

“My step for Shirak Province” investment-business forum kicks off in Gyumri



“My step for Shirak Province” investment-business forum and local production exhibition kicked off in Gyumri on July 20.

Nikol Pashinyan attended the My Step for Shirak Marz economic forum.

The Premier first toured the exhibition, launched as part of the forum, to get acquainted with the products manufactured by Shirak Marz-based companies: farm products, processed goods and commodities, textile, footwear, etc. The Head of Government asked the representatives of the companies about the organization of

production and the upcoming programs.

Addressing the forum, Nikol Pashinyan noted that today’s event is an opportunity to talk about the conceptual approaches behind the Government’s economic policy a year after the well-known events.

“In essence, these concepts should be called conceptual provisions of the economic revolution that we will soon complete and present as a complete strategy how we imagine Armenia’s development and economic structure. At this stage, we have been able to make an important step,

namely the Tax Code reform. In the economic policy, we also see different levels of tax change - the policy of micro, middle and macro businesses,” Nikol Pashinyan said, adding that the macro business will be kept in focus.

The Prime Minister informed that starting from January 1, micro business will be exempted from all kinds of taxes, the income tax for these companies will be set at 5,000 drams instead of 23 per cent.

“This is prioritized in a bid to boost business

➡ page 3

President Sarkissian receives CCAF Co-chair

p. 2

NSS Director proposes two options for overcoming illegal logging

p. 4

New wool factory to open in Armenia’s Amasia community

p.7

Armenian Speaker Meets U.S. Congressional Leaders

p. 5

Armenian Parliament Speaker delivers remarks at Atlantic Council

On a working visit to the United States, Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Ararat Mirzoyan delivered remarks at the Atlantic Council.

The Speaker briefed the attendees on the changes in Armenia after the Velvet Revolution and the perspectives of development.

Following the speech Ararat Mirzoyan had a discussion with representatives of US government and expert circles on Armenia's foreign policy, the expected judiciary reforms, development of the Armeni-



an-American agenda and other issues.

The Speaker also discussed the possible

support to civil society and media with the managing board of the National Endowment for Democracy.

At the Armenian Embassy in the US Ararat Mirzoyan received Scott Mastic, Vice-President of the International Republican Institute.

The delegation headed by the Parliament Speaker met with Armenian community representatives to exchange views on recent developments in Armenia and the parliamentary activities.

Pashinyan congratulates Macron on National Day of France



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan congratulated President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic on the occasion of the National Day of France – July 14th.

“On behalf of the Armenian people and on my own behalf, I extend my warmest congratulations to you and to the French people on the occasion of the National Day of the French Republic – July 14th.

“The centuries-old friendship between the Armenian and French peoples and the special relations between our countries, the high-level political dialogue and mutual trust constitute a solid basis for continued development and deepening of the Armenian-French cooperation,” the Prime Minister said.

“It was very important for us that France

inscribed the 24th of April on the French republican calendar as the day of commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, for which I would like to thank you again,” he added.

Nikol Pashinyan appreciated the continuing efforts of France, as a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group together with Russia and the United States, for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the strengthening of peace, security and stability in our region.

He hailed the close cooperation on international platforms, including within the International Organization of La Francophonie.

“France has always supported the promotion of Armenia-EU relations, and we hope that this will be continued in the future. Today as the Armenian government has launched an ambitious reform process, France's support for the realization of the Armenia-EU cooperation agenda becomes particularly important,” the Armenian Prime Minister noted.

President Sarkissian receives CCAF Co-chair

President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian received on July 19 Co-chair of Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France, editor in chief of “Nouvelles d’Arménie” Ara Toranian.

As Noyan Tapan was informed from the press service of the Armenian President's Office, the interlocutors discussed the activities of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France, as well as exchanged views on the opportunities of cooperation over a number of projects initiated by the President.



page 1



activity; we thereby pledge our support to citizens and call for action. This case is seen as an important tool for overcoming poverty. For example, in case of family business today we raised the threshold up to 24 million drams. The commercial booths outside Yerevan will also benefit from this January 1, which refers to those who do not work in trade centers. The



guesthouses with turnover of up to 24 million drams will also benefit from this privilege,” the Prime Minister said.

According to Nikol Pashinyan, the Government’s economic policy has a well-pronounced social bias. Since July 1, drivers of taxis who are not individual entrepreneurs have been exempted from fees. Each month taxi drivers used to pay 12 thousand drams in Yerevan and 8,000 drams in the regions. Either the licensing procedure is now free for taxi drivers.

“This means that our compatriots are given the opportunity to engage in business activity, and we hope that this will be a benchmark for government-citizen cooperation. By exempting taxi drivers from tax

liability, we hope they will consistently improve the quality of services. Note that tourists get some impressions from taxi services. Our task is to ensure that every foreign visitor would urge his fellow countrymen to come to Armenia,” the Prime Minister pointed out. The Head of Government said that with the new tax amendments, those individuals engaged in household work will be exempt of turnover tax. The tax threshold for restaurants has been returned to July 1, 2018, retroactive force has been reported to the law and restaurants have been given the opportunity to recalculate taxes.

“This is a strong impetus for tourism development. Most of these spheres deal with tourism. According to the Central Bank, tourists spent about USD 120 million in Armenia in the first half-year of 2019. With

this policy, we open an economic opportunity for the citizens of the Republic of Armenia,” the Premier said, adding that the Government will curb the corruption-driven



economic system and there will be no compromise in this matter.

In the matter of economic development, Nikol Pashinyan attached importance to the

projected land reform. Nikol Pashinyan thinks that 30% of our country’s labor force is involved in agriculture, 14% of GDP is agriculture. “The share of the labor force in agriculture should be reduced and the share of those involved in industry should increase in Armenia. In this sense, the land reform is very important, which should give an opportunity to develop industry and boost labor productivity. These efforts should be the next important direction of our government policy. We also see the technology sector as a leading branch of the economy. The latest legislative amendments have created better conditions for startups, and we will continue to pursue this policy. We are also interested in the tangible development of the military-industrial complex, and hope that the creation of the Ministry of High-Tech Industry will lead to concrete results,” Nikol Pashinyan said.

The Premier said an industrial collapse could be seen in the video which presented the current status of Shirak Marz. “On one occasion, I said that industrial zones and facilities were turned into commercial spaces over the past 30 years, and that the trade fairs should be transformed into industrial areas in the next 30 years, and the Republic of Armenia should reclaim its once-glorious reputation of industrial country. The new one will not be like the old industry, but we have enough intellectual potential, and we will be able to gradually develop said potential by means of educational reforms. We believe that this will also help us tackle the demographic problem in the country,” the Prime Minister said, noting that the problem should be solved by means of effective decision-making rather than through social programs.

The Head of Government reminded that the demographic problem in our country was solved when industry experienced drastic development in the Soviet era. “We can do the same for the second time, if we learn lessons from our past mistakes,” Nikol Pashinyan concluded, calling on everyone to make a decision deep down and demonstrate an irrevocable will in implementing their decisions.

During his trip to the Technology Center in Gyumri, the Prime Minister was introduced to investment projects underway in the region, which cover agriculture, tourism, processing industry and other spheres.

13 Arrested in Armenia after violent unrest



Police in Armenia made 13 arrests on July 18 after clashing overnight with residents of the northern Tavush province who protested against a government ban on logging in the area.

Several hundred protesters blocked on Wednesday a highway passing through the provincial capital Ijevan to demand that the authorities stop preventing them from cutting and selling wood from nearby forests. They said logging is their sole source of income.

Riot police used force after the protesters refused to unblock the highway leading to the main Armenian-Georgian border crossing.

Police officers were pelted with stones and hit by sticks during the clashes. Eleven of them required hospitalization, according to a spokesman for the Armenian police. At least one injured civilian also received medical assistance in a local hospital.

Traffic through the busy road resumed after police reinforcements were sent to Ijevan. The national police chief, Valeri Osipyan, also rushed to the town close to the Georgian and Azerbaijani borders on Wednesday night. Osipyan remained there as of Thursday afternoon.

A spokeswoman for Armenia's Investigative Committee, Naira Harutiunyan, said dozens of people were taken for questioning following the violence. Thirteen of them were placed under arrest on suspicion of hooliganism and resistance to law-enforcement authorities, while six others signed written pledges not to leave their places of residence pending investigation, Harutiunyan told RFE/RL's Armenian service.

One of Osipyan's deputies, Vartan Movsisyan, said the police are now trying to track down and arrest other violent protesters.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan condemned the unrest in Ijevan, his hometown, as he chaired a weekly cabinet meeting in Yerevan. "Those responsible for yesterday's events as well as the organizers of illegal logging must be strictly punished," said Pashinyan.

"We will be halting illegal logging in the most resolute manner," he added.

Pashinyan also posted on his Facebook page video of Osipyan addressing and praising police officers lined up in an Ijevan square on Thursday morning.

"We will not be lenient towards anyone," said the police chief. "Everyone must receive a punishment for their deeds envisaged by the law."

NSS Director proposes two options for overcoming illegal logging

Director of the National Security Service of Armenia Artur Vanetsyan talked about the results of the consultation in Tavush Province on the events that took place in Ijevan city on July 17.

"We had a very direct and sincere conversation to understand the problems and be able to solve them. The message I would like to address to the residents of Tavush Province is the following – Tavush is a unique province with its forests, and they can be used more productively than just as firewood. The forests of Tavush Province can become unique touristic areas and the Government has initiated forests tourism for that goal in order to allow the people to organize leisure and touristic zones in the area of forests", Vanetsyan said.

As the second option for solving the issue the NSS Director offered that the citizens should be able to use the wood on the ground for heating their houses.

"There was a proposal from the community heads that the state should regulate the process of gathering that wood, so as the citizens do not enter the forests, but the state should do it through relevant bodies and divide among the residents through the heads of communities", Vanetsyan concluded.

13 people have been arrested in suspicion of conducting hooliganism, signature on not leaving has been chosen as a precautionary measure against 6 people following yesterday's clashes in Arme-

nia's Ijevan town.

On July 17, a group of people blocked the Yerevanyan-Ijevanyan intersection in Ijevan town protesting against the toughening of



fight against illegal logging. During that period, a group of people, deliberately violating the public order, showed a disrespectful attitude towards the Ijevan residents, insulted them and acted violently. In particular, they injured several police officers with the use of stones.

Criminal case has been launched.

Pashinyan names main achievement



Armenia -- Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan speaks to RFE/RL, Yerevan, July 17, 2019.

(Yerevan – RFE/RL)– An Armenian court issued has an arrest warrant for the former head of a Yerevan hospital related to former President Serzh Sargsyan after a law-enforcement body brought more corruption charges against him.

The suspect, Ara Minasyan, is a renowned doctor whose once influential son Mikael is Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on July 17 that the holding of parliamentary elections in Armenia widely recognized as democratic has been the most important achievement of his 14-month rule.

In an interview with RFE/RL's Armenian service, Pashinyan also dismissed critics' claims that many of the young government officials appointed by him have proved incompetent.

"In my view, my biggest achievement is democracy and Armenia's democratic image and the fact that in the contemporary world Armenia is unequivocally considered a democratic country," he said. "[December] 2018 saw democratic elections the results of which were not disputed neither de jure nor publicly for the first time ever. This is a unique event in the history of the Third Republic and I regard it as the biggest success."

Pashinyan also pointed to recent local elections which were won not only by his My Step alliance but also opposition forces. And he reiterated that his government has successfully tackled corruption, strengthened the broader rule of law and broken up economic monopolies since taking office in the wake of the 2018 "Velvet Revolution" led by him.

According to a U.S.-funded opinion poll conducted in May, My Step would win 59 percent of the vote if another general election was held now. The bloc got 70 percent in the December ballot.

Pashinyan insisted that the voter survey does not necessarily mean a more than 10 percentage point drop in his and his bloc's popularity. He argued that pre-election

polls commissioned by the government also showed 60 percent support for My Step.

According to the poll released by the Washington-based International Republican Institute last week, when asked about the Pashinyan government's biggest achievements, the largest proportion of respondents (27 percent) pointed to a decrease in corruption. "Bad management" was the most frequent answer (22 percent) to a question about the government's biggest failures.

"Is there bad management in Armenia? Of course, there is," said Pashinyan.

But he insisted that new people brought by him to the government are not primarily responsible for it. The vast majority of government officials and civil servants had joined the state apparatus before the 2018 revolution, he argued, adding that many of them are "accustomed to working through corruption."

"And now that you are trying to work according to the law, it turns out that the law was meant for showing off, rather than working," said Pashinyan. He said his political team has "enough skills to govern the country."

Armenian Speaker Meets U.S. Congressional Leaders

Parliament speaker Ararat Mirzoyan reportedly called for greater U.S. assistance to Armenia when he met with U.S. Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell in Washington on July 16.

Mirzoyan also held a separate meeting with U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on the sidelines of an international forum held in the U.S. capital. According to the Armenian parliament's press office, he briefed Pelosi on ongoing developments in Armenia and thanked her for her "contribution to U.S.-Armenian relations."

Pelosi has long supported measures championed by the Armenian community in the United States, notably draft resolutions recognizing the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey. Her California constituency has a large number of ethnic Armenians.

In a separate statement, the office said Mirzoyan discussed with McConnell "possibilities of increasing financial assistance



provided by the United States to Armenia." It said they also talked about Armenia's foreign policy and energy security as well as "regional stability."

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan complained in March about America's "zero reaction" to democratic change in his country. He seemed unhappy with the fact that there has been no significant increase in U.S. economic assistance to Yerevan since last year's "velvet revolution" which brought him to power.

The U.S. ambassador in Yerevan, Lynne Tracy, countered afterwards that in 2018

Washington provided \$26.7 million in assistance to Armenia in addition to an ongoing \$66 million aid program implemented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

A U.S.-Armenian "strategic dialogue" held in Yerevan in May was followed by an announcement that the U.S. government will provide up to \$16 million in fresh aid to the South Caucasus nation. In addition, the USAID promised \$6 million in support of the Pashinyan government's "democratic reform agenda."

And in June, the U.S. House of Representatives approved \$40 million in "democracy assistance" to Yerevan to be allocated next year. The figure is considerably higher than annual aid levels set by the U.S. Congress in recent years.

Overall U.S. aid to Armenia has exceeded \$2 billion since 1992.

Armenia resolute to reinforce its agenda for “smart” development – Deputy PM

The Armenian Government is resolute to reinforce its agenda for “smart” development, with a strong focus on good governance and the policies of embracing national talent as the drivers for development, Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan said at a High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York titled “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.”

“Advancing sustainable development with particular emphasis on information and communication technologies, amplifying the growth of start-ups, fostering innovation and investing in young people’s skills and entrepreneurship are among the strategic priorities of the Government of Armenia, having embraced the bottom up dynamics and successful examples of business and impact investment initiatives,” Avinyan said.



“We are willing to build on the existing positive record of cooperation and support for the advancement of “smart development” as a strategic priority for action in our domestic agenda, as well as internationally,” the Deputy Prime Minister added.

He announced that Armenia will host the 23rd World Congress on Information Technologies later this year, which will bring together prominent industry leaders, policy makers, thinkers and innovators to de-

bate on the key questions facing the industry and the world, such as issues related to artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, impact of ICT in education, women in technology and many other issues of global interest.

He extended an invitation to all relevant stakeholders to participate and contribute to this very important conversation, which will take place in Yerevan on 6-9 October.

The Deputy PM noted that as a middle-income country and a landlocked developing country,

which is located in one of the most seismically active regions of the world, Armenia is well familiar with the risk of environmental challenges, natural disasters and their impact on human societies.

“Recognizing the cross-cutting nature of environmental and economic issues, the Government of the Republic of Armenia emphasizes the importance of the integration of economic and environmental policies. It is our firm conviction that the best economic decisions are made when the environmental aspects have been carefully taken into consideration,” Tigran Avinyan noted.

He emphasized the “very positive record of cooperation” that Armenia has developed in implementing programmes for energy efficiency and climate smart technologies, towards a low-emission and climate-resilient pathway for sustainable development.

100-member Iranian trade and economic delegation to visit Armenia next month



Armenia and Iran are “likely to use” local currencies in trade activities with each other, Chairman of Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce Hervik Yarijanian told a briefing in Tehran on July 16, Mehr News reports.

“We are following up necessary measures to do business with hard currencies of the two countries i.e. rials and drams,” he said.

Hervik Yarijanian added that during a recent meeting Armenian President Armen Sarkissian said “Armenia attaches great importance to its relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran and intends to increase mutual investment between the two countries.”

Dispatching trade and business delegations, setting up exhibitions and taking maximum advantage of potentials and capacities of the two countries are of salient programs, he highlighted.

Turning to Meghri Free Economic Zone, he added: “this Zone has not yet been activated. With the activation of this Zone in the vicinity of Iranian borders, we can connect factories and service systems to Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) system.”

Yarijanian said a 100-member Iranian trade and economic delegation will be dispatched to Armenia next month.

Chairman of Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce put the total trade volume of the two countries at \$300 million and added, “energy is the major field of cooperation between Iran and Armenia

Zucklight: Armenian engineers developing prototype for Zuckerberg's sleep box



A team of Armenian engineers and builders have developed a prototype for Zuckerberg's sleep box and launched a Kickstarter campaign to fund the production in June, CNBC reports.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg threw out the idea for a business in April.

Mark Zuckerberg CEO shared that he

built his wife, Priscilla Chan, a device he called a "sleep box," a wooden box that sits on the bedside table and emits a soft light between the hours of 6 a.m. and 7 a.m., when it's time to go get their kids. That way Chan doesn't have to constantly wake up and check the time on her phone.

Zuckerberg said "a bunch" of his friends seemed interested in having one, so he posted his creation on Facebook "in case another entrepreneur wants to run with this and build sleep boxes for more people," he said.

By May 18, Armenian engineer Greg Hovannisyan had a prototype, on June 13 he launched the Kickstarter campaign and with 27 days left it has already raised \$108,000, more than 21 times its \$5,000 goal.

Hovannisyan and the founding team are Armenian, so the device dubbed Zucklight is being developed by team of engineers in Armenia. The company's headquarters, meanwhile, are in New Jersey.

Early bird pricing for the basic Zucklight is \$29, which is more than half off the expected \$60 retail price, according to the Kickstarter campaign.

Early bird pricing for the Zucklight Plus, which includes wireless charging, is \$39, which is more than half off the expected retail price of \$80.

The Zucklight Pro, which has wireless as well as environmental sensors to measure the level of humidity, carbon dioxide and temperature in the room as well as alerts, is available to early bird backers for \$47 and is expected to retail at \$100.

New wool factory to open in Armenia's Amasia community

Wool Factory organised within the framework of the EU-supported "EU4Shirak: Wool for Jobs" project will be officially opened in Amasia community of Armenia's Shirak province.

H.E. Mr. Piotr Świtalski, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to Armenia, H.E. Mr. Suren Papikyan, RA Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, Mr. Tigran Petrosyan, the Governor of Shirak province, Mrs. Jemma Harutyunyan, the Mayor of Amasia, Mrs. Varduhi Dadunts, the Country Director of People in Need NGO will participate in the opening ceremony and deliver opening remarks.

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony and official opening of the Amasia Wool Factory, the guests will participate in a short tour in the factory involving presentation of installed equipment and wool-processing techniques.



"EU4Shirak: Wool for Jobs" project was launched in March of 2018 and will continue until March of 2020. The project is co-funded by the European Union as well as the Government of the Republic of Ar-

menia and implemented by "People in Need" NGO, together with Women's Development "Resource Center" Foundation, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Shirak Marz and Amasia Municipality.

NSW Premier hopes Australia will recognize Armenian Genocide in near future – interview



Premier of New South Wales, Australia, Gladys Berejiklian is in Armenia for already the fourth time. This time she pays a private visit, but meetings were already held with Armenia's President and Prime Minister.

Gladys Berejiklian gave an interview to ARMENPRESS talking about the future programs, the Armenian community of New South Wales, the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and other topics.

-Mrs. Berejiklian, as a result of elections held in New South Wales on March 23, 2019, you become the first female and ethnic Armenian Premier of NSW. NSW exceeds Armenia with its size and number of population for several times, as well as exceeds a number of leading countries with its economy. What cooperation prospects do you see with Armenia? Are there any mutual partnership programs which you already discussed with the Armenian President or the PM?

-The programs are very broad, but I hope we will be able to establish strong ties at the official level in the future, because at a non-official level our hearts are very close. The Armenian community of New South Wales is very powerful. The members of the community always want not only to visit Armenia, but also be useful for the country. We have thoroughly discussed the

issue of deepening the relations at an official level both with the PM and the President, and I hope that we will be able to give an official status to our relations in the future.

-You visited Armenia also in 2013 with the delegation of Austrian politicians. Six years have passed since that visit, what change do you see in Armenia and what are your impressions today?

-This is the first time I am visiting Armenia as a PM, but, in general, this is my 4th visit. I have relatives here and always try to visit Armenia. I saw a lot of changes in Armenia. I think the people here are more optimistic, full of hope about the future, construction is developing, but there are some issues which need to be solved in the future. But I am optimistic about Armenia and feel that the Diaspora-Armenians always stand together with Armenia.

-What impressed you most in Armenia? And what can attract NSW tourists to visit Armenia?

-I think Armenia's history, beautiful sites can be attractive. Armenia should show its wealth in a better way, especially the monuments with a historical value. For instance, if the western world is informed that there are churches here dating back to the 4th-5th centuries, they will be interested in visiting here.

-Last time you also visited Artsakh. Are you planning a similar visit this time?

-Unfortunately, no. This time the visit is very short, I came here for a week to attend a wedding. But I will visit Artsakh in the future, I have been there for two times and always urge my friends to visit there. Another group of Australian lawmakers will visit Armenia in the near future, and I hope they will visit Artsakh as well.

-You proudly state that you are the granddaughter of a family who survived the 1915 Armenian Genocide. During your activities you repeatedly called on the Australian authorities to recognize the Armenian Genocide. What do you think when Australia will recognize the Armenian Genocide, what are the possibilities for that and what actions do you take on this direction?

-It's already 20 years New South Wales has recognized the Armenian Genocide and is recognizing the independence of Artsakh. We hope that Australia will also recognize, if Germany and some countries can recognize, and I always raise this issue among my parliamentary friends. I hope Australia will recognize the Armenian Genocide in the near future.

-What will be your advice to Armenians living in Diaspora who are just starting their activities in politics?

-Two things have always helped me, the belief and diligence. If you work hard, you can do everything. I'm always asked what is the secret, I say there is no secret. You need to work day and night and should always be optimistic, these two things are very important.

-Do you have any plans and goals to occupy higher positions in the future?

-No, my position as PM is enough. But 17 years ago, when I was elected as member of parliament, I didn't imagine that one day I will become a premier. But gradually when you are recording one success, you understand that you can achieve another as well. Thus, I achieved this position in that way.

*Interview by Norayr Shoghikyan
Photos by Tatev Duryan*

Inecobank to sponsor “Sevan Startup Summit 2019”



services including break through and innovative digital banking solutions. For over 23 years the bank has been providing high quality banking service in Armenia serving more than 500 000 customers and over 200 000 online users.

Inecobank has developed and delivered industry-leading digital banking solutions with the purpose of introducing an entirely new culture of banking services.

On July 19, Inecobank has announced about a new initiative to support the startup sector in Armenia. The Bank is supporting “Sevan Startup Summit 2019” project and is the sponsor of the “Big Battle” nomination.

Taking part in “Sevan Startup Summit 2019” and being a sponsor, the Bank aims to promote the establishment and development of innovative technology-driven ideas in Armenia.

“Inecobank highly appreciates the organization of such IT events in Armenia, that further the economic growth through the development of IT industry in the country and promotion of business processes. Today, sponsoring the “Sevan Startup Summit 2019” annual conference and being the sponsor of the “Big Battle” nomination, the Bank contributes to the development of newly established structures involved in innovative technologies, providing a platform for cooperation and growth and supports further improved implementation of best ideas and solutions,” said Aren Nalchakyan, the Marketing and Development

Director of Inecobank.

The Seaside Startup Summit CEO, Vahagn Rapyan, stated, “Sevan Startup Summit has become the most awaited regional startup event. Each year we are trying to involve more beneficiaries. We are happy to announce about our partnership with Inecobank and hope to enjoy continuous cooperation with them”.

“Sevan Startup Summit” is organized since 2016 and is aimed at creating new ways of cooperation between startups and investors. This year about 1000 startups, more than 200 programmers have applied for participation in the summit, and around 100 mentors and business experts have been invited from all around the world.

“Sevan Startup Summit 2019” will be held from July 28 to August 3 in the Sevan National Park.

ABOUT INECOBANK CJSC

Inecobank CJSC is one of the leading banks in the South Caucasus region, focused on individual customers, small and medium market businesses and large corporations offering a full range of banking

- In 2009 the Bank digitalized and fully automated the “Point of Sale Loan” product, reducing the loan generation time from 3-4 days to a few minutes.
- In 2012, with the introduction of InecoOnline, the Bank was one of the first to provide 24/7 banking services to its customers.
- In 2014 the Bank launched Ineco-Mobile application, which has the greatest amount of users among Armenian financial applications due to its capabilities and simplicity of use
- In 2017, the Bank was the first to introduce a fully automated consumer lending solution through its mobile and online applications, which generates consumer loans 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In 2018, the Bank was the first banking institution in Armenia to introduce Ineco-Pay, the cashless payments new system.

Armenia ready to help recover ancestral Christian presence in the Middle East -FM



Armenia promotes adherence to international human rights instruments and firm commitments to ensuring freedom of religion within the framework of the overall democratization of the society, Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom hosted by the U.S. Department of State.

He said the non-violent Velvet revolution that took place in Armenia in April-May last year once again demonstrated the powers of tolerance, non-discrimination and respect for human rights and their value in our society.

“Religion represents an institution of identity and the protection of the identity. Our history is a telling story about that. Tolerance and respect for all religions is based on our national experience, Christian heritage and long history of living together and sharing with other faiths,” the Foreign Minister said, adding that “freedom of religion and belief is an absolute human right which cannot be abolished or curtailed under any circumstances including in conflict situations.”

Minister Mnatsakanyan emphasized that preventing mass atrocities against members of religious groups is an absolute priority

for Armenia.

“We know what it means to be a persecuted religious group within the oppressive framework. It is a duty for us to pledge support to all those who are persecuted, including on the basis of their religion and belief today,” he noted.

“Armenia became a safe haven for a number of vulnerable religious minorities particularly Yazidis and Assyrians. Today Yazidis are the strongest minority group in Armenia, and we are very proud that the biggest temple of this ancient people very soon will open in their Armenian homeland. Together with the most ancient Christian churches of the world and magnificent Blue Mosque of Yerevan it will symbolize beauty of faith and tolerance,” the Foreign Minister stated.

He reminded that Armenia has received more than 20 thousand refugees from the Middle East and provided assistance to them on the ground.

“Armenia stands ready to cooperate with all interested parties to recover ancestral presence of Christians in the Middle East by rebuilding their lives, communities and churches. The Armenian people historically have been significant contributors to diversity, harmony and prosperity of the countries and societies of the Middle East,” he stated.

Armenian Ambassador's article published at Diplomatic World magazine

An article by H.E. Tatoul Markarian, Armenia's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium, has been published in the prestigious Diplomatic World magazine.

In the article titled “Armenia... Where Europe Ends or rather Starts,” the Ambassador briefly presents the millennia-long history of the first Christian nation, the latest developments in the country's domestic political, public and cultural developments.

“Ancient history, rich culture and a striking nature! It is not enough to say that Armenia and Armenians are ancient, but one should say that Armenians are one of the oldest civilizations inhabiting our planet, with a history that dates back to the ancient Kingdom of Urartu, that existed in IX-VI



centuries BCE,” Amb. Markarian wrote.

“Truly, the year 301 marked the adoption of Christianity as a nation, thus Armenia becoming the first country to adopt it as a state religion. One century later – in the year 405 the Armenian alphabet was created by Armenian linguist and ecclesiasti-

cal leader Mesrop Mashtots. Even though the spoken language, which belongs to the Indo-European family, had existed for many centuries, the invention of the Alphabet was a truly revolutionary event in the history of the Armenian people,” he continued.

Tatoul Markarian said “with its rich culture, history and economy Armenia is a difficult topic to exhaust.”

“The best way to learn about it would be visiting the country itself, discovering by one's own eyes its ancient history and vibrant culture and experiencing first-hand the hospitality of its people, and enjoying its delicious food. Armenia is surely a rewarding experience!” he concluded.

Turkish Anti-Armenian Lobbying Extends to City of Armenia in Colombia

By Harut Sassounian

The Breitbart website published an article by Frances Martel describing the Turkish lobbying efforts in the Colombian City of Armenia, which was founded in 1889 and originally called Villa Holguín. According to Wikipedia, the South American city changed its name to Armenia “in memory of the Armenian people murdered by the Turkish Ottomans in the Hamidian Massacres of 1894 – 97 and later the Armenian Genocide of 1915 – 23.” Some scholars dispute this assertion, ascribing the origin of the city’s name to the Biblical reference to Armenia.

Ece Ozturk Cil, the Turkish Ambassador in Bogota, Colombia sent two letters, one on December 14, 2018 and the second on January 11 of this year, to the Mayor of Armenia, Colombia, inviting him and 10 city council members to visit Turkey as official guests of the Turkish government.

On February 3, during a special Sunday night session, Armenia’s City Council by a vote of 12 to 6 approved the visit of Mayor Oscar Castellanos and nine city council members to Turkey, between February 6 and 13. During the trip, the mayor and city council members of Armenia met with the mayors of Istanbul and Ankara, the Chairman of the Turkish Parliament, and visited the Center of Latin American Studies at the University of Ankara. They also met with Turkish businessmen and visited the Blue Mosque and the Grand Bazaar.

The trip generated a major controversy in Colombia. Many residents of the city of Armenia objected to the visit, because of the absence of the mayor and the nine city council members at a time when the city was in economic disarray and mismanaged. Five mayors of Armenia had been ousted in the past three years due to corruption. The citizens felt that the new mayor should have stayed home and taken care of the business of the city. The Regional Prosecutor General opened an investigation into the Turkish trip to review the violations com-

mitted by the mayor and the council members. They should also be investigated to establish what bribes or gifts they received from their “generous” Turkish hosts while visiting Turkey.

The local Colombian publication *Semana* confirmed the link between Armenia (Colombia), Turkey and genocide: “...It turns out that the [city] council of Armenia, [Colombia], decided through Agreement 08 of 2014, to recognize the Armenian Genocide and as such declare April 24 as the official commemorative date, in solidarity with the country that bears the same name as the Colombian city. Subsequently, the Council ratified these links in Minutes 075 of 2015, through which they sought to establish ties of friendship with the Republic of Armenia....”

In response to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, *Semana* explained that “everything seems to indicate that the background of this invitation from the Turkish government is to provide the council members with the other version of a painful historical episode that points to that country as responsible for genocide.”

Semana reported: “As will be remembered, what is known today as the Armenian Genocide happened in 1915 during the First World War and although the figures are still under discussion, there is talk of a minimum of 300,000 and a maximum of 1.5 million deaths. The victims of that extermination were the Armenian people and they point as their executioner to the Ottoman Turkish Empire, today’s Turkey.”

Semana wondered if as a consequence of the city officials’ trip to Turkey they may decide to repeal the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

In the meantime, the only new development since the trip is a mural of a man wearing Ottoman-era clothing on the side of Armenia’s city council building. Breitbart reported that the mural has “no historical correlation to the city” and “is confusing and angering many residents.... The regional newspaper *La Crónica de*

Quindío reported that locals appear baffled, and some outraged, by the expensive mural, which they find irrelevant to their heritage.”

Breitbart quoted a local woman named Maricela Montes telling *La Crónica*: “I don’t really understand what Armenia [the Colombian city] has to do with Turkey. I think that what they need is to pay back favors for that little trip they took.... It is not logical that something like this would be painted on such a pretty department.”

The newspaper quoted another resident as saying that he is not angry, but merely “confused.” Jorge Jaramillo told *La Crónica*: “We are confused, because we don’t understand what a sultan has to do with Armenia [the city]. What is happening to us? Please, serious statesmen have to take the reins of this city. This is truly horrible for our capital.” City Councilman Luis Guillermo Agudelo told *El Tiempo* that, “the mural is an absurdity.... This is a public building that has a very important connotation.... This is where our gallery was, and now they are totally changing its identity.”

El Tiempo reported that “the council is not only considering cultural favors to Turkey. They are now openly debating amending the 2014 declaration the city passed recognizing the Armenian genocide,” according to Breitbart.

So far, the Turkish invitation has backfired on Turkey, because it has generated a lot of discussion about the Armenian Genocide in the Colombian media and has gotten the mayor and the city council members in legal trouble.

It is incumbent on the Armenian Republic’s Ambassador to Brazil, who is also accredited to Colombia, to initiate an immediate action to counter the Turkish lobbying efforts. A similar action has to be undertaken by the Armenian communities in South America. They should also ensure that the city council does not repeal its earlier decision to recognize the Armenian Genocide and gets rid of the Ottoman mural.

Presentation of books

On June 12 in the Armenian Evangelical Center the presentation of the books “Is this house yours or mine?” and “First station: Aleppo” of Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) executive officer Zaven Khanjian took place under the auspices of Armenian Writers Union, “Diaspora” scientific - educational center and Armenian Evangelistic Partnership.

Those books were published in 2007 and 2012 in Los Angeles, but this is the first time they are presented in the homeland. In the books the feelings and experiences of the famous Armenian Diaspora intellectual are expressed: in the first one about the motherland of his ancestors, the Western Armenia, and in the second one about his motherland Aleppo. The guests and speakers of the event, Armenian Writers Union President Ed. Militonyan, “Diaspora” scientific - educational center director Suren Danielyan, YSU History Department Dean



his homeland but also towards the motherland of his ancestors despite living all his life in foreign countries. Armenian Writers Union President Ed. Militonyan, as a confirmation of the expressed praise, gave the

books “Is this house yours or mine?” and “First station: Aleppo” were characterized as silent novels, full of longing and desire to be seen by many eyes.

The title “Permanent table-books of the nation accompanying our generation” can rightly become not only the main emphasis of the presentation, but also a message-reminder to the readers of Zaven Khanjian’s books whose number also owing to this event should increase. A special charm was given to the event by the theatrical presentation of his wife, Sona Khanjian. And the shots shown on the screen were telling about the important events of the famous intellectual’s life and biography also described in his books. In his speech Z. Khanjian thanked the well-known speakers for reading and appreciating his books. He emphasised that especially in our days it is important to maintain in foreign countries the feeling and pride of being Armenian and transfer the ancestors’ relics to our generations.



E. Minasyan, RA National Academy of Sciences Archeology and Ethnography Institute researcher H. Cholaqyan, RA National Academy of Sciences Oriental Studies Institute researcher, Genocide Expert Anush Hovhannisyanyan, Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute scientist-secretary Narine Margaryan spoke with a praise to the author emphasizing that he had maintained his love and appreciation not only towards

Writers Union Certificate to Z. Khanjian. Literature specialist Suren Danielyan in his speech in particular stated that the experiences of Z. Khanjian are not solely personal, they save from being lost not only the memory, but also the non-personal, hidden in dust of the history, the universal red thread of national memory. This is the mission of the pilgrimage to the Western Armenia, the ancestors’ motherland. The



Professor Armen G. Charchyan: “This Congress was Truly Unprecedented One in All the Respects ...”

**By Gourgen James Khazhakian,
Chief Correspondent**

Recently, the next International Medical Congress of Armenia has been held in Yerevan that is being held every four years, as well as the Armenian International Medical Congress organized in Diaspora also in four years.

*We talked about the outcomes of the Congress, its achievements, prospects with its President, Director of the Izmirlian Medical Center, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor **Armen G. Charchyan**.*

Armen Charchyan:

- It would not be an exaggeration to say that this Congress was a re-



lecturers, such as **Noubar Afeyan**, Head of Cambridge University's Biotechnology Programs, **John Chilingarian**, Head of MBA Pro-

sor **Hayk Nikoghosyan** who gave a great lecture on “The Global Health Care”, a world-renowned specialist in the field of transplantology **Nizam Mamode** (UK), Academicians at the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences Prof. **Bagrat Alekryan**, Prof. **Aramayis Kamalov**, **George Harutyunov**, **Ashot Yesayan**, **Areg Totolyan**, neurologist **Maria Tanashyan**, immunologist **Khachik Sayadyan** (Moscow-Frankfurt-Los Angeles), others. One of the important peculiarities was the fact that all the lectures were broadcasted online, and that the doors were open for all those with no exception, whether they



ally unprecedented one in terms of the number of participants, the level of invited lecturers, and the diversity of satellite symposiums and sectional sessions.

We had fourteen world-renowned

program in the area of the Health Care Leadership from Boston, former Healthcare Minister of Armenia, currently Head of the Convention Secretariat WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Profes-





were able to pay the registration fee or not.

I would also like to emphasize something very important.

At the Congress, we expressed our profound gratitude to our Diaspora sisters and brothers for their invaluable support that they have done since Armenia's independence, but now we offer them mutually beneficial cooperation over various projects.

More than 2400 people participated in 26 specialized satellite symposiums, and I would like to remind you that before the official opening of the Congress we held symposiums in Gyumri, Artsakh and Tavush.

And in the 27 section sessions the whole 186 reports were made. I might point out that the discussions were of a non-formal character, they were hot enough sometimes...

-...And what about the main objectives of the Congress?

-Well, they are the following:

a) Acquaintance with recent achievements in science and tech-

nology;

b) The practical application of those achievements in Armenia's health;

c) Establishment of the links and programs between different areas' professionals.

And I can say that we have fully achieved those goals.

- Who has financed the Congress?

- A quarter of the expenses was covered by the registration fees;

- Armenia's leading telecommunication operator VivaCell-MTS is the Congress General Partner since its founding;

- We appealed to "Tsarukyan" Charitable Foundation, and they kindly paid for the registration fee of 100 participants;

-Zangezour Copper and Molybdenum Plant, Platinum Benefactor
- Izmirlian Foundation (Switzerland-Armenia), Platinum Benefactor.

Some money was provided by pharmaceutical companies.

- And what about your speech, Professor Charchyan?

- In my speech, I emphasized that we, doctors, are the world's most "apolitical" people, we can take on ourselves the strong consolidation of the Armenia-Diaspora-Artsakh ties, especially as after "velvet revolution", it has become much easier, in particular, some bureaucratic barriers almost disappeared.

I should also attach importance to the speech of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia **Nikol Pashinyan**, the messages of the President of the Republic of Armenia **Armen Sarkissian** and Catholicos of All Armenians His Holiness **Karekin II** and, of course, the fact that the participants of the Congress were warmly received at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin by His Holiness, as well as received by the President of Armenia at the Presidential Palace.

- .. Sorry, dear Professor Charchyan, what was the most remembered thing in the Prime Minister's speech ...

-Mr Prime Minister said that our Congress was one of the best examples of the Homeland-Diaspora relations, adding that if the doctors can unite, why other professions cannot do the same ?

And this can not be disagreed with...



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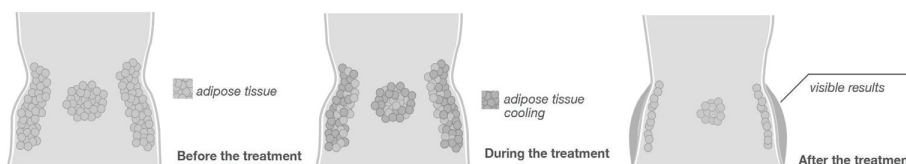
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AZAD Pharma AG AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Switzerland

AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Durachweg 15
CH-8200 Schaffhausen
Phone No: +41 52 632 09 10
Fax: +41 52 632 09 11

AZAD Pharma AG

Bahnhofstrasse 9
CH-3125 Toffen
Phone No: +41 31 810 40 10
Fax: +41 31 810 40 11

Canada

AZAD Fine Chemicals Ltd.

1895 - 55th Avenue
Dorval, Qc H9P 1G9
Phone No: +1 514 636 19 99
Fax: +1 514 636 75 55

Atlit Inc.

16 Westminster Ave.,
Suite 306A
Montreal, Qc H4X 1Z1
Phone No: +1 514 369 25 91
Fax: +1 514 369 81 67

China

Hangzhou Representative Office of AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Room 801-087, Lixin Plaza,
#102 Moganshan Road
310051 -Hangzhou China

Phone +86-571-8761 5336
Mobile +86-153-5505-0903
Fax: +86-571- 8895 8963

Germany

AZAD Pharma GmbH

Fritz-Reichle-Ring 6a
DE-78315 Radolfzell
Phone No: +49 7732 939101510
Fax: +49 7732 9391016

Armenia

AZAD Pharmaceuticals LLC

Vanahovit 8, Proshian
Ashtarak Ave., Kotayk Marz
Phone No: +374 93 40 40 62
Fax: +374 93 40 34 40

Noyan Tapan

The publisher: NT Holding LTD
Լրատվական գործունեություն իրականացնող
ՆՏ Հոլդինգ ՍՊԸ

Ծավալը՝ 2.25 մամուլ, տպաքանակը՝ 1500
Circulation: 1500 print copies and
15600 copies by e-mail list in PDF format

Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993

President of the NT Media Holding:

TIGRAN HARUTYUNYAN

Editor-in-Chief of the Media Holding:

GAYANEH ARAKELYAN

Director of the weekly:

MARINA HARUTYUNYAN

Chief Correspondent: **GOURGEN KHAZHAKIAN**

Proofreader: **SUSANNA MKRTCHIAN**

Համարի թող. պատ.՝ Մ.Հարությունյան

ISSN 1829-0604

Գրանցման վկայականի համարը՝
03U898368, տրված՝ 11.01.2013թ.
Registration certificate and the date:
273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

E-mail: contact@nt.am
URL: www.nt.am

Address in Armenia:

28 Isahakian Str., Yerevan, 0009, RA
Tel.: (+374 60) 35-11-22 (+374 60) 35-11-24

Address in France: Masion De L'Armenie,
Paris 17e-95, Bld. Gouvion, France
Tel.: (+33) 01 43 59 66 72

Address in USA: 1146 E. Lexington Dr., #112,
Glendale, CA, USA, 91206
Tel.: +1 (818) 646 10 72

Հասցե՝ Իսահակյան 28, Երևան, ՀՀ, 0009