishkhan Saghatelian, announced on Monday that the first rally will be held in Yerevan's Liberty



erty Square on February 20.

Vazgen Manukyan, a veteran politician nominated by the alliance as a caretaker prime minister, looked forward to the "big rally," saying that the pause in the opposition campaign has "lasted a bit longer than it should have."

"The movement has discussed what it has done before," Manukyan told reporters. "I won't say now what it found right and what it found wrong. But it has drawn lessons and I think that with the February 20 rally it will continue its activities with much greater vigor."

"There are several hundred thou-

sand people who are terribly and emotionally unhappy," he said. "One million other people are also unhappy with Nikol Pashinyan but don't bother to participate in all this, feeling broken for various reasons. We must manage to get these people out on the streets in order to have a full-scale, specular popular movement."

Manukyan said the opposition should also strive to "break" and "discredit" what he described as Pashinyan's power base: senior members of the ruling My Step bloc and high-ranking police officers.

Pashinyan expressed readiness on December 25 to hold snap parliamentary elections to end the political crisis in the country. Opposition leaders continued to insist on his resignation.

In a joint statement issued on February 7, Pashinyan and My Step's parliamentary group spoke out against the conduct of such elections, saying that it is not backed by most Armenians.

Swedish parliamentarians call on Azerbaijan to immediately release Armenian POWs

The Sweden-Armenia Friendship Group of the Swedish Riksdag calls on the Republic of Azerbaijan to accelerate the exchange of prisoners of war, Armenia's Embassy to Sweden reports.

Members of the Group have issued the following statement:

We, the undersigned Members of the Sweden-Armenia Friendship Group of the Swedish Riksdag,

having regard to

- the Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on Nagorno-Karabakh, issued on 19 November 2020,
- the commitment by the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan made at the end of 2020 to exchange prisoners of war and other detainees on the basis of the 'all for all' principle,
- the appeal of the representative of the European External Action Service of 29 January 2021, and
- the statement by the Political Assembly of



the European People's Party of 1 February 2021,

remaining concerned that Azerbaijan's destructive approach to politicizing humanitarian issue is accompanied with attempts of blocking the entry of international organizations, including UN into the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, thus depriving the latter of the opportunity of providing the people of Nagorno-Karabakh with humanitarian assistance,

also noting point 8 of the Statement on a complete ceasefire by the leaders of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azer-

baijan and the Russian Federation made on 10 November 2020,

call on the Republic of Azerbaijan to accelerate the exchange of bodies of the killed, as well as the exchange of prisoners of war and hostages, to immediately end criminal proceedings against them and ensure their transfer to the Republic of Armenia.

An unconditional and immediate return of prisoners will be one of the first steps towards the restoration of a trust-based atmosphere between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia. We also call on the institutions of the European Union to raise this humanitarian issue consistently in the context of the current and future relations with the Republic of Azerbaijan.

ARIN KARAPET
BJÖRN SÖDER
FREDRIK MALM

Armenian, Russian, Azerbaijani Deputy PMs hold second meeting

Senior Armenian, Azerbaijani and Russian officials held on February 12 further discussions on practical modalities of opening the Armenian-Azerbaijani border for commercial and other traffic.

The restoration of transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan is envisaged by the Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement that stopped the war in Nagorno-Karabakh on November 10.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan decided to set up a trilateral “working group” for that purpose when they met in Moscow on January 11. They said it will submit by March 1 a timetable of “measures envisaging the restoration and construction of new transport infrastructure facilities.”

The group co-headed by deputy prime ministers of the three states held



its first meeting in the Russian capital on January 30.

Their second session held on Friday took the form of a video conference. A Russian government statement said the three vice-premiers discussed “the course of joint work” stemming from the Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements. They approved a “schedule for further work,” the statement added without elaborating.

The Armenian government issued an identical statement on the video conference.

At their January 30 meeting, Deputy Prime Ministers Alexei Overchuk of Russia, Mher Grigoryan of Armenia and Shahin Mustafayev of Azerbaijan decided to form two “expert subgroups” tasked with dealing with transport issues and border controls.

One of the subgroups held a video conference on February 6. According to the Armenian Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures, its members “exchanged preliminary views” on the state of regional road and railway networks.

The truce agreement commits Yerevan to opening rail and road links between the Nakhichevan exclave and the rest of Azerbaijan that will presumably pass-through southeastern Armenia. Armenia should be able, for its part, to use Azerbaijani territory as a transit route for cargo shipments to and from Russia and Iran.

City of the future: Project of Armenia’s Engineering City approved



The “Engineering City” project has entered an active phase, Armenia’s Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan informs.

be announced soon and the construction of the city will start.

It is one of the projects financed under the Trade Promotion of Quality Infrastructure program in cooperation with the World Bank.

The plan of the city of the future in Armenia has already been approved, the tender for the construction company will

It will consist of 22 engineering companies’ premises, laboratory, parking lot, garden and engineering infrastructure.

It will become a center of engineering thought and innovation and will provide a completely new environment for urban life.

“The Engineering City to be built in Nor Nork promises to be one of the best examples of public-private partnership, combining modern technologies, our scientific mind, and a healthy, safe, and prosperous public environment,” Avinyan said.

Yerevan City Hall to purchase 161 new buses

Yerevan’s City Hall will purchase 161 buses to improve the city’s transportation system, Mayor Hayk Marutyán said at a special session of the City Council.

“The British company WIG has designed a new bus network for us. It is planned to purchase about 850 buses, of which 450 should be 7.5, 8.5 meters, and the rest – 12 and 18 meters. At the moment,

we are confirming the purchase of 161 7.5- to 8.5-meter buses,” Marutyán said.

The Mayor said that the tender will open on March 31.

According to him, the purchase will help get rid of the minibuses, which are “dangerous, problematic and inconvenient.”



Armenia to go digital as government approves new strategy

The Armenian government on February 11 approved the country's Digitalization Strategy.

The executive says the development of high technologies plays a decisive role in the competitiveness, security and living standards of the state.

The strategy envisages digital transformation of the Government, the economy and the society through introduction and

development of innovative technologies, cyber security, data policy and e-services and e-government systems, coordination of digitalization processes, creation of common standards and digital environment, as well as initiatives promoting the use of digital technologies in the private sector of the economy and the development and implementation of programs promoting the use of electronic tools by the public.

Armenia's digitalization strategy is aimed at ensuring high quality of public service delivery, efficiency and transparency of the public administration system, development of broadband and telecommunication infrastructure, increase of competitiveness of the private sector, decision-making necessary for economic growth, development of digital skills workforce

EU, Lithuania Embassy to provide emergency aid packages to 150 displaced Armenian families



The European Union and the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Armenia joined forces together under the #TeamEurope initiative to provide help to displaced people from Nagorno Karabakh.



Today, the Ambassador of the European Union to Armenia Andrea Wiktorin and the

Ambassador of Lithuania in Armenia Inga Stanytė-Toločkienė visited the premises of Children of Armenia Fund (COAF), where the parcels for displaced families are getting ready to be distributed.

The visit happened under the 'Emergency aid to displaced families from Nagorno Karabakh' project. The project is financed by the European Union, implemented by COAF and includes contribution from the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania.

Thanks to this joint initiative, 150 families will receive emergency aid packages consisting of food, hygiene items and

winter clothes, 450 children will receive stationary and 150 displaced families will receive psycho-social support, health care services and speech therapy. The project is implemented in Armavir, Lori, Shirak, Tavush and Aragatsotn regions.

The selection of the project beneficiar-



ies is done by the implementing partner in cooperation with the local authorities. The European Union Delegation to Armenia does not select project beneficiaries. In order to receive support from one of our projects, please make sure you are registered with the local authorities.



Armenia highlights the need for well-defined objectives that contribute to the prevention of genocide

Armenia believes that it's necessary to set well-defined and measurable objectives that contribute to the prevention of genocide, Armenia's Permanent Representative to the UN Office at Geneva Andranik Hovhannisyán said at the Intersessional Meeting of the Human Rights Council on the Prevention of Genocide, which was mandated by the HRC resolution 43/29 initiated by Armenia and unanimously adopted in 2020.

The Ambassador said "Never Again" is not just a promise uttered but an action fulfilled for the sake of a world free of the most heinous crimes known to humankind.

"It is not a naïve appeal to reform the conduct of human beings and their morality, rather an effort to ensure that national and international actors abide by the common rules and standards whenever they identify that humanity and morality are degraded to an extent that may lead to crimes against humanity," he noted.

"The recent violence that unfolded in our region, recalling the horrors of past atrocities, has once again demonstrated the need to identify failures and challenges



faced by international mechanisms to effectively counter the odious scourge from its inception. The #HRC resolution 43/29 has identified that justification, biased accounts or denial of past instances of genocide may increase the risk of reoccurrence of violence. It further identified genocide denial as a form of hate speech," Amb. Hovhannisyán said.

"The primary focus of the consistent international action against the hate speech – and genocide denial as a distinct form of it – should address all instances of genocide denial that is initiated, supported, and induced by a State. Involvement of a State in promulgation of such ideas and theories through textbooks and official, government-sponsored historical societies, absence of a proper reaction by the

authorities to hate speech are clear signs and early warning signals of an imminent and looming threat. Such a conduct by a State is a continuous violation of human rights of victims and their descendants. Moreover, that is a clear indication that no meaningful action has been taken to guarantee non-recurrence of the genocidal acts. The descendants of perpetrators do not bear the guilt until they choose to justify it and identify themselves with it. Hence, it is of utmost importance to put an end to impunity as an effective tool for ensuring prevention," he stated.

He stressed the need to set well-defined and measurable objectives that contribute to the prevention of Genocide. "One of such objectives would be universalization of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. We made it a standing recommendation that Armenia delivers in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review. We believe that with every new State acceding to the Convention one more step is being made towards prevention of genocide."

Artsakh tightens the rules for entry of foreigners

For security reasons, the entry procedure of foreign citizens to the territory of the Republic of Artsakh in the post-war conditions has been updated, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs.

Citizens of foreign countries willing to visit the Republic of Artsakh must first apply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to obtain a permit. The procedure applies both to foreign citizens who need an entry visa, and to citizens of visa-free countries.

For security reasons, information about applications will also be transmit-



ted to the Russian peacekeeping forces. The foreign national will be notified, when the applications are approved. They will then need to get their visas at the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Artsakh in Yerevan and travel to Artsakh.

As for the timing, corresponding work is being carried out to improve the mechanism. The entry permit is issued within 3 or 4 working days. Sometimes the process may take longer, in which case the foreign national who submitted the application will be notified about the delay. The mechanism is already in progress. In recent days, representatives of a number of foreign media and international organizations have arrived in the Republic of Artsakh under this procedure.

Restoring economy and formulating development agenda the next steps – PM

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited the Ministry of Economy on February 9 to discuss the Ministry's ongoing and upcoming programs. The meeting was attended by Chief of the Prime Minister's Staff Arsen Torosyan, Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan, the deputy ministers, the heads of Ministry of Economy-affiliated agencies, other dignitaries.

“The Republic of Armenia has been in a state of crisis management for a year now. In March, 2020, the coronavirus was officially registered in Armenia, as in many countries around the world, which led to a socio-economic, health and humanitarian crisis. All the way through the crisis we saw others cite examples of how to manage the situation. But today Armenia itself can set an example to other countries in terms of crisis management,” PM Pashinyan said before proceeding to the agenda of the meeting.

“The war was the next challenge. Coupled with the coronavirus crisis, the war could result in a macroeconomic collapse. It should be noted that we were facing such a challenge. But today we can confidently state that we managed to maintain the macroeconomic stability, and ultimately get international recognition of Armenia's economic stability through increased issuance of Eurobonds, because the most visible, tangible assessment a country's economic position is the trust shown by institutional investors. After all, it is a powerful indicator of confidence,” PM Pashinyan added.

He drew attention to the fact that Armenia managed to issue Eurobonds at the lowest-ever interest rate in the history of the Republic of Armenia, which means institutional investors believe in Armenia's economic and political future.

“I would like to state the following fact. We have had a crisis year, but we also had a non-crisis year before that. The results of 2019 were brilliant in all respects, including the economic indicators. Of course, 2020 was a year of crisis: the consequences



of the war were too bitter for us. In the meantime, as I mentioned above, we were able to live up to the task in terms of crisis management,” the Prime Minister said.

“Rehabilitation is the second task we have set, and the next task is to return to the development agenda in parallel with the restoration. And, of course, the Ministry of Economy has to play a key role in this regard. Today we will see what we have outlined, what we are going to do, and what kind of guarantees we have set up. It is crucial to ensure that our plans come true: what we write on paper or what we have in mind must be materialized in practice,” he added.

Then, the meeting took note of the work done to resume economic growth and improve the business environment. The speakers made a point of expanding the range of Armenian products exported to foreign markets, including the Eurasian Economic Union, the European Union, the United States and other regions.

Armenia has set up more than 30 inter-governmental economic commissions with foreign partners, which regularly take up issues related to the furtherance of economic ties, addressing legislative bottlenecks, holding business forums in an effort to help the local producers get new partners abroad and master new sales markets.

It was reported that discussions held within the EAEU have resulted in a number of important decisions, among which the possibility for EAEU-registered entities, inclusive of Armenian companies, to participate in public procurement tenders in the Russian Federation. The relevant

decision will come into effect in June this year. Armenian companies will be able to participate in Russian public procurement tenders in 10 spheres, including light industry, construction, military industry, etc.

Prime Minister Pashinyan stressed the need to provide detailed information to local companies, noting that it could open up a vast field of activity for businesses with serious development prospects.

Armenia's trade missions are being renewed and upgraded abroad, which can lead to increased exports in specific spheres and wider availability of Armenian products in foreign countries. Work is being done to increase the export potential of Armenian wines, alcoholic beverages, canned and other types of food. This is largely facilitated by the GSP + system with the EU, and the GSP systems with the United States, Canada, and Switzerland.

Issues related to public-private partnership, promotion of public investment, improvement of the applicable legislative framework were discussed during the meeting.

The Investment Support Center is currently discussing 60 specific projects with investors to a total cost of USD 1.5 billion. Some projects are being implemented now. The Center keeps in close touch with investors and helps them deal with the existing problems.

Referring to investment programs, the speakers noted that there is great interest from investors, especially in the field of reservoir construction. The Prime Minister prioritized the construction of new reservoirs in the country, emphasizing that water is going to become a key regional factor over the time. In this context, Nikol Pashinyan stressed the need to take consistent steps towards liberalizing the water market and expanding the coverage of arable land.

A number of other issues related to losses and leaks at gas stations, the development of the institute of standards, the overall improvement of the business environment was discussed during the meeting.

You Should Deserve High Title of Military Doctor. Rector of the Medical University

On 8 February the cour-
sants, lecturers and interns of
the Military Medical Faculty
were awarded letters of grati-
tude at Yerevan State Medical
University for supporting med-
ical care during the recent war
in Artsakh, as well as 8 cadets
were awarded military ranks.
“Those who did their duty and
survived are also heroes. It is
gratifying that today we can
thank also the heroes who sur-
vived,” said YSMU Rector Pro-
fessor **Armen Muradyan**.

According to him, overcoming
the difficult trials, the “white
army” (doctors) reaffirmed its
readiness to stand by the people
and fulfilled both the medical
and military tasks set before it.
“Eternal glory to our immortal
heroes who will always be with
us, as a part of the University,”
said Mr Rector and continued:

*“They were immor-
talized, bringing honor
to the University,”* espe-
cially welcoming those
boys who were tur-
nished on the battlefield
and proved their noble
mission. And... *“Feeling
the word “patriotism”
deeply, seeing the fallen
friends, their families,
the eyes of their mothers, you
should deserve the high title of
being a military doctor”*.

*“Long live our homeland,
the state, the army, the “white
army”,”* said the Head of the
University.

The Head of the Military
Medical Faculty **Vardan Tsatu-
ryan** emphasized that the med-
ical community contributed to
the healing of the wounded.
*“We proved once again that by
uniting around the wounded, we
can help them recover quickly
and return to the service,”* said



the Head of the faculty, remind-
ing that the military doctor wins
when the recovered soldier re-
turns to the service.

The Head of the Military Uni-
versity after Vazgen Sargsyan
of the RA Ministry of Defense
Khachatur Khachatryan highly
assessed the cooperation with
YSMU, and stated that during
the organization of the treatment
of those who were wounded
during the war against Artsakh
at the Military University he
witnessed a work worthy of an
Armenian doctor organized by
Military Medical Faculty cour-
sants.

*“With the medical service
staff of the Military University,
you were able to fulfill your
service and medical duties in a
fully-fledged manner,”* said the
Head of the Military University
offering to continue coopera-
tion in favor of the State.

*From Armen Muradyan’s
FB page/24 News.am*

*Translated and edited by Gour-
gen James Khazhakian,*

Chief Correspondent



Professor Armen Muradyan: Get to Know Gohar, I am Sure She will Have What to Say in the Infinite World of Science ...

Gohar is from Artsakh ... The life of YSMU post-graduate student, already junior researcher **Gohar Karapetyan** changed dramatically in September 2020 due to the 44-day war provoked by Azerbaijan. Before the war, during the war and almost its last days (before the hospital evacuation), Gohar worked as a laboratory doctor at the Stepanakert Republican Medical Center.

The young specialist spent the day and night in the hospital, with few exceptions. The laboratory where Gohar worked was moved to bunker during the war, along with other hospital services. After the war, she moved to Yerevan to continue her education and due to work.

Gohar is from Artsakh, graduated from Stepanakert Secondary School No. 1 and entered the Medical-Biological Faculty of the Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University.

“Unfortunately, after graduating from University, the range of narrow professional choice was not wide. I was admitted to the clinical residency of the YSMU Center for Vocational and Continuing Education with specialization «laboratory diagnostics», and in parallel I started working in one of the medical centers in Yerevan. After working for three and a half years, I returned to Artsakh.

In 2016, I was admitted to the postgraduate course of YSMU Department of Biochemistry, and it can be said that the Medical University



was presented with all its charm at that time,” says the postgraduate student. Gohar Karapetyan has chosen the field of neuroscience, in particular, she is currently working on the possible interaction of bone marrow on the brain in case of Alzheimer’s disease. According to her, the current goals are related to the PhD thesis,- to work and to get a “product” which she hopes will be a small contribution to the discovery of many secrets in science, particularly in the field of neuroscience.

She chose the path of a researcher, not a scientist. *“Scientist is another concept that I do not dare to claim. The path of a researcher is connected with my interest and love for medicine, for human being. It is natural that the studies of a mysterious person should start from the brain, that is why I started from the research of the brain, using animal models,”* she details.

Referring to the topic of science, the young researcher believes that science in Armenia is in safe hands.

“We have wonderful scientists and young researchers whose scientific minds are very flexible, who ask the right questions and scientifically approach their solution. I would like the conditions for their creation in the Homeland to be more favorable in order to realize the full potential,” says Gohar. According to her, science should develop in all the areas. As a post-graduate student in the Neuroscience Laboratory, she is very excited about the idea

of establishing a brain research center at YSMU in the near future.

This step will be a great basis for more young people to be interested in science as well as more experienced doctors to combine their practical work with that of science, because in order to be a good specialist in today’s world one must walk in line with science. The post-graduate student wants to contribute to the development of fundamental science in Armenia and Artsakh.

For her, science is the exact path to the world knowledge and self-knowledge.

From YSMU Rector Professor Armen Muradyan’s FB page

Translated by Gourgen J. Khazhakian

Yerevan Mayor condemns desecration of Holocaust Memorial in Yerevan

Yerevan Mayor Hayk Marutyan has condemned the desecration of the monument to Holocaust and Armenian genocide victims.

“Encroachment on any monument is a completely unacceptable and condemnable act that should be excluded from our city,” the Mayor said.

“Representatives of different nationalities have lived side by side in Yerevan for centuries, proudly bearing the honorable title of being a citizen of Yerevan along with their nationality, and no motive can undermine that solidarity,” he added.



He voiced hope that the law enforcement agencies would respond quickly and

adequately.

The “To Live and Not Forget” Holocaust memorial in the Armenian city of Yerevan was desecrated with paint sprayed all over the Hebrew writings.

The memorial was built to honor both the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide victims and consists of two primary pillars, with “To Live and Not Forget: To the Memory of the Victims of the Genocides of the Armenian and Jewish Peoples” written in Armenian on the right pillar and Hebrew on the left pillar.

Rep. Schiff briefed on the situation following Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression against Artsakh

The Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region (ANCA-WR) Board of Directors, regional and national staff, as well as local ANCA chapter leaders held a productive meeting with Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA-28).

ANCA representatives briefed Congressman Schiff on the latest developments in the region following the Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression and 44-day war waged against Artsakh and Armenia with the assistance of terrorist mercenaries from Syria. Chief among the topics discussed were the issues relating to the deployment of immediate U.S. humanitarian aid to Armenia and Artsakh, strict enforcement of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act as well as sanctions and other punitive measures against Turkish and Azerbaijani regimes, and the immediate return of Armenian POWs still in Azerbaijani captivity.

“Congressman Schiff is one of the most knowledgeable and committed legislators we have representing our community in the



federal government. He has championed all aspects of the Armenian Cause in Congress and through the media, and we are grateful to enjoy a close partnership with him and his office throughout his 20-year Congressional tenure, especially as he successfully led the passage of the resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide,” remarked ANCA-WR Chair Nora Hovsepian, Esq. “We look forward to continuing to work with him moving forward as he continues to advocate for the needs and concerns of his constituents,” she continued.

Democratic Vice-Chair of the Con-

gressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, Rep. Schiff has consistently and persistently advocated for justice for the Armenian Genocide, secure and prosperous Artsakh, stronger U.S.-Armenia strategic partnership, and other matters of critical importance to the Armenian-American community. In October 2020, Rep. Schiff called for the formal U.S. recognition of the Republic of Artsakh, in a statement entered into the official Congressional Record. He reiterated his position in a recent op-ed published in the San Francisco Chronicle and co-authored with Rep. Jackie Speier.

Rep. Schiff has consistently received an “A+” rating from the ANCA. In 2003, ANCA Western Region honored him with the prestigious Freedom Award. Rep. Schiff was also honored at the 2019 “Thank You Congress!” town hall as the principal co-author of H.Res.296 which passed in an overwhelming 405-11 bipartisan vote.

Presence of Azerbaijani troops on roads in Armenia’s Syunik illegal – Ombudsman

The presence of Azerbaijani armed forces (flags and signs) in the communities of the Syunik region of the Republic of Armenia, or on the roads connecting the communities, and especially any movement on those roads by these elements should be ruled out, Armenia’s Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan says.

“They have deployed troops there as a result of gross violation of the rights of the civilian population of Armenia and

Artsakh, by military and ethnic cleansing, mass destruction of peaceful communities, continuous institutional hatred towards Armenians, torture, inhumane treatment, threats of a new war, and gross violations of international rules in the process of border determination through mechanical approaches,” the Ombudsman said.

According to him, the mere presence of the Azerbaijani military continues to grossly violate the rights of the border res-

idents of Armenia, or seriously endanger their peaceful life.

Therefore, he added, irrespective of circumstances, their presence or any movement is devoid of any legal basis, and contradicts the foundations of human rights under international law.

“The activities and operations of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia at all platforms are carried out according to these fundamental concepts,” Tatoyan concluded.

Senators urge Biden Administration to press Turkey on human rights record, cite support to Azerbaijan

U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) on February 9 urged the new Biden administration to press the Turkish government to improve its human rights record, which includes an increasingly authoritarian crackdown on dissent both domestically and abroad.



The bipartisan letter signed by more than 50 other senators cited Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for marginalizing domestic opposition, silencing or coopting critical media outlets, purging independent judges and replacing them with party loyalists, and jailing scores of journalists.

“President Erdogan’s foreign policy has also grown more belligerent and combative over time. In recent years, he brazenly attacked U.S.-backed Kurds fighting ISIS in Syria, he purchased Russian air defense systems despite warnings that they were incompatible with U.S. technology, and he encouraged Azerbaijan to use violence to settle a territorial dispute with Armenia,” the senators wrote.

“President Erdogan has also attempted to pressure the U.S. and other countries into extraditing Turkish nationals, whom he blames for the failed coup in 2016. The Erdogan government has sought to silence critics in the United

States like Enes Kanter, an NBA player and human rights advocate, by going after his family in Turkey and placing an INTERPOL red notice on him.”

The senators note that the United States has a significant opportunity to influence Turkey’s troubling human rights record because it’s an important ally in a key region of the world.

“We believe that the United States must hold allies and partners to a higher standard and speak frankly with them about issues of human rights and democratic backsliding,” the senators wrote. **“We urge you to emphasize to President Erdogan and his administration that they should immediately end their crackdown on dissent at home and abroad, release political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and reverse their authoritarian course.”**

The letter led by Wyden and Rubio was

also signed by U.S. Sens. Charles Schumer (D-NY), John Thune (R-SD), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Roger Wicker (R-MS), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Benjamin Cardin (D-MD), Ben Sasse (R-NE), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), John Boozman (R-AR), Tom Carper (D-DE), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), John Cornyn (R-TX), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Patty Murray (D-WA), James Lankford (R-OK), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Susan Collins (R-ME), Ed Markey (D-MA), Mike Braun (R-IN), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Todd Young (R-IN), Mark Warner (D-VA), Mitt Romney (R-UT), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), John Kennedy (R-LA), Robert Casey (D-PA), Jerry Moran (R-KS), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Jon Tester (D-MT), Chris Coons (D-DE), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Tina Smith (D-MN) and Joe Manchin (D-WV).

Documentary about SOAD’s Serj Tankian and 2018 Armenian Revolution premieres February 19th

The documentary Truth To Power about soloist of System of a Down Serj Tankian and the 2018 Armenian Revolution will premiere on February 19.

Before the premiere Rolling Stone has released a short clip about the film.

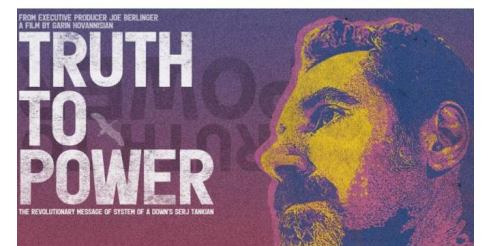
In the clip, Tankian visits the close-knit Armenian community (Little Armenia) hidden in the heart of Hollywood. “My own family came here to Los Angeles, migrated in 1975,” Tankian says while driving through the neighborhood. “Right in the middle of Hollywood, the Armenian community had a school, a church, different cafes, bakeries, restaurants. It was a settlement with Armenians from all over the

world.”

Truth to Power, out on VOD and in theaters on February 19th, examines the singer’s role in the 2018 Armenian Revolution, as well as his history of activism.

“With exclusive interviews, adventures, and original footage personally filmed by Serj, Truth to Power allows audiences backstage access to an international rock star whose faith in music not only revolutionized heavy metal but also world events,” Oscilloscope Laboratories said of the documentary as quoted by Rolling Stone. “Throughout his life, the musician has pursued social justice, harnessing the power of his songs and celebrity for real

political change. Serj’s voice is equally likely to take on American corporate greed as lambast the corrupt regime of his homeland. His decades-long campaign for formal U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide was finally approved by Congress last year. Governments hate him. People love him.”



Plans for new Netflix series discussed with Armenia's High-Tech Minister

Armenian High-Tech Minister Hakob Arshakyan received on February 12 Rafael Tadosyan and Arthur Aloyan, the authors of the program about the startup ecosystem of Armenia for Netflix.

New Netflix series will tell about the startup ecosystem and technological potential of Armenia. The 10–12-part film will tell the story of four guys who grow a seemingly unrealistic idea into incredible success using the possibilities provided by artificial intelligence.

The *Musk Factor* will present the reality about Armenian startups without any exaggeration.



The team is willing to combine the all-Armenian potential in the film and attract Armenian professionals across the globe.

The comedy series will not only present Armenia's startup ecosystem, the importance of technologies in the contemporary world, but will also highlight the values humanity is losing on the path towards technological development – from simple human relationships, tolerance and religious values to the negative impact that comes with the advancement of technologies.

The script has already been approved by Netflix producers and the shooting is expected to start in the near future. The team has been inspired by the late Karen Vardanyan, a pioneer in Armenia's high-tech industry.

Lucky carrot: Armenian startup vying for product of the day on ProductHunt

The Armenian startup Lucky Carrot is leading the way in the voting for Product of the Day on *ProductHunt*, a platform for users to find new and exciting products and for founders to launch their creations and capture the early feedback. Voting is still open.

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The collected carrots can be redeemed into fun activities, branded gift cards and

donations.

Lucky Carrot is also a tool for companies to get full insights into employee engagement and interactions.



15 Armenian pilgrims visit Dadivank monastery

On Sunday, 15 Armenian pilgrims visited the Dadivank monastery complex.

As a result of the agreements reached, the servicemen of the Republic of Azerbaijan freely allow pilgrims to the territory of the complex, accompanied by Russian peacekeepers.

To ensure security, one of the observation posts of the Russian peacekeeping contingent is located in the



immediate vicinity of the architectural complex.

Dadivank – one of the oldest Christian monasteries of the Armenian Apostolic Church – is located on the territory of the Karvachar region, which, in accordance with a tripartite statement, came under the control of Azerbaijan in November 2020.



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