

Armenian PM, Russian FM discuss agenda of bilateral relations in Yerevan



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Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov who arrived in Yerevan on an official visit the PM's Office told Noyan Tapan. Welcoming the Russian FM, PM Pashinyan said: "Last time you paid an official visit to Armenia two years ago. That time very great changes took place in Armenia, and I want to state that as a result of those changes the relations of our countries received a new dynamic. After being elected as PM of Armenia I had numerous meetings with the Russian President, Prime Minister. In the past 1.5 year I had a chance to host in Yerevan the Russian President, the PM, recently the defense minister arrived in Armenia, many high-ranking officials visit Armenia, and I think that there is really a new dynamic in our relations. Recently we reached an agreement that next year I will pay an official visit to Russia which will be followed by the official visit of the Russian leader to Armenia".

Pashinyan said Armenia had an effective chairmanship in the Eurasian Economic Union, reminding that recently the session of the

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OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minsk Group Co-Chairs discuss Karabakh peace process

Recent developments and prospects for conflict resolution in Nagorno-Karabakh were discussed at a meeting between OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák and the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, the Slovakian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports.

The meeting with Igor Popov for the Russian Federation, Stéphan Visconti for France and Andrew Schofer for the United States arrived in Bratislava. They were also accompanied by a personal representative of the OSCE Acting President for conflict, handled by the Minsk Group, Andrzej



Kasprzyk.

“I am glad that the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, together with the parties, continued discussions on further measures to reduce tensions and maintain an atmosphere conducive to peace,” Mr. Lajčák said at

a meeting in Bratislava with Co-Chairs Igor Popov, Stéphan Visconti and Andrew Schofer, as well as the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk.

The Slovak Presidency will continue to help the parties, the Foreign Minister said.

The discussions also focused on preparations for the OSCE Ministerial Council, which will take place in Bratislava on 5 and 6 December 2019, and will be the culmination of the Slovakian Presidency of the OSCE.

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Supreme Eurasian Economic Council was held in Yerevan. “I think, it was an unprecedented event with its scale, and I am very happy that during our chairmanship we signed an agreement with Singapore and Serbia, the free trade agreements with Iran and China entered into force. In this context our economic relations are successfully developing and we hope this year the trade turnover will reach 2 billion USD which is a very good result. All these create very important signal for the further development of strategic, allied relations between our countries. I am confident that your visit will give a new impetus to our allied relations, and of course, as you announced recently, I am also optimistic about the further development of our relations. I am happy to once again welcome you in Yerevan”, Pashinyan said.

In his turn the Russian FM thanked for the reception and conveyed the warm greetings of the Russian President and Prime Minister to the Armenian PM. “You met with the Russian President four times this year, as well as with the PM. We have very close contacts in terms of economic agencies. As you mentioned, our other agencies also are closely cooperating. Recently our defense minister, healthcare minister, State Duma Speaker were in Armenia, therefore, we have very close contacts at all directions”, Sergey Lavrov said, adding that the Armenian-Russian inter-regional forum will take



place soon.

“We are happy also for the development of the bilateral trade turnover, it constantly grows. Russia is Armenia’s key economic partner, the first investor in Armenia’s economy. Our cooperation within the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States, is under our spotlight, and we congratulate Armenia on a very effective chairmanship in the EAEU. A very important event, the CSTO summit will take place in Bishkek in several weeks where as well we should move forward our cooperation connected with the military-political security and the allied partnership”, the Russian FM said.

Thereafter, the Armenian PM and the Rus-

sian FM discussed the bilateral agenda-related issues touching upon the political and economic cooperation.

The sides exchanged views on regional issues, including the settlement process of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Pashinyan highlighted Russia’s key role in maintaining security, stability and peace in the region.

Nikol Pashinyan and Sergey Lavrov emphasized the importance of the peaceful settlement of the NK conflict within the OSCE Minsk Group and the need to implement humanitarian projects for forming an atmosphere of mutual trust between the conflicting sides.

Pashinyan allies lambaste Kocharyan over ‘trouble-making’

(RFE/RL – Yerevan) - Pro-government lawmakers have vehemently criticized Robert Kocharyan over his article published on a Kremlin-funded news agency’s website in which the former president described Armenia’s current leadership as “pro-Western” and predicted “bad scenarios” for the country.

“Is a divided Armenia ready for bad scenarios?” queried Kocharyan in his article published on Sputnik-Armenia on November 8.

Kocharyan, who is being tried on coup and bribery charges and is currently in prison, also accuses the government of Nikol Pashinyan of weakening Armenian positions in Nagorno-Karabakh peace talks and committing gross mistakes. He warns of a new possible war with Azerbaijan that will entail “devastating consequences incomparably graver than ever before.”

“We have seen bad scenarios during Robert Kocharyan’s presidency,” Andranik Kocharyan [no relation], a member of the My Step parliamentary faction and head of the parliament committee on defense and security, said, reacting to Robert Kocharyan’s article on Friday. “It would be better if Robert Kocharyan at some point in his life started to talk about good scenarios... We want the new Armenia to go ahead with good scenarios and achieve strength that will enable it to always have good scenarios.”

“If he [Robert Kocharyan] thinks that Armenia is moving along just one vector, he couldn’t be more wrong. Armenia and its security system are moving in the direction that only adds to their capabilities and never reduces them for sure,” Andranik Kocharyan added.

In his article Robert Kocharyan, in particular, accuses Pashinyan of effectively nullifying the agreements on strengthening ceasefire in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone achieved with Azerbaijan by the previous administration of President Serzh Sarkisian following a brief escalation of fighting in 2016. He also claims “complicated relations” between the ruling elites in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and blunders committed by Armenia’s leadership in this regard.

“The prime minister’s statement that ‘Karabakh is Armenia, full stop!’ has shifted the negotiations away from the principle of self-determination of peoples onto a plane of territorial integrity of nations, which is undesirable for us,” Robert Kocharyan writes.

“I think that Robert Kocharyan should first of all answer when the Meghri issue originated. At that time, we were heading down a very dangerous path. Thank God, we managed to steer clear of that trap,” said Andranik Kocharyan, referring to an alleged plan for a territorial exchange between Armenia and Azerbaijan as part of a broader Karabakh solution ostensibly discussed during Robert Kocharyan’s presidency.

Another My Step lawmaker Ruben Rubinyan, who heads the parliament’s foreign relations committee, said that in his article Robert Kocharyan uses talking points of Azerbaijan. “It can be described as trouble-making,” he said. “I don’t think that any Armenian politician, especially a person who formerly occupied the post of the president, could bring forth such pro-Azerbaijani arguments,” he said.

Rubinyan also rejected Kocharyan’s claims that Armenia has a divided society today. “We saw people’s unity during the 2018 Velvet Revolution. We saw people’s unity during the 2018 December [snap parliamentary] elections. We’ve seen this unity also between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh,” he said.

In his article Kocharyan also accuses Pashinyan of having a “pro-Western” orientation. The former president notes that among those that support Pashinyan are also political groups that call for the withdrawal of the Russian military base from Armenia. He claims that in Armenia today there are many government officials and pro-government members of parliament who espouse pro-Western views.

Rubinyan dismissed this claim as ridiculous. “We are against the idea of being ‘pro-someone’. We stand only for the interests of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh,” he said.

My Step’s lawmaker Gayane Arakelyan, for her part, argued that the goal of Kocharyan’s article was to derail Armenian-Russian relations. The parliamentarian who sits on the European integration committee said: “Clearly this is a message to Russia that pursues certain goals. I say that Kocharyan will never stop at anything. Even if with each such message he deeply harms Armenian-Russian relations, he will never have repugnance to do so. He will resort to anything possible even at the cost of the state and statehood, even at the cost of the country’s sovereignty,” Arakelyan said.

Tsarukyan complains about investment conditions in Armenia

Opposition Prosperous Armenia Party leader Gagik Tsarukyan complained about conditions for investments in Armenia as he inaugurated a new ceramic cookware factory on November 7.

The factory, Ceramisia, was set up as part of a joint investment project of the Tsarukyan-owned Multi Group and the Italian Stoneware holding.

According to the press office of Armenia’s prime minister, initial investments in the project amount to 30 million Euros (over \$33 million). The factory is expected to open 300 jobs by February. In general, up to a thousand jobs are expected to be created due to the project.

Talking to reporters after the ceremony, Tsarukyan called for improvements in the



investment climate, voicing complaints about “time-consuming” paperwork. “Businessmen cannot wait long,” he said. “What an investor needs are basically a one-window approach to be able to get all the paperwork done quickly.”

Tsarukyan, who is considered to be one of the wealthiest people in Armenia, also complained about the shortage of highly

skilled specialists in Armenia. “You know better than me that most good workers, good specialists have left for work in Europe, Russia. Now we are looking [for good specialists] and can’t find them. You can run job announcements on television that those wishing to be employed can come, we will send them to Italy for a month-long training so that they can work,” he said.

Tsarukyan also disagreed with Pashinyan’s assessment that “an economic revolution is gaining momentum in Armenia.” The opposition politician said: “For the economic revolution it is necessary to change laws, create more favorable conditions for investors... Taxes should be cut,” he said.

The US calls on parties to Karabakh conflict to translate agreements into actions

The United States calls on the parties to the Karabakh conflict to translate agreements into concrete actions.

Addressing the OSCE Permanent Council on November 8, US Ambassador to the OSCE James S. Gilmore III hailed the activity of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk.

Noting that “a great deal has changed over the past year, the Ambassador said “we are concerned about casualties on the Line of Contact in recent months.”

“These casualties illustrate the continuing human cost of the conflict. They raise the temperature on the ground – and in capitals. And, they deepen distrust and animosity, diminishing prospects for a lasting settlement,” he added.

“At the same time, we are encouraged by the constructive high-level contacts between the leaders and foreign ministers of



Armenia and Azerbaijan... We encourage the sides to agree on concrete measures discussed throughout this year on specific humanitarian and security measures to prepare the populations for peace and reduce tensions. We also welcome the simultaneous release of prisoners that took place on June 28,” the Ambassador continued.

“Yet, agreement on these issues is not enough. We call on the sides to translate these agreements into concrete actions now. The time has come for the sides to prepare their populations for peace, and to refrain from mutual accusations and recriminations. The United States supports confi-

dence-building measures and increased dialogue between Armenians and Azerbaijanis that can stabilize the security situation and foster a more constructive atmosphere for negotiations. Those participating in dialogue must be able to do so freely and without fear of harassment or recrimination when they return home,” he stated.

The Ambassador stressed that there can be no military solution to this conflict, and the status quo is unacceptable.

“The United States is committed to working with the sides to find a lasting and peaceful resolution based on the principles, shared by participating States, of non-use or threat of force, territorial integrity, and equal rights and self-determination of peoples, as embraced in the Helsinki Final Act, which remains the key instruments of principles and conduct for the OSCE member States,” James S. Gilmore III concluded.

Armenian minister, EU Ambassador discuss future cooperation opportunities

Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Zaruhi Batoyan received Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin, the ministry told Noyan Tapan.

“I am very happy for our cooperation with the European Union, especially over the projects relating to human rights, the rights of women, children and people with disabilities. We have a special commitment especially in the protection of labor rights,



making the changes in the Labor Code in accordance with the international standards and conventions. In this respect I want to inform that the development of employment strategy is already at the completion stage, and the changes of the Labor Code at the public debate stage”, the Armenian minister said.

the minister said it has been developed in a participating environment, in cooperation with the international partners and local structures.

“We promote work because we are confident that it is possible to overcome poverty only through work. In this context I would like to state that the ministry is revising the

system of fees which should be based on the vision that employment is the logical continuation of the social assistance and its main component”, she said.

“I am very happy to see the ongoing changes in the fields of social protection, employment, working rights. While talking about your activities the first thing you mentioned related to human rights. I would like to note in this regard that the EU’s entire

policy is based on the protection of human rights”, the EU Ambassador said.

The sides discussed the future cooperation opportunities directed to labor and employment projects, protection of rights of people with disabilities and creation of equal opportunities.

First-Ever Nuclear Medicine Center Opens in Armenia

A new medical center providing radioisotope-based diagnosing and treatment to cancer patients has opened in Armenia amid a growing demand for the service that thus far Armenians have been able to get in the region only by traveling to neighboring Georgia.

The European Center of Nuclear Medicine fitted out with up-to-date equipment is the first such facility in Armenia that will provide radioactive iodine therapy for thyroid cancer, a disease that has a high rate in the country and the region in general. The center is located in one of Yerevan's suburbs in close proximity to the Erebuni Medical Center.

"Nuclear medicine is making great strides and is becoming a very trendy field in the world. That's why our administration has decided to have an advanced center [of nuclear medicine] in Armenia," executive director of the Erebuni Medical Center Mikayel Manukyan said.

"Now patients will be able to receive high-quality therapy in Armenia, since all of our specialists are well-trained. We have a team of very good young physicists," he



added.

According to Manukyan, patients who until now had to go abroad for radioactive iodine therapy for thyroid cancer will be able to receive this treatment locally. Besides being more convenient, it will also be less costly for them, he added.

"A primary examination will cost patients about 40,000 drams (\$85)," he said, adding that the issue of government-funded treatment for socially vulnerable groups will further be discussed with the Ministry of Health.

The newly opened European Center of Nuclear Medicine in Armenia will be headed by radiologist Natalia Shengelia-de Lange, who had worked for 15 years at a Vienna Medical University clinic before heading two nuclear medical centers in

Georgia.

"The center is equipped at the highest level. All measures of radioactive safety have been taken into account for both the patients and the environment," Shengelia-de Lange said.

Isotopes for the needs of the center will be imported from abroad in a particular quantity based on the needs of patients.

The European Center of Nuclear Medicine has been constructed as part of the Erebuni Medical Center's investment project. More than \$1.2 million have been spent on the construction of the new facility that has lead lined walls and doors providing shielding from radiation.

For safety reasons patients receiving high-dose radioactive iodine therapy often have to be isolated for several days. The center says it provides various facilities for self-service as well as entertainment in patient rooms. Safety features also include a separate sewage system for rooms containing dangerous substances.

The ceremonial opening of the center was also attended by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

EIB to provide 4.2 million euros for Armenia road safety program



The Armenian government has approved the proposal to sign a grant agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the European Investment Bank to support the

Road Safety Program in Armenia.

First Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Vache Terteryan said the grant program amounting to

4.2 million euros aims to ensure road safety along with large-scale road construction.

The funds will be allocated to the improvement of the Yerevan-Meghri, Yerevan-Ijevan, Yerevan-Armavir-Turkey, Goris-Artsakh, Kapan-Tsav and Yerevan-Artashat-Aygevan highways.

It is also planned to carry out an audit of interstate and republican highways, technical oversight of dangerous sections, raise security awareness.

The funds will also be allocated for tainting auditors, reviewing the Armenian road-construction standards with a view of bringing them in line with best European experience.

The project is expected to improve at least 30 dangerous sections, which will, in turn, result in a 30% reduction in the number of road accidents.

Armenia, Huawei exploring opportunities for cooperation

On a working visit to China, Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan had a meeting with Huawei Vice-President.

Tigran Avinyan presented Armenia's scientific-technical potential and peculiarities, as well as the opportunities of investing in IT.

The Huawei Vice-President briefed the Armenian Deputy PM on the main directions of the company's



development, including the production of equipment and research activity.

The parties discussed the perspectives of Armenia's economic advancement, development of high technologies and solar energy sector.

An agreement was reached to explore further opportunities for cooperation, including in research and development.

Roaming between Armenia and Artsakh to be abolished – Masis Mayilian

Artsakh's Foreign Minister Masis Mayilian has announced the entry of a second mobile operator to the country in 2020.

"In 2020, the telecommunications monopoly will be abolished and we will have a second operator. Meetings and consultations held in recent months allow us to say with certainty that in 2020

Artsakh will have a second operator. There are investors and experienced professionals willing to participate in the project," Mayilian said in a Facebook post.



"I will pursue this cause and have the political will to provide the necessary conditions in 2020 to overcome monopoly in the telecommunications sector and to ensure the entry of the second operator in Art-

sakh," he added.

The Foreign Minister said it will ensure a high-quality mobile communication at low prices. Besides, he added, competition will force the existing operator to cut the prices for subscribers and provide advanced 4G / LTE mobile Internet access. It will also create new jobs, first of all for young specialists.

Finally, the Foreign Minister said, it will help ensure a protected communication at the border zone and will eventually lead to the abolition of roaming between Armenia and Artsakh.

Armenia to produce ceramic tableware



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attended the opening ceremony of the Ceramisia plant founded in the framework of a joint investment project between Multi Group

Concern and Italian Stoneware Holding. Initial investment amounts to €30 million and will be of continuous nature, 500 to 1000 jobs will be created.

Italian Stoneware Holding is engaged in the production of ceramic tableware, hotel business and construction of new buildings.

Ceramisia's main material – the clay that is made of crockery – is distinguished by its durability, thanks to which it is called stoneware, which is

ecologically clean and can be used in the microwave.

The ceramic tableware produced in Armenia will be exported to different countries under the slogan "Made in Armenia with Italian design."



Indian pharmaceutical business is ready to strengthen the cooperation with its RA partners

The Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council (PHARMEXCIL) established by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India, the Government of India and the Embassy of India in Armenia will hold next "India-Armenia Pharmaceutical Business Forum-Exhibition" in Yerevan from November 10-13. The press service of the Embassy discussed the prospects of development of relations between the two countries in the field of healthcare, and in particular in the field of pharmacy with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India to Armenia, K. D. Dewal.

- Mr. Ambassador, how would you describe the level of relations between India and Armenia in the field of healthcare?

- The field of healthcare is unique in the palette of relations between India and Armenia. Our two countries have gathered a rich experience of cooperation, the main component of which is the preparation of doctors for India at Yerevan State Medical University after Mkhitar Heratsi (YSMU). Perhaps it is due to many cultural similarities of Indian and Armenian peoples that Indian students have been studying at YSMU since 1985 with great pleasure and diligence. More than 2.1 thousand Indian doctors, who received high quality education there, successfully work not only in India, but also in many countries around the world, and have become Armenia's unique ambassadors in their countries of activity. Currently there are over 600 Indian students studying at YSMU.

All this, of course, has provided a solid basis for cooperation and exchange of experience between India and Armenia in various fields of healthcare.

- What are the prospects of cooperation between India and Armenia in the field of pharmacy?

- There are great opportunities for development of relations between our two countries in this field. The initiative here mainly belongs to the Indian side.

To illustrate the possibilities of cooperation with the Indian Pharmaceutical Business, here are some indicators: India is the largest provider of generic drugs in the world accounting for 20 per cent of global exports in terms of volume. The country has 3,000 pharmaceutical companies with a powerful network of over 10,5 thousand industrial facilities. The value of production in India makes up almost one-third of the value of the United States and nearly half of that of Europe. India is the source of 60,000 generic brands across 60 therapeutic categories and manufactures more than 500 different Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients



(APIs). Exports of pharmaceutical products in 2017-18 totaled \$ 17.27 billion. The Indian pharmaceutical market is expected to reach \$ 55 billion by 2020.

Naturally, the open pharmaceutical market of Armenia should be involved in using the achievements of Indian companies of the field. If in 2018 the volume of export of Indian origin goods to Armenia was \$ 77 million 119,3 thousand (RA State Revenue Committee data) increasing by 53.9% compared to 2017, then the export volume of Indian origin pharmaceutical products in 2018 totaled \$ 4.7 million increasing by 33.8%. In the first semesters of 2019 and 2018, the growth rates of these figures have accelerated, with pharmaceutical production growing to a greater extent. In the first semester of 2019 products exported from India to Armenia totaled \$ 52.7 million (55.2% growth), of which \$ 3.22 million was for pharmaceutical production (44.5% growth). As you can see, the proportion of pharmaceutical products in the total volume of export of goods from India to Armenia is quite large.

I should also mention that the list of drugs exported from India to Armenia is constantly increasing; as of end of September of this year more than 150 of the 5,000 drugs registered in the RA state registry of drugs, are manufactured in India, among them drugs, manufactured by the largest international companies in our country.

I am sure that there are great prospects for utilizing the development potential of India-Armenia relations in the field of pharmacy, and the Indian pharmaceutical business is ready to strengthen the cooperation with Armenian partners which is evidenced by the next India-Armenia Pharmaceutical Business Forum-Exhibition to be held from November 10-13 in Yerevan by PHARMEXCIL, a body under the Ministry of Commerce of India and the Embassy of India in Armenia. The event will feature the prospects for establishing business ties with India's pharmaceutical sec-

tor, industry achievements and legislative regulations in our country, meetings of B2B format will be held between 28 leading Indian companies of the field and Armenian companies.

- Has the forum-exhibition held by PHARMEXCIL in Yerevan in 2011 contributed to the development of India-Armenia ties in the field of pharmacy? What further steps does the Government of India take to promote cooperation between Indian and Armenian companies of the field?

- The last forum-exhibition held in Yerevan in March 2011 with participation of the representatives of 21 Indian prominent pharmaceutical companies and Armenian pharmaceutical, drug distributor and import companies had a great positive impact on the development of the relations of our two countries in the field of pharmacy. The above-mentioned figures would probably have been lower if the event had not been held, on the basis of the arrangements of which not only Indian high-quality drugs and pharmaceutical raw materials are imported to Armenia, but also modern "clean rooms", production lines and equipment that comply with international standards.

As for the steps taken by the Indian Government to foster cooperation between Indian and Armenian pharmaceutical companies, the most significant is perhaps the provision of the annual participation of 10-15 Armenian drug manufacturers in India's largest international pharmaceutical annual exhibition iPHEX (International Exhibition for Pharma and Healthcare). Since 2014, the Government of India has been covering the costs of their iPHEX visits, thereby greatly contributing to the fact that Armenian pharmaceutical companies can already get acquainted with the achievements and opportunities of the Indian drug manufacturers and pharmaceutical equipment manufacturers, with the legislative regulations of our country's pharmaceutical field, as well as they can present Armenia's achievements and opportunities of the field and the legislative framework either.

PHARMEXCIL, the Ministry of Commerce of India and myself, as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India to Armenia, will continue to support the development and strengthening of mutually beneficial ties between our country and Armenia in the field of pharmacy, which I am sure will contribute to the progress of the pharmaceutical companies of both countries and especially to providing the Armenian population with quality, affordable, effective and safe drugs.

Have you heard about Sumgait, Maragha and Baku? Armenian FM tells Azerbaijani MP

On November 6 Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan alongside with the Foreign Minister of Ukraine Vadym Prystaiko participated in a lecture at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, entitled “A talk with the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Ukraine,” dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership. In his remarks Minister Mnatsakanyan presented in detail Armenia’s cooperation with the European Union within the framework of Eastern Partnership, the ongoing democratic reforms in Armenia, the country’s foreign policy priorities. Touching upon the Velvet Revolution, Minister Mnatsakanyan, particularly, noted that the wide public mandate, received during the elections, held last year, is also a trust in the government and a big responsibility to address the immediate priorities under that mandate: “Throughout the first months the government has been absolutely focused on delivering on those most immediate demands, reflected in the mandate: the questions of corruption, the questions of equal space, equal opportunities in economic and social life, the question of justice, the question of elections, and the political will has demonstrated its power, that you can address corruption ahead on, if you have a political will, that you can organize elections which are accepted by the public and political forces and that is when you have shown the political will,” he said.

But that is not enough, the Minister added. “That’s only the beginning. It’s only the first step, because consolidating these institutions is the most important challenge and the most important objective. To make sure that irrespective of political will political institutions, the public institutions do gain strength to sustain the model which is based on respect and strength of democracy, human rights, rule of law. And this is what we live through and live with today in Armenia,” he stated. Minister Mnatsakanyan said Armenia’s foreign policy is built in a very careful way to consolidate, to sustain consolidation of our national security architecture. To demonstrate the point, we have two fundamental challenges to our security.

“One challenge is the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh challenge, the other challenge is Turkey threat. The non existence of relations with Turkey, the consistent denial of justice in case of Turkey, the failure to build on what we have invested in, what many of you may know, the Zurich proto-



cols, they, in combination with some other factors, they represent a serious security threat to Armenia,”

Asked by an Azerbaijani MP whether Armenia is ready to apply to international tribunal alongside with Azerbaijan to investigate alleged war crimes and ethnic cleansing committed by Armenia, Minister Mnatsakanyan pointed to crimes, committed by Azerbaijan.

“Have you heard about Baku? Have you heard about Sumgait, Maragha, have you heard about the occupation of Shahumyan region? Have you heard about the occupation of the part of Martakert region? Have you heard about the occupation of a part of the Martuni region? Do you want me to continue? This is exactly the point. Are you prepared to reduce rhetoric? Are you prepared to understand our concerns? Are you prepared to engage in such dialogue? Or it is your truth or no truth? Or is it your way or no way? We will never have peace, if we are maximalists. That is the whole point that I was making about preparing populations to peace. You were talking about some problems that concern us. Do not pretend to be saints!” Minister Mnatsakanyan said. “I was saying there is a question of security. A question of security, that is the only security arrangement, that does not allow the resurgence of aggression, occupation – the words that you know and you use so often. Aggression, occupation and existential physical security threat to our compatriots – 150.000 Armenians. They are humans, they have names, they have families, they have homes, they have their physical security concerns and there is no other security arrangement than what it is today. This is what the negotiations are about – how to come to something, which is not taking us to maximalist demands by one party at the expense of the other,” he added. In response to Azerbaijani representatives’ questions as to how it is possible to talk about peace when Armenia’s Prime Minister declares: “Artsakh is Armenia and period” and what kind of steps were taken to

prepare the population of Armenia to peace, Minister Mnatsakanyan noted: “First of all I want to refer to something very important, refer to what the distinguished member of parliament of Belarus was saying, his message I think is very important, the message was about the sense of ownership of the peace process by those who are the actual stakeholders. You’re absolutely right, it is first of all for Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno Karabakh, to bear the responsibility and to find a solution, to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. And that also refers to the question, I think, Mr. Bakhtiar was asking.” “Look, the way in which the Prime Minister was putting the message of peace, which is acceptable to the people of Armenia, to the people of Nagorno Karabakh, and the people of Azerbaijan, was a message that deserves to be reciprocated, that is a message which reflects on one very important premise, in finding a solution, and that is the capacity of the parties to look at the concerns of the other party, and calculate that balance of commitments in a way that reflects the concerns of each party,” the Foreign Minister noted.

“That is the sense of having a solution, which is acceptable to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh, to the people of Armenia, people of Nagorno Karabakh, people of Azerbaijan. I think, this is something that also builds on what the next question was about,” he added.

“Now, we have, as I have indicated, there are some proposals, some ideas, on which we are trying to build, the way in which we can in a depoliticize such people to people contact. Like, we are having this politicized contact, we are trying to blame each other, we are trying to be ignorant of the other party’s concerns. This demonstration of a politicized discussion is what, exactly what we do not need,”

“And I mentioned journalists, there are some various ideas, but we need, and there is a good understanding on both parties, now that we are talking with my colleague, the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, to do it in a way, in a careful way, that we can sustain what we are trying to do now, create a platform in which some experience can be generated, so that we can continue and build on it, that the journalist example I mentioned. We can start generating a new different narrative in our region, so far as the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is concerned,” Zohrab Mnatsakanyan stated.

Economic reforms put Armenia on radar of yield-hungry investors

Armenia's economy is growing faster than oil-rich Azerbaijan next door, bolstering investors' willingness to lend to the impoverished, landlocked nation of three million people, authors Nvard Hovhannisyanyan, Margarita Antidze and Karin Strohecker write in an article published by Nasdaq.

Nikol Pashinyan's government has adopted a reform programme that aims to strengthen Armenia's institutions and the rule of law, improve the business environment and clamp down on corruption.

It plans to increase the share of investment to gross domestic product (GDP) to 23-25% in the next four years from around 20% now and to raise the share of exports to 43-45% of GDP from 37%.

According to the article, when Armenia opened books for a Eurobond two months ago, demand was four times bigger than the offering, highlighting the new-found appeal of the tiny ex-Soviet republic among inves-



tors hungry for yield in a world of negative interest rates,

"Yerevan sold \$500 million of 10-year Eurobonds in September, drawing demand of more than \$2 billion in its third foray into international markets. It also bought back part of its inaugural 2013 dollar-bond due in 2020 in the September sale," authors remind.

Armenia's 2025 bonds are yielding 3.9% – a touch above Azerbaijan's and Uzbekistan's 2024 bonds at 3.3% and 3.5% respectively. Returns on Armenia's bonds in the JPMorgan emerging bonds benchmark has risen nearly 14% year-to-date compared to

a 9.4% rise for Georgia.

"Armenian bonds outperformed many of their regional peers this year, which is a sign that investors who bought them clearly trust ongoing reforms," Igor Rapokhin, fixed income strategist at VTB Capital, told Reuters.

Economic growth in Armenia picked up to 6.5% in year-on-year terms in the second quarter of 2019. This

week the central bank raised its GDP growth forecast for this year to 6.9-7.1% from 4.9% due to the strength of both manufacturing and services.

Next year Armenia will cut corporate tax to 18% from 20%, introduce a flat-rate income tax of 23% and will hike tobacco and alcohol duties. Private firms with a turnover of less than \$50,000 a year will benefit from zero taxes.

Economic growth is expected to slow in 2020 as Armenia needs more structural reforms to become more competitive, officials and experts said.

Armenia, Georgia launch joint Free Route Airspace

Armenia and Georgia have announced the launching of the joint Free Route (FRA) Airspace South Caucasus, which allows to operate flights above 195 flight levels (FL 195) round the clock under simplified Cross Border operation.

About 125 flights are expected to use the concept daily, with the number expected to reach 40,000 annually.

The process has been carried out through the joint efforts of the specialists of the Armenian Civil Aviation Committee, the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency, EURO-



CONTROL, ARMATS CJSC and SAKAERONAVIGATSIA Ltd.

As a result, 28,714 miles of flight paths, 3,872 minutes of flight time, 260,438 kg of fuel will be reduced annually, which, in turn, will contribute to environmental pro-

tection.

The Armenian Civil Aviation Committee notes that not all European countries can boast a similar concept.

Free route airspace (FRA) is a specified volume of airspace in which users may freely plan a route between a defined entry and exit point.

FRA is a way of overcoming the aviation sector's efficiency, capacity and environmental problems by helping reduce fuel consumption and emissions, while improving flight efficiency.

Lord Ara Darzi urges the British Parliament to recognize the Armenian Genocide



Lord Ara Darzi has lauded the vote by the US House of Representatives to recognize the Armenian Genocide, and has expressed his dismay at the lack of a similar acknowledgment by the British government.

“As the first Armenian in the British parliament, I am overjoyed at the vote by the US House of Representatives on Tuesday last week to recognize the Armenian genocide of a century ago. But I remain dismayed by the British government’s refusal to acknowledge the slaughter of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians in a wave of violence that followed the fall of the Ot-

toman empire,” Professor Ara Darzi said in a letter to *The Guardian*.

“It is a source of intense pain and regret to me and my compatriots that our own government persists in denying the genocide out of fear of offending Turkey, a Nato ally. At least 20 countries around the world have formally recognized the massacre as genocide – among them France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the European par-

liament. Now the House of Representatives has joined them,” he added.

Prof. Darzi reminded that his great grandfather and his sons were executed by Ottoman government forces in 1915.

“His daughter, my grandmother, then a teenager, only escaped by pretending to be dead. She walked barefoot with her mother from Erzerum, where the family lived, arriving weeks later in Mosul, northern Iraq. I was born in Baghdad, where we lived as refugees,” the letter reads.

“It is unconscionable for the British gov-

ernment to continue to deny the Armenian genocide. Genocide is a global issue. We have seen it in Rwanda and Darfur and in what happened to Christian communities at the hands of Isis in Syria and northern Iraq. The House resolution says the US government should no longer associate itself “with denial of the Armenian genocide or any other genocide”. Our own parliament should do the same,” Lord Darzi concluded.

The US House of Representatives voted 405 to 11 on October 29 to adopt a resolution (H. Res. 296) affirming the United States record on the Armenian Genocide.

The resolution establishes a proactive policy of recognizing Armenian genocide and challenge Turkey’s denials of the crime.

The resolution ensures that the United States commemorates the Armenian Genocide through official recognition and remembrance and rejects efforts to enlist, engage, or otherwise associate the United States Government with denial of the Armenian Genocide or any other genocide

It also encourages education and public understanding of the facts of the Armenian Genocide, including the United States role in the humanitarian relief effort, and the relevance of the Armenian Genocide to modern-day crimes against humanity.

Serj Tankian: Recognizing the Armenian Genocide means being on the right side of history

Turkey’s continued denial of both its past and present crimes against humanity proves that it is an insecure state, System Of A Down frontman Serj Tankian writes in a piece for *NewEurope*.

According to him, the recent passing of House Resolution 296 has highlighted the almost unbelievable roller coaster dynamics of Turkey’s relationship with its NATO allies.

The Armenian Genocide has for decades been used by Turkey as political capital against well-known democracies around the world, Tankian writes.

The result, he says “has been an absolute disaster, hindering Turkish democracy, and helping to silence all those struggling for an



egalitarian, secular state there.”

“Armenians around the world were devastated to witness Turkey’s bombing of Kurdish forces and civilians in Syria. It was like experiencing PTSD from a 100+-year-old genocide,” Tankian continues.

“As Armenian-Americans, we have fought for recognition of the genocide for

many years. We will continue to fight for a Senate resolution of the same kind in the coming days and months. The importance of such resolutions is to finally make it clear to Turkey that there is a price to pay for genocide denial, for continuing to act with impunity against its own minorities and activists and to shed international laws,” the musician writes.

Serj Tankian believes the Armenian Genocide should serve as an important historical lesson to all. According to him, unpunished crimes against humanity that are ignored for economic or political gain by the international community will eventually lead to global disorder.

Armenian-Lithuanian Music Cooperation: Kaunas Choir Participates in Mozart Requiem with Armenian Opera House Orchestra and the Soloists

By Gourgen James Khazhakian
Chief Correspondent



...For the first time in my life I heard Mozart's Requiem when I was 5 or 6: that was a vinyl disc from my Mom's (who, besides being a professional doctor, graduated from a musical college as a pianist) collection – "thick as a brick" one, traditional for 40s-50s in the Soviet Union...I do not know why, but I loved "Lacrimosa" more than other parts of this masterpiece...

So dozens of years later, being whether in Moscow, Paris or Brussels this author rushed to enjoy Requiem again and again...

But the one I heard on 8 November in Yerevan Opera House performed by Kaunas State Choir that visited Yerevan within the framework of world tour dedicated to 50th anniversary of professional artistic activity as well as 80th birthday of the orchestra Artistic Director and Chief Conductor since its very establishment, Laureate of the National Award of Lithuania Professor **Petras Bingelis**, Armenian Opera House orchestra conducted by the Honored Artist of the Russian Federation Maestro **Constantine Orbelian** and the soloists **Sofya Sayadyan**



(soprano), **Sofia Tumanyan** (mezzo-so-

prano), **Hovannes Ayvazyan** (tenor) and **Zohrab Zohrabyan** (bass), was very special...And my favorite "Lacrimosa" was also a very special one...

So it was not occasional at all that the audience in overcrowded hall was not letting the artists to go for a long...

Notably, Kaunas State Choir is well-known in the world, it toured all over world.

Since 1989 the Kaunas State Choir participated in many prestigious festivals; the



world stars such as Irina Arkhipova, Montserrat Caballe, Dmitry Khvorostovsky of the blessed memory, others sung with the Choir. Finally, Kaunas Choir has performed more than 3,000 concerts in Lithuania and abroad.

In his interview with The Highlights at the reception just after concert that was attended members of the Lithuanian Embassy in Yerevan led by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary H.E. Mrs. Inga Stanytė-Toločkienė (accompanied by her husband) General and Artistic Director of the AI. Spendiaryan Opera and Ballet National Academic Theatre **Constantine Orbelian** in his short interview with your correspondent said the following: "I am really happy this remarkable evening with one of the best European choirs took place...Although they received a grant from the Lithuanian Government to visit Armenia yet six months ago, I wanted them to sing here in Armenia just after our Moscow concert with Asmik (Hasmik) Grigoryan on 6 November as Asmik is half-Armenian and

half-Lithuanian so there is a kind of symbolism in this...Generally speaking, the choir culture in Armenia should be promoted and developed, and in this sense I'd like to note a kind of correlation between our Hovannes Chekijyan and Petras Bingelis...The first one is 90, and the second – 80, and the both have been leading their choirs for more than a half-century...".

Maestro Orbelian said he has been having cooperation with the Kaunas State Choir for 7-8 years already. In particular, the Choir participated in recording of "Simon Boccanegra" (nominated recently for Grammy) and "Rigoletto" operas by Verdi; the both was starring by **Dmitri Khvorostovsky** of the blessed memory.

In turn, speaking with yours truly, Maestro Bingelis said he has been familiar enough with the Armenian music; the Choir he has been leading since its establishment in 1969 performed works of Armenian composers from Komitas to Alexander Harutyunyan and so they were eager to sing works by our contemporary composers. He noted that the Kaunas State Choir has

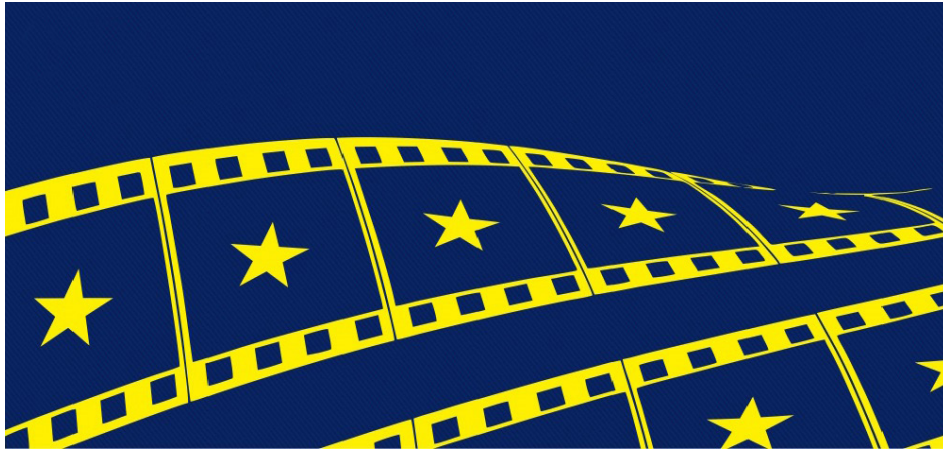


already performed in Yerevan, but...in far already 1979...

Petras Bingelis heaped praise to Maestro **Hovannes Chekijyan** calling him "a legend" and added that he was present at many concerts of Capella under Chekijyan's leadership. In his interview with the Aravot Daily's Samvel

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Second European Film Festival to be held in Armenia



Within the frameworks of the EU Film Festivals initiative the European Union Delegation to Armenia and the EUNIC Armenia Cluster of EU National Institutes for Culture organize this year the second EU Film Festival in Armenia offering the best production of European cinema and creating space for intercultural dialogue.

About 140 EU delegations in the world are involved in organization of European film festivals with a view to promote the European Union, and showcase European culture.

The EU Film Festival in Armenia will run from November 10 to December 2, 2019 in 4 cities of Armenia, including Yerevan, Gyumri, Dilijan and Vanadzor. This year the programme of main screenings includes

12 films of recent cinema production of 12 EU Member States, including Finland as the EU Presidency country, which first time this year has joined the Festival.

The rich programme of the festival includes Yerevan premieres of films by such prominent directors as Roy Andersson, Angniezka Holland, Nora Fingscheidt, Jessica Woodworth, Richard Billingham and many others. Winner titles from this year's Cannes, Berlinale and Venice Film Festivals. Besides the main film screenings festival will be accompanied by public talks and master classes hosted by local and international professionals of the field, including public talk "Festivals in the Age of Streaming" by Jens Geiger and "Restoring Armenia's Film Heritage" by Daniel Bird.

The International EurasiaDoc film platform once again will give a change to the emerging filmmakers to present their project and pitch them to internationally acknowledged producers for future funding and collaboration. Rich film program in the regions will support the development of cultural atmosphere outside Yerevan.

As an exclusive part, the program of the Festival includes a first ever special film competition "Women in Motion" to promote Armenian female filmmakers. 10 films of Armenian production from recent years will be screened for the audience and the members of jury from 11 to 13 November who will choose one winner film, which will be awarded with mentorship and support from international and local members of the jury.

The grand opening of the Festival will be held at Moscow Cinema at 16:30 on 10 November 2019. The Grand opening will be followed by the premiere of the opening film of French Italian co-production "GLORIA MUNDI" by renowned Armenian film director Robert Guédiguian.

H.E. Mrs Andrea Wiktorin, EU Ambassador to Armenia, H.E. Mr. Jonathan Lacôte Ambassador of France in Armenia and other high-level guests will deliver a speech during the opening ceremony.

Over 80 Diaspora-Armenian start-ups express willingness to operate in Armenia

The deadline for applying for "NerUZH" Youth Startup Program is over. Over 80 startups from different parts of the world - USA, Australia, China, Germany, England, France, Spain, Estonia, Czech Republic, Ireland, South Korea, Russia, Georgia, Egypt, have applied, Noyan Tapan was informed from the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs.

Afterwards, the applications will be viewed, interviews will be taken and the winners



will be invited to Armenia to participate in

a gathering from December 16-20 in the International School of Dilijan, to get acquainted with the opportunities for startups and doing business in Armenia, as well as listen to the best experts of the sphere, cooperate with local partners and to develop their ideas. The winners will receive 15-20 thousand USD grants and a complete support for establishing their business in Armenia.

The project is organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs and the Ministry of High-Tech Industry of Armenia.

Danielyan professor Petras Bingelis said that every time listening this or that work performed by the Armenian Capella he was astounded by new sound of the piece. “I want Armenian and Lithuanian choirs exchanges will take place more often”, he concluded.

Coming back to the just-ended concert,



Maestro Bingelis told your author that he was satisfied with the Armenian Opera House orchestra’s play, calling it “a flexible one”. He also praised our soloists and said that Armenia has been having “a very good vocal school”.

By the way, about soloists: your author enjoyed for several times numbers by Sofya Sayadyan, Hovannes Ayvazyan and Zohrab Zohrabyan, but Sofia Tumanyan became a surprise for me – a brilliant mixture of her nice voice, beautiful appearance and “literate” performance let yours truly consider her as a rising star of Armenian and, why not, international stages.

Below The Highlights readers could find some principal extracts from Sofia’s bio (that is pretty impressive):

In 2011, she graduated the piano department of the Komitas Yerevan State Conservatory with a bachelor’s degree. From 2009 to 2014, studying under the guidance of Maestro Gegham Grigoryan, she graduated from the Department of Classic Vocal Music of the State Conservatory, receiving her bachelor’s and master’s degrees with honours. In 2016-2018 she has got training in the Opera House Young Artists Program (Head of Program Levon Javadyan). Since 2016, she has studied under the guidance



of Maestro Antonio Lemmo.

In 2010, as a soloist of Sharakan spiritual ancient music ensemble, she had performed at the Cankar Hall in Ljubljana, Slovenia and at St. Hripsime Church in Vienna, Austria and toured throughout Armenia (conductor: Daniel Yerazhisht).

In 2011, she performed in Spring Remembrance performance concert in Leighton House Museum in London, UK. Since 2015, she is a guest soloist of A. Spendiarian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet. In 2015, she performed the role of Azucena in Giuseppe



Verdi’s Il Trovatore opera (conductor: Gianluca Marcianò, Italy) and acted as Adalgisa in Bellini’s Norma in 2016 (conductor: Gianluca Marcianò). In 2017 she sang various concerts in the 43rd Festival della Valle d’Itria in

Martina Franca, Italy. Sofia Tumanyan received a Special Prize for outstanding



dramatic expression of the Aram Khachaturian International Competition in 2017 from Richard Rodzinski. In 2018, she performed as a soloist in concerts with Croatian Chamber Orchestra in Croatian Music Institute in Zagreb, Salzburg Mozarteum Great Hall and Vienna Musikverein Golden Hall. In the same year, she won the Second Prize at the Angelo Affinita International Singing Competition (Italy). In December 2018, she performed the role of Glaša in Leoš Janáček’s Káťa Kabanová opera in Teatro di San Carlo in Naples. In February-March 2019, invited by Maestro Gianni Tangucci, participated in masterclasses at Accademia del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in Florence.

In June 2019, she performed in Beethoven’s 9th Symphony with Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano (conductor: Markus Poschner). Subsequently, she performed in Mozart’s Requiem in Festival Souni dal Golfo in Lerici (conductor: Gianluca Marcianò) and National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet of Armenia (conductor: Constantine Orbelian).

According to Levon Javadyan, Head of the Young Artists Program of the Opera House (where Sofia was trained), the time has come to keep our young talents here in Armenia, meantime not hindering their international recognition.

Photographs by Tigran Araqelyan of Opera House

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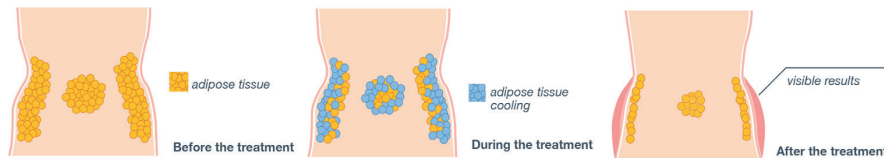
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