

The Chinese Ambassador to Armenia attaches importance to cooperation with Shirak Province in various fields



Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China Fan Yong paid an official visit to the Shirak Province on June 24 and met with Governor Nazeli Baghdasaryan.

The Ambassador shared his first impressions of the Shirak Province with journalists, noting that he liked Gyumri very much, the local climate is cooler than in Yerevan.

"I think that when Chinese tourists come to the Shirak Province, they will have the same impressions as I do," said Fan Yong.

During the meeting with the Governor of Shirak Nazeli Baghdasaryan, the prospects of future cooperation were touched upon.

"The delegation of Shirak Province signed a memorandum of cooperation and mutual understanding in China's Hainan province in 2019, which is already a practical step in terms of establishing close relations between the two regions. Today we have the opportunity to further develop those relations," said the Governor.

During the meeting, reference was made to the opening of the Chinese Confucius classroom in the Shirak Province, issues related to the teaching of the Chinese language. The Governor assured that she will be one of the first in terms of learning Chinese.

Ambassador Fan Yong thanked Nazeli Baghdasaryan for the warm reception, noting that the past 30 years of Armenian-Chinese diplomatic relations have been quite productive.

Within the framework of his first official visit to Shirak Province, Fan Yong also visited Gyumri Municipality, where he was received by Deputy Mayor David Arushanyan. The Ambassador then visited the Gyumri regional library, where in 2018, thanks to the efforts of the Ministry of Culture, the Chinese Embassy in Armenia, a mobile library was launched and "Smile" preschool, the building of which was renovated in 2019 with the help of the Chinese Embassy.

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Armenia, Qatar FMs discuss bilateral ties, regional security issues

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan had a telephone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abd Al-Rahman Al Thani.

The Foreign Ministers hailed the results of the recent official visit of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to the State of Qatar, and stressed the need for consistent implementation of the agreements reached during the visit.



The interlocutors referred to the steps aimed at the political dialogue between the two countries, the intensification of mutual

visits at high levels and the development of economic ties. The development of cooperation in the fields of information technologies, agriculture, air communication, tourism and education was discussed.

Ararat Mirzoyan and Sheikh Mohammed bin Abd Al-Rahman Al Thani also exchanged views on regional security and stability issues.

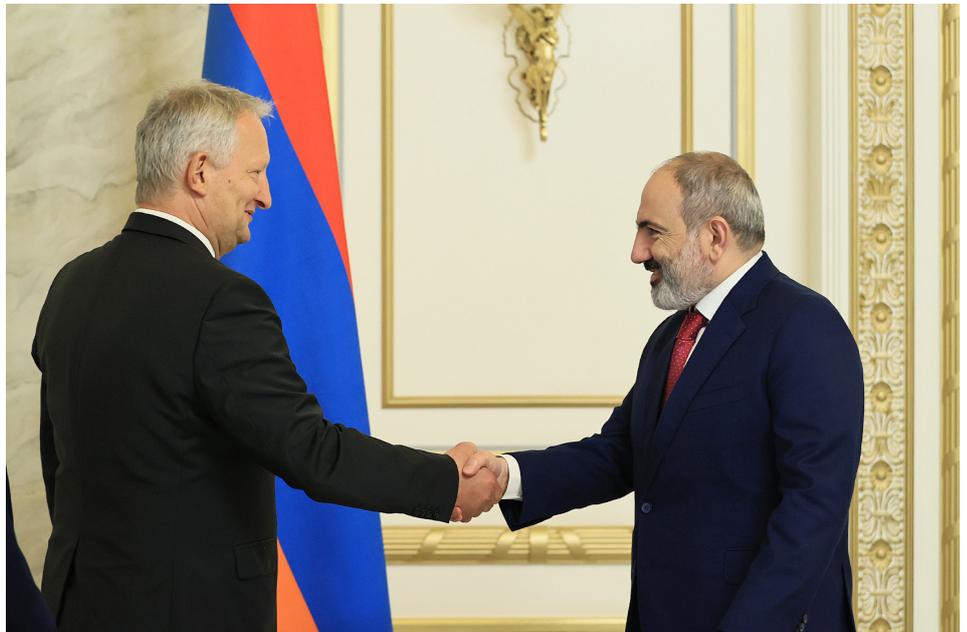
PM Pashinyan, the German Ambassador discuss the agenda of the Armenian-German partnership

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Germany to Armenia Victor Richter, Noyan Tapan was informed from the Office of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister stressed the importance of relations with Germany, which is Armenia's largest trade and economic partner among the EU countries, and expressed confidence that the high-level political dialogue will further promote mutually beneficial cooperation.

Ambassador Richter noted that Germany is interested in developing cooperation with Armenia and reaffirms its support for Armenia's democratic reforms.

The interlocutors discussed the prospects for deepening Armenian-German ties. Expressing satisfaction with the programs implemented within the framework of the bilateral agenda, Nikol Pashinyan considered intensive agriculture a promising direction. The Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany welcomed the Prime Minister's proposal and mentioned also the joint programs in the fields of SME, energy, water management, e-governance, finance and other spheres. The sides



attach importance to the activities of the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Reconstruction Credit Institute (KfW) in Armenia.

During the meeting the sides also touched upon regional developments and work on unblocking the communication routes. PM Pashinyan and Ambassador Richter exchanged views on the situation in Nagorno Karabakh.

The Prime Minister presented Armenia's positions on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the peace

agenda announced by the Armenian Government. Nikol Pashinyan stressed that the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh's status remains unresolved, it should be settled within the framework of the internationally recognized format, under the mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. The Prime Minister touched upon the issues of the return of Armenian prisoners of war, hostages and other detainees still being held in Azerbaijan, the protection and preservation of the Armenian historical and cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh.



Armenia is yet to receive response to its peace proposals to Azerbaijan, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said in an interview with Radio Liberty.

“Both publicly and in the international arena, as well as in the direct contacts with the Azerbaijani side, Armenia has repeatedly stated its consistency in the agenda of establishing peace on the highest levels, and that we do not consider anything unacceptable in the proposals of Azerbaijan regarding the future peace agreement, certainly, completing those proposals with our ideas,” the Foreign Minister said.

“We have conveyed our proposal for the framework of the agenda of comprehensive peace negotiations to Azerbaijan through the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries, but so far, we have not heard any official response. In other words, contrary to the statements of the President of Azerbaijan, Armenia not only did not reject but also responded positively to the proposal of peace talks, waiting for Azerbaijan’s response. At the same time, we have proposed Azerbaijan to launch consultations on the peace agreement between the For-

Armenia yet to receive response to its peace proposals to Azerbaijan – FM

ign Ministers, but so far, we have not received any response. The Republic of Armenia reaffirms its readiness to launch consultations on a peace agreement at once,” he noted.

The comments come after Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev stated that they have not received a response from Armenia on the proposal to commence the works on the peace agreement.

The President of Azerbaijan also noted that one and a half years later, the Trilateral Statement of November 9, 2020, is not fully implemented, referring, in particular, to the issue of unblocking regional transport communications.

“Indeed, the Trilateral Statement of November 9 has not been fully implemented yet. Azerbaijan, violating not only its obligations under the Trilateral Statement but also international humanitarian law, continues to illegally hold in captivity the Armenian prisoners of war and civilians, using them as hostages, bargaining and subjecting them to human trade,” the Foreign Minister said.

Moreover, he added, Azerbaijan denies one of the basic realities enshrined in the Trilateral Statement, stating that there is no Nagorno-Karabakh, and there is no Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Meanwhile, he said, the President of Azerbaijan confirmed the existence of the Nagorno-Karabakh entity

by signing a Trilateral Statement. And as long as there is the Trilateral Statement, the existence of that entity cannot be denied.

“The gross violation of the Trilateral Statement of November 9 is also the fact that the Azerbaijani armed forces, violating the first provision of that statement, invaded the area of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh on March 24, 2022, and still remain there,” the Foreign Minister said.

“As for the unblocking of regional transport communications, we have repeatedly stated that Armenia is greatly interested in the success of this process,” he added.

“The process would have been completed much faster if it were not for the continuous groundless statements of the Azerbaijani authorities on the extraterritorial corridor, which have nothing to do with reality and the agreements reached in the presence of several international partners. Anyway, for the sake of justice, it should be noted that the discussion on the issue of unblocking is carried out in a constructive environment. I hope that it will not fail due to incomprehensible political intrigues and will be successfully completed soon,” Minister Mirzoyan said.

Kristina A. Kvien nominated as new US Ambassador to Armenia

US President Joe Biden has nominated Kristina A. Kvien as new US Ambassador to Armenia replacing Lynne Tracy who has been serving in Yerevan since 2019.

A career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister-Counselor, Kvien serves as Deputy Chief of Mission at U.S. Embassy Kyiv. She was previously Chargé d’Affaires ad interim from 2020-2022. Prior to that, she served as Minister-Counselor for Economic Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Paris, France and as Economic Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. In both Paris and Bangkok, she served more than

one year as Acting Deputy Chief of Mis-



sion. She also served as Economic Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in London.

Earlier in her career, Kvien was detailed to the National Security Council in Washington, D.C. as Director for EU,

Ukraine and Belarus affairs. Other overseas assignments include the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, Russia; the U.S. Mission to the EU in Brussels; and the U.S. Embassy in Manila, Republic of the Philippines. Domestic assignments include the Office of European and Regional Affairs, and the Office of Central European Affairs, both in the Bureau of Europe and Eurasian Affairs.

Kvien, a native of California, holds a BA from Occidental College and an MS from the U.S. Army War College. She is a recipient of multiple State Department performance awards and speaks Russian and French.

Armenia, Greece, Cyprus to cooperate on Diaspora issues

On June 24, a memorandum on trilateral cooperation on diaspora issues was signed between Armenia, Greece and Cyprus in Athens.

The memorandum was signed by RA High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan, Greek Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Andreas Katsaniotis and the Presidential Commissioner for Humanitarian Issues and Overseas Cypriots, Fotis Fotiou.

The signing ceremony was preceded by a face-to-face meeting between the two sides and a “2+1” meeting between the delegations.

Armenian Ambassador to Greece Tigran Mkrtchyan was also present at the meetings and the signing ceremony.

The Memorandum sets the directions of cooperation between the three countries



in the Diaspora, including the exchange of experience, inter-community cooperation, joint educational and cultural events, youth initiatives and more.

During the press conference that followed the signing, Zareh Sinanyan stressed the importance of historical friendship and common values of the three countries. “I would like to stress that our Diaspora communities in the different countries are cooperating with each other and it is our

commitment to encourage them to more actively collaborate and exchange best practices and know-how and finally to take actions toward promoting common values and interests to the greatest extent possible.” said the High Commissioner.

During his working visit, Zareh Sinanyan also met with the Armenian community in Greece and presented the activities, programs and policies of our Office. Then, they discussed the repatriation process, integration programs, the establishment of the first Repatriation and Integration Center in Armenia, and investment policy.

During the meeting, Zareh Sinanyan also touched upon the domestic policy of the Republic of Armenia, external and internal challenges, and the development of the regions of Armenia.

Armenian, Russian, Azerbaijani Prosecutor Generals discuss ways to solve humanitarian issues caused by 44-day war



A trilateral meeting took place in Minsk between the Prosecutor General of Armenia Artur Davtyan, the Prosecutor General of Russia Igor Krasnov and the Prosecutor General of Azerbaijan Kamran Aliyev.

They discussed the possibility of finding new opportunities for resolving the existing humanitarian and legal issues arising as a result of the war unleashed against Artsakh within the competence of the prosecutor’s offices of the three countries. Issues related to the implementation of the agreements reached during the previous two meetings were discussed.

The parties stressed the need to maintain the tripartite format of the meetings of the Prosecutors General as an effective

platform for continuing legal contacts to ensure stability, legitimacy, de-escalation, basic human rights and security in the region.

Armenian Prosecutor General Artur Davtyan noted that despite the agreement reached during the previous trilateral meetings on the incidents on the contact line of the Armenian and Azerbaijani armed forces and on the mediated exchange of operative information on the ongoing investigations, the criminal ceasefire violations continue, resulting in human losses, new threats to the realization of vital rights and security of the civilian population.

As a vivid example, the Armenian Prosecutor General referred to the actions carried out by the Azerbaijani armed forces in the direction of Parukh settlement, which left 16 servicemen killed and 16 wounded. Artur Davtyan stressed the need to properly investigate these actions in the village of Parukh, as well as other cases of gross

ceasefire violations.

These realities also prove the urgent need to increase the efficiency of the operative exchange of information by using the resources of the representatives of the Russian Prosecutor’s Office located in Artsakh.

Artur Davtyan raised the circumstance that the 8th point of the trilateral statement on the November 10, 2020 ceasefire was especially imperfect. He noted that the speedy return of 38 Armenians held in Azerbaijani is crucial to restoring trust between the parties, establishing peace in the region and extending security guarantees, with particular emphasis on the full implementation of the humanitarian requirements of the trilateral statement by Armenia.

As a result of the meeting, an agreement was reached with the mediation of the Russian side to continue the talks in order to fully resolve the humanitarian issues in a short time.

Head Of Armenian Judicial Watchdog Sacked After Accusing Government of Blackmail

(RL/RFE) - The nominal head of a state body overseeing Armenia's courts was formally relieved of his duties on June 23, three days after publicizing what he sees as evidence of illegal government pressure exerted on him.

Ruben Vardazaryan was already suspended as chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) in April 2021 immediately after being charged with obstruction of justice amid rising tensions with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Pashinyan's political allies accused him of encouraging courts to free arrested government critics.

Vardazaryan denied the charges and said that he was indicted as part of government efforts to replace him with Gagik Jahangiryan, a controversial former prosecutor widely seen as a figure loyal to Pashinyan. Jahangiryan was named as acting head of the SJC pending the outcome of the criminal investigation into Vardazaryan, which is still going on.

The SJC launched disciplinary proceedings against Vardazaryan last month following a newspaper interview in which



he claimed that Jahangiryan was appointed as a member of the judicial watchdog in breach of Armenian law.

In its decision read out by Jahangiryan, the SJC said Vardazaryan has been sacked as both chairman and member of the council as well as judge of a Yerevan court of first instance for a "significant disciplinary violation." The decision was backed by eight of the nine other SJC members.

Jahangiryan claimed that the decision was made on June 16 and is only being made public now. He thus seemed to deny any connection between it and a scandalous audio of his February 2021 meeting with Vardazaryan which the latter secretly recorded and publicized on June 20.

The 14-minute recording suggests that Jahangiryan warned Vardazaryan to resign

or face criminal charges. He also said he wants to help Pashinyan prevent former President Robert Kocharyan from returning to power.

The audio caused uproar in Armenia, with opposition and civil society figures describing it as clear evidence of political orders executed by Jahangiryan and his illegal interference in the work of law-enforcement bodies.

They said that he must be not only sacked but also prosecuted.

The country's main opposition groups portray Vardazaryan's revelation as further proof that Pashinyan's administration has been trying to tighten control over the judiciary, rather than reform it.

The SJC discussed the scandal on Tuesday but did not move to take even disciplinary action against its acting head.

For their part, prosecutors ordered the Investigative Committee to look into the audio. The law-enforcement agency has still not opened a criminal case in connection with it.

Vardazaryan's lawyer, Hovannes Khudoyan, said on Thursday that his client has been summoned to the Investigative Committee for questioning.

Boosting Iran-Armenia economic cooperation to enhance political ties – official

Continuous cooperation between Iran and Armenia in the fields of trade and economy will lead to bolstering of political relations of both sides, Head of Chabahar Trade Zone Nasrollah Ebrahimi said at a meeting with Arsen Avakian, the new Ambassador of Armenia to Iran, adding that over 30-years-long diplomatic ties between the two countries have been based on fraternal relations, *Mehr News Agency* reports.

Chabahar has welcomed investors from all across the world, he said, noting that neighboring states, undoubtedly, are a top priority to this end.

Terming Chabahar as a center of international communication, he said that the Trade Zone is not subject to economic sanctions.

Arsen Avakian, for his part, elaborated on his country's main objectives pertaining to the current visit and said that evaluating



Chabahar's capacity and infrastructure for investment is the main goal of the trip to Iran.

"The second goal is to develop relations between India, Iran and Armenia," he further noted.



The tax revenues of the 2022 state budget of Armenia will increase by 40 billion drams, and these funds will be directed to the reserve fund.

The decision was unanimously approved at the Cabinet meeting on June 23.

Minister of Finance Tigran Khachatryan said in the first half of the year the state budget's semi-annual tax revenues are higher than originally planned.

"As of June 22, the tax revenues are nearly 911 billion drams, and this is 30%

Tax revenues of 2022 state budget to increase by 40 billion drams

more than the figure of the same period of the previous year", he said, stating that the growth in tax revenues is connected with a number of factors, such as the improvement of tax administration. The minister said that as of today the actual figures of tax revenues are sufficient ground for increasing the figure of tax revenues by 40 billion drams at this stage.

"During the discussions of the 2023-2025 medium-term expenditure programs when we were summing up the actions to be taken in 2023, we recorded that we have capital programs in different areas which could be implemented also in 2022 if funding is available. We have discussed the capital programs that are included in the appendix of the expenditure priorities as approved by the 2022 state budget and

plan to include some of them in the programs that will be financed soon", he said, adding that the increase in revenues will allow to start implementing new programs in education, healthcare and physical infrastructure in coming weeks, which were to launch in the beginning of 2023.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that with the results of 2021 the revenue part of the state budget has been fulfilled by 147 billion drams more than planned.

"As of today, we have collected 46 billion drams more in terms of the performance of the revenue part of the 2022 budget. We think that if nothing extraordinary happens, the budget revenues will increase more, and we are now waiting for the ministries to present new programs", the PM said.

Moscow Stock Exchange to start trading in Armenian drams

On June 27, the Moscow Stock Exchange will begin trading in the foreign exchange market with the Uzbek sum, Armenian dram and South African rand, the trading platform said RIA Novosti reports.

The statement said, "On June 27, 2022, the Uzbek sum, Armenian dram and South African rand will begin to be traded in the foreign exchange market of the Moscow Stock Exchange."

"The new currencies will expand the trading opportunities of professional market participants, their customers – including subjects of foreign economic activity."

Trading participants and clients will have access to spot and clearing tools for the following currency pairs: South African rand – Russian ruble (ZAR/RUB), US dollar – South African rand (USD/ZAR), Armenian dram – Russian ruble (AMD/RUB), US dollars – Armenian drams (USD/AMD) and Uzbek sums – Russian rubles (UZS/RUB).

The exchange will later announce the start of trading in the UAE dirham – Russian ruble (AED/RUB) and US dollar – UAE dirham (USD/AED) currency pairs.

In early June, Andrey Skabelin, Direc-



tor of the Foreign Exchange Market Department of the Moscow Exchange, said in an interview with RIA Novosti that the Moscow Exchange plans to start trading in Armenian drams, Uzbek sums and Emirati dirhams in the coming months.

Orion Summit 2022: Armenia Central Bank Governor comments on dram devaluation and issues voiced by exporters



Governor of the Central Bank of Armenia Martin Galstyan commented on the current devaluation of the Armenian dram and the issues raised by exporters during his speech at the Orion Summit 2022 in Yerevan.

He presented factors which contribute to devaluation of the dram, such as the flow of foreign visitors to Armenia, the growth in export of services. "Many of you visit restaurants in the evening where you can see how many foreigners there are. According to the statistical rules, it should be registered as an export. Thus, we can see an unprecedented growth in export from Armenia this year, which, of course, leads to the devaluation of the national currency", he said.

He said that now some part of the society, particularly the exporters call on the Central Bank to artificially depreciate the Armenian dram, which, most probably, should help them to be more effective and

competitive. However, the CBA Governor raises a question whether the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of exporters depends on the devaluation of the dram by 5-10%.

"In my view, this is not a solution. The solution is to be unique. If we want to be unique, there are many things we can do together. But I will not rely only on the artificial depreciation", he said.

Recently the Armenian dram has been appreciating especially against the US dollar. As of June 21 exchange rates set by the CBA, the US dollar exchange rate has decreased by 4.02 drams, comprising 417.01 drams. The Euro exchange rate decreased by 3.40 drams, comprising 440.07 drams



Dutch-Armenian Business Days will be held in Armenia on July 6-8.

The event is organized by the Embassy of the Netherlands to Armenia within a hybrid platform.

Larisa Harutyunyan, the Political and Economic Affairs Policy Officer of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Armenia, told Armenpress that a number of programs with the focus on agriculture and IT will be implemented on the sidelines of the Dutch-Armenian Business Days.

Dutch-Armenian Chamber of Commerce to open in Yerevan

“As the Embassy in Armenia is new, is operating for one and a half a year, therefore, we will firstly present our economic priorities. It is of cognitive nature. Firstly, for the public to know that there is an Embassy of the Netherlands in Armenia and it has an economic section. Developing and deepening the economic cooperation is going to be our priority. We will talk about the funding mechanisms; the support tools will be presented. We have a very good support program for businesses, we provide experts to small and medium enterprises free of charge”, she said.

Dutch businessmen are expected to attend the event in Armenia. In addition to this, a group of businessmen will join online. The event will focus on sectors like

agriculture, mainly focusing on green economy, and information technologies.

Within the framework of the event, the opening ceremony of the Dutch-Armenian Chamber of Commerce in Armenia is expected. Following the ceremony, the Dutch Embassy will sign a memorandum with the Dutch-Armenian Chamber of Commerce. The purpose is to boost the business ties, attract investments, develop bilateral commercial relations and provide multi-profile support to the members of the Chamber.

For registration, it is necessary to send an e-mail to JER-EVENTS@minbuza.nl, clearly mentioning the sector of interest and the date. The deadline is until July 1, 2022. The agenda will be provided after registration. Participation is free of charge.

Asseco Group: European IT firm opening office in Armenia



One of the largest IT companies in Europe, Asseco Group, the main IT company of the EU-Asia Business Finance Center Holding, which has more than 60 companies operating in different countries, is opening an office in Armenia. Asseco has plans to make significant changes in the

financial sphere and invest large in Armenia. It has worked actively in our country, but had no office in Armenia. The time has come.

In Armenia, Asseco Group will carry out modernization, digitalization, telemedicine of banks and other financial institutions, as well as production of industrial robots to be sold in the Eurasian market.

Asseco Group is engaged in the automation and development of IT solutions in the financial, telecommunications, medicine, energy, industry and gas sectors worldwide. The largest partners of the

holding are companies such as UniCredit, BSGV, Citibank, HSBC, Sberbank, BNP Paribas, Raiffeisenbank, VTB, Deutsche Bank, ING, KBC, Toyota, OTP, Intesa San Paolo and other companies.

Asseco Group also implements various systems, infrastructure projects for government agencies in Europe and the CIS. The clients of the company are the national banks of Georgia, Kazakhstan, Greece, Serbia, Poland, Austria, the Czech Republic, Israel, the Balkans, other European countries, as well as the ministries and public services of those countries.

Russia supports unblocking of economic and transport communications in the South Caucasus – Zakharova

Russia will continue to support the efforts of Azerbaijan and Armenia to unblock economic and transport communications in the South Caucasus, Spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova said at a briefing on June 22.

“We welcome the intensification of the activities of the trilateral working group, co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Ministers of the three countries [Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia] to unblock economic and

transport communications in the South Caucasus,” she said.

She recalled that on June 3, a regular meeting of this group was held, during which “the parties brought their positions closer on a number of issues,” and on June 16-17, discussions continued on the sidelines of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF).

“The Russian side will continue to provide close assistance to this process,”



Zakharova stressed.



Russia pays special attention to the unblocking of transport and economic infrastructure in the South Caucasus, in accordance with the agreement reached between the leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said at a meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on the sidelines of the session of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council in Minsk.

He said Russia is Armenia's main foreign trade partner and the investor in the Armenian economy. "According to the results of January-April of the current year, the mutual trade turnover increased by 30% exceeding \$ 890 million. I think there is still room for growth. The volume of Russian capital in the Armenian economy is more than \$ 2 billion, there are opportunities to grow here as well, it will be important for Russian investors to expand their investments in Armenia," Mishustin said.

"There are major Russian companies operating in Armenia – oil and gas, trans-

Armenian, Russian PMs discuss opening of regional communications

port, digital technologies, other sectors – we hope that the Armenian Government will continue to create favorable conditions for Russian companies. We are interested in expanding bilateral cooperation, launching new productions, promoting joint projects in various fields, first of all in industry, energy, transport, and digitalization. These issues are in the focus of our intergovernmental commission," the Russian Prime Minister said.

He noted that by the relevant decision of the Government, all restrictions on the entry of Armenian citizens to Russia by land have been lifted. "We expect that in the near future the flow of tourists will be restored and will even grow further. In my opinion, this is very important for the populations of Armenia and Russia," Mishustin said.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, in turn, expressed gratitude for responding quickly to all issues that need a solution "in order to maintain the high pace of our trade and economic relations."

"I would especially like to emphasize the decisions you have made regarding the Upper Lars checkpoint. You know that, unfortunately, it is still the only land route that connects Armenia and Russia. There are concerns about the current economic conjuncture, with some problems arising

in connection with the increase of land economic flows; the decisions you have already made and which we have already agreed on are very important. We are also talking about this with our Georgian partners so that the trade turnover between Russia and Armenia does not face artificial restrictions," PM Pashinyan said.

"In this context, the opening of regional infrastructure, the unblocking of the whole region is very important. I would like to thank once again Alexey Overchuk and Mher Grigoryan, who are working very intensively with the Co-chair of the Republic of Azerbaijan on these issues. I hope that the work done will result in concrete decisions, as you know that the opening of economic and transport infrastructure in the region is important for all countries in the region. In the current situation, it is of special significance," he added.

The Armenian Prime Minister also noted that the agenda of the Eurasian Economic Union is also very important for us. "Both Armenia and Russia are interested in making the Eurasian Economic Union a more effective format. Of course, we are pleased with how this mechanism works, but there is always room for improvement," he said.

President Biden waives Section 907 restrictions on U.S. aid to Azerbaijan, again

Despite ongoing Azerbaijani aggression against Armenia and Artsakh, President Joe Biden has, yet again, waived Section 907 restrictions on U.S. aid to Azerbaijan, clearing the way for continued U.S. assistance to the corrupt, anti-Armenian Aliyev regime, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

"President Biden's decision to green-light military aid to Azerbaijan by waiving Section 907, again, emboldens President Aliyev to continue his illegal imprisonment of Armenian POWs, deadly attacks against Artsakh, and ongoing occupation of sovereign Armenian territory," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "The ANCA will continue to work with U.S. Senate and House leaders to zero-out U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan and restrict presidential waiver authority of Section 907."

During his run for office, on October

14th, 2020, then-candidate Biden stated that the United States must "fully implement and not waive requirements under Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act to stop the flow of military equipment to Azerbaijan." As President, he first reversed his position on the issue on April 23, 2021 – on the eve of his historic announcement properly recognizing the Armenian Genocide. "American recognition of the Armenian Genocide comes with responsibilities, among them not arming or abetting Azerbaijan's drive to complete this crime," commented ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian at the time. "Any action by President Biden that green-lights U.S. aid to the Aliyev regime runs counter to his clear stand and, more profoundly, the spirit of his recent recognition of the Armenian Genocide."

Section 907, enacted in 1992, estab-

lishes statutory restrictions on U.S. assistance to the Government of Azerbaijan "until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh." Congress included a Section 907 waiver in the FY2002 Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act. U.S. presidents – Republican and Democrat – have waived Section 907 annually ever since.

The Section 907 waiver and subsequent extensions require a number of certifications, including that granting the waiver "will not undermine or hamper ongoing efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan or be used for offensive purposes against Armenia."

Armenian MP calls out PACE's failure to address protection of the right to self-determination



We have started treating human destiny rather selectively and very often in the context of geopolitics, Armenian MP Armen Gevorgyan said, addressing the session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

He said in the past decades PACE has tried to pursue issues like minority rights, gender equality, diversity, and other important issues for democratic statehood, but has failed to address more fundamental aspects of democratic peace such as protection of the right to life and the right of people's self-determination.

"Some debates in this Assembly show that we have allowed political expediency to make suffering of some Europeans more important than for other Europeans, to

make the right of some European peoples' for self-determination unconditional, while for others only decorative," the lawmaker said.

"We have put much effort to abolish capital punishment in member states, but turning a blind eye on how high-tech industry creates new deadly weaponry, which is freely sold in the market. I have never heard of any investigation or fact-finding missions to explore how certain member states use prohibited types of weaponry, such as, for example, white phosphorus bombs. Certain member states have demonstrated that by the using of force and money some issues can be resolved while ignoring fundamental rights and freedoms," Gevorgyan noted.

He noted that it has become a strange tradition for the organization to avoid discussing violations of certain fundamental rights and freedoms, explaining that the Council of Europe does not deal with security issues. "This is a very unacceptable position which essentially encourages new violations."

"Where and how it is decided that the right of people to self-determination is outside the interest of the Council of Europe, that any military aggression by any member of our organization that kills thousands of innocent people is not our mandate?" he added.

"I try and fail to understand how can the European Parliament speak the language of values and human rights by adopting the relevant language and resolutions, for example, on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, while the Council of Europe and its bodies, including this Assembly, hide behind political correctness and fail to call things by their name," the lawmaker said.

"I'm raising all these issues with only one aspiration: to contribute to the development of our organization and making it a better fit to our troubled world. I believe it's through the re-establishing of an environment of respect, trust and dialogue that we can make our organization a relevant forum for international cooperation and the protection of values of the free world," Armen Gevorgyan concluded

At PACE, Armenian MP draws attention to Azerbaijan's state-sponsored hatred towards Armenians

Hatred is especially dangerous, when it is proliferated towards a neighbor, and even more dangerous, when there is an unresolved conflict in need of a robust peace process, Armenian MP Sona Ghazaryan said, addressing the session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

"This is a case in the context of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and systematic Armenophobia in Azerbaijan," she said.

"You know too well the case of the Trophy Park in Baku that glorifies war and depicts Armenian soldiers in captivity, degrading human dignity and dehumanizing Armenians. This was a case of state-spon-



sored hatred and racism. The mannequins of Armenian soldiers were taken down only after Armenia filed a case with the International Court of Justice based on the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination," the MP noted.

She reminded about the interim deci-

sion of the International Court of Justice, calling on Azerbaijan to take all necessary measures to prevent incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination, including by officials and public institutions targeted at Armenian nationals or people of Armenian descent.

"I believe that the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly should be very vocal and direct, calling state-level hatred, speech, racism and xenophobia by name. We should all together combat this, because hatred is a poison, it's very hard to collect once it spills over," Sona Ghazaryan concluded.

Very Reverend Dr. René Léonian: Let Artsakh Always Remain a Connecting-Link Between the Armenians Throughout the World

By Gourgen James Khazhakian
Chief Correspondent

As it is known, Very Reverend Dr. René Léonian, one of the outstanding representatives of the French-Armenian community, often visits Armenia and Artsakh.



Recently, he visited the second Armenian Republic for the umpteenth time.

We talked about the visit to Artsakh with René Léonian, President of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in Eurasia.

- We, Diaspora Armenians, must compare Artsakh before the 44-day war and after the war.

Although we, Diaspora Armenians, except for a few dozen Diaspora Armenian Heroes, did not directly participate in the liberation struggle, we are an integral and active part of the nation, the people who once won.



When I was in Artsakh last year, the situation was very sad ...

We saw security checkpoints, first Armenian, then Russian, then, on the way to Shushi, Azeri, with two flags, Azeri-Turkish, our people had just buried their thousands of sons, fathers, brothers, and then they and we were all very depressed...

This time, however, I can't say why, that pressure, the negative atmosphere of people seemed to no longer exist... People were rela-



tively calm...

(Perhaps it is this calmness that makes the Azeri guard on the road look at us more calmly, without a look leading to open provocation ...-G.Kh.)

When I saw the new road being built by the Azerbaijanis inside Shushi Fortress, I told my driver that we should thank them, he asked in surprise. Why? ...

Because soon that way will be ours, I said.

...We visited two villages in Askeran region, Khramort and Khanabad that are ours, and Barukh

is alas, no ...But the residents of our villages are worried because they saw the fate of Barukh ...

Behind that village there is an Azerbaijani flag on the slope; on the other one was the Armenian tricolor...

The Head of Khramort village announced really good news: The day before of our conversation, 21 of its inhabitants returned to the village: women and children mainly ... There is life, and people have the courage to stay on their land. People repair houses, cultivate land ... And they are determined to live and build on the land of their ancestors.

...Of course, the presence of Russian peacekeepers creates certain guarantees in terms of security... But, to be honest, people are not so much afraid of the secular enemy as of the uncertain future fate, the status of Artsakh, the rumors that Artsakh should supposedly remain part of Azerbaijan.

They are waiting for the decisive position of the Armenian authorities...

...I call on the Diaspora Armenians not to think for at least a second about why to help our compatriots in Artsakh, if people have to leave from here... On the contrary, if we were doing one thing in Artsakh, now we have to do two things.

...I visited the Francophone Center in Stepanakert that was established with the support of various French municipalities. I am convinced; it will be a bridge between Artsakh and cities of France.

I consider it my duty to inform that the *Armenian Missionary Association of America* (AMAA) implements a number of various joint programs in Artsakh with the French organization «Espoir pour l'Arménie». By the end of the year, it is planned to open

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Global Startup Ecosystem Index Report 2022: Armenia ranked 1st in the Caucasus

Armenia has moved 5 spots up to be ranked at 60th globally in StartupBlink’s annual Global Startup Ecosystem Index Report 2022.

Armenia continues to be 1st in the Caucasus region, with more than double the total score of Georgia, the 2nd in the region, suggesting Armenia will continue to hold this position in the near future.

With Yerevan as Armenia’s only ranked city, the country’s ranking depends greatly on its capital city. In 2022, Yerevan entered the top 250 city ranking globally. Yerevan has seen a major jump, improving by 38 spots to 244th globally, and reversing its declining momentum from 2021.

This increase pushed Yerevan up the ladder in Eastern Europe, where it is now ranked 19th, versus 29th in 2021. Yerevan is the highest ranking city in the Caucasus region, with a safe margin. Its score is more than double Tbilisi’s score, and more than triple Baku’s score.

“As a landlocked country with restricted land access due to tensions with Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Armenian ecosystem manages to show true resilience. The Armenian government has long understood innovation is critical to the future of the country, and resources have been allocated to grow the ecosystem. In 2021, the tech sector in Armenia flourished, with new investments fueling growth,” the report reads.

It reminds that the country’s first unicorn, PicsArt, recently reached a US\$1 billion valuation. Moreover, the Armenian startup scene has seen growth in terms of entrepreneurship and tech development, with companies like Shadowmatic and YerevaNN receiving praise for designing deep learning technologies.

“A strong and successful Armenian diaspora is also supporting the Armenian economy, and several highly successful American entrepreneurs of Armenian origin, like Reddit founder Alexis Ohanian, are working to boost the local startup ecosystem. Armenian startups are built to target the global market from inception due to the small market size of the country. Armenia has a population of only 3 million

people, but offers a sizable amount of tech talent. Additionally, the Armenian government does a great job of supporting tech startups, including tax incentives,” the report says.

“To support foreign investment, Armenia established Free Economic Zones and full ownership among other incentives under the legal framework On Foreign Investments. During the past few years, Armenia made significant progress in reducing bureaucracy and corruption. While the Armenian startup ecosystems are still in their early stages and the country has work to do to recover from its turbulent past, there is substantial untapped potential waiting to come to the surface,” it continues.

Since 2017, the index offers policymakers and startup ecosystem stakeholders insights into their startup economy, unveiling trends and momentum. The index is also used as a tool by founders and investors trying to discover the best ecosystems.

This year’s report ranks the startup ecosystems of 1,000 cities and 100 countries, and features several new sections and an improved algorithm.

page 10 ➔ an educational and cultural center in Stepanakert for refugee children from Shushi and other occupied areas.

Especially after the fierce war, by decision of Mr. **Zaven Khanjyan**, the Executive Director of the AMAA, the Association not only didn’t suspend its programs in Artsakh for at least an hour, but also increased their number.

In cooperation with the Artsakh authorities it was decided to renovate and reconstruct people’s houses... There is a number of other programs implemented in cooperation with other organizations, local or Diasporan.

Did you have meetings with the leadership of Artsakh?

- I met with the President of Artsakh, the State Minister in Yerevan, the Speaker of the National

Assembly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and others - in Stepanakert. I talked to them about the current situation, the socio-economic issues of the families, the future status of Artsakh as well as the cooperation with the Diaspora.



I was informed that the «red

line» for them is the status of Artsakh. And that impressed me quite a lot in the sense that they rule out Artsakh being part of Azerbaijan.

- In your opinion, to what extent do the Russian peacekeepers guarantee the security of the people of Artsakh today?

... I find it difficult to answer your question ... but today, when, unfortunately, Armenia, first of all through its army, is no longer able to ensure the security of fraternal Artsakh, the only option is the Russians...

- What would you like to add, dear Dr. Léonian ?

- May God protect, guard and bless our nation in Artsakh, Armenia and the Diaspora.

And let Artsakh continue to be a connecting-link for the Armenians throughout the world ...

Strengthening link between workforce and education an ongoing imperative – deputy minister



Competitive workforce is one of the most important preconditions for the development of the economy of the country and the community, therefore, the government of Armenia has set development of human capital, creation of jobs, and targeted and social development as a priority, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Ruben Sargsyan said during the Armenia Workforce Development Activity first national conference in Yerevan.

He said the ministry has adopted a policy of continuous development of human capital aimed at boosting labor and high-productivity employment.

“The ministry’s new draft strategy

highlights more the conscious choice of profession, the promotion of employment, as well as the introduction of career development and effective training systems”, the deputy minister said, adding that the employment strategy will be adopted this November-December and will consist of several components.

Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Artur Martirosyan said the strengthening of connection between workforce and education is the continuous imperative in any country of the world. “Our task is to reach the point that the investments being made in education to have their direct affect also on the country’s economic life. There is an inter-agency stable dialogue in terms of enhancing the education-workforce link”, he said, adding that in 2021 the government of Armenia approved the state criteria for general education which is offering new content solutions, including introduction of a professional orientation institute in all schools

of the country which will provide students with an opportunity to choose their future profession.

In his turn Deputy Minister of High Technological Industry Gevorg Mantashyan said that their ministry is open to all those people who want to participate in the country’s technological change. “Not only the abilities, but also knowledge are important. Making great changes is difficult alone”, he said.

Armenia Workforce Development Activity (AWDA) is a five-year program, designed to provide the youth and women with the opportunities to improve their skills in line with labor market needs and find employment in the fields of ICT/high-tech, agriculture, tourism and hospitality. The program is funded by the US Agency for International Development and will be implemented by Enterprise Incubator Foundation with Armenian National Agrarian University, Fund of Armenian Relief and CIVITTA Armenia.

FIFA’s Infantino reaffirms determination to contribute to the prosperity of football in Armenia

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has reaffirmed determination to promoting the prosperity of football in Armenia.

In a letter to the President of the Football Federation of Armenia Armen Melikbekyan, Infantino expressed gratitude for the cordial welcome and warm hospitality during a recent visit to Armenia. He thanked for making their stay “so special on the occasion of our visit to Armenia last Wednesday, for the FFA 30th Anniversary’s celebrations.”

“First of all, please allow me to reiterate my heartfelt congratulations on this historic milestone and pay tribute to all those who keep our sport alive and ensure its



prosperity in Armenia, and to all those who have contributed and continue to contribute to this invaluable legacy,” the FIFA President said.

“During our visit, we have shared important moments. The audience with H.E. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister

of the Republic of Armenia, the exciting match at Tsovagyugh Village, and the memorable FFA 30th Anniversary Gala dinner were certainly some of the highlights. All these moments shared together offered us the opportunity to exchange our ideas and vision of football and to express FIFA’s support for the development of football in your country. No doubt that the mini-fields project will greatly contribute to it,” he added. He assured that “this visit has reinforced our determination to work together for the prosperity of football and the community in Armenia, and you can always count on FIFA’s support for this.”

Upcoming Unicorns: Achievements of Armenian tech companies presented at Orion Summit 2022

The achievements of the Armenian tech companies, the “upcoming Unicorns” were showcased at the Orion Summit 2022 in Yerevan. Featured in the panel were companies such as Scylla, Embodied, Granatus Ventures.

Scylla develops AI-powered real-time physical threat detection solutions that help organizations augment their security infrastructure, optimize operations, save costs, and increase their situational awareness. Using its proprietary technology, Scylla delivers its solutions with exceptional accuracy and performance, minimizing false alarms by up to 99%.

Since officially launching its solutions to the market in 2018, Scylla has experienced a major revenue growth and is now one of the leading real-time physical threat detection solutions on the global market.

Embodied is an industry leading robotics and AI company creating state-of-the-art companion robots to revolutionize



human-centric care and wellness by enhancing quality of life for individuals and families.

Embodied has developed Moxie – the next-generation AI robot that complements traditional therapy and supports social-emotional development in kids through play.

Granatus Ventures is the first venture capital firm to provide investment, expertise and networks to startups worldwide that leverage Armenia’s potential as an emerging technology hub.

The Fund was initiated in 2013. The principal activity of the Fund is investing in a range of IP, technology or inno-

vation-based companies that capitalize on opportunities in high-growth sectors including but not limited to: ICT (enterprise software, consumer internet, digital media, mobile technologies); engineering (hardware, software and electronics); materials sciences and clean-tech. The Fund’s primary focus is on seed, start-up and early-stage privately held companies. The Fund invests in companies that carry out their core value-added activities in Armenia.

Orion Summit 2022 has brought together the founders of upcoming unicorn companies on one platform, who present their success stories and motivate young startup founders. For the first time, Orion Summit introduces the Armenian Startup Ecosystem consolidation initiative via Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A) opportunities, and discuss possible impetus for much rapid growth of startup companies.

In addition, the Summit introduces the new Digital Julfa Network initiative.

White House unveils plans to reduce nicotine in cigarettes



The amount of nicotine in cigarettes sold in the US is set to be reduced to minimal or non-addictive levels, the BBC reports.

The White House on Tuesday unveiled the plans which could dramatically reduce cancer deaths – a goal of President Joe Biden’s administration.

But the measure is likely to face oppo-

sition by the tobacco industry.

Smoking remains the US’s leading cause of death, accounting for 480,000 every year, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Nicotine is a highly addictive “feel good” chemical in tobacco products.

In a statement, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said that plans for a proposed product standard would establish a maximum nicotine level in cigarettes and “finish” some other tobacco products.

“Making cigarettes and other combusted tobacco products minimally addictive or non-addictive would help save lives,” FDA Commissioner Dr Robert M

Califf said.

Dr Calif added that lowering nicotine levels may decrease the likelihood that young people become addicted to cigarettes and help current smokers quit.

In 2020, an estimated 30.8 million adults in the United States smoked cigarettes. The US Surgeon General estimates that 87% of adult smokers begin by the time they turn 18.

The initiative comes after the Biden administration in February set goals of reducing the cancer death rate by at least 50% over the next 25 years, as part of his Cancer Moonshot campaign.

Dr. Eric Esrailian elected to the Board of Trustees of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures



Dr. Eric Esrailian has been elected to the Board of Trustees of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures along with Julia S. Gouw and Shira Ruderman.

Ted Sarandos, Board Chair and Co-CEO of Netflix, said, “We are thrilled to welcome these three extraordinary leaders,

who have already done so much for our community, and the industry at large... As members of our board, they will support and guide the Academy Museum in realizing its ambitious mission of increasing public appreciation for the arts and sciences of moviemaking and exploring the

ongoing, multifaceted history of film.”

Dr. Eric Esrailian is a film producer, philanthropist, physician, and entrepreneur. He is also actively involved in philanthropic efforts and education. Dr. Esrailian has been a significant supporter of Academy Museum educational programs and is part of the leadership of several philanthropic organizations, including the Motion Picture & Television Fund.

He has produced films, including *The Promise* (2016) by Terry George, starring Oscar Isaac and Christian Bale. He also produced the educational companion documentary *Intent to Destroy* (2017) with Joe Berlinger, which was nominated for an Outstanding Historical Documentary Emmy. In 2019, Dr. Esrailian and his partners launched SOMM TV—a streaming service with original series, films, and master classes dedicated to wine and food.

I am excited to be in Charles Aznavour’s homeland. Zaz is looking forward to the Yerevan solo concert

Within the framework of “Haya” music festival, Armenia hosted French singer, composer Zaz, who performs pop, jazz music combined with soul-acoustic genres. Zaz will give a solo concert in Yerevan on June 25 at Hrazdan Stadium.

At a meeting with journalists on June 24, the singer said that she is very happy to be in Armenia and is looking forward to the concert evening, during which she wants to share her energy with the musi-

cians and the audience, making the day a real holiday for everyone.

Speaking about the great chansonnier Charles Aznavour, with whom Zaz performed the song Paris au Mois de Mai Paris, the singer stressed that she attaches great importance to Aznavour’s advice, but Aznavour urged Zaz to learn English, which the singer did not do.

“I am excited to be in Armenia, because this is Charles’s homeland, and I feel responsible. The last time I was here was in 2018 within the framework of Francophonie. I was excited when I had to leave. People here are warm, full of love. I love the Armenian duduk, I often listen to Levon Minasyan’s performances, which give me positive energy,” she said.

Aznavour had com-



pared Zaz with Edith Piaf and considered her the future of French music. The singer modestly mentioned that it is nice that the chansonnier said that about her, but there are many artists who present French music wonderfully. Zaz thinks that there are tones in her voice that are reminiscent of old French songs, and there is something new, and that combination gives a good result.

The duet of Zaz and Aznavour was included in the singer’s album dedicated to Paris. According to her, Paris is colorful because people of different nationalities live there. The singer likens Paris to a rainbow.



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Yezequelian@aol.com

Paris Office: 34 Avenue des Champs Elysees
Phone: 011 33 1 43 59 66 72
Yerevan Address: 8, Khorenatsi St.

