

Armenia ready to finalize and sign peace treaty with Azerbaijan within a month – FM



Armenia is ready to completely finalize the within a month and sign the peace treaty with Azerbaijan, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said at a joint press conference with his Estonian counterpart Margus Tsahkna in Tallinn.

“We have been engaged in negotiations, and we almost finalized the text of the draft of the peace treaty,” the Minister said.

“I cannot say that we have seen the

positive reaction of our Azerbaijani counterparts to this proposal to sign the peace treaty within a month, but the dedication to the peace agenda and determination of Armenia to normalize relations with Azerbaijan and to recognize each other’s territorial integrity on the basis of the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration and to continue the process of delimitation on the basis of the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991 is there,” FM Mirzoyan said.

“I truly believe that we do have the momentum to close the page of the conflict in the South Caucasus and bring peace to our region and I truly believe that this peace will be beneficial for all the peoples and countries in the region. We will of course continue working in that direction and count on the strong support of our partners interested in stability and durable peace in the South Caucasus,” Ararat Mirzoyan stated.

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Alen Simonyan invites Daiga Mieriņa to visit Armenia



The delegation, headed by the Chairman of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia Alen Simonyan, is on an official visit to Riga at the invitation of the Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia Daiga Mieriņa.

The delegation, which also includes the Head of the Armenia-Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia Friendship Group Arsen Torosyan,

members Eduard Aghajanyan and Maria Karapetyan, had a meeting with Daiga Mieriņa on June 26.

In addition to other issues of bilateral interest, the discussions focused on issues of Armenian-EU cooperation and democratic reforms in Armenia. In this context, Alen Simonyan emphasized the importance of developing relations with Latvia both as a bilateral partner and as a member of the EU, as mentioned in the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia's statement.

Speaking about the development of inter-parliamentary relations, the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia emphasized the issue of intensifying ties between the friendship groups operating in the two parliaments,

proposing to initiate cooperation between the standing commissions of the two parliaments, as well as within the framework of the "Northern Europe-Baltics" (NB8) format.

Alen Simonyan introduced his colleague to the "Crossroads of Peace" project initiated by the Armenian government and asked for her support in bringing the Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan back to their homeland.

Thanking for the warm welcome on behalf of the Armenian National Assembly delegation, Alen Simonyan invited the Speaker of the Saeima to visit the Republic of Armenia.

Following the meeting, the partners issued a joint press statement.

Armenian, Turkish FMs discuss continued dialogue between the two countries

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan had a phone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Hakan Fidan.

The interlocutors discussed issues of continued dialogue between the two countries and referred to regional developments.

The process of normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey, the implementation of the agreements were touched upon.

Armenian PM offers condolences to Russia's Putin over deadly attacks in Dagestan

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has offered condolences to Russian President Vladimir Putin over the terrorist attacks in Derbent and Makhachkala.

"Dear Vladimir Vladimir, I received with deep sorrow the tragic news about the terrible terrorist attacks that took place in Derbent and Makhachkala that caused the death of innocent citizens and law enforcement officers," PM Pashinyan said.

"The Republic of Armenia strongly condemns this act of terrorism and considers any manifestation of violence unacceptable. On behalf of the people of Armenia and on my own behalf, I would like to convey words of sympathy and support to the families and relatives of the victims, and wish all the victims a speedy recovery," the Armenian Prime Minister said.

Attacks on police posts, churches and a synagogue in Russia's North Caucasus



republic of Dagestan have left 19 police officers and several civilians dead. Six gunmen were also killed.

The apparently coordinated attacks targeted the cities of Derbent and Makhachkala on the Orthodox festival of Pentecost.

Armenian PM receives Freedom House Director for Europe and Eurasia

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received Mark Behrendt, Director for Europe and Eurasia programs at Freedom House.

The Prime Minister emphasized the importance of cooperation and dialogue between the Armenian government and the civil society, which contributes to the effective implementation of democratic

reforms in various fields.

Nikol Pashinyan noted that Freedom House's reports also provide an important impetus to the government in promoting reforms. The Prime Minister emphasized that the development of democratic institutions and the reform agenda is a strategy for the government.

The interlocutors discussed issues related to the fight against corruption, freedom of speech, ensuring the independence of the judicial system and reforms implemented in other directions, the problems of people forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh and the steps taken by the Armenian government to solve them.

Anna Vardapetyan, Maurizio Block discuss cooperation between Armenian and Italian prosecutor's offices



On June 26, the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Armenia Anna Vardapetyan received the delegation led by Maurizio Block, Military Prosecutor-General of the Republic of Italy.

Military Prosecutor, Deputy Prosecutor

General of the Republic of Armenia Grigor Elizbaryan, Italian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Armenia Alfonso Di Rizzo, Armenian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Italy Tsovinar Hambardzumyan also participated in the meeting.

According to the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Armenia, Anna Vardapetyan welcomed colleagues from Italy, thanked them for accepting the invitation, and emphasized that the RA Prosecutor's Office is taking continuous steps to develop international legal cooperation and expand interactions with foreign partners

for this purpose.

Anna Vardapetyan noted that the visit of Maurizio Block and his delegation is the third visit by high-ranking representatives from the Italian Prosecutor's Office to Armenia in the last two years.

According to the source, during the meeting, among other topics, a number of issues related to the structures of the prosecution systems of the two countries, the scope of their powers, ongoing reforms, and the expansion of cooperation between the prosecutor's offices in the field of criminal justice were discussed.

Armenia's Parliament Speaker, President of Latvia discuss Armenia-EU relations

On June 26, the delegation led by Armenian Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan, as part of an official visit to the Republic of Latvia, met with President Edgars Rinkēvičs.

According to the readout issued by the Parliament, the interlocutors discussed a wide range of issues related to Armenia-EU relations, from current regional challenges to specific aspects of the Armenia-EU partnership agenda.

Alen Simonyan thanked the President of Latvia for his support of Armenia-EU



relations and the democratic reform process in Armenia. Edgars Rinkēvičs, in turn, expressed his willingness to contribute

to the strengthening of Armenia-EU relations, as well as to initiate a visa liberalization dialogue.

Alen Simonyan presented Armenia's "Crossroads of Peace" project, noting that it is a roadmap to peace. The President of Latvia expressed hope that in the near future, it would be possible to sign a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan, ensuring the lasting peaceful development of the region.

Other issues of bilateral interest were also discussed.

Armen Grigoryan announced that the 44-day war would not have happened without Russia's permission

Armenian Secretary of the Security Council, Armen Grigoryan referred to the consequences of Armenia's total dependence on Russia.

"When Armenia was completely dependent on Russia, didn't we have a war? We did. Let it be known that we ended up in war due to the existing situation, we tried to bring stability with these changes and we are sure that these changes will

bring stability," said Armen Grigoryan.

The Secretary of the Security Council insisted that Russia took Nagorno-Karabakh.

"This happened when we were completely dependent on Russia. Russia came, took Nagorno-Karabakh from us, returned it to Azerbaijan and then left, this is the whole reality. I insisted that Russia took Nagorno-Karabakh. Without Russia's

permission, the war would not have happened" Grigoryan concluded.



Start of visa liberalization talks a priority for Armenia, Speaker Alen Simonyan tells Latvian FM

On an official visit to the Republic of Latvia, Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Alen Simonyan met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, Baiba Braže.

Alen Simonyan emphasized that one of the priorities of Armenia is the start of visa liberalization dialogue with the EU, noting that Armenia expects the support of the Republic of Latvia in the matter.

Speaking about the “Crossroads of Peace” project initiated by the Armenian government, the Speaker of the National



Assembly noted that the project envisages the development of regional communications based on the principles of sovereignty, reciprocity and equality.

Referring to the Armenia-Azerbaijan

peace treaty, Alen Simonyan reaffirmed Armenia’s commitment to the principle of mutual recognition of territorial integrity based on the Alma-Ata Declaration.

Appreciating the role of the EU observation mission stationed in Armenia, Alen Simonyan also expressed his gratitude to the Latvian government for the humanitarian aid provided to support the Armenian refugees of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Issues related to the repatriation of Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan were also discussed.

Armenia committed to full normalization of relations with Turkey – FM

Armenia is ready to fully normalize relations with Turkey, establish diplomatic relations and open the borders, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said at a joint press conference with his Estonian counterpart Margus Tsahkna in Tallinn.

“As a result of dialogue with our Turkish counterparts we have already come to concrete agreements to open the borders

for third country nationals and diplomatic passport holders, and outlined the steps that can be undertaken towards full normalization,” FM Mirzoyan said.

“We continuously reconfirm our commitment to this arrangement, and I do believe that it’s time to implement the agreements, to see things happening on the ground,” the Armenian Foreign



Minister stated.

Arab League: Armenia’s recognition of Palestine is a stand on the right side of history



The Arab League has welcomed Armenia’s official recognition of the State of Palestine, affirming that this decision places Armenia on the right side of history.

Secretary-General of the Arab League,

Ahmed Aboul Gheit said in a statement that the expanding recognition of the Palestinian state reflects a “growing international consensus on the impossibility of maintaining the occupation and the necessity of implementing the two-state solution.”

He considered this recognition a significant step toward realizing a Palestinian state within the June 4, 1967, borders.

The Arab League Secretary-General urged all countries that have not yet taken this step to make the morally, legally, and politically correct decision to recognize the State of Palestine as soon as possible.

He emphasized that such recognition is a manifestation of the two-state solution and a genuine contribution to achieving peace.

On June 21, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced its recognition of the State of Palestine, reaffirming Armenia’s commitment to international law, principles of equality, sovereignty, and peaceful coexistence among nations. This recognition brings the number of countries that have recognized Palestine to 149 out of 193 United Nations member states.

PACE welcomes electoral reforms implemented in Armenia, regrets excessive polarization of political climate

PACE welcomed the electoral reforms implemented by Armenia in accordance with the recommendations of the Venice Commission, considering that the objective to hold genuinely democratic elections had to a large extent been achieved.

In adopting unanimously a resolution based on the report by Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland, SOC) and Boriana Åberg (Sweden, EPP/CD), PACE also pointed out the Armenian authorities' continued effort to improve the system of judicial governance in line with European standards, in close co-operation with the Council of Europe, and commended "the real determination showed by the authorities to fight the problem of systemic corruption".

Regretting excessive polarization of the political climate, the Parliamentary



Assembly encouraged all political stakeholders "to enter into dialogue about how to improve the [...] relationship between the parliamentary majority and the opposition", in particular with a view to depoliticising the appointment procedures to independent collegial bodies and agencies.

Among the progress made since the adoption of [PACE Resolution 2427 \(2022\)](#) on the functioning of democratic

institutions in Armenia, PACE highlighted the decision to present a new draft law on freedom of information and public information, the abolition of the criminalization of defamation, the ratification of Protocol No. 13 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, concerning the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances, and the continuation of negotiations of a peace treaty with Azerbaijan.

In view of these advances, particularly in the field of electoral law, PACE decided to pursue its monitoring procedure, attaching particular importance to the implementation of reforms regarding the justice system, the field of media and freedom of expression.

China is interested in Armenia's contributions to global science and culture -Ambassador

The National Academy of Sciences of Armenia hosted an international scientific conference on the topic of "Cultural Dialogue: Armenia-China."

The conference was organized by the Institute of Oriental Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia with the support of the Confucius Institute at Yerevan State University named after Valery Brusov.

Prominent specialists and scholars participated in the event, along with the Chinese Ambassador to Armenia Fan Yong.

Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the People's Republic of China Vahe Gevorgyan, addressed the participants of the event with a video message.

In his speech, Ambassador Fan Yong expressed satisfaction with the nature of Armenian-Chinese relations and their meaningful interaction, particularly in the realms of science and culture. He noted with pleasure that the number of Armenians studying Chinese is increasing, as well



as interest towards Chinese history and culture is growing. He also emphasized China's reciprocal interest in Armenian history, culture, the contributions of the Armenian people to global science and various cultural fields.

"Interest in the Chinese language and culture is growing day by day in Armenia. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Armenia, which consistently supports these efforts, has made a significant contribution. I should also mention the support provided by the Confucius Institute in Armenia. Currently, more than 5,000 students are

studying Chinese in Armenia. This process is not only taking place in universities but also in schools," said the Ambassador.

Referring to the cultural dialogue between the two countries, Yong Fan noted that China is actively promoting cooperation with countries involved in the "Belt and Road Initiative," with a particular emphasis on educational cooperation.

"Today's event is also dedicated to this initiative, so it can be said that this is a significant event for both countries. Our countries regularly organize various cultural events. We must continue to cooperate in the same spirit. I believe we will strengthen our cooperation in the future," emphasized the Ambassador.

Ambassador Fan Yong stated that many people in China are interested in Armenian culture. He mentioned that last year, a violin competition dedicated to the famous Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian was held, along with a series of concerts.

Armenia to receive €75 million loan from French Development Agency: an agreement was signed

A loan agreement worth 75 million euros was signed in Yerevan on June 26 by Armenian Finance Minister Vahe Hovhannisyan and Matthieu Vassier, regional director of the French Development Agency for Eurasia.

According to the readout issued by the Ministry of Finance, the French side also co-signed the loan agreement with Olivier Decottignies, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the French Republic to Armenia.

The program aims to assist the



Armenian government in improving the efficiency and stability of public services, as well as in the development of the financial sphere.

The program consists of three main components:

- 1) Improving the public finance management system,
- 2) Strengthening the basis for issuing and managing state securities and money market infrastructures,
- 3) Developing new instruments for financing business activities and ensuring more transparent management.

The budget financing is part of a multi-year program with the Asian Development Bank.

50 million AMD allocated from Yerevan budget to flood-affected Alaverdi



In the 5th session, the Yerevan Council of Elders voted in favor of the city's proposal to allocate 50 million AMD from the reserve fund of the 2024 budget to the Alaverdi community. That money will be directed to the implementation of subsidy programs in Alaverdi, which was affected by the flood in May.

This initiative previously received positive approval from the Standing Committee on Financial-loan and Economic issues of the Yerevan Municipality.

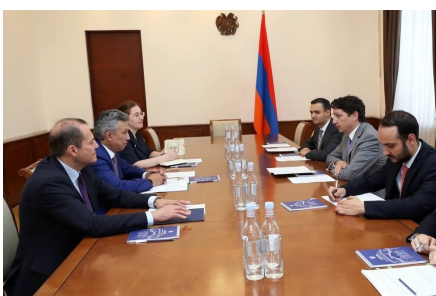
Lusine Gevorgyan, a member of the "Civil Contract" party of the Yerevan Council of Elders, presented the project to the session delegates. She mentioned that Yerevan, always standing by the other sister communities of the country and guided by the relevant provisions of the law "On Local Self-Government in the City of Yerevan", extends a helping hand to Alaverdi.

"To allocate 50 million AMD from the reserve fund of the administrative part of the 2024 budget of the city of Yerevan under the article "Other capital grants for the classification of budget expenditures".

The decision comes into force on the day following its official publication. This amount will be allocated to the Alaverdi community, allowing them to apply to the Government of the Republic of Armenia for matching funds. By assuming the obligation of the subsidy program, this amount can be doubled or increased up to 70 million AMD to implement capital expenses", it is stated in the decision approved by the delegates of the session.

As a result of the floods caused by the heavy rains on May 25-26, significant damage was inflicted on the Lori and Tavush regions, which were recognized as disaster zones by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia on May 27.

Armenian Finance Minister, EEC Economy and Financial Policy Ministers discuss cooperation issues



Armenian Finance Minister Vahe

Hovhannisyan on June 26 had a meeting with Bakhyt Sultanov, Minister in charge of Economy and Financial Policy of the Eurasian Economic Commission.

According to the readout issued by the Ministry of Finance, during the meeting, the parties discussed several issues related to their current cooperation: the methodology for calculating norms for distributing import customs duties among the budgets of Eurasian Economic Union

member states, alternative mechanisms for calculating and distributing customs, special, anti-dumping, and countervailing duties, as well as draft agreements in the fields of auditing and accounting.

According to the source, Vahe Hovhannisyan noted that Armenia's presidency of the EAEU bodies in 2024 obliges to continue making appropriate efforts to ensure the best implementation of the economic cooperation agenda.



French Ambassador, French Development Agency visit Vedi Dam

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France to Armenia, Olivier Decottignies, together with representatives of the French Development Agency, visited the Vedi Dam and irrigated areas. “3,200 hectares of irrigated area with

5,000 beneficiaries in Armenia’s most fertile plain,” the French Ambassador said in a post on X, adding that the project, financed by over 80% through AFD funding, will be completed in a few months.

State Revenue Committee of Armenia thwarts drug smuggling attempt - Iranian national arrested

An Iranian citizen was arrested for attempting to smuggle marijuana and cocaine across the Armenia-Iran state border, reported the State Revenue Committee of the Republic of Armenia.

According to the source, during further customs control conducted jointly with employees of the SRC anti-smuggling department, the vehicle underwent a thorough inspection. More than 12.1 kg of marijuana and approximately 4.42 grams of cocaine-like substances were

found in the vehicle.

The materials related to the incident were transferred to the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia, where the Iranian citizen, A.A., was arrested under criminal proceedings initiated pursuant to Article 399 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia.

Note: Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until proven guilty in a manner prescribed by the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of



Armenia and found guilty by a court decision that has entered into legal force.

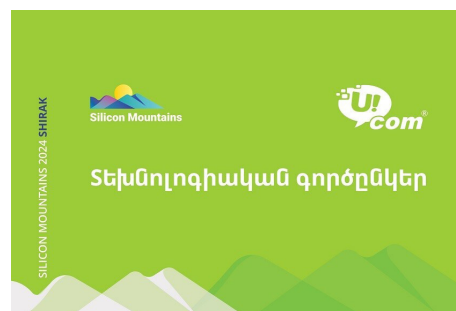
The Silicon Mountains Shirak technology forum will take place with Ucom’s support

With Ucom’s support, the Silicon Mountains Shirak technology forum dedicated to digital opportunities will take place on July 4.

The purpose of the summit is to identify the level of digitization of regions in the age of digital transformation, to integrate regions in digital transformation, to digitize various branches of the regional economy, to promote the use of digital tools and to promote cooperation between the public and private sectors.

The organization and holding of regional Silicon Mountains technological forum will have its impact on almost all sectors (including agriculture, tourism), because in modern days, high-tech solutions are necessary for all sectors.

Ucom is the technology partner within the framework of the forum, and the



company’s General Director Ralph Yirikian will speak at the forum and present his experience and vision to the participants.

“Ucom has been supporting projects aimed at technological development in Armenia for years, and we give great importance to this summit as well. This particular event held in Gyumri aims to promote the development of technologies in the regions, and I am sure that soon talented

young people from our regions will make a great contribution to the development of technologies in Armenia,” said General Director of Ucom Ralph Yirikian.

Within the framework of the event, an expo will be organized, in which organizations offering and applying digital solutions will participate. Panel discussions on the topics “Startups in the regions”, “Human capital in the regions” and “Investments in the regions” will also take place.

The organizer of the event is the Union of Employers of Information and Communication Technology (UEICT). The partners are Unicomp, EasyPay, Synopsis Armenia and the RA Ministry of High-Tech Industry.

The agenda, speakers and other details of the event can be found at the following [link](#).

“Crossroads of Peace” is a reflection of Armenia’s commitment to achieving peace in the region - Canadian Ambassador’s interview to ARMENPRESS



Canada views the “Crossroads of Peace” project, initiated by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, as an optimal solution for unblocking regional communications. The project underscores Armenia’s constructive commitment to the peace process and its forward-looking approach.

The Ambassador of Canada, Andrew Turner expressed this opinion in an interview with Armenpress, discussing prospects for Armenian-Canadian relations, regional developments, the activities of the newly opened Canadian embassy in Armenia, and other related topics.

- Mr. Ambassador, in October 2023, Canada officially opened its embassy in Armenia, with the ceremony attended by Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly. During a joint press conference with her Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzoyan, she stated that the embassy’s opening aims to deepen and strengthen ties between Armenia and Canada. How would you assess the current level of political dialogue between the two countries, and what key points would you highlight in this regard?

- I think it is excellent. And the only challenge is listing everything that we have been able to do in such a short amount of time. But since the Embassy opened, we have had many more visits, including more parliamentarians. We have had our first business delegation. We have had senior government officials from our police, from military. We had our Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security. So we have had lots and lots of opportunity to exchange. And perhaps even more importantly, just because I and my colleagues are here at the Embassy, we have had the chance to engage with Armenians around the country on the ground. And it’s absolutely wonderful to see how welcome Canada is and how much desire there is to strengthen the partnership between our two countries.

- Mr. Turner, almost a year has passed since the opening of the Canadian Embassy in Armenia. How would

you evaluate the work done during this period, and what impact has it had on Armenian-Canadian relations?

- I think the work has gone very well. We are still obviously doing a lot of work physically getting the Embassy set up, as you can see. All of those logistical tasks of staffing and construction and getting official vehicles registered. But all of this is laying a foundation that will ensure that the Embassy is able to strengthen ties with Armenia for decades to come. And simply by being here, and even in the transitional phase as we get set up, we are able to facilitate all of these visits and exchanges and opportunities for partnership, several of which I had mentioned. And there are many others, our role in the Eueopean Union Observer Mission. And all of this is coming, I think, because the Embassy is here and functioning. And it’s only going to become even stronger as we get full capacity.

- As we know, Canada has joined the EU mission in Armenia. How would you assess the mission’s work and its activities? In your opinion, what is the role of the mission in maintaining security at the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and in normalizing relations between the two countries?

- I think the work that has been done by the EU mission has been remarkable. I think it is a very visible, tangible demonstration of the international community’s commitment to trying to promote peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. And I had the chance just last week, in fact, again with another visiting official from Canada, to meet with the EU Observer Mission leadership, to meet with the Canadian observer that we have deployed, and to actually join in on one of their patrols. So we were able to see firsthand how people in the border regions are so pleased that the patrols are taking place, because they see that we are engaged. And in terms of the work that has been done, statistically it is very clear that the number of incidents in the border areas where the EUMA patrols are taking place has decreased significantly. We are working as well through the Canadian participation to help try and develop further confidence building measures. So I think the results speak for themselves, and the response that I get from everyone everywhere I go, be it from the government or simply Armenians in general, I think outside of opening the embassy itself, the contribution to the

EUMA mission is probably what Canada is most visible for. And this, of course, is an excellent example of Canada-EU cooperation, and how the international community is working together to advance the peace process.

- Mr. Ambassador, since 2020, Azerbaijan has continued to take destabilizing steps in the South Caucasus. Over 100,000 ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh were forcibly displaced from their historical homeland due to ethnic cleansing by Azerbaijan in September. Additionally, Azerbaijan refuses to withdraw its troops from the sovereign territory of Armenia. How do you think these actions affect the peace agenda in the South Caucasus region?

- Well, first, let me say, it has been absolutely heartbreaking to meet with, and hear from the refugees, of the stories of everything they have had to go through. And this was also something that Minister Joly herself made a priority in her visit, to hear firsthand. And so we very much understand what a difficult situation it is and the suffering they have faced. And I think it is remarkable and speaks very highly of the Armenian people, how quickly they have moved to welcome and help people adapt here in Armenia.

The goal from Canada is very much to do everything we can to support the peace process. It is in the best interests of all of the countries in the region to resolve this longstanding conflict. The only country that has benefited from the instability has been Russia, in terms of manipulating the countries and allowing it to maintain its influence. So a peace agreement that would allow for the resolution of all of these issues is absolutely in everyone’s interest, is absolutely in Azerbaijan’s interest. And the hope is that they can recognize that there is now an opportunity to resolve this to everyone’s benefit. And so we continue to do everything we can to encourage that with our support for Armenia, through humanitarian assistance for the refugees, our role in the EUMA mission to assure monitoring of the border, and with our diplomatic advocacy, both in support of Armenia but also our advocacy with Baku and with Ankara to encourage them on the peace process. And all of this, of course, starting as well from the bedline principles that the rights of the refugees to return, the rights to preserve cultural heritage, all of these need absolutely to be respected as part of

that process.

page 8 ➔ **- In recent years, there has been much discussion about the need to unblock regional communications in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan demands the so-called "Zangezur corridor" from Armenia, threatening to obtain it by force. How would you assess this aggressive and unprovoked behavior by Azerbaijan?**

- From Canada's experience, we see very much the benefit of regional economic cooperation and integration. We have the tremendous benefits of the North American Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. and with Mexico, and this has made us all much more prosperous, as well as strengthened our partnership by increasing those economic ties. So the logic of having trade links throughout the South Caucasus is absolutely clear and would benefit all of the participants. That has to take place, though, on the basis of reciprocity and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. And there are various solutions that can be negotiated, technical measures, and we have some in Canada. The European Union has many other examples. So there are ways that can be used to make this work. But what it needs to have is a genuine commitment from all parties to make that happen. And whilst it's been encouraging at times to see some progress, the agreements on prisoner releases, or the mutual support for Azerbaijan hosting the COP meeting this year, the agreements on some of the border demarcation, this has also been coupled with, at times, more, yes, aggressive, threatening rhetoric, which does not inspire confidence. And given that there have been so many decades of conflict and that there has been the very recent violence, it's understandable that there is a lack of trust, and therefore it's incumbent on all parties, and particularly Azerbaijan right now, to do everything it can to demonstrate its commitment to peace and build that trust. And so some of these threatening statements obviously do not help advance that agenda.

- In response to these claims, the Government of the Republic of Armenia published the "Crossroads of Peace" project. What is Canada's opinion on this initiative?

- The crossroads of peace seems to be an ideal solution. It brings together all of the countries in the region. It builds those economic linkages. It really provides a win-win for everyone. And again, I see it very much as a parallel to, yes, the cooperation that the European countries have developed and expanded into the European Union, again, a parallel with the agreements in North America. So this

is, I think, a very clear demonstration of Armenia's commitment to peace, looking to move forward to the future and build a regional economic integration throughout the South Caucasus, and not just the South Caucasus, but then would benefit even more broadly in terms of trade routes into Europe and Asia. So this is, I think, a very clear demonstration of Armenia's constructive and open commitment to the peace process, and one that shows that there would be a benefit for Azerbaijan to engage as well.

- Recently, Armenia and Azerbaijan reached an agreement on starting the border delimitation process based on the Alma-Ata Declaration. How would you evaluate this agreement and, in your opinion, can it bring peace to the two countries and the South Caucasus region?

- Given that there has been such a long history of conflict and mistrust, it is obviously very important to take steps towards peace that can help build confidence. This is not something for Canada to tell Armenia and Azerbaijan, but we certainly support anything that is going to advance the peace process. And the fact that this was the first time that there was an agreement put forward in terms of the border demarcation, hopefully provides a model that can be used to expand. So, we, as I say, from Canada, we are an outsider, we are not here to tell countries what they should be negotiating on, but we are here to support whatever steps will help advance the peace process.

- Mr. Turner, which economic areas are of greatest interest in the relations between Armenia and Canada, and what should the two countries do to develop their economic ties?

- Well, we certainly really want to make this a priority. There is significant growth in our trade relationship, but there is a lot of potential to develop it further. And again, I think this is one of the reasons why we are so pleased that the Embassy has opened, because it does help to facilitate, we can provide more information, we can identify opportunities. And already in the first few months of this year, we have seen compared to last year when the Embassy was not yet open, the volume of trade has increased by 10%, so we hope that will continue. In terms of specific areas, we certainly see a lot of potential in things like agriculture, clean tech, the ICT sector, mining, education. These are all areas where both Armenia and Canada have a lot of expertise and can cooperate. And, as I say, we had the first business delegation that came just a couple of months ago and very much focused on these areas. And we are already seeing positive results for

further cooperation, contracts that are being signed. And so I am very optimistic that we will expand our economic partnership even further.

- Mr. Ambassador, are there any planned high-level visits from Canada to Armenia in the near future?

- We hope so, yes. We have been discussing further exchanges, both at the officials level and at the political level. We had established a series of annual consultations, and so we are working on scheduling the next series of that. This year it will be hosted in Yerevan, so we are hoping to organize that in the fall. And there are also some discussions about further visits from parliamentary delegations from Armenia that would go to Canada in September or October. So again, we are still finalizing the details, but it is looking very positive. And I think this is again just a demonstration of the increased interest in engagement from both sides. The number of visits has been much more in the last few months than it was in the last few years. And I think this is just a reflection of the fact that with the Embassy here and we have that base of support on the ground, it makes it a lot easier to coordinate and organize these types of exchanges. So I think we have several ones that are not quite finalized yet, but they are looking very positive for the fall. And again, this I think will just be another step and there will be even more to come going forward.

- Thank you for the interview opportunity. Is there anything else you would like to share or add?

- I think the one thing that I would really like to add is to just highlight how much I have enjoyed my time here so far. It has been quite remarkable to see how warmly the Armenian people have welcomed me and the entire Embassy. It has been very, very rewarding to see how much people appreciate Canada. I think that reflects well on the strong ties between our countries. Obviously, we have the strong links between the Armenian and Canadian community in particular. And so that has made it a remarkably positive experience for me to meet so many people, to visit so many different parts of the country. I still have many more places to go and see, but the experience of the first several months here has been absolutely remarkable for me. And it is one of the reasons now as we are getting ready to celebrate the first Canada Day that the Embassy will be organizing, that this will be a great chance to celebrate both everything that we have accomplished in the last few months and that long-standing tie between Canada and Armenia that is only going to get stronger.

Interview by Davit Mamyán

Armenian-Indian relations experienced significant increase in recent years - Ambassador of Armenia to India



In recent years, Armenian-Indian relations have seen a significant increase, with the political dialogue gaining new momentum.

The meeting between the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, and the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, held in New York in 2019 within the framework of the UN General Assembly, was an important stimulus for this development.

In an interview with **Armenpress** correspondent, Armenian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to India, Vahagn Afyan said, stressing that the prospect of deepening interstate cooperation was highlighted at the aforementioned meeting.

“During the first visit of Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar to Armenia in October 2021, as well as during the subsequent working visit of Armenia’s Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan to India within the framework of the “Raisina Dialogue”, the commitment of the two countries to deepen bilateral ties in various fields was reaffirmed.

In particular, the expansion of cooperation in the trade-economic, defense and cultural spheres, as well as the promotion of interpersonal contacts, were emphasized,” said the Ambassador.

Referring to the bilateral economic

relations, the diplomat stated that during the past year, as compared to 2018-2019, the volumes of trade turnover between Armenia and India have tripled. Last year, that figure was 358.6 million US dollars. However, taking into account the demand for exported and imported goods between the two countries and the steps taken towards enhancing interaction, it should be noted that there is a huge unrealized potential. Therefore, consistent steps are being taken to multiply the volume of trade with India in the coming years.

“Tourism is also considered as one of the perspective sectors in relations with India. This is an important area of cooperation, which also contributes to the deepening of mutual recognition between the two friendly peoples. Here I would like to note that active steps are being taken to establish a direct air connection between Armenia and India, and we hope that in the near future there will be tangible achievements with the involvement of both Armenian and Indian airlines,” the Ambassador informed.

In the context of connectivity and communication between the countries, naturally, the topic related to regional logistics mega-projects was not bypassed, especially since Armenia is highly interested in developing cooperation within the framework of the “North-South” international transport corridor, the Chabahar port’s

full launch project, as well as the Persian Gulf-Black Sea International Transport and Transit Corridor.

“As for Armenia’s participation in the Chabahar port project, practical studies are underway within the working group headed by the Minister of Economy of the Republic of Armenia,” our interlocutor noted. According to Afyan, the mentioned programs are consistent with the “Cross-roads of Peace” concept developed by the Armenian government.”

Continuing on the theme of promoting people-to-people contacts, the Ambassador also touched on bilateral cultural ties, stressing that according to established tradition, every year in January-February, the rich Armenian cultural heritage is presented at the annual Surajkund International Crafts Mela in Faridabad, India. This festival includes the participation of around 50 states and attracts thousands of visitors from India, regional and distant countries.

With the support of our embassy, a group of twelve Indian artists visited Armenia in March. Meetings and discussions were organized at the Union of Artists and the Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide. Agreements have been reached to implement joint cultural programs, organize exhibitions, master classes, and other projects to strengthen the cultural connection between representatives of the fine arts in Armenia and India and to discover new talents.

In addition, on April 19, the embassy, in cooperation with the International Chamber of Media and Entertainment Industry of India, organized the screenings of the film “The Color of Pomegranate” and collage works dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the famous Armenian film director Sergey Parajanov in Noida Cinema.

It is also planned to organize a concert series in Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai (Madras) dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the birth of Charles Aznavour, the national hero of Armenia, world-famous musician, included in the 2024-2025 UNESCO calendar of anniversaries of famous people and important events,” the

page 10 ➔ *diplomat noted.*

Continuing on the topic, the Ambassador noted that film production is another area that can significantly contribute to deepening ties between peoples. In this context, Afyan informed that in July 2022, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the National Cinema Center of Armenia and the Indian Trade and Economic Organization aimed at developing the film industry and promoting Armenian-Indian cooperation in that field.

“At the initiative of the embassy, an agreement was reached to finalize the

signing of a memorandum of understanding between the National Film Center of Armenia and the International Chamber of Media and Entertainment Industry of India. It should be emphasized that the Armenian Law on Cinematography, amended in 2023, introduced cashback mechanisms offering up to 40 percent reimbursement of film producers’ expenses, making Armenia even more attractive for shooting films, including for Indian filmmakers,” the ambassador noted.

Reference was also made to bilateral cooperation in the field of education. The Ambassador noted that the number

of Indian citizens studying in Armenia is increasing every year. Some of India’s leading universities, such as Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, offer scholarships to Armenian students, and currently, several students are studying at universities in various Indian states. In this context, Afyan emphasized the “Academic City” program developed by the Government of Armenia, which, when implemented, will significantly increase Armenia’s capacity to host foreign students.

Manvel Margaryan

Azerbaijan lobbying against Ruben Vardanyan abroad, POLITICO reveals



Azerbaijan is lobbying against Ruben Vardanyan abroad, POLITICO has revealed.

“Eyebrows were raised after POLITICO — and no doubt other media outlets — last week received an email from a PR firm about what it described as Russian influence operations in Europe. While this sounded very juicy, it focused exclusively on one man, my colleague Gabriel Gavin spotted: Russian-Armenian oligarch Ruben Vardanyan,” Elisa Braun writes in an article titled [“The spies are coming.”](#)

The article reads, in part:

Vested interests: Vardanyan is currently behind bars in Azerbaijan after the

country launched an offensive to conquer Nagorno-Karabakh, sparking the mass exodus of its Armenian residents. While the 56-year-old made his money in Moscow and has been sanctioned by Ukraine for his involvement in Russian infrastructure businesses, he gave up his Russian citizenship in order to go into politics and become the Karabakh Armenian prime minister. There has been speculation he maintained ties with the Kremlin, but Russian peacekeepers stationed in Nagorno-Karabakh ultimately left Vardanyan and other local leaders to be detained by the Azerbaijanis.

Friends in high places in the West: Former Unilever boss Paul Polman and pharmaceutical company Moderna co-founder Noubar Afeyan are among those actively campaigning for Vardanyan’s release. His office also claims he’s been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize — even if the chances of him winning the coveted prize with his chequered past are virtually zero.

A Russian agent? Nevertheless, Azerbaijan is furious about the nomination, as per several reports from local outlets. That’s where the PR campaign comes in, as it claimed that MEPs had backed a motion calling on the Nobel Prize Committee to recognize Vardanyan as a Russian agent and rule him out as a potential recipient of the award.

So what? Well, according to a press release sent out by a PR company working on behalf of the Center for Analysis and Strategies, Ukraine, MEPs Viola von Cramon-Taubadel and Karen Melchior supported calls for Vardanyan to be blacklisted from the prestigious prize. There’s only one problem: the pair of lawmakers told POLITICO they had done no such thing, suggesting their words had been deliberately taken out of context to support Azerbaijan’s talking points.

Flat-out denial: “I took part in this event on the basis it was

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about Russian disinformation,” said von Cra-
mon-Taubadel, a German
MEP. “It’s shameful it seems to be being
used for Azerbaijani disinformation. I did
not support any joint declaration, and I
wouldn’t have participated if it had any
links to the Azerbaijani embassy.” Den-
mark’s Melchior also told POLITICO she
hadn’t signed up to the statement, nor
would she.

We just make the sandwiches: A
spokesperson for the Brussels Press Club

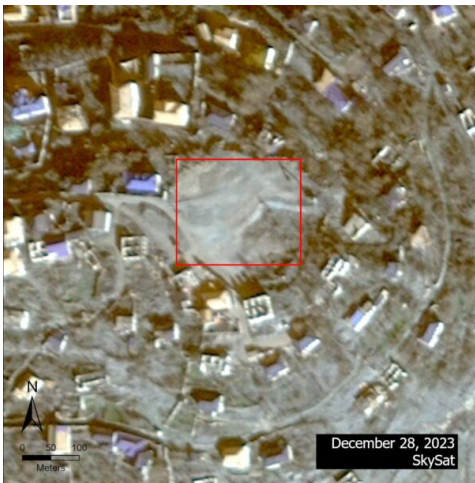
denied it had any involvement in lending
credibility to such a lobbying event. “Any-
one can book our venue, like any hotel in
Brussels, and we have hundreds of events
a year,” said a staffer who answered the
phone when POLITICO put in a query. “But
we aren’t the organizers of these events,
we just host them.”

**So what is the Center for Analysis
and Strategies, Ukraine?** Well, it’s not
entirely clear. The organization doesn’t
seem to have a functioning website in
English or Ukrainian, has 88 likes on its

Facebook page, and four out of the only
five references to the think tank on Google
are pro-Azerbaijani articles written by its
founder, Ihor Chalenko.

Country of concern: Azerbaijan is
already facing criticism over its cham-
pioning of fossil fuels and its network of
influence in the West — but outwardly
misrepresenting MEPs’ stances would
mark a new rift between the country and
the Parliament. POLITICO has reached
out to the country’s ambassador to the
EU, Vaqif Sadiqov.

Satellite Images Show Extensive Cultural Heritage Destruction in Artsakh – CHW



**Caucasus Heritage Watch’s
(CHW) latest report on Armenian cul-
tural sites targeted by the Azerbaijani
regime found a 75% increase in de-
stroyed sites since fall 2023.**

CHW today released [Monitoring Re-
port #7](#) on cultural heritage at risk in Na-
gorno-Karabakh. The latest monitoring
cycle has revealed the greatest number
of impacted Armenian cultural sites since
CHW began monitoring in 2021: 6 newly
destroyed sites and 7 facing critical threats
to their survival.

After the ethnic cleansing in Artsakh
in September 2023, the Caucasus Herit-
age watch added over 180 sites into their
monitoring routine. Since CHW began,
they have assessed 57 sites as destroyed,

damaged, or threatened.

Included in the latest report was the
demolition of Kanach Zham church (Ar-
menian for “Green Chapel”) as well as the
completed destruction of the Ghazanchet-
sots cemetery in Shushi after CHW data
yielded evidence of earlier damages to
both cultural sites. At the base of the hill
Shushi was built on, a village called Karin-
tak was completely leveled between last
fall and April of this year, likely to make
way for a new Azerbaijani residential
settlement.

CHW’s report specifically highlights
the destruction of two Soviet-era schools
in [Tsar and Chragh](#) whose structures
were inlaid with architectural fragments

featuring Armenian art and inscriptions
from other buildings. The demolition of
9th- and 13th-century *khachkars* (carved
Armenian cross-stones) from a long-ru-
ined church at the Kohak sacred place near
Chartar and the destruction of the 19th- to
20th-century Ghuze T’agh Cemetery near
Aknaghybur are also discussed.

Additionally, the group added five
churches and two cemeteries to the list
of threatened locations, bringing the figure
from 24 sites in December 2023 to 31 as
of June 2024. CHW attributed the elevat-
ed risks to the seven additional sites to
recognizable construction or demolition
activity around the area, or because they
possess unmistakably Armenian features
such as inscriptions.

CHW, a research initiative led by ar-
chaeologists at Cornell and Purdue Univer-
sities, has added 181 Armenian heritage
sites to its watchlist in the last year. That
list now includes 489 locations across
Artsakh.

“Preparations for COP29 may have a
grave impact on Karabakh’s Armenian cul-
tural heritage. Massive infrastructure and
redevelopment projects are threatening,
damaging, or destroying cultural sites in
the path of omnipresent earth movers,”
CHW says.

Armenian, other churches in Jerusalem oppose municipal tax decision

The heads of various Christian churches in Jerusalem united in opposition to the Jerusalem Municipality's decision to impose municipal taxes (Arnona) on church properties. In a joint statement released on behalf of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches on Sunday, the leaders expressed deep concern over the municipality's move, which they argued contradicted centuries of historical agreements between the churches and civil authorities, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reports.

"We declare that such a measure both undermines the sacred character of Jerusalem and jeopardizes the Church's ability to conduct its ministry in this land on behalf of its communities and the worldwide church," stated the collective heads of churches.

The statement emphasized the significant contributions of Christian churches to Jerusalem, including investments in schools, hospitals, homes for the elderly, and facilities for the disadvantaged. It asserted that civil authorities have historically recognized and respected these contributions.

The heads of churches called upon the Jerusalem Municipality to retract its decision and uphold the historically sanctioned status quo. They emphasized

the importance of maintaining Jerusalem's sacred character and protecting the churches' ability to fulfill their ministries.

The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches who signed the statement included:

– Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate- Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate- Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator, Latin Patriarchate- Fr. Francesco Patton, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land- Archbishop Anba Antonious, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem- Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate- Archbishop Aba Embakob, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate- Archbishop Joseph-Jules Zerey, Greek-Melkite-Catholic Patriarchate- Archbishop Mosa El-Hage, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate- Archbishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East- Bishop Ibrahim Sani Azar, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land- Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate- Msgr. Georges Dankaye', Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate.

The churches' collective opposition to the municipal tax underscored their commitment to preserving Jerusalem's religious and social fabric, reflecting concerns

shared by the Christian community in the Holy City.

The conflict over municipal taxes on church properties in Jerusalem had been ongoing for several years. In 2018, the Jerusalem Municipality announced plans to collect NIS 650 million in taxes from properties owned by churches that are not used as houses of worship. This decision led to significant backlash from church leaders, who viewed the move as violating longstanding agreements and international obligations guaranteeing their rights and privileges.

The situation escalated when church leaders closed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in protest, a rare and dramatic step highlighting the severity of their opposition. During a peak time for Christian tourism, the closure underscored the potential economic and diplomatic repercussions of the municipality's decision.

In response to the outcry, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu intervened, halting the tax collection efforts and forming a commission led by Regional Cooperation Minister Tzachi Hanegbi to find a resolution. This intervention aimed at preserving the status quo and preventing further damage to Israel's relations with the global Christian community.

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission to host hearing on human rights violations perpetrated by Azerbaijan

The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission will host a hearing on alleged human rights violations perpetrated by the government of Azerbaijan against ethnic Armenians since the fall of Nagorno-Karabakh and ethnic Azerbaijanis who oppose the government.

The Commission notes that the government of Azerbaijan has a notoriously poor human rights record. According to Freedom House, "Power in Azerbaijan's authoritarian regime remains heavily concentrated in the hands of Ilham Aliyev, who has served as president since 2003, and his extended family. Corruption is rampant, and the formal political opposition has been weakened by years of persecution. The authorities have carried out an

extensive crackdown on civil liberties in recent years..."

Since the government conducted a military operation to gain full control over Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023, the situation for ethnic Armenians has changed dramatically. By the end of 2023 virtually all of them fled to Armenia. The hearing will examine this apparent ethnic cleansing and a number of related issues, including the situation of prisoners of war and political prisoners, the status of Armenian cultural sites in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the right of return of ethnic Armenians to Nagorno-Karabakh.

The hearing will also examine the government's treatment of members of the ethnic Azerbaijani majority who have been victims of domestic and transnational

repression due to their opposition to the government and its policies, and the relation between corruption and human rights abuses. Witnesses will offer recommendations for Congress.

The hearing will be hosted by Members of Congress Chris Smith and James P. McGovern.

Witnesses:

Gegham Stepanyan, Former Human Rights Defender, Republic of Artsakh

Karnig Kerkonian, International lawyer, and member, Committee on the Protection of the Fundamental Rights of the Artsakh People

Kate Watters, Co-founder and Executive Director, Crude Accountability

Emin Bayramli, Son of Azerbaijani political prisoner Gubad Ibadoghlu

Tarsem Singh: Director of music video for Lady Gaga's 911 song to head the jury of Golden Apricot's "Regional Panorama" program

Indian-American director Tarsem Singh, best known to the Armenian audience as the author of the music video for Lady Gaga's song "911" inspired by Parajanov aesthetics, will head the Golden Apricot International Film Festival's "Regional Panorama" competition program.

He also directed the music videos for the the song "Losing My Religion" by "R.E.M.", "Be My Baby" by Vanessa Paradis, "What's Good" by Lou Reed, etc.

In 2000, Tarsem's film debut – the cult sci-fi thriller "Cell" starring Jennifer Lopez

– was released.

Singh has authored another five feature films since, the latest of which, the drama "Dear Jassi," had its world premiere in 2023 at the Toronto International Film Festival, winning the "Platform" award.

This year the festival will take place on July 7-14. The international film festival will present competitive films from different countries of the world, as well as films from the most prestigious (Cannes, Berlin, etc.) film festivals.

Golden Apricot 2024 will make a



special reference to the 100-year anniversaries of Charles Aznavour and Sergey Parajanov.

Armenian U-18 chess team takes 2nd place at European Championship



The U18 chess team of Armenia won the title of vice-champion of the European team championship.

Armenia was represented by Emin Ohanyan, Arsen Davtyan, Robert Philiposyan, Erik Gasparyan and Benik Agasarov.

In the last round, the chess players defeated the Austrian team with a score of 3-1. Overall, at the U-18 European Championship, Armenian chess players secured 5 victories, 1 draw, and 1 defeat.

In the first round, the Armenian team defeated the team from the Israeli city of Ramat Gan with a score of 3.5-0.5. In the second round, they drew 2-2 with Slovenia, and in the third round, they beat the Turkish team with a score of 3-1. In the fourth round, the U-18 team defeated the main team of Israel with a score of 2.5-1.5. In the fifth round, they lost to Poland with a score of 1-3, and in the penultimate, sixth round, they gained an advantage over Germany with a score of 2.5-1.5.

The winner of the championship was the Israeli team, which suffered its only defeat in the championship against the Armenian representatives.

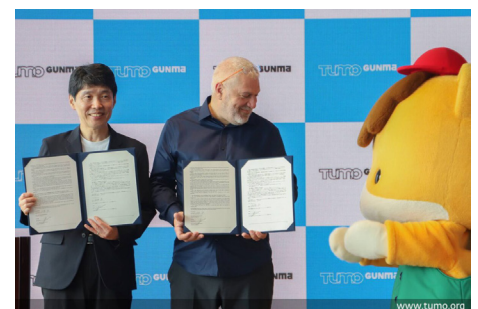
First TUMO center to open in Japan in 2025

The first TUMO center will open in Japan in 2025.

TUMO executives Marie Lou Papazian and Pegor Papazian signed an agreement in the Japanese city of Takasaki with Gunma Prefecture Governor Ichita Yamamoto to launch TUMO Gunma. The center is set to open in summer 2025 with a capacity of 1,000 students.

The Governor highlighted, "I believe this is the first of many TUMO centers in our country, paving the way for stronger Japan-Armenia tech relations."

Pegor Papazian added, "TUMO is about learning. We aim to learn from our partners while empowering Japanese teens on their learning journeys."



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