

Yerevan marks the 2800th anniversary

Yerevan Mayor Hayk Marutyan's congratulation on the 2800th anniversary of Erebuni-Yerevan foundation



Dear Yerevanians,

I want to congratulate you on the 2800th anniversary of Yerevan foundation.

This is a holiday not only for Yerevan dwellers but also for all those who love Yerevan and feel at home here as Yerevan is the capital of all Armenians. I wish our Yerevan to be young and strong forever despite its venerable age.

On these days I receive congratulations from different corners from the world and convey these congratulations to you, dear Yerevanians. I want to mention that the celebration has started in Yerevan since early morning, numerous festive events, fashion shows, thematic stages, cycling are awaiting you in different parts of Yerevan.

By the way, I am participating in the start of the cycling. Throughout the day I will be touring about the capital, meeting you and we will be congratulating one another and celebrating the jubilee of our beloved city together. I am sure that we will have a great day.

At 19:30 the main event-the gala-concert is starting in Republic square and I hope it will fill you with positive energy and gift you unforgettable moments. The festive evening will be full of Yerevanian music, there will be a historical reference, dramatized biography of the ancient and present day Yerevan shown on stage, and the event will be completed with a firework.

Once again I congratulate you, dear co-citizens, on this glorious event, I love you and wish all of us to celebrate the day in a high mood.



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Leaders of Armenia, Lebanon hail the level of bilateral political dialogue

On a working visit to Lebanon, Armenia's acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a meeting with the country's President Michel Aoun.

Nikol Pashinyan thanked President Aoun for participating in the Francophonie Summit in Yerevan last week. Mr. Aoun, in turn complimented Nikol Pashinyan for organizing and holding the 17th summit of the Francophonie International Organization in Yerevan. He added that the acting PM's visit might help promote and strengthen the traditionally friendly relations between the two countries.

Pleased with the ongoing high-level political dialogue between Armenia and Lebanon, the interlocutors stressed that they were propped up by historical affinities and the active contribution of the Lebanese-Armenian community.

Nikol Pashinyan conveyed the Armenian nation's gratitude for the Lebanese people's warm attitude toward the Armenian Genocide survivors. "Lebanon is the only country in the region to have officially recognized the Armenian Genocide. It is crucial in terms of both preserving historical memory and prevent-



ing new genocides." The Acting Prime Minister stressed that Armenia and the Armenian people have a privileged attitude toward friendly Lebanon and its people as evidenced by the fact that the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia is in Lebanon.

In turn, the Lebanese President highly assessed the role played by the Lebanese-Armenian community in his country's political, economic, social, cultural, educational and sporting life, as well as the development of friendship and friendship between the two countries and peoples.

The parties discussed opportunities for developing trade and economic exchanges between the two countries. "We have to synchronize our economic ties with

the high-level political dialogue and human relations between our countries," Nikol Pashinyan said. The Acting Prime Minister of Armenia introduced the measures taken by the Armenian Government to combat corruption, simplify tax and customs procedures, and create an investment-friendly climate.

The President of Lebanon expressed readiness to assist the two governments with the implementation of joint programs and initiatives.

The sides looked at ways of enhancing cooperation within international organizations. In this context, Nikol Pashinyan welcomed the initiative to establish the Human Academy in Lebanon as announced by the Lebanese

President at the UN General Assembly session of September 21, 2017 in New York.

"Armenia welcomes Lebanon's initiative to become a global hub liaising different civilizations, religions and human races, and is ready to back it. We are confident that Lebanon's efforts and long experience for peaceful coexistence of different religions and nations could be instructive not only for individual countries, but also for the whole region," Nikol Pashinyan said, convinced that the initiative will arouse great interest among Armenian students.

The Lebanese President thanked the Acting Prime Minister for Armenia's participation in the United Nations' UNIFIL peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon.

Emphasizing that Armenia honors its international commitments, and highlighting the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, Nikol Pashinyan expressed satisfaction with the fact that the UN Security Council has extended UNIFIL peacekeeping mission's mandate for another year.

At the end of the meeting, Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan signed the Book of Honorary Guests.

Armenia committed to holding elections meeting intl standards, acting FM says

Armenia is committed to solving the Karabakh conflict exceptionally in a peaceful way within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship, Armenia's acting Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said at a meeting with Rudolf Michalka – Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus.

In this regard Zohrab Mnatsakanyan underlined that Armenia attaches great importance to the formation of an atmosphere of security and peace, emphasizing that "our international partners should

refrain from actions that could lead to arms race in the region and increase the threat of instability.

During the meeting the parties referred to the developments in the region. Armenia's acting FM briefed the guest on the latest domestic developments in Armenia, underlining that on the basis of the mandate granted by the people the government continues the process of reforms aimed at fighting corruption, ensuring rule of law and reinforcing justice.

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan reiterated the commitment of the Armenian authorities to hold



snap parliamentary elections in compliance with international standards and attached im-

portance to cooperation with OSCE ODIHR and other international structures.

Armenia's Parliament votes down proposed amendments to Electoral Code

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan accused Armenia's outgoing parliament of "sabotage" on October 22 after it voted down major amendments to the Electoral Code drafted by his government for snap general elections expected in December.

The amendments formally approved by the government on October 16 are aimed at facilitating the proper conduct of the elections. They would, among other things, change the existing legal mechanism for distributing seats in the National Assembly which many believe favored Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party (HHK) in the last parliamentary elections held in April 2017.

Under Armenia's constitution, any amendment to the Electoral Code must be backed by at least 63 members of the 105-member parliament. Only 56 lawmakers voted for the government bill.

Pashinyan was quick to accuse the parliament majority of "sabotaging" the work of his cabinet. "They hope that in this way they will manage to turn the fresh parliamentary elections into an instrument for revenge," he said. "But I want to make clear that even if the elections are held under the existing Electoral Code that will not change anything because the victory of the people is



inevitable and cannot be stolen by anyone."

"There will be no return to the past," Pashinyan added, urging supporters to get ready for "completing regime change" in Armenia.

The bill was essentially blocked by the HHK, which still has the largest parliamentary faction.

The former ruling party officially voiced its opposition to the proposed changes in a statement released earlier in the day. It said that they were submitted to the parliament at a very short notice and that the lawmakers therefore did not have enough time to look into them.

The HHK also accused the government of ignoring a number of alternative proposals that were jointly made by the four political

forces represented in the current National Assembly.

The HHK's stance was denounced by other parliamentary forces. Naira Zohrabyan, a top representative of Gagik Tsarukyan's Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK), called it an act of "political sabotage."

The HHK's deputy chairman, Armen Ashotyan, remained unrepentant, however, saying that the electoral system must not be changed less than two months before the anticipated elections. "It is simply absurd to build democracy in the country with undemocratic methods," Ashotian told reporters.

In the 2017 elections, Armenians voted for not only parties and blocs as a whole but also their individual candidates running in

a dozen nationwide constituencies. The individual races greatly helped the HHK to score a landslide victory at the time. Wealthy HHK candidates relied heavily on their financial resources and government connections to earn both themselves and their party many votes.

The bill put forward by Pashinyan's government also envisages safeguards against vote rigging and other major changes such as a lower vote threshold for winning seats in the parliament.

Gianni Buquicchio, the president of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, said on Friday that the draft amendments "pursue legitimate aims and seem mostly positive." In a statement, he also noted "the specific situation in Armenia, which requires the holding of early elections."

Buquicchio said at the same time that the commission still has "reservations" about the proposed change of the electoral system. He stressed, though, that "these reservations are less relevant if there is consensus among political forces about the change."

The government is allowed to reintroduce the bill to the parliament and force another urgent debate on it in the coming days. Pashinyan did not say whether the government will do so.

Venice Commission: Proposed amendments to Armenia's "Electoral Code" mostly positive

The proposed amendments pursue legitimate aims and seem mostly positive, President of the Venice Commission Gianni Buquicchio said following talks with the First Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia at the 116th session of the Venice Commission.

The President said he acknowledges and supports the peaceful manner in which the Armenian people is carrying out change and understands the specific situation in Armenia, which requires the holding of early elections.

He welcomed the commitment of the Armenian authorities to abide by international standards when revising the Electoral Code and noted that the proposed amendments pursue legitimate aims and seem mostly positive.

Mr. Buquicchio also welcomed all steps taken

to facilitate the exercise of the right to vote, to extend access to media, the rights of observers and more generally the transparency of the electoral process, as well as to struggle against electoral fraud;

He praised the implementation of recommendations of the Venice Commission and ODIHR, concerning in particular:

- The reduction of the electoral thresholds and thresholds applied for returning electoral deposits; the reduction of the amount of deposits;
- The reduction of deadlines for the accreditation of observers and media representatives, as well as the suppression of obstacles to the work of observers, such as the possibility to limit their number;
- Guarantees to ensure free vote by the mil-



itary.

While Gianni Buquicchio recalled the reservations of the Venice Commission with respect to major changes in the electoral system, such as the abolition of district lists, within the year preceding the elections, he noted that "that these reservations are less relevant if there is consensus among political forces about the change."

Pashinyan's Party Wins, Loses Local Elections

(Yerevan –RFE/RL) Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party won mayoral elections in at least two major Armenian towns but was defeated in another at the weekend.

Voters in nearly 50 communities across Armenia went to the polls on Sunday to elect their chief executives or local councils. As was the case in the September 23 municipal elections in Yerevan, the polls were marked by a lack of serious fraud reported by election candidates, observers and media.

In the largest of those communities -- the towns of Armavir, Echmiadzin, Hrazdan and Kapan -- the elections were held because their former mayors resigned shortly after Pashinyan swept to power in May in what is known as a democratic "velvet revolution." They were affiliated or linked with former President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party (HHK).

In Echmiadzin, official vote results gave victory to Civil Contract's Diana Gasparyan, the acting mayor appointed by Pash-



inyan's government in June. Gasparyan, 30, was challenged by 11 other contenders. She is the first female head of an Armenian urban community elected since the early 1990s.

Another Civil Contract candidate, Davit Khudatyan, prevailed in the mayoral race in Armavir. The town located about 50 kilometers west of Yerevan is the administrative center of the Armavir province encompassing Echmiadzin.

The snap election in another provincial capital, Hrazdan, was won by a 25-year-old son of Sasun Mikaelyan, a prominent Hrazdan-

based politician and a leading member of Civil Contract. The party leadership pointedly declined to back Sevak Mikaelyan for still unclear reasons, however.

Pashinyan's party suffered a setback in Kapan, the capital of the southeastern Syunik province bordering Iran. Its candidate, Narek Babayan, was defeated by a non-partisan challenger.

Pashinyan personally campaigned for Babayan, holding a rally in Kapan on October 19.

The Armenian prime minister put a brave face on the setback on Monday. While saying that he is "very sorry" for Babayan's de-

feat, he portrayed the election outcome as a triumph of democracy.

"It's an unprecedented phenomenon [for Armenia] when the country's prime minister backs a candidate and that candidate doesn't win an election. This is the greatest victory for democracy in the history of the Third [Armenian] Republic," Pashinyan declared in a trademark video address to the nation aired on Facebook.

"Citizens made a decision and the government didn't even attempt to place the citizens' choice into the bounds of its wishes. Dear people, this is what we did the revolution for," he said.

The former ruling HHK had for years swept most local elections in Armenia, heavily relying on its administrative and financial resources. Sargsyan's party has essentially refrained from contesting such polls since losing power.

According to Pashinyan, Civil Contract nominated or endorsed candidates in 15 communities and only two of them lost in Sunday's elections.

Armenia President's Office will make a statement on the controversial bill about Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly

Armenian President's Office is expected to make a statement regarding President's actions concerning the controversial bill on amending the Rules of Procedure law of parliament that was adopted on October 2 and still hasn't been signed into law by him.

Adopted bills should be signed into law by the president to come into effect.

Sarkissian's office said the president's office will issue a statement until the defined deadline.

"The deadline is October 24," Sarkissian's office told.

Under the law, the president has 21 days to either sign a bill into law or to forward it to the Constitutional Court to dispute its constitutionality.

The controversial bill is an amendment to the Rules of Procedure law of the parliament, whereby in the event of a parliament session being unable to be held because of lack of quorum, or if lawmakers are anyhow prevented from participating, it will be considered interrupted rather than failed, with a possibility of resuming at a later date.



The bill was perceived as an apparent limitation of possible circumstances of dissolution of parliament initiated by Republicans. It was adopted on October 2 by the parliament which is dominated by Republicans [HHK], and sparked demonstrations. On that day, PM

Nikol Pashinyan sacked Cabinet members and governors representing the ARF and Tsarukyan factions for supporting the bill.

Coincidentally, the first round of electing a prime minister will be held on the very same day – October 24.

Trump Lawyer Giuliani visits Armenia

U.S. President Donald Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani met with Armenia's Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan and visited the Armenian genocide memorial in Yerevan on October 22 during what he described as a private trip to the country.

Giuliani, who served as mayor of New York City from 1994-2001, was invited by Ara Abrahamian, a pro-Kremlin leader of the Armenian community in Russia, to take part in an international forum in the Armenian capital organized by the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), a Russian-led trade bloc.

Giuliani was accompanied by Abrahamian when he visited the Tsitsernakaberd memorial to pay his respects to some 1.5 million Armenians massacred by the Ottoman Turks during the First World War.

As New York mayor, he had repeatedly issued statements recognizing the genocide and attended commemorations of the genocide victims organized by Armenian-American advo-



cacy groups.

Speaking to RFE/RL's Armenian service at Tsitsernakaberd, Giuliani was asked whether he believes Trump should also publicly describe the 1915 mass killings as genocide. "I certainly recognize it," he replied. "I think it's a historical fact. But I'm not here in my capacity as a private lawyer for President Trump. I'm here as a private citizen."

"So it's up to the administration to make its own conclusion about that," he added.

Like his predecessors, Trump avoided using the word geno-

cide in his statements issued for the annual April 24 commemorations of genocide anniversary in the United States. He spoke instead of "one of the worst mass atrocities of the 20th century"

Giuliani was also careful not to comment on U.S.-Armenian relations, saying that "it's up to the two governments" to develop them. "Again, I'm here as a private citizen just to learn some facts in my first time in Armenia," he said. "I know the Armenian community in America well but this is my first time here."

Giuliani met with Tonoyan later in the day. A statement by the Armenian Defense Ministry said the minister briefed him on "the security environment around Armenia." The two men also "exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues," added the statement.

Giuliani, 74, is known for his hawkish views on America's relations with Iran, a key neighbor of Armenia. He has strongly supported Trump's controversial decision to pull out of an international deal on Iran's nuclear program and to re-impose economic sanctions on Tehran.

Like the other world powers that signed it -- France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China -- Armenia continues to support the 2015 deal. It has made clear that it will press ahead with joint economic projects with the Islamic Republic.

Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, is due to arrive in Yerevan later this week as part of a tour of Russia and the three South Caucasus states.

Artsakh's Shekher signs friendship declaration with French Arnouville



A Declaration of Friendship was signed today between Shekher community of the Republic of Artsakh and Arnouville

community of the French Republic. The Declaration was signed by head of the Shekher community Mkhitar Mangasary-

an and Mayor of Arnouville Pascal Doll.

The solemn ceremony of signing took place in Shekher. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh Masis Mayilian, Member of the National Assembly of France, Vice-Chairman of the France-Artsakh Friendship Circle François Pupponi and member of the France-Artsakh Friendship Circle François Rochebloine were present at the ceremony.

The Declaration, in particular, states that the communities of Shekher and Arnouville establish friendly relations based on the universal human values such as peace, freedom and democracy. The Declaration is aimed at contributing to the development of cooperation between the two communities, as well as to the exchange of experience in the spheres of administrative management, economy, education, culture, and others.

Armenia hosts Eurasia Week Forum



The “Eurasian Week” International Forum kicked off in Yerevan on October 22. The event organized at the initiative of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has brought together 2,500 participants from EAEU and 250 participants from third countries.

Addressing the event, Armenia’s acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan noted that the forum is a good platform for summing up the interim results of integration processes, especially on the eve of Armenia’s presidency of the EAEU Council. He said it provides a good opportunity to discuss the obstacles to the activity of EAEU business circles and work out practical measures to overcome those.

Pashinyan noted that Armenia has been recording steady growth in trade volumes with EAEU member states.

“The volume of exported supplies from Armenia to EAEU member-states has grown 31.3% in January-July 2018, making \$ 351.9 million,” he stated.

The acting Prime Minister drew the attention of participants to a number of key issues.

First, he said, the EAEU and Iran have signed an interim agreement as a first step towards formation of a free trade zone.

“Armenia is the only EAEU country to share a land border with Iran. The existence of the “Meghri” free trade zone on the common border is an additional impetus to the development of trade-economic ties. We are ready to become practical platform for establishment of reliable relations between Iran and EAEU,” Nikol Pashinyan stressed.

Secondly, the acting PM attached importance to continued negotiations with countries interested in the cooperation with all EAEU members. In this regard he stressed Armenia’s willingness to get actively involved in EAEU-Egypt talks.

Third, Pashinyan said, the development of high-tech industries is becoming an important issue from perspectives of both national security and economic development.

“Armenia has a serious potential with 400 enterprises in the high-tech industry, and we are interested in developing cooperation with EAEU partners to jointly access external



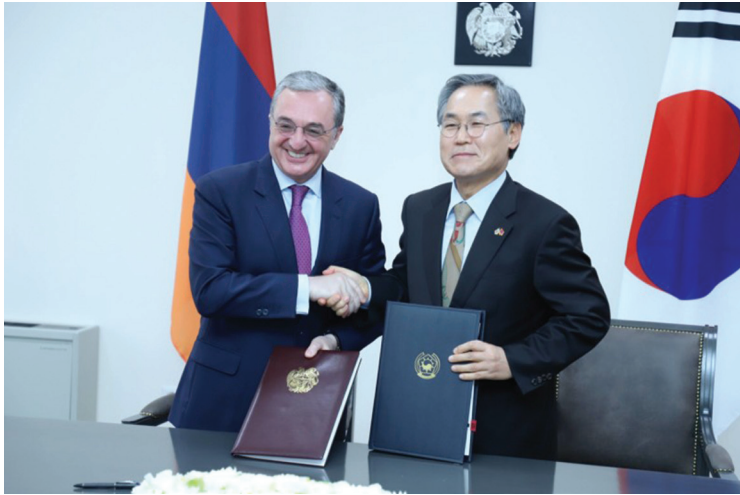
markets,” he stated.

Finally, the acting PM noted that “open dialogue between business and regulators is key to ensuring further integration.”

“I am confident that during the regular meeting of the Advisory Board on Business Cooperation, which will be held within the framework of the conference, the main issues of concern to our businessmen will be discussed,” he said.

From the viewpoint of forming modern customs regulations, Nikol Pashinyan attached importance to the full implementation of the EAEU Customs Code.

Armenia, Korea agree to promote and protect investments



Armenia and Korea have signed an Agreement for Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments.

The document was signed by Armenia's acting Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and Korea's Ambassador to Armenia Woo Yoon-keun. The parties hope the agreement will give new impetus to bilateral cooperation.

During the meeting Zohrab Mnatsakanyan reiterated Armenia's willingness to take practical measures to deepen and expand cooperation with the Republic of Korea in different spheres, namely trade, agriculture and tourism.

In this context special reference was made to the perspectives

of establishment of cooperation between the Republic of Korea and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Speaking about domestic development, the acting Foreign Minister highlighted Armenia's commitment to fight corruption and reinforce the judicial system. He attached importance to the implementation of exchange programs in the fields of high technologies and innovation.

The interlocutors exchanged views on a number of international and regional issues and the ways of their solution. The parties attached importance to the need to solve issues exceptionally in a peaceful way within the framework of internationally recognized formats.



Armenia's Central Bank signs €50mln loan agreement with European Investment Bank

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Central bank of Armenia (CBA) have signed a €50mln loan agreement to finance SME projects, CBA press service reports.

The loan will be provided to the Central Bank of Armenia, which will make the funds available to SMEs.

Loans to be provided to small and medium sized businesses will mostly aim to promote ex-



ports, tourism, agriculture and processing of agricultural products.

CBA President Artur Javadyan said the projects will push the local business towards competitive and sustainable development, at the same time contributing to the development of green financing in intermediary financial institutions. The program is the third initiative between EIB and CBA since 2014.

Armenian exporters and manufacturers to supply goods to Russian supermarkets without mediators – SCPEC Chairman

Armenian exporters and manufacturers will supply their products to Russian supermarkets without mediators and any barriers, Artak Shaboyan – chairman of the State Commission for the Protection of Economic Competition, told reporters within the framework of the Eurasian Week International

Forum which launched in Yerevan on October 22, reports Armenpress.

He said representatives of a great number of Russian retail chains have been invited to the Forum, and meetings have already been organized for them with the Armenian exporters.

“As of now some exporters are already cooperating with the Russian supermarkets without mediators, but it is necessary to take actions to increase their number”, he said, adding that the Russian supermarkets preferred to receive the Armenian goods via local suppliers which increased the value of

that good and made it less competitive in the market.

The Eurasian Week three-day forum is being held by the initiative of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the support of the Armenian ministry of economic development and investments and Business Armenia Foundation.

EU ready for a new era in relations with Armenia

Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia of the European External Action Service (EEAS) visited Armenia on 17-18 October 2018.

In the course of his visit, Mr. Mayr-Harting, accompanied by H.E. Dr. Piotr Antoni Świtalski, Ambassador, Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia and Mr. Vassilis Maragos, Head of Unit responsible for Armenia at the European Commission's Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, met with Acting Prime Minister Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, His Holiness Catholicos Karekin II, Acting Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Mher Grigoryan, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Acting Minister of Defense Mr. Davit Tonoyan, and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Ms. Arpine Hovhannisyan.

The Managing Director also met with representatives of political parties and civil society, and delivered a public lecture in front of a broad student audience at the Yerevan State University.

The senior EU official emphasized the EU's support to sustainable democracy. "This is an important time for Armenia – it is now essential to secure the gains of the democratic changes the country has experienced" – he said. He stressed the EU appreciated the achievements of peaceful transition, particularly the commitment to eliminating corruption and making Armenia a modern society based on the rule of law, with a truly independent judiciary.

"We are at the beginning of a new era in EU-Armenia relations. Our new Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement – CEPA – opens up a broad spectrum of opportunities for deeper engagement in various spheres, starting with democratic institution-building to social affairs, trade, health, cooperation in the areas of tourism, science and technology, cultural cooperation and others. All of

this can be taken to a higher level depending on the will of both sides", said Mr. Mayr-Harting. He expressed hope for a speedy development of a CEPA Implementation Roadmap containing measures to improve the business environment and attract investment, ultimately bringing tangible benefits to Armenian citizens. He added that Armenia's obligations under CEPA were fully compatible with those of Armenia being a member of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Thomas Mayr-Harting reconfirmed the EU's support for the Government's ambitious reform agenda focusing on enhanced transparency and accountability, and looked forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in December. "The EU and several of its Member States will provide financial support for the conduct of the elections. We hope to see broad participation by the youth and women".

"The EU is the largest donor in Armenia. We have an active portfolio of around 250 million EUR of grant support. Our investment portfolio is close

to one billion EUR. We are currently reviewing our existing and planned cooperation package together with the Government to match Armenia's reform priorities and commitments in a more targeted manner that benefits Armenian citizens. We are already preparing a CEPA Reform Agenda Facility including Twinning, and a banking facility to help private sector investments to adjust to the requirements of CEPA," said Mayr-Harting.

The EEAS Managing Director also praised Armenia's commitment to regional cooperation in the framework of Eastern Partnership and the joint work towards achieving the "20 Deliverables for 2020".

The senior EU diplomat also touched upon the Nagorno Karabakh conflict welcoming the momentum after the Dushanbe meeting between the Armenian Prime Minister and Azerbaijani President on 28th September. He hoped this would open the way for engagement in substantive negotiations without preconditions as soon as possible.



Armenia's acting PM meets His Holiness Aram I in Anteliad

As part of his working visit to Lebanon, Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on October 22 met with Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia in Antelias.

Prior to the meeting, Nikol Pashinyan joined Catholicos Aram I to visit the Chapel by the Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral at the Holy See, which perpetuates the memory of the Armenian Genocide victims. Nikol Pashinyan paid tribute by laying flowers at the memorial.

Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Aram I noted in his welcoming speech: "Dear Mr. Prime Minister, I am happy to welcome you home. The Church belongs to our people; we originate from the people, we belong to the people and are called to serve our people. This is the home of our nation, our homeland. We have formed this understanding as we studied here."

"When we lost Cilicia as a kingdom and as a land, we created a spiritual Cilicia. This factor has gone a long way toward developing the spiritual Cilicia, as you mentioned in your speech this morning, and the mission of this chair is to materialize our spiritual, cultural and national values in our people's lives," His Holiness said.

"We dreamed of Armenia, we wanted Armenia to see our dream, we dreamed of free and independent Armenia. Consequently, the majority of this chair represents the power of Armenia, and a new page opened in our homeland's modern history – a new chapter of hope and love, unity and vision," he added.

"And from the very first day, I called on our people to not only be proud of Armenia at a distance, but also to take a share in the reconstruction and strengthening of our Homeland. Consequently, I would like to tell you once again that this chair with its wings and I personally support you because your success is Armenia's success. Conse-



quently, we all want our Motherland to grow stronger under your wise leadership. Once again I welcome you with these thoughts and expectations," the Catholicos said.

Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, in turn, congratulated His Holiness on the 50th anniversary of his spiritual activity. "I expressed my appreciation during the morning's event. I would like to reiterate my respect and appreciation to you for your work and thank you for the invitation because it gave me the opportunity to communicate with all the layers of Lebanon's Armenian community," he said.

"Of course, it was a pleasure to state that the Armenian government has full support on the part of our compatriots. Believe it, your support, and, more importantly, your kind remarks and your active stance added to our strength during the days of the velvet revolution, for which I wish to thank you once again," Pashinyan stated.

he stressed that those changes could not have been done without the support of the Diaspora, without the unequivocal support of Diaspora-based Armenians. "It helped us implement political processes exclusively in an atmosphere of peace, love and soli-

darity. The people's position both in the Diaspora and Armenia was so obvious that any resistance seemed to be illogical."

"Of course, it is very important to talk about the future, and being in such a spiritual center of the Armenian nation, I want to emphasize the factor of faith when talking about the future. We must believe in the future of our people, in our strength, and that is perhaps the most important thing. As the Bible teaches us, any goal can be reached with faith, conviction and purposefulness," the acting Prime Minister added.

"I hope, and I am also convinced that our people will never lose its self-confidence because it is crucial to state the essential, and what matters most is the people's voice, which is a decisive power as stipulated in the Constitution of our country. I have no doubt that it will be the case ahead," he said.

"We must hope that we will not disappoint our people with our undertakings and activities; instead we will give them a new breath and instill trust in their power. Your support is crucial in this respect. Thank you for your readiness," Nikol Pashinyan said.

Massnet's "Manon" on the Armenian Stage

In the everyday run-of-the-mill of concert and theatre life not every artistic phenomenon proves to be a jubilation leading to an emotional earthquake. We must admit it is inevitable, although ideally every encounter with Art should be a jubilant occasion. Massenet's opera premiered in Yerevan on the stage of the National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet after A. Spendiarov (and timed to coincide with the biannual Summit of the Francophony) is exactly that: a jubilation.

“Manon”, the staging of which has been transferred from the Moscow Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theatre on the initiative of the Artistic Director and General Manager of our Opera Theatre **Constantine Orbelian** became the pinnacle of the current theatre season. This staging is another proof, if any proof were needed, that our Opera Theatre, in spite of numerous problems and the government neglect, is determined to forge ahead. Forging ahead, however, is not due to external conditions conducive to development.

Correction: “government neglect” of the Opera Theatre is a thing of the past. The government has in fact paid attention to the Opera Theatre, but, paradoxically, only to cut funding from the Ministry of Culture in the current fiscal year by 85 million AMD, thus emphatically announcing its return to the cultural scene of Armenia.

Meanwhile, every premiere at the Opera Theatre demands substantial funds that is self-evident. We ignore this simple truth and at the same time expect results on the level of the best opera companies of the world such as the Metropolitan Opera, the Bolshoi or La Scala ignoring the fact that financial problems are routinely solved at the ex-

pense of the personal funds of the Artistic Director Orbelian who is single-handedly trying to revive the operatic scene. This is especially true in the case of “Manon” leased from the Moscow Musical Theatre.

We will deal with the financing issues in the future, and now let us look at “Manon”. Musical Director and Conductor of the opera - **Christopher Okasek**.

Sargsyan.

(As this article is intended not only for the opera aficionados, it is necessary to explain that the famous work of fiction by Abbe Prevost, "Histoire du chevelier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut" has inspired two different composers - **Massnet** and **Puccini** - who wrote two different operas, both of them universally considered as masterpieces).

a world masterpiece, that theatre is facing a real test. Tunes that are so familiar, with an added challenge of being always associated with the best singers in the world, demand at least the fullest mastery of the technique. Otherwise the most ingenious director's moves would be seen as a mere compromise. This is not to say that the Yerevan staging of "Manon" was not liked by the public or that the audience remained unenthusiastic. On the contrary - the opera was met with acclaim, it totally disarmed the critics with vivid theatrical quality, with its exaggerated showiness. Superb stage sets designed by Rainis Sukhanovs and brightly coloured, really fantastic costumes by Christina Pasternaka determine the genre aesthetics of the performance, which holds the viewer spellbound. The development of the story makes you feel that every single character on stage has been individualised, has been imparted with his or her background, even the chorus is perceived as a collection of individual characters.

Puccini himself pointed out his own understanding of the protagonist's character and what distinguishes it from Massenet's: "*His Manon is a Frenchwoman, she is all make-up powder and menuet, my own is an Italian, i.e. passion and desperation*". Arguably, Puccini's Manon more accurately portrays Prevost's character, while Massenet is more successful in recreating the environment and colours of the historical period in question. Puccini was more interested in the psychology of the conflict between the two central characters.

Director Andreis Zagars, however, introduces his own vision: his opera sounds very contemporary. He plants the storyline firmly in the 20th century, in the 1960s, to be



Director of the opera - well-known Lithuanian actor and director **Andreis Zagars** decorated with the French Order of Legion d'Honneur and the Russian Order of Friendship.

Artistic Director - **Rainis Sukhanovs**, Costume Designer - **Christine Pasternaka**, Lighting artist - **Kevin Vin-Jones**, Videoartist - **Ineta Sipunova**, Chorus leader - Merited Artist of the RA **Karen**

Massenet's "Manon" (unlike Puccini's "Manon Lescaut") has never been staged in Yerevan before. That circumstance alone turns this premiere into a not-to-be-missed Event. Both operas share the same storyline, but they are worlds apart: a passionate, bordering on breakdown, Italian opera and the Frenchman's tender and sentimental work.

Whenever a theatre turns to

precise. In the swinging sixties, when Europe, having recovered from the horrors of the war, tasted the intoxicating air of freedom. As Moscow reviews correctly pointed out - *"the epoch of the sexual revolution, liberation, permissiveness, apology of irresponsibility - all those motives the director finds compatible with the aroma of Abbe Prevost's novel"*.

The music is void of indifference. It is felt again and again by the passion with which the highly gifted musician and theatre conductor Christopher Okasek is leading the opera.

ing - unique in its form, breathing and moving in its gradation of feeling. The world of this stage performance is ever-changing, multifaceted, combining intrigue with shadows of a detective story and obsessive fantasies, and an interaction of fully-fledged characters. But soul lyrics, heart throbbing dominate.

Every detail, every nuance in this staging enhances psychological development and promotes purely theatrical action. Visible and metaphorical worlds unite and join the music, creating counterpoint of plastic images and voices of the solo-

A most favourable impression was left by the wonderful tenor **Liparit Avetisyan** in the role of chevalier des Grieux. The open emotion-dramatic context, and minute traits of the psychological subtext of the role he accesses in equal measure. That is achieved by the depth of his empathy to his character. Liparit is an inspired artist, but he does not limit himself by the intuitive understanding of his character's image. Having carefully studied the personality of his character, the singer concentrates on the composer's main idea, the director's treatment of



His ability to direct musical strata of the performance, his mastery of virtuoso technique allowing him to spotlight the relief of the score, enveloping it with the delicate play of shadow and light, all this is really stunning. As stunning, as the flight of fancy of the set designer Rainis Sukhanovs, who enlivens the space of the stage, painting with exquisite colours the way that the story is progressing.

Such striving towards artistic creation marks the work of the performers with stylistic sophistication of a pencil draw-

ists, the chorus and the sound of the orchestra.

But it goes without saying that no Opera Theatre can exist without its own captivating singers, who are also actors, and it is precisely their mastery that determines to a considerable extent success or failure of the performance as a single whole combining the vision of the director, conductor, artists.

There is a direct and logical connection between the soloists' level of musical culture and the artistic merit of the show.

his character, he is very sensitive to his partners' intentions, presenting an example of delicate and creative tactfulness. His manner of performance combines such exceptional qualities as restraint and freedom, phrasing versatility and plasticity. No need even to mention the beauty of his voice - it is fantastic! It is as if the part of chevalier des Grieux has been tailor-made for the artist, to such an extent he has moulded himself into the role created by the author.

continued on page 12

Massnet's "Manon" on the Armenian Stage

from page 11

It is noteworthy that after the first night at the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre he received a prestigious "Golden Mask" Award. The Moscow press praised Avetisyan's work very highly.

Only one quote: *"Among the performers tenor Liparit Avetisyan of the Yerevan Opera Theatre stands out: a fresh young voice, uplifting, tender, suits the part of des Grieux perfectly. It may be true that his participation in the perfor-*

is obviously a diamond, but needs a little polishing to shine as a true brilliant. Her undoubted achievement is her intonation, stylistically true from start to finish, as well as excellent plastic movement.

A revelation for many was Lescaut sung by the young **Kim Sargsyan**.

Kim has proved to be a very valuable addition to the company. He easily combines his vocal culture with the ease of a drama theatre actor and psychological expressiveness, he sang his part artistically, with emotional gusto. His baritone is of a rare tembre, he feels at home on

the acting side as dictated by the Director.

In general the cast looked impressive. The singers had full support of the orchestra led by the talented conductor Okasek.

Unfortunately, "Manon" will not adorn the Opera Theatre's affiche.

At best, it would be performed one or two nights in November, and after that it is returning to Moscow. And yet, as Maestro Orbelyan points out, it has been a very important master class for members of the cast who worked hard on their French, for costume makers, for lighting



*mance compensates abundantly for albeit stylishly designed, but shallow director's concept", wrote **Evgenia Krivitskaya**.*

Manon's part in the Yerevan premiere is performed by a very young soloist **Mary Movsisyan**. Vocally gifted, she has not yet been able to fully display her talent in the complex and important role of Manon - she is very attractive on stage, but sometimes a little rigid, and her voice

stage, fits his character perfectly, is absolutely free and achieves the best result. He has managed to find all the convincing colours for portraying his character.

With varying degree of success other soloists took part: baritone **Ashot Ghantaryan** - des Bretigny, **Ruben Nurijanyan** - Giyo Monfontaine, **Haik Tigranyan** - count des Grieux and others. Unfortunately, not all of them put emphasis on

artists, for all those who once again realised what sense of responsibility one needs to work in the Theatre.

*"Golos Armenii" /golosarmenii.am/,
17 October*

*Translated from Russian and edited by
The Highlights Chief Correspondent
Gourgen James Khazhakian*

Third International Conference of the Institute of Internal Auditors of Armenia was Held

The Third International Conference of the Institute of Internal Auditors of Armenia, titled “Growing with your business”, was held in Best Western Congress Hotel in Yerevan. The two-day conference has gathered under one roof specialists from around the world and Armenia, representing different spheres of internal audit application. Representatives of highly reputable organizations, including the sphere of audit, as well as the financial sector – banks, insurance, investment companies, as well as from the sphere of state administration, take part in the conference. Famous speakers from all over the world, representing the private, public and financial sectors from Armenia, the Netherlands, Russia, USA, Israel, Austria, Estonia, Slovakia, share their experience. The conference has two concurrent tracks: challenges of governance, risk and control in modern world and technological challenges for internal auditors. The general partner of the conference is Armenia’s leading telecommunications operator VivaCell-MTS.

Among keynote speakers are Ara Chalabyan, the President of IIA Armenia, Nerses Yeritsyan, Deputy Governor of CBA, Mane Tandilyan, the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of the RA representing the public sector, Armen Der Ki-

ureghian, the president of AUA from educational sector, Ralph Yirikian, VivaCell-MTS General Manager and Hakob Andreasyan, the ACBA-Credit Agricole Bank Chief executive Manager representing the private sector. Ara Chalabyan, Mane Tandilyan, Ralph Yirikian and Hakob Andreasyan delivered welcome speeches on the first day of the conference. The speakers emphasized the importance of the presence of Armenia in international professional platforms as a country with innovative solutions in the sphere of governance and acknowledged the positive steps in Armenia in

the sphere of corporate governance. Highlighting the importance of application of the internal audit and compliance in the corporate governance sector, the Viva-Cell MTS Fouding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian**



terms of boosting the corporate governance culture in Armenia, as well as in terms of communicating to the business community on the mission, objectives and benefits of internal audit for organizing healthy, long-term and sustainable business performance. The guests of the country, who are experienced auditors in respective spheres of the economy, are exposed to achievements of Armenia in the sphere of internal audit and corporate governance, which will add to the external positive image of our country.

VivaCell-MTS (MTS Armenia CJSC) is Armenia’s leading telecommunications operator, having the widest 2G/3.75G/4G network reach and spreading a wide range of Voice and Data services all across Armenia. Having the best of the Armenian people interest at heart since its launch on 1st July 2005 and in a short period of time VivaCell-MTS has managed to build a nationwide network and a considerable customer base. VivaCell-MTS drives innovation and aims at always being at the forefront of any development serving the Armenian mobile communications market. The company follows the guidance provided by ISO 26000 (International Standard of Social Responsibility) and ISO/IEC 27001:2013 (Infor-



mentioned in particular: “*Saying that internal audit is about early warning system, helping to prevent problems by identifying the risks at an early stage, before they grow into crises, is to say nothing. Talking business-wise, internal audit and compliance are tools, are means, and a weapon helping to retain positions, win in the competition, and moreover, to develop competitive advantage, enhanced to the level of distinctive capability that is not easy to replicate*”.

The organization of international conference on internal audit in Armenia is important in

mation Security Management System). For more information, visit www.mts.am

Mobile TeleSystems PJSC (“MTS”) is the leading telecommunications group in Russia and the CIS. Including its subsidiaries, the Group services over 100 million mobile subscribers in Russia, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Armenia and Belarus. Since June 2000, MTS’ Level 3 ADRs have been listed on the New York Stock Exchange (ticker symbol MBT).

Yerevan hosts 'Frontiers in Chemistry: Armenia 2018' international conference



Groningen University of the Netherlands in partnership with the Yerevan State University and with the support of the European Union Delegation in Armenia organized a massive scientific international conference – Frontiers in Chemistry: Armenia (ArmChemFront2018) on October 22, reports Armenpress.

World-renowned speakers, including 2 Nobel Prize winners and the EU's Horizon2020 participants have been invited to Armenia. Apart from the invited top speakers, more than 100 scientists from all over the world, including Armenia, were present at the conference.

The main goal of the symposium is to provide Armenian scientists, especially the younger generation, with the opportunity to get acquainted with the best practices in the field using innovative methods and quality techniques in their work. The core message of the conference is the need to re-energize chemical research in the Republic of Armenia tailored to the specific requirements and conditions of the country and in line with the scientific achievements of the world.

The conference kicked off with the welcoming speech by Syuzanna Harutyunyan, Professor of Organic Chemistry at the University

of Groningen and the main Coordinator of ArmChemFront 2018. She stated that the main goals of the conference focus on empowering Armenian scientists. "International conferences play an important role in scientific research, since they serve as a unique platform for the researchers to present their scientific achievements and results, as well as to expand their network of cooperation", she said.

During the opening ceremony EU Ambassador Piotr Świtalski said Armenia needs more participation in international research and innovation programs. "Science, research and development (R&D), technology and innovation are key for improving competitiveness, economic growth and for creating jobs. European Union is committed to stronger Armenia and ready to bring people together around the practice and enjoyment of learning and innovating to showcase the link between educations, learning and employability as well as finding solutions in a community", he said.

Deputy Minister of education and science Hovhannes Hovhannisyan also delivered welcoming

remarks at the event: "The economic difficulties accompanying the historical course of events focused on the restoration of the independence at the end of the 20th century created certain natural obstacles for the preservation and further development of scientific and industrial capacities of the sphere. Nowadays, under the new realities in Armenia, we do need modern, up-to-date solutions in line with the current requirements in order to restore and upgrade the formerly existing chemistry capacities", he said.

Other officials also delivered remarks during the event.

At the end of the conference "The Best Talent" scholarship award will take place on October 25. The international panel of scientists will select the brightest Armenian talent. Within the framework of the scholarship the selected student will get a chance to have a 3-month internship at one of the top chemistry research groups in the world.

The University of Groningen organized the first International Chemistry Conference ArmChemFront in Yerevan in 2013.

Armenian libraries get 1,000 Arabic books as a gift

The Sharjah-based Kalimat Foundation for Children's Empowerment (KF), has supplied 1,000 books to ten Armenian public libraries, which include a variety of genres

and aim to offer easy reads to Arab refugee children and young adults, The Gulf Today reports.

This recent effort forms part of KF's 'Pledge

a Library' initiative, which was launched to support and empower refugee Arab children and young adults through reading by offering them high-quality reading materials in Arabic.

The initiative also aims to help these young readers better understand and appreciate their first language, heritage and cultural legacy living outside their countries of origin.

Amna Al Mazimi, Manager of KF, said: "Bringing 1,000 Arabic books to libraries in Armenia build on our efforts to reach out to the maximum number of Arab refugee children worldwide. Through these initiatives, we reinforce our commitment to help children caught up in crisis overcome their hardship by losing themselves in the stories contained within these books. It is our firm belief that books play a critical role in shaping opinions and personalities."



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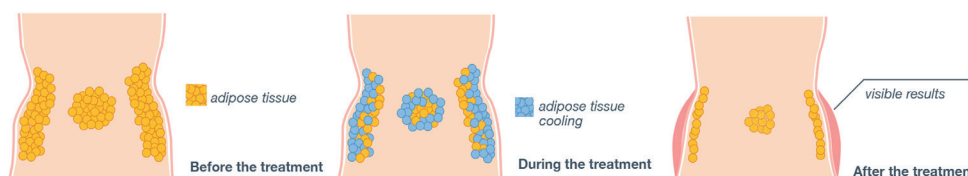
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