

Armenian, Georgian PMs assess bilateral negotiations as productive



Georgia - Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili (R) meets with his Armenian counterpart Nikol Pashinyan, Tbilisi, September 8. 2021.

Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan has wrapped up the visit to Georgia.

Within the framework of the visit, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, President Salome Zurbashvili, paid tribute at the Heroes' Square in Tbilisi, participated in an official dinner hosted by the Prime Minister of Georgia.

Nikol Pashinyan and Irakli Garibashvili discussed the agenda of Armenian-Georgian relations. The prospect of opening an era of stability, peace and development in the region was one of the key topics on the agenda.

The Armenian Prime Minister expressed gratitude to the Georgian side and the Georgian Prime Minister for the efforts made by Georgia for returning 15 Armenian prisoners of war from Azerbaijan, emphasizing that it was a significant contribution to peace and stability in the region. In this context, Nikol Pashinyan high-

lighted Georgia's balanced position on the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, which should be based on the principles proposed by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. The Prime Minister referred to Azerbaijan's unconstructive policy, anti-Armenian rhetoric, which is a threat to regional stability and security.

The Prime Ministers of Armenia and Georgia noted with satisfaction the significant intensification of high-level bilateral official visits in the last three years, which has given a new impetus to the Armenian-Georgian cooperation.

The parties exchanged views on the domestic political situation in the two countries. Prime Minister Pashinyan noted that for the second time in the history of Armenia the elections are recognized by international observers as completely transparent, free and fair, as a result of which it was possible to overcome the domestic political crisis in Armenia. Nikol Pashinyan noted that the strengthening of the rule

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Armenian FM, EU Ambassador discuss humanitarian issues in Artsakh after the 44-day war

Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan received the Head of the EU Delegation in Armenia Ambassador Andrea Wiktoria.

The interlocutors touched upon the agenda of Armenia-EU relations based on common values and ambitions, as well as democratic development and ensuring rule of law. They emphasized the promotion of cooperation in the fields of political dialogue, trade and economic relations, education, transport, energy and environment. Minister Mirzoyan and Ambassador Wiktoria specifically stressed the implementation of infrastructure projects in the south of Armenia.

The sides highlighted the need for effective implementation of the Armenia-EU



Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement and the full use of the cooperation opportunities provided by the latter. The sides also exchanged views on the “post 2020” vision of the Eastern Partnership, as well as on the implementation of the forthcoming summit of the Eastern Partnership.

Minister Mirzoyan drew his interlocutor's attention to the provocative actions carried out by the units of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces against the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, which are a serious threat to the security and sustainable development of the region.

The sides touched upon the humanitarian issues created in Artsakh after the 44-day war. In this context, the urgency of the issue of unconditional repatriation of Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians in Azerbaijan was stressed.

Minister Mirzoyan also emphasized the resumption of the peace process within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship for the lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Armenian PM receives Russian Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received the newly appointed Russian Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group Igor Khovayev. His visit to Yerevan is of cognitive nature.

The interlocutors discussed the ways of settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, in that context emphasizing the importance of the activities of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs' format.



Iraq's President highlights expansion of Armenian diplomatic presence in the country



On September 6, on the occasion of the completion of the diplomatic mission, the

Ambassador of the Republic Armenia to Iraq Hrachya Poladyan met with the President of Iraq Barham Saleh, the Embassy of Armenia in Iraq reports.

During the meeting, President Saleh thanked Ambassador Poladian for the effective work done within the framework of the development of bilateral relations, attaching importance to the expansion of diplomatic presence of Armenia in Iraq, the intensification of economic, cultural

programs and initiatives.

During the meeting President Saleh conveyed his warm greetings and best wishes to the leadership of Armenia.

Ambassador Poladian thanked the President Saleh for the warm welcome and words of appreciation noting the active support of Iraqi authorities and President Saleh personally, in the implementation of various programs and initiatives of the Armenian Embassy in Iraq.



United States doesn't consider status of Nagorno Karabakh resolved - US Ambassador to Armenia

The US is doing everything to bring the parties together under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group, US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy told reporters in Yerevan on September 11.

She noted that the fundamental issues of peace and security require negotiation and diplomacy.

"Secretary Blinken has made our commitment to this process very clear on several occasions," Amb. Tracy emphasized.

"It's obviously a very tough environ-

ment, 30 years of war and tensions are not going to be resolved overnight, but we understand that there are some fundamental issues that have to be addressed, and one of them is that we do not consider the status of Karabakh resolved," the Ambassador added.

She noted that the US will continue to keep that on the agenda of the Minsk Group.

Asked about the perspectives of dialogue, Amb. Tracy noted: "I don't want to speak for the parties. The Government of Armenia has made clear that the issue

of prisoners held by Azerbaijan is to be resolved before it's possible to talk about wider issues."

"As you know, the United States has made efforts in this regard, our Russian colleagues have made efforts in this regard with some success. We hope to get to a place where we have all the prisoners returned, and it is certainly the call that we have been making," she added.

She noted that there is no perfect platform, but the Minsk Group is a platform that has a mandate and legitimacy and can still play a role in the process.

page 1 ➡ of law, including the fight against corruption, opening the era of peace and development for the Armenian people, as well as for the region are the priorities of the Armenian Government's Action Plan.

The interlocutors discussed the ways for further development of economic ties. The sides expressed mutual readiness to increase trade turnover. In this regard, the work of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation between

Armenia and Georgia was highlighted, the next sitting of which is scheduled to be held in Georgia at the end of this year. An agreement was reached to continue the ongoing programs, as well as to develop new initiatives in the fields of transport, energy, high technologies and other spheres.

The sides highlighted the five-sided format of cooperation between Armenia-Georgia-Bulgaria-Greece-Iran and the continuous work on the draft agreement on the establishment of an international trans-

port corridor from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea.



Heads of Armenian, Austrian parliaments discuss in detail the steps to be taken for the immediate release of POWs



Within the framework of the working visit to Vienna Alen Simonyan met with the President of the Austrian National Council Wolfgang Sobotka. The parties discussed in detail the steps to be taken for the immediate release of prisoners of war held by Azerbaijan.

As Noyan Tapan was informed from the press service of the National Assembly, Alen Simonyan highlighted Wolfgang Sobotka's contribution to the deepening and

development of the inter-parliamentary and interstate relations between the two countries. According to the head of the parliament, Armenia considers it necessary to take steps to intensify inter-parliamentary cooperation and contacts.

The sides referred to Armenia-EU visa liberalization negotiations. The head of the Armenian parliament stated that today Armenia advocates the agenda of establishing long-term and lasting peace in the region. In its foreign policy, Armenia is guided by the principle of conciliation of interests, which allows Armenia to pursue a balanced and flexible foreign policy.

Wolfgang Sobotka praised the democratic achievements of the Republic of Armenia, a vividly proof of which is the recent early parliamentary elections. It was

noted that Armenia welcomes Austria's efforts to strengthen peace and stability in the region, to create an atmosphere of mutual trust, to promote regional cooperation, as well as to resolve the Artsakh conflict within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

Wolfgang Sobotka expressed confidence that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be resolved in the format of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. The parties discussed in detail the steps to be taken for the immediate release of prisoners of war held by Azerbaijan. Alen Simonyan thanked the Austrian parliamentarians for the discussions and statements condemning the aggression during the war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh in the fall of 2020.

Ruling Party Opposes Parliament Panel on Karabakh

(RFE/RL -Yerevan) - Lawmakers from the ruling Civil Contract party objected on September 10 to an opposition proposal to legally task one of the standing committees of Armenia's parliament with dealing with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The pro-government majority in the National Assembly already blocked last month an opposition bill calling for the creation of a separate committee on Karabakh.

The main opposition Hayastan bloc went on to draft another bill that would add Karabakh-related issues to the jurisdiction of the existing parliament committee on foreign relations. The panel would be renamed the Committee on Foreign Relations and Artsakh Affairs.

The parliament committee on legal af-

fairs refused to endorse the bill. Seven of its 11 members represent the ruling party. None of them backed the Hayastan proposal.

"I am sorry to note that this bill does not bring us any closer to pro-Armenian solutions," said the committee chairman, Vladimir Vartanyan. "It would not make the situation worse. It just wouldn't change anything."

Hayastan's Aghvan Vartanyan, the main author of the bill, predicted that the pro-government majority will also ensure that the bill is not debated on the parliament floor.

"This will be indicative of the ruling political majority's attitude to the Artsakh issue," he told reporters.

Hayastan and another opposition bloc

represented in the current parliament hold the government and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in particular responsible for Armenia's defeat in last year's war with Azerbaijan.

They also accuse Pashinyan of being ready to cede Armenian territory to Azerbaijan and even recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh in ongoing negotiations mediated by Russia. The premier and his political allies deny that.

Pashinyan's government has also been condemned by the opposition for not sending any of its senior officials to Stepanakert last week to attend official ceremonies there that marked the 30th anniversary of the proclamation of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

Former chief of Armenia's Investigative Committee arrested



Former chief of the Investigative Committee of Armenia Aghvan Hovsepyan has been arrested; the Special Investigation

Service informs.

Investigation has established that during his tenure as Head of the Prosecutor General between March 18, 2004 and September 13, 2013 and as President of the Investigative Committee between July 18, 2014 and June 11, 2018, Aghvan Hovsepyan participated in the management of a number of LLC companies carrying out business activity.

Furthermore, the Special Investigation Service says Hovsepyan received a bribe in the amount of 190,000,000 AMD and embezzled property worth 800,000,000 AMD.

Aghvan Hovsepyan is also charged with money laundering in the amount of 1,299,404,414 AMD.

The former President of the Investigative Committee has been arrested.

Armenia Deplores Turkish-Azeri Drills Near Karabakh

Official Yerevan criticized Azerbaijan and Turkey on September 7 for holding joint military exercises near Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry announced the start of the exercises on September 6, saying that they are taking place in the Lachin district which was mostly retaken by Baku shortly after last year's war over Karabakh.

A 5-kilometer-wide stretch of the district currently serves as the sole overland link between Armenia and Karabakh. It is controlled by Russian peacekeeping forces deployed in the disputed territory under the terms of a Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the war last November.

The Defense Ministry in Baku said the drills are aimed at improving the interoperability of Azerbaijani and Turkish troops



"during combat operations." It did not specify the number of soldiers involved in them.

"We regard the conduct of the Turkish-Azerbaijani military exercises near the borders of Armenia, Artsakh (Karabakh) and the Lachin corridor as an action damaging de-escalation steps ... and under-

mining efforts to establish a lasting peace, security and stability in the region," the Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Vahan Hunanyan, said in written comments.

There was no public reaction to the drills from Moscow.

The recently appointed Russian co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, Igor Khovayev, held talks in Yerevan with Armenia's and Karabakh's leaders on Monday.

Turkey provided decisive military assistance to Azerbaijan during the war. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev thanked Ankara for that aid when he and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited in June the Karabakh town of Shushi (Shusha) captured by the Azerbaijani army in November.

Russia appoints new Commander of Peacekeeping Forces in Artsakh

Armenian Minister of Defense Arshak Karapetyan received on September 9 the newly appointed Commander of the Russian Peacekeeping Forces in Artsakh, Major General Mikhail Kosobokov, and the Commander of the Russian 102nd Military Base in Armenia, Colonel Dmitry Ovcharov. The Defense Attaché of the Russian Embassy in Armenia, Colonel Igor Shcherbakov took part in the meeting.

The Armenian Defense Minister congratulated Major-General Mikhail Kosobokov on assuming the post and



wished him success in his peacekeeping mission.

Arshak Karapetyan congratulated Colonel Dmitry Ovcharov on his appointment

to the post of Commander of the 102nd Military Base in Russia and stressed the role and significance of the Russian unit stationed in Armenia.

The defense minister praised the efforts of the Russian Federation aimed at stabilizing the military-political situation in the region, as well as the process and effectiveness of the Russian peacekeeping mission in Artsakh.

The sides exchanged views on regional security issues.

Kamo Vardanyan appointed Defense Minister of Artsakh



Major General Kamo Vardanyan has been appointed Minister of Defense of the Artsakh Republic, Commander of the Defense Army. A relevant decree has been signed by president Arayik Harutyunyan.

Born March 18, 1966 in the village of

Norshen, Martuni region, Kamo Vardanyan has been serving in the Defense Army of Artsakh since February 1, 1992. From 1992 to 2012 he held a number of command positions in different military units of the Defense Army.

From 2007 to 2012 he was the commander of the Defense Army mountaineering unit. On November 12, 2012, by the decree of the President of the Republic of Artsakh, he was appointed First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Defense Army.

On May 6, 2011, by the decree of the President of the Republic of Artsakh, he was awarded the military rank of

Major General. Participated in the 1992-1994, 2016 and 2020 combat operations.

He has been awarded the Combat Cross Order of the 2nd degree of the Republic of Artsakh, the Medal of Courage of the Republic of Armenia, the Vardan Mamikonyan Order of the Republic of Armenia, the 1st degree Medal For Services to the Motherland of the Republic of Armenia, other state and departmental medals of the Republic of Artsakh.

He is married, has two daughters and one son.

Russia doesn't plan to pull out peacekeepers from Karabakh upon completion of initial term, says analyst Vladimir Evseev

Russia doesn't plan to pull out its peacekeeping forces from Nagorno Karabakh, military expert Vladimir Evseev told ARMENPRESS when asked to comment the former commander of the troops Lt. General Rustam Muradov's latest statement.

"I think Russia doesn't plan to pull out peacekeepers upon the completion of the 5-year term. But of course, everything will depend on the current situation. Azerbaijan will certainly try to somehow drive out Russian peacekeepers, but I don't think they'll succeed," the Russian analyst said.

Lt. General Rustam Muradov, who led the Russian peacekeeping forces in Nagorno Karabakh since the signing of the ceasefire and who was only recently replaced by Major General Mikhail

Kosobokov, told TASS that a decision on extending the mission's term will be made when the 5-year term is completed. Muradov mentioned that he assesses highly the peacekeeping activities, and noted that this assessment is given by the civilian population of Artsakh.

In this context, Evseev said that almost a year since the end of the war Azerbaijan basically hasn't yet mastered the territories it occupied.

"I don't see how Azerbaijan is [mastering] Karabakh. This isn't visible. There is some military mastering, but the territories aren't being populated. Turns out the 7000 Azerbaijanis which Azerbaijan lost in the war died for nothing. Turns out they captured territories where no one lives. In this case, what was the point in taking so many



casualties? What do Arabs for example do in Nagorno Karabakh? Why did they appear there? There are many questions. Therefore, I think it's too early to speak about what could happen in 4 years. But in any case, I think Russia doesn't plan to pull out its peacekeepers. This is my personal opinion," Evseev said.

Interview by Aram Sargsyan



Armenian, Georgian FM's discuss Persian Gulf-Black Sea international transport corridor

On a visit to Tbilisi, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan met with Georgian Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani.

The interlocutors discussed issues on the agenda of friendly and good-neighborly Armenian-Georgian relations, expressed readiness to make efforts to further deepen the cooperation, in particular, in the political, economic, communication, cultural, humanitarian and tourism spheres.

The sides expressed confidence that the intensification of dialogue and cooperation between the two countries will contribute to regional security and stability. Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan stressed that Armenia attaches great importance to the deepening

of trade and economic cooperation with Georgia, highlighting the role of the Armenia-Georgia Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation.

The interlocutors discussed issues related to the agreement on the establishment of the Persian Gulf-Black Sea international transport corridor and the new opportunities within that framework.

In the context of sustainable development and strengthening of security in the region, Minister Mirzoyan attached importance to the unblocking of regional communications, which will also provide new opportunities for the expansion of Armenia-Georgia cooperation.

During the meeting, Minister Mirzoyan thanked the Georgian government for the mediation efforts in ensuring the repatriation of 15 Armenian prisoners of war. At the same time, he added that Azerbaijan still holds Armenian prisoners of war hostage, which is a violation of international human-

itarian law, as well as its obligations under the trilateral statement.

The Armenian Foreign Minister briefed his Georgian counterpart on the situation created as a result of the penetration of the Azerbaijani armed forces into the sovereign territory of Armenia, which undermines regional stability.

Touching upon the Nagorno Karabakh issue, Ararat Mirzoyan stressed the need to resume the process of peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group.



Challenges facing public-private dialogue discussed in Yerevan

On September 8, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded Armenia Business Enabling Environment project and the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia jointly hosted a "Public-Private Dialogue in Armenia" Stakeholder Meeting in Yerevan.

Vahan Kerobyan, the Minister of Economy, and John Allelo, the USAID/Armenia Mission Director, with Ministry representatives, business associations, private companies, and international organizations took part in the event to accomplish the following: discuss the issues and challenges facing public-private dialogue (PPD); hear the opinions of the participants on how to improve opportunities for dialogue; and to review various PPD mechanisms that would create effective, and sustainable dialogue platforms.

"The Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia attaches great importance to dialogue with the private sector and the business community; and to the open and honest discussion of issues that



the business leaders face. Business representatives and sector associations representing the interests of their membership play a crucial role in the public-private dialogue," said Vahan Kerobyan, the Minister of Economy.

"Dialogue between the public and private sectors in Armenia is not a new concept. A number of successful initiatives have been organized in the last decade, in which international donor organizations, including USAID, have provided technical support. Despite the progress made to date, many policy reforms and legislative processes still do not sufficiently include the views and interests of the private sector. USAID will remain committed to sup-

porting these initiatives that will contribute to improved business environment for private sector growth," said John Allelo, the USAID Armenia Mission Director.

"Public-private dialogue is a rather challenging process, and it does not result in a simple recipe for success. It largely depends on the willingness, capabilities, and the long-term vision of the parties to find a common ground on issues that need to be addressed and resolved. In addition, in order for the PPD to be successful and effective, the private sector must have the relevant knowledge to conduct the dialogue, to present the issues, and the ability to realistically advocate for their initiatives," said James Brew, international expert for the ABEE project.

The participants also learned about international best practices in PPD, as well as the prerequisites for the success and risks for failure. The stakeholders discussed further steps towards creating a meaningful and effective dialogue between the private and public sectors in Armenia.

Equipment worth \$770,000 donated to Spitak Medical Center



U.S. Ambassador Lynne M. Tracy traveled to Armenia's Lori province to participate in a donation ceremony of a Digital Radiography and Fluoroscopy Machine to

the Spitak medical Center.

The medical imaging device, worth \$255,000, is one component of a medical equipment donation to the Ministry of Health valued at \$770,000 to support the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in Armenia. The U.S. European Command's Humanitarian Assistance Program funded the donation.

"Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been working closely with the Government of Armenia to keep Armenians safe and healthy. The medical

equipment provided by the U.S. European Command's Humanitarian Assistance Program will improve the capacity of the Armenian healthcare system to diagnose and treat COVID-19 patients," Ambassador Tracy said.

In addition to the donation ceremony, the Ambassador also held a meeting with Lori province governor Aram Khachatryan.

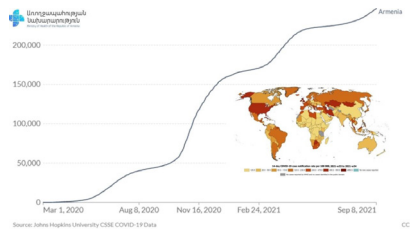


Covid-19: Armenia back to EU's "red zone"

Due to the sharp increase in the prevalence of COVID-19, Armenia has moved to EU's "red zone," the Ministry of Health reports.

once again found itself in an epidemically dangerous "red" zone, which could lead to tightening of entry rules for Armenian nationals.

The European Center for Disease Con-



trol and Prevention (ECDC) updates the list of epidemiologically safe countries

every two weeks, taking into account the COVID-19 situation, the number of new cases and vaccinations.

At the beginning of summer Armenia was moving from the "red" to the "green" zone, but due to the rapid spread of the new Delta variant within a month, Armenia is again considered an insecure country from an epidemiological point of view.

Armenia to participate in Thessaloniki International Fair



The 85th Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF), the greatest exhibition event in Greece, will be physically held at the Thessaloniki International Exhibition Centre from the 11th to 19th of September 2021, while observing all necessary hygiene protocols.

TIF will be the first major exhibition to be organized in Europe in 2021 and will set

the organizational bar for all corresponding events.

Armenia is participating for 7th consecutive time in the most influential business event in Greece promoting Armenian products, tourism as well as investments in several fields of the Armenian economy focusing on agriculture, renewables, financial services and capital markets.

The widest ever range of Armenian products will be presented at the Show including the legendary brandy ArArAt, the world famous ZULAL, ARMENIA WINE, KARAS, ARAIME wines, legendary ZORAH, – one of the best 10 wines of the world according to Bloomberg, the multi-award winning KILIKIA beer, JERMUK and BJNI mineral wa-

ters, NOYAN Premium juices as well as the innovative AWI Watches. Capital markets will be presented by Armenbrok, the leading brokerage firm of Armenia and its associates in Greece.

Armenia's participation is organized by the Hellenic-Armenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Greece under the auspices of the Embassy of Armenia to the Hellenic Republic.

Chamber's staff will be available at the booth to provide important information about doing business with Armenia. Due to the pandemic, it is kindly recommended to arrange a meeting with the participants by messaging to our Chamber's e-mail: thessaloniki(at)hacci.gr.

Armenia, Georgia give new dynamics to bilateral relations: Expert comments on Pashinyan's recent visit

Expert on Georgian studies Jony Melikyan gave an interview to ARMENPRESS, commenting on the recent official visit of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to Georgia.

Talking about the overall dynamics of the Armenian-Georgian relations, the expert said he has an impression that Tbilisi is sending response signals to Yerevan with the wish to further deepen the bilateral ties.

“In the past there have always been signals from Yerevan to transform, revise and further deepen the relations with Georgia, but the response of Tbilisi has not been so concrete or has been given in a different manner. But today it can already be stated clearly that there are signals, and they are mutual, only concrete programs are needed, the implementation of which will revise and transform our relations”, Jony Melikyan said.

He emphasized that it's very important that Armenia identifies its friends from the partners and tries to form a joint agenda with them especially now when security issues in the region are not solved yet.

According to Melikyan, the Armenian-Georgian relations are within this context and the fact that the two sides are trying to give a new dynamics to their relations is very important.

“The meeting with the Georgian Prime Minister both in an open and closed format, the extended-format talks attended also by ministers, as well as the meeting with the Georgian President were very important. And it's also important that this visit is followed by certain steps which will upgrade the bilateral agenda, will bring new projects and directions to the development agenda of the bilateral rela-



tions”, the expert said.

Jony Melikyan states that such visits enable to review and summarize the works done so far and outline the future plans. He says that Pashinyan's visit was directed to this, to revise the Armenian-Georgian relations, to discuss the new developments in the region and initiate new programs.

“It was also mentioned. In my view, that interest is two-sided, both sides are interested. Both Yerevan and Tbilisi will work on this direction and will bring their contribution to the implementation of such projects”, Jony Melikyan said.

The expert notes that the security component has always had a special place in the Armenian-Georgian talks. Before September 27, 2020, Yerevan was informing Tbilisi about all developments related to the Karabakh conflict, presenting its positions.

“The Artsakh issue is not closed, but in line with this, Armenia, based on the November 9 statement, announces that it is ready for the establishment of regional stability and will contribute to the devel-

opment of the region. The talk is about different infrastructure, unblocking. Yerevan's “message” is very clear: at this stage Armenia will do everything for the region to be more stable and safer, to develop, which will allow, including Armenia, to get economic benefit and solve all problems caused by the war. Neighbors and first of all Georgia will use this process”, Jony Melikyan said.

The expert also explained why Georgia is actively interested in the implementation of major economic and transportation projects with Armenia. He notes that if the agreements on resumption of communications between Armenia and Azerbaijan are fulfilled, Georgia will lose its monopoly position as a country providing transit communication and roads. Therefore, he said, in order to compensate the future economic losses, Georgia is trying not to be left out from regional developments.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan paid a two-day official visit to Georgia on September 8.

New Controversy Looms in Jerusalem Over Land Leased by the Patriarchate



By Harut Sassounian

As if Armenians did not have enough problems these days with the disastrous developments in Artsakh, we are now faced with a new controversy in the Diaspora. I have received dozens of phone calls and emails from Armenians in various countries, informing me about a new issue brewing at the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. The details are sketchy and Armenians I contacted in Jerusalem asked that I do not disclose their names fearing either expulsion from the housing provided to them by the Patriarchate or some other retribution.

The issue is about a plot of land that was recently leased by the Patriarchate to a Jewish businessman from Australia. I contacted all three clergymen who were mentioned as approving this deal on behalf of the Patriarchate.

I first sent an email to Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, asking for a copy of the contract. Regrettably, he did not respond. I then called Archbishop Sevan Gharibian, the Grand Sacristan of the Patriarchate. He was reluctant to discuss the issue. I was told by an anonymous source that Arch. Gharibian was pressured into approving the contract. I then called Father Baret Yeretizian, Director of the Real Estate Department of the Patriarchate, who confirmed the deal and provided some of the details. These three clergymen, a minority of the eight-member Holy Synod of the Patriarchate (Dnoren Joghov), were the ones who had approved the lease. An anonymous

source suggested that the entire St. James Brotherhood of the Patriarchate should have met to review the contract.

Fr. Yeretizian stated that there have been several offers from citizens of various Arab countries to lease that particular property owned by the Patriarchate. However, he stated that the most advantageous offer was made by Danny Rubenstein, a Jewish businessman from Australia.

Without disclosing the amount, Fr. Yeretizian confirmed that the Patriarchate received an advance payment from the businessman. An anonymous source informed me that the down payment was one million dollars. Fr. Yeretizian also told me that the Australian businessman plans to build a seven-star luxurious hotel on the property and a percentage of the annual revenue of the hotel will be transferred to the Patriarchate. Even though the anonymously circulated information fixed the length of the lease at 99-years, Fr Yeretizian told me that the lease was in fact for 98 years. Such a lengthy lease leads many to believe that the Patriarchate will never recover that property. When asked, Fr. Yeretizian disagreed, asserting that the Australian businessman will have to return the property to the Patriarchate at the end of the lease, along with the pricey hotel built on it. This is an issue that remains to be seen a century later. Similar lengthy leases for other properties have been signed by the Patriarchate in the past resulting in the same arguments.

The property in question is called “Goveroun Bardez” (Cows’ Garden), located on the historic Mt. Zion, at the southwest corner of the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem. Several months ago, the Patriarchate had signed an agreement with the Municipality of Jerusalem to use the same property as a parking lot to be renovated at the expense of the Municipality and part of it used to park the cars of Jewish residents of the area. At the time, the Patriarchate issued a statement declaring that the value of this land is over \$2 million. Fr. Yeretizian told me that the new lease with the Australian businessman will supersede the earlier agreement with the Municipality. Other

sources told me that the new agreement was also signed without the approval of the Armenian Patriarchate’s full Holy Synod or the Brotherhood of St. James.

There have been past controversies when members of the Patriarchate leased other properties or attempted to sell precious manuscripts stolen from the archives at Sotheby’s auction in London. To make matters worse, the sale or lease of any Armenian property to Israeli individuals, companies or the government is frowned upon by Palestinians who view such transactions as expanding Israel’s presence in the occupied territories. I was told that the Palestinian Authority had sent a formal letter of complaint to the Armenian Patriarchate regarding the lease of this property. However, Fr. Yeretizian denied receiving any such communication.

In the absence of concrete facts and copies of actual documents it is hard to reach any firm conclusions. In the name of transparency, the Patriarchate should make public a copy of the contract for the lease of the “Goveroun Bardez” property disclosing its terms. Without such disclosure, it is hard to judge the advantages or disadvantages of this contract.

If the Patriarchate is engaging in such transactions in order to cover the administrative expenses of its operations, it may be useful to release a report of the Patriarchate’s annual revenues and expenses so everyone can see if the Patriarchate is in a dire need of income. If the Patriarchate is indeed in a desperate financial situation, such a report may encourage benefactors from around the world to make contributions to the Patriarchate and eliminate the need for the sale or lease of additional valuable plots of land.

Finally, in the past, an independent temporary committee was formed to oversee the administrative affairs of the Patriarchate. This may be the right time to reestablish such a committee on a permanent basis. The reports of a credible oversight committee would put an end to divisive and persistent rumors in the Armenian communities about the affairs of the Patriarchate.

EU-funded conference on Increased Resilience of Syrian Armenians and Host Population held in Yerevan



On September 9 the Increased Resilience of Syrian Armenians and Host Population – IRIS Programme Final Conference took place in Yerevan.

The project aimed to enhance the economic integration of Syrian-Armenians and the host population by raising the competitiveness of the local economy by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurial spirit in Armenia.

“I believe that this support from the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis and joint efforts of the founding organizations helped to facilitate and strengthen the economic integration of Syrian Armenians, migrants, repatriates and local entrepreneurs, contributing to the growth of Armenian SME sector. I hope that this experience would be useful for replication within different similar projects in the future,” said the Head of the European Union Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador H.E Andrea Wiktorin in her welcoming speech.

The EU IRIS programme was implemented from July 2018 to July 2021 and was consisting of four main components: Economic integration, Housing Support, Information Services, Social Inclusion. The objective of the programme was to improve social and economic integration of Syrian Armenians and host population and to strengthen institutional capacities for economic growth in Armenia.

During 36 months Armenian Red Cross Society achieved the following:

- 270 families received housing rental subsidies
- sustainable housing models were developed for low and medium income families,
- 100 Syrian and local Armenians participated in paid traineeships activities, from which 77 received job offers afterwards
- 200 older people received food and hygiene parcels on quarterly basis
- Psycho-social Support (PSS) Centre of Armenian Red Cross Society established and provided personal PSS support to 361, and offered group-based integration activities to 735 Syrian Armenian children and adults, as well as to more than 40'000 people affected by COVID-19 and escalation of Nagorno Karabakh conflict
- 631 teachers / partner organizations' & state body employees participated in Psychological First Aid trainings

- 9'000 pupils and teachers were reached through educational activities
- 430 youth were empowered through capacity building and Seed Grant sub-projects.

Armenian Caritas and SME Cooperation Association established EU IRIS Business Incubator foundation as a separate entity which provides full cycle of business incubation including trainings, coaching, mentoring and access to the finance in form of grants and loans. As a result of two calls 102 entrepreneurs have been supported through IRIS Academy, and AMD 449'000'000 has been allocated for their businesses in form of grants and loans.

The Centre for Coordination of Syrian Armenians' Issues with its InfoHub made sure that all services available and provided by different organizations were bundled and shared with all Syrian Armenians.

The IRIS programme is funded by the European Union through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (the 'MADAD' Fund), Austrian Development Cooperation and Austrian Red Cross and is being implemented by the consortium led by Austrian Red Cross and consisting of “Armenian Caritas” Benevolent NGO, Armenian Red Cross Society, Centre for Coordination of Syrian Armenians' Issues and SME Cooperation Association.

All preconditions exist for the conflict settlement to enter a more active stage, Artsakh FM says



The United States, Russia and France have the general understanding that the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs should resume their activity, Artsakh's Foreign Minister

David Babayan said in an interview with Public Radio of Armenia.

“They have never ceased their activity, but have not been very active due to well-known reasons,” Babayan said, noting that all preconditions exist for the settlement process to enter a more active stage.

The comments come after the President of the Artsakh Republic Arayik Harutyunyan met in Yerevan with Russian Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group Igor Khovayev. FM David Babayan was present at the meeting.

Various issues related to the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict including the possibility of the Co-Chairs' visit to the region were discussed during the meeting.

Babayan attached importance to the visit, but found it hard to mention any timeframe.

“The process is going, let's see when it takes place,” the Foreign Minister noted.

He said the self-determination of the people of Artsakh remains a priority and the Armenian side will keep the issue high on the agenda.

Armenia stands in solidarity with the US in commemorating 9/11 victims



On 20th anniversary of 9/11, Armenia stand in solidarity with the friendly people of the US in commemorating innocent victims of terrorist attacks, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said in a Twitter post.

“Last year, Armenians of Artsakh encountered the horror of terrorism, and Armenia will put its utmost efforts in global fight against terrorism,” the Foreign Minister added.

ister added.

On Tuesday 11 September 2001 suicide attackers seized US passenger jets and crashed them into two New York skyscrapers, killing thousands of people.

The attack remains one of the most traumatic events of the century, not only for Americans but also for the world.

Four planes flying over the eastern US

were seized simultaneously by small teams of hijackers.

They were then used as giant, guided missiles to crash into landmark buildings in New York and Washington.

Two planes struck the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York.

The first hit the North Tower at 08:46 Eastern Time (13:46 GMT). The second crashed into the South Tower at 09:03.

The buildings were set on fire, trapping people on the upper floors, and wreathing the city in smoke. In less than two hours, both 110-storey towers collapsed in massive clouds of dust.

At 09:37 the third plane destroyed the western face of the Pentagon – the giant headquarters of the US military just outside the nation’s capital, Washington DC.

The fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania at 10:03 after passengers fought back. It is thought the hijackers had meant to attack the Capitol Building in Washington DC

UK encourages Armenia and Azerbaijan to sign convention which commits to halting spread of landmines

Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Armenia John Gallagher has addressed a message over the UK’s contribution to supporting mine action in areas in and around Nagorno Karabakh.

In his message the Ambassador says that the “impact of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, particularly the loss of life and livelihoods, has been devastating for the region”.

“I am proud that the UK was the first international partner to donate to the International Committee of Red Cross humanitarian response. We gave a million pounds (660 million drams). We are currently working with the UNDP in the communities of Syunik, Vayots Dzor and

Gegharkunik to provide psychological support and help create new economic opportunities for those affected by the conflict”, the Ambassador said.

He added that the UK is also committed to help in clearing up all the weapons, landmines and explosives that remain after the war, endangering lives and limiting the use of the land.

“So, I am delighted that the UK’s Minister for the European Neighborhood Wendy Morton has announced the contribution of 500,000 pounds (330 million drams) to support UNDP efforts in and around Nagorno Karabakh. We hope other international partners will support the UN with this important work and we call on all

parties to work with the UN to have a full access for the UN and other international humanitarian agencies across all areas affected by the conflict.

Our contribution also recognizes the UK’s commitments to help rid the world of landmines. That is why we firmly support the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

The UK strongly encourages Armenia and Azerbaijan to sign this Convention, known as the Ottawa Treaty, which commits to halting the spread of landmines.

Together we can contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous future for all those affected by last year’s conflict”, the UK Ambassador said.

Armenia to host the prestigious Summit of Minds for third time



Armenia will host the prestigious international Summit of Minds for third time this fall, the President's Press Office informs.

The annual Summit of Minds held in Chamonix, France, has been hosted by Armenia since 2019.

The traditional Armenian Summit of Minds has developed into a unique Armenian brand today. An exceptional agreement on its organization was reached in September 2018, when the President of the Republic of Armenia Armen Sarkissian participated as the keynote speaker at the annual Summit of Minds.

The Summit unites famous figures of the world's political, economic, scientific and cultural circles. It is a unique platform for exchange of ideas, knowledge and ex-

perience, the main goals of which are to present new ideas on key issues of global interest, to establish trust-based partnerships through direct discussions.

With the aim of expanding the geography of the summit, discovering new ideas and opportunities, the Summit of Thought will be held in several countries this year.

In September 2021, the main world macro issues will be discussed in the French city of Chamonix. The topics will cover economy, geopolitics, society, environment and technology, their development in the coming years and the potential impact on investment and business decisions.

The summit will be held in Armenia in October and in Canada in November. The summit is scheduled to be held in the United States next year.

The first Armenian Summit of Minds, which was held in Dilijan in 2019 brought together about 300 participants, including famous and influential politicians and statesmen, scientists, businessmen and investors, heads of major companies and media outlets from around the world.

The second Armenian Summit of

Minds was held online due to the coronavirus epidemic and the war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh. The organizers and participants of the summit addressed the military aggression of Azerbaijan in the context of global challenges.

The third Armenian Summit of Minds is scheduled for October 23-24, 2021 in Dilijan. It will be held under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Armenia Armen Sarkissian, the main partners are The Monthly Barometer analytical magazine and the Central Bank of Armenia. The main topics will include geopolitics of the South Caucasus region, development of technologies, namely artificial intelligence, biotechnology in the 21st century. Well-known speakers from different countries will deliver reports.

At the recent online meeting with the summit participants, President Armen Sarkissian. "The most powerful resource Armenia has is the human being. I am one of those who believe that human resources are much richer, stronger and more powerful than natural resources, because that is the future, that is the 21st century."

Baroness Caroline Cox awarded St. Sahak – St. Mesrop Order of the Armenian Apostolic Church



His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, received in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin member of the House of Lords, Baroness Caroline Cox. His Holiness expressed his joy for Baroness Cox'

visit to Armenia and her participation in the conference on International Religious Freedom and Peace. His Holiness appreciated the Baroness' efforts in various international instances to protect the right of the Armenians of Artsakh to live freely and independently, as well as to

provide constant support and assistance to the children of Artsakh. In appreciation of the praiseworthy services rendered by Baroness Caroline Cox to the Armenian people and the Armenian Church, the Catholicos awarded her with the high order of

St. Sahak-St. Mesrop of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In her turn, Caroline Cox thanked the Armenian Patriarch for such a high honor. The Baroness assured His Holiness that she would continue to speak from various international platforms about the atrocities committed by Azerbaijan against the Armenians of Artsakh and the Armenian cultural and religious heritage.



France pays national tribute to Jean-Paul Belmondo



"We love Belmondo because he is like us," Emmanuel Macron said at the ceremony.

Looking back at Belmondo's work with New Wave directors François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, the French President described him as an "unparalleled star of French cinema".

Macron underlined that Belmondo was also an "unforgettable presence" in the work of other groundbreaking French *auteurs*, such as Jean-Pierre Melville, Alain Resnais and Claude Chabrol.

Belmondo was a "presence with whom we grew older, from film to film", Macron continued.

Thousands more gathered outside to watch the service on giant screens set up for the occasion, before being admitted for a final glimpse of the beloved star, known simply as "Bebel" in France.

Lying in state as thousands file past his coffin and a speech by the president: such were the rare honors prepared on September 9 for actor Jean-Paul Belmondo after he died this week at the age of 88, *France 24* reports.

Politicians, celebrities and sports stars were among the thousand people who attended the rare ceremony at Les Invalides in Paris, where President Emmanuel Macron made a speech paying tribute to the late icon.

The last time such a homage was staged was for former president Jacques Chirac in 2019.

Belmondo first came to fame as part of the New Wave cinema movement with films like *À bout de souffle* and *Pierrot Le Fou* by Jean-Luc Godard that heralded a new, postmodern style and helped define French cool in the international imagination.

He went on to become a household name, acting in 80 films covering a multitude of genres, including comedies and thrillers.

Belmondo was also often called "Le Magnifique" (The Magnificent), after a 1970s secret agent satire in which he starred.

"He will always be The Magnificent," Macron tweeted on Monday.

Calling Belmondo "a national treasure", Macron added: "We all recognized ourselves in him."

Armenian Summer Festival opens in London



Armenian Ambassador to the UK Varuzhan Nersesyan participated in the traditional Armenian Summer Festival, organized by the Committee of the Armenian Diocese in Great Britain and Ireland, the Armenian Embassy in UK informs.

The event started with a minute of silence in memory of the Armenians who

sacrificed their lives during the 44-day war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh last year.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Nersesyan attached importance to the organization of the event, during which the best traditions of Armenian culture, history, art and cuisine were presented.



He also stressed the important role of the British-Armenian community in the development and strengthening of bilateral relations, pledging to do his best to expand that cooperation.

Bishop Hovakim Manoogian, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Ireland, Baroness Cox, Member of the House of Lords, Rupa Hook, Member of the UK Parliament, Patrick Sukhdeo, President of the Barnabas Foundation, Chairman of



the British-Armenian Community Council Armand Abrahamyan, the Mayor of Ealing attended the event.

Fortress: Shooting of new film co-produced by Armenia kicks off in Sicily, Italy



The shooting of the full-length feature film *Fortress* directed by Jessica Woodworth and co-producer of the Armenian side Angela Frangyan has started in Sicily, Italy. The film is a co-production between Armenia, Belgium, Italy, Bulgaria and the

Netherlands, the *Armenian National Cinema Center* informs.

Armenia has both financial and creative participation in the film, which stars Armenian actor Samvel Tadevosyan, Hollywood actress Geraldine Chaplin and others.

Co-producer of the Armenian side Angela Frangyan says: "When I was told that Jessica Woodworth was in Armenia a looking for a "fixer," a person that would look locations and accompany the team, I immediately agreed, thinking that it was a good opportunity to show my favorite places to

the famous director. The Armenian lands became a real inspiration for the director. Later, they invited me to the Netherlands and offered to be their co-producer, even though I had no experience with such a large project."

"Everything in Armenia seems to be beyond any specific time and place, this is a unique attraction," Jessica Woodworth says.

In March 2021 Eurimages announced support to the film.

Glendale to host Armenian Festival 2021 in October

Glendale will host the Armenian Festival 2021 on October 9th; the Armenian Consulate General informs.

The event aims at presenting the Armenian arts and culture to the American public at large and promoting those through highlighting the creative image of the Armenian people. One of its important goals is to introduce to the American public a wide range of technology and products spanning from high-tech to traditional merchandises made in Armenia, Artsakh, and California.

In the special pavilions of the Armenian Festival 2021, handicrafts made by disabled soldiers of the 44-day war in Artsakh

and the women of Hadrut are going to be presented. The proceeds will go to charity.



During the festival, a fashion show of the Armenian national costumes of different historical periods as an integral component of the Armenian culture will be organized.

Visitors will be introduced to a large se-

lection of wine, beer, and brandy produced by winemakers from Armenia, Artsakh, and California, with an opportunity of winetasting.

The cultural program of the Armenian Festival 2021 will present solely Armenian folk and national patriotic song and dance performances.

The successful implementation of the Festival will boost the economy in the Homeland benefiting people and contributing to the targeted promotion of the Armenian arts and culture in California. Other Armenian communities from the Western United States are going to participate in the festival.

Moderna developing a one-dose Covid-and-flu booster shot

Moderna is developing a new Covid-19 vaccine and a new combined booster shot that also boosts immunity against the flu, the company told investors on September 9, giving a window into the vaccine maker's plans for a future where the coronavirus is a regularly occurring virus, if one that's less widespread and devastating.

"I am proud of the progress that the Moderna team has made in advancing our best-in-class mRNA pipeline while addressing the global COVID-19 pandemic.



We believe our mRNA platform can solve the world's greatest health challenges, from diseases impacting millions, to ultra-rare diseases impacting dozens, to medicines personalized down to the individual level,"

said Stéphane Bancel, Chief Executive Officer of Moderna.

"Today we are announcing the first step in our novel respiratory vaccine program with the development of a single dose vaccine that combines a booster against COVID-19 and a booster against flu. We are making progress on enrolling patients in our rare disease programs, and we are fully enrolled in our personalized cancer vaccine trial. We believe this is just the beginning of a new age of information-based medicines," he added.

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