

## Armenia extends the state of emergency for another month



PRESS OFFICE OF THE  
GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA  
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Citing the continuing spread of the coronavirus in Armenia, the government on June 12 extended by another month a state of emergency which it declared in March to combat the epidemic.

The government announced the decision after the Armenian Ministry of Health reported that the number of coronavirus cases in the country of about 3 million rose by 612 to 15,281 in the past day. More than 520 hospitalized patients were in a severe or critical condition.

A few days after declaring the state of emergency on March 16, the government issued stay-at-home orders and banned most types of business activity. It began relaxing those restrictions already in mid-April and lifted virtually all of them by May 10 despite the growing numbers of coronavirus cases and deaths reported by the Armenian health authorities on a daily basis.

Critics say that the government never properly enforced the lockdown and lifted it too soon. Some of them have called for a renewed and tougher lockdown.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan indicated his continuing opposition to such a measure when he spoke at a cabinet meeting that approved extending the state of emergency until July 13. He said the authorities will instead continue to encourage Armenians to practice social distancing, wear face masks and follow other safety rules.

Earlier this month the government made it mandatory for everyone to wear a mask in all public areas.

Speaking in the Armenian parliament later in the day, Pashinyan made clear that emergency rule will remain in place until the authorities achieve a significant drop in infection rates. He said the daily number of new COVID-19 cases should fall below 150.

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## Armenia's dialogue with Iran very inclusive – FM

The relations between Armenia and Iran are very inclusive, and our dialogue is very active, Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan told reporters on June 11.

“We have very clear plans for the development of bilateral relations at all levels. In this period, the permanent dialogue between Armenia's Prime Minister and the President of Iran continues, there has been a very clear conversation in terms of advancing our programs. At the level of foreign ministers, a very clear dialogue has been maintained,” Minister Mnatsakanyan stated.

“Our diplomatic mission is working very



actively; the Iranian diplomatic mission is working actively. Our agenda is extensive, and we are going to continue our work,” the Foreign Minister stated.

As for other issues, he said “Armenia has

its own interests, which is should pursue.”

“Armenia has never pursued and is not going to pursue a policy with one partner at the expense of another. We have more than a handful of examples of how Armenia combines its policies with various partners, its key partners, while also pursuing its own interests and not harming the various developments that affect our national security,” Zohrab Mnatsakanyan stated.

The comments follow an act of protest in front of the Armenian Embassy in Iran demanding to cancel plans to open an Embassy and cut ties with Israel.

## Armenian President congratulates Queen Elizabeth II on Birthday



Armenia's President Armen Sarkissian has sent a congratulatory message to Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her Official Birthday.

“Armenia greatly values the continuous expansion and development of the Armenian-British cooperation. We have managed to establish an effective political dialogue in both bilateral and multilateral formats,” the President said.

“We are ready to take steps to enrich the bilateral agenda with new projects of mutual interest for the benefit of our peoples,” he continued.

President Sarkissian wished the Queen good health and all the best, as well as further progress and prosperity to the friendly

people of the United Kingdom.

The Queen celebrated her 94th birthday in April, but it is officially celebrated on the second Saturday of June every year.

The Queen's official birthday will be marked with a new ceremony instead of the annual Trooping the Color parade, as the coronavirus lockdown continues.

It is only the second time in her 68-year reign that the parade in London has not gone ahead.

Instead, Windsor Castle will host a ceremony with a small number of Welsh Guardsmen and military musicians.

Social distancing rules will be in place for those who are marching.

## Armenian Parliament Speaker touches upon Azerbaijan's provocative actions at CSTO PA Council session

Speaker of Parliament of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan participated in the online session of the Council of the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly, the Speaker said on Facebook.

“I participated in the remote session of the CSTO PA Council. During the session I touched upon Azerbaijan's provocative actions during the coronavirus pandemic.

The fight against the pandemic should become an opportunity for reconciliation of peoples. I think we all support this opinion

of the UN Secretary-General.

Nevertheless, despite the call by the UN Secretary-General and the global humanitarian crisis which we are fighting against, Azerbaijan these days is not refusing from its policy of provocations and opening a shot against the civilian population.

Such kind of actions are impermissible, and I expect their condemnation in order to keep stability in the region”, the Speaker said.

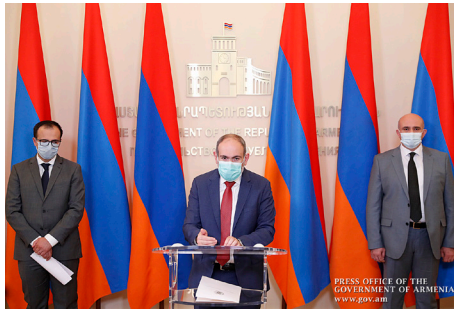




## “Wearing a mask is the most likely way to stop the COVID-19 epidemic” - PM presents international study findings

After regular meeting of the Commandant's Office, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held a news briefing with Minister of Healthcare Arsen Torosyan and Director General of the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention of the Ministry of Healthcare Artavazd Vanyan.

The Premier noted that a significant part of the society continues not to follow the safety rules and not to wear masks. “The time has come to admit that we have not been able to persuade or compel our compatriots to abide by the most effective means so far, namely to wear masks. In fact, it should be noted that in Armenia, despite the decisions made by the fence, the propaganda used, the proceedings, the transparency of the government's activities, people do not wear masks in masse. This is the number one reason for the spread of the coronavirus epidemic in Armenia,” Nikol Pashinyan said.



The Prime Minister presented a study published in the scientific journal of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States, according to which wearing masks in combination with social distancing and other rules is the most probable possibility to stop the COVID-19 epidemic.

“The experience of dozens of hardest-hit countries, including Spain, Italy and the United States, has shown that wearing masks has a decisive effect. I want to say that this was published today, that is, the belief in masks exists at this stage. Previ-

ously, there was no such belief in the effectiveness of masks. Therefore, there have been inaccuracies in the statements in various places,” Nikol Pashinyan said.

According to the same article, masks are necessary for healthy people as this allows them not to inhale the atmospheric particles exhaled by others, which can stay in the air for tens of minutes. In this case, the mask is an effective remedy. Nikol Pashinyan quoted another part of the article, according to which the rules of staying at home and keeping a social distance in New York did not yield so many results. The results were most visible after making the masks mandatory.

The Prime Minister once again urged citizens to strictly observe the safety rules: wear a mask, keep a social distance and frequently wash one's hands.

## Armenia has a stable banking system: PM introduces new Central Bank President to staff

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan introduced on June 15 new President of the Central Bank of Armenia Martin Galstyan to the Bank's staff.

Pashinyan thanked former CBA President Artur Javadyan for the works done during



this period.

“I wish good luck to Martin Galstyan in his activity as CBA President. Mr. Galstyan is not a new person in the banking system and is working in the field for quite a long time. I closely communicated with the Central Bank in the past two years and can state that the Bank has a very good team which is working on the stability of the banking system”, the PM said.

According to Pashinyan, the Central Bank is one of the most important achievements of the third Republic. He stated that the banking system in Armenia is stable and well-established.

“All these is seen from how the financial system demonstrated itself in several crisis situations or during political upheavals, including also during the peaceful, Velvet and people's Revolution, as well as during the current coronavirus crisis. Of course, this change that is taking place is important in a sense that it ensures certain legacy for the activity of the Central Bank. On the other hand, it also symbolizes the further development course and necessity of reforms of changes without undermining the stability”, Pashinyan said.

He said in the current period one of the key challenges of the banking system is to raise the financial literacy among the citizens of Armenia. The PM highlighted the need for actions so that Armenians will be able to see and understand the nuances of the banking system.

“One of our greatest tasks, challenges must be to make the Central Bank more human-centered. We should do so that the context of relations between the banking system and the citizens becomes more constructive in order to avoid negative perceptions around this system. This is one of the most important preconditions for the stability and sustainable development of our economic system”, the Armenian PM added.

He said they have certain agreements with former CBA President Artur Javadyan in terms of future activities. Pashinyan said Mr. Javadyan will be engaged into the process of developing the economic policy, analyzing economic issues and engaging international economic specialists.

“We have concrete programs the implementation of which will be a great success for the development of economic mind of Armenia”, the PM noted.

In turn Artur Javadyan thanked the CBA staff and expressed confidence that the new President will ensure the continuation of the stable work.

## Authorities Move to Arrest Tsarukyan

Law-enforcement authorities on June 15 asked the Armenian parliament to allow them to arrest Gagik Tsarukyan, a wealthy businessman leading its largest opposition group, on charges which he and his allies reject as politically motivated.

Parliament speaker Ararat Mirzoyan said he received a relevant motion from Prosecutor-General Artur Davtyan and included it on the agenda of a National Assembly session scheduled for Tuesday.

In the motion publicized by his office, Davtyan claimed that Tsarukyan “created and led an organized group” that bought more than 17,000 votes for his Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) during parliamentary elections held in April 2017.

The chief prosecutor said the vote bribes were handed out to residents of the Gegharkunik province. Each of them received 10,000 drams (\$21), he said, adding that the National Security Service (NSS) has collected documents and testimony corroborating these accusations.

Davtyan made no mention of two other Tsarukyan-related criminal cases opened by the NSS. The security service accused companies owned by the leader of the opposition Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) of large-scale fraud after raiding his villa outside Yerevan on Sunday. It then interrogated him for more than eight hours.

In a written statement issued several hours



mishandled Armenia’s worsening coronavirus crisis and failed to mitigate its severe socioeconomic consequences.

“Instead of solving problems and doing difficult but real work, the authorities are terrorizing their opponents,” he said.

“I am prepared for any scenario,” the BHK leader added, alluding to his possible arrest. “I am appealing to my fellow citizens: don’t get depressed, everything will be fine, and we will overcome this crisis even if the authorities and Nikol Pashinyan personally do everything to aggravate the situation.”

Tsarukyan met with BHK parliamentarians earlier in the day. One of them, Arman

Artur Davtyan still has a chance not to execute the political order,” she said.

Davtyan’s spokesman, Gor Abrahamyan, countered that Tsarukyan cannot be prosecuted for political reasons.

Pashinyan and senior representatives of his My Step bloc also denied any political motives behind the crackdown. Some of them posted on their Facebook pages supposedly confidential details of the criminal investigations which they said substantiate the NSS allegations.

Tsarukyan’s party was officially in opposition to then President Serzh Sargsyan when it ran for the parliament in the April 2017 elections. One year later, it backed the “Velvet Revolution” that toppled Sarkisian, helped Pashinyan become prime minister and joined his first cabinet formed in May 2018.

Pashinyan fired his ministers affiliated with BHK in October 2018, accusing Tsarukyan of secretly collaborating with the former regime.

The BHK came in a distant second in the December 2018 parliamentary elections and won 26 seats in Armenia’s 132-member parliament.

Pashinyan’s My Step controls 88 parliament seats, putting it in a position to give the green to Tsarukyan’s arrest and prosecution.



before the announcement of the authorities’ decision to seek his arrest, Tsarukyan again denounced the crackdown as government retribution for his demands for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. He stood by his claims that Pashinyan’s government has

Abovyan, told RFE/RL’s Armenian service that the tycoon was “in very high spirits.”

Another senior BHK figure, Naira Zohrabyan, claimed in the morning that the authorities have made a “political decision” to lift Tsarukyan’s parliamentary immunity from prosecution. “Prosecutor-General





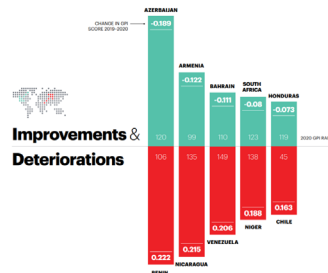
## Global Peace Index 2020: Armenia, Azerbaijan record largest increase in peacefulness

Armenia is ranked 99th (up from 118th last year) among 163 countries in Global Peace Index 2020 released by the Institute for Economics & Peace.

Armenia had the second largest increase in peacefulness on the 2020 GPI, with only its neighbouring country Azerbaijan having a larger improvement. It rose 15 places in the rankings and is now ranked among the 100 most peaceful countries, owing to a large improvement in relations with neighboring countries, as well as a substantial fall in its incarceration rate.

The largest improvement occurred on the Ongoing Conflict domain, with improvements in relations with neighboring countries and a fall in deaths from internal conflict. The primary driver of these changes was an improved relationship with neighboring Azerbaijan, helped in part by Armenia's 'velvet revolution', and a stabilization of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

On the Safety and Security domain, Armenia's incarceration rate improved significantly, falling over 35 per cent over the past three years to 76 prisoners per 100,000 people. This fall means that Armenia now



has the lowest incarceration rate in the Russia and Eurasia region. There was also an improvement in its homicide rate, political instability, and a fall in terrorism impact.

Despite these improvements, Armenia did record deteriorations in some indicators. Although political instability improved, it came at the expense of increasing government interference, resulting in a deterioration in Armenia's political terror scale score. There was also a deterioration in the Militarization domain. Weapons imports rose significantly, as did military expenditure as a percentage of GDP.

The results this year show that the level of global peacefulness deteriorated, with the average country score falling by 0.34 per cent. This is the ninth deterioration in

peacefulness in the last twelve years, with 81 countries improving, and 80 recording deterioration over the past year.

The 2020 GPI reveals a world in which the conflicts and crises that emerged in the past decade have begun to abate, only to be replaced with a new wave of tension and uncertainty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Armenia's neighbors in the region are ranked as follows: Georgia – 95th, Azerbaijan 120th, Turkey – 150th, Iran – 142nd.

Armenia's partners in the Eurasian Economic Union Russia and Belarus are placed 154th and 94th respectively, Kazakhstan is 70th, Kyrgyzstan is 93rd.

Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008. It is joined at the top of the index by New Zealand, Austria, Portugal, and Denmark.

Afghanistan is the least peaceful country in the world for the second year in a row, followed by Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and Yemen. All, except Yemen, have been ranked amongst the five least peaceful since at least 2015.

## Joint Statement of the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace in support of the Egyptian Peace Initiative for Libya

The Bureau of the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace (IPTP), held an urgent session. This session was attended by the President of the Global Council for Tolerance and Peace, the Speaker of the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace and the Heads of Committees of the IPTP, representing the seventy Parliamentarians of the IPTP. The main outcome of the session was the issue of a Joint Statement of the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace in support of the Egyptian Peace Initiative for Libya.

Based on IPTP mission to jointly tackle the issues which have a high impact on the international peace and security, we invite all the relevant stakeholders, our national parliaments and the international community to support the Egyptian Peace Initiative



for Libya that envisages:

1. Proclaiming an immediate ceasefire in Libya;
2. Respecting the integrity and independence of Libya and withdrawing all foreign forces and fighters;
3. Returning to the peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, which will be concluded with a comprehensive political solution to end the Libyan crisis

in line with the outcomes of the Berlin Conference;

4. Holding the presidential council elections under the supervision of the United Nations, and establishing constitutional provisions for organizing the elections for a later stage;

5. Supporting the appropriate Libyan national dialogue mechanism, with international efforts and assistance to strengthen local institutions.

This initiative, which has already gained the support of the key international organizations and states around the world, aimed to achieve the common national interest of the Libyan people by stopping the bloodshed in order to pave the way for building the independence and prosperity of all citizens of Libya.

## Armenia's economic growth in 2020 will be negative due to COVID-19, new CBA President says

According to the estimations of the Central Bank, Armenia's economic growth is forecast to be negative based on the results of 2020 due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, CBA President Martin Galstyan said at the session of the parliamentary standing committee on financial-credit and budgetary affairs.

"According to our estimations, Armenia's economic growth based on the results of 2020 will be negative, significantly lower from our previous prediction. The most affected sectors from the pandemic are housing and public food, transportation, tourism agencies, other services and construction. But the pandemic almost had no effect on agriculture", he said.



Due to this uncertainty, reduction in private consumption and private investments will be recorded. As it was expected by the action plan, a low inflationary environment has been maintained, the 12-month inflation comprised 1.2% in May. Although there were some uncertainties with the relative pace of restoration of supply and demand, but the CBA's current analysis

shows that the restoration of the demand is taking place at slower rates due to the expected slow pace of external demand and the current uncertainty.

According to the January forecasts of the International Monetary Fund, the global economic growth in 2020 was expected to 3.3%, but in April the IMF already presented its forecasts stating that the impact of COVID-19 on economies will be painful. According to the report presented recently by the World Bank, 5.2% decline is expected.

*From the very start 4.9% economic growth was predicted in Armenia's 2020 state budget draft, however, due to the current coronavirus pandemic this figure was revised, forecasting 2% economic decline.*

## Armenia prison system benefits from CoE support to prevent COVID-19

**Preventing COVID-19: Council of Europe supports prison systems in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro and North Macedonia**

In response to the emergency of COVID-19 pandemic and to the need of providing urgent support to inmates and prison staff, in the context of its cooperation programs, the Council of Europe has donated protective materials to five member States – Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

In Armenia, donations included 50 medical uniforms; 8,000 disposable gloves; 100 glasses; 260 respiratory masks; 5,000 disposable masks; 2 oxygen generators; 5 portable saturometers; 5 infrared thermometers; and 10 bactericide lamps.

A total of 13,760 masks; 2,500 facial shields; 1, 240 liters of disinfectant/sanitizer for hands and surfaces; 84,000 gloves; 99 infrared thermometers; 2 oxygen gen-



erators; 5 portable saturometers; 10 bactericide lamps; 50 medical uniforms; 100 protective glasses, 20 pulse oximeters; 3,000 head covers; 5,000 shoe covers were delivered to prison administrations in the mentioned countries. 850 pieces of disinfectants and 5,000 gloves are also under way of delivery in North Macedonia and additional items are expected to be purchased in Montenegro and Azerbaijan until end of June 2020.

These donations aim at supporting the

commitment of the Council of Europe member States and their national prison administrations to adhere to the CPT statement of principles for the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty, in accordance with the World Health Organization guidelines in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The donations were delivered following requests from the Ministries of Justice and prison administrations within the framework of the cooperation activities implemented by the Criminal Law Cooperation Unit, Action against Crime Department, Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law.

The donation to Armenia was possible in the framework of the project Enhancing Health Care and Human Rights Protection in Prisons (financed through CoE Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022).



## From firearms to long-range missile systems: Armenia keeps equipping the military with new armaments

Every soldier must be sure that he is better armed and prepared than his opponent, that his weapon is more accurate and far-reaching, Armenian Defense Minister David Tonoyan said in an extended paper on his vision of priorities of development of the Armed Forces.

He said a large-scale process of equipping the army with new armaments – from firearms to long-range missile systems and combat multifunctional aviation – has already started, but this is the “start of the road.”

According to the Minister, the replenishment of the armed forces pursues several goals.

“The first is the formation of a military potential that will not only curb the enemy’s revanchist ambitions, prevent the temptation to launch large-scale hostilities,



but also quickly deprive them of the ability to wage war. This potential is also called the push ultimatums, preconditions and threats out of the negotiation process on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict,” the Defense Minister said.

Second, he said, the process is aimed at equipping the units of the Armed Forces with mobile, modern and high-precision weapons that will operate in the field of automatic control and will ensure the de-

centralized independent operations of the units.

“Emphasizing the qualitative rather than the quantitative indicators, the types of armaments and military equipment obtained as a result of the upgrade should exceed the existing weapons and military equipment with their firepower and accuracy, mobility, protection and rapid response capacities,” the Defense Minister added.

Third, Minister Tonoyan said, the goal of the upgrade is to achieve a long-lasting and easy exploitation of armaments and military equipment, requiring fewer human resources.

Fourth, he said, the goal of the replenishment is to reach obvious superiority and neutralize the potential enemy in different areas of combat operations with the most efficient use of available resources.

## Estonia provides 30,000 euros to Children of Armenia Fund for fight against Covid-19

President Armen Sarkissian had a telephone conversation with the President of the Republic of Estonia Kersti Kaljulaid on June 10.

The Presidents exchanged views on coronavirus-related situation in both countries, the measures to prevent and overcome it, and discussed opportunities for cooperation in the fight against the virus.

President Sarkissian thanked the President of Estonia for providing 30,000 euros to the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF), which will be directed to the fight against the epidemic and the purchase of appropriate medical supplies.

The Presidents also touched upon the development of bilateral relations, emphasizing the existence of great potential for cooperation between the two countries in the fields of technology, artificial intelligence, science, technology and education, including cooperation within the framework

of the ATOM presidential initiative.

In this context, it was noted that President Armen Sarkissian’s official visit to Estonia in the fall will be a new impetus for deepening cooperation between the two friendly countries.





“We have a professional team that will be capable to keep the financial stability, as well as to have a stable macroeconomic environment in the current situation caused by this coronavirus crisis”, Javadyan said.

New President of the Central Bank Martin Galstyan

thanked for the appreciation.

“During these years a team has been really formed in the Central Bank which passed many experiments and has been capable of solving its tasks. I assure you that the work which has been done will be continuous, we will deepen the cooperation with our partners of the government for the benefit of our nation and society. We will make all efforts to ensure macro-stability in the country regardless of everything”, the new CBA President said.

Martin Galstyan was elected President of the Central Bank by the Parliament on April 17.

## French doctors join Armenia's fight against Covid-19

French doctors have joined Armenian colleagues in fighting Covid-19, Health Minister Arsen Torosyan said on Facebook.

The doctors have already started working at intensive care units of three large hospitals engaged in the fight against Covid-19 – Sourb Grigor Lusavorich Medical Center, Sourb Astvatsamayr Medical Centre and Traumatology and Orthopedics Center. The French doctors spent the whole day in hospitals. They held discussions with the local specialists on the treatment process of patients who are in serious and critical condition.

Minister Torosyan expressed gratitude to all partners who helped organize the visit, which, he said, “will be really useful for us.”



A group of French doctors arrived in Armenia via a special flight to help the healthcare system to battle the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs of Armenia said today.

“This is the first such kind of an initiative on engaging foreign doctors which became a reality by the cooperation between our Office, USAID and the ministry of healthcare. Most of the doctors, who overcame the virus in France, visit Armenia for the first time and they are sure that they will invest all their experience and knowledge in the responsible mission to save human lives”, the statement says.

Recently Lithuania, Georgia and the World Health Organization (WHO) also expressed readiness to assist Armenia in fighting the COVID-19.



## Startups can re-invent the post-pandemic world, says Armenian president

Armenian president Armen Sarkissian calls for the creation of a club of small, successful states to pioneer innovative policies. Sarkissian says all countries now need to adopt an agile, tech-savvy mentality. The President believes startups will play a critical role in the post-pandemic world.

“The unfortunate reality is that every country will face high unemployment. Companies will be under pressure to stay afloat and cut costs further as they try to adjust to the new ways of living, consuming and working. As we saw after the 2008 crisis, people will be willing to take more risks and start new companies because they may not be able to return to their old jobs,” Armen Sarkissian said in an interview with *Sifted*.

He believes governments should do everything they can to encourage this form of risk-taking because these are the companies which can help us to innovate and live and work more productively in the post-pandemic world.

“Technology can help us create not only distant learning but also distant healthcare. We focus too much on the cure instead of prevention. The pandemic is a clear manifestation of this notion. Technology, through the use of artificial intelligence and distant engagement, can help people maintain higher standards of hygiene, healthcare and education without implementing higher costs on the taxpayer. But we need to encourage the private sector to develop these technological solutions. Upfront investments and incentives by states to cre-



ate the right ecosystems for innovation will ensure a longer-term reduction of costs, while increasing the levels of education and healthcare,” the President stated.

As someone who has worked on one of the first educational games — Wordtris-Tetris, he believes educational games will play a more prominent part in the future, rather than the traditional classroom systems.

President Sarkissian said he will be launching a Club of small states officially soon. He has discussed the idea with a number of leaders including the Emir of Qatar, Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the prime minister of Singapore, and the presidents of Rwanda and Montenegro.

“It is a good time to be a small state since the spread of democratic norms-based international institutions, combined with increased interdependency and openness of global markets, allows small states like Armenia not only to prosper but also to influence the evolving multipolar world order,” Armen Sarkissian said.

At the same time, according to him, unconventional challenges like the ongoing

Covid-19 pandemic are an added reason for many small states to seek effective co-operation.

“One of the missions of the Club is to identify innovative approaches to collective actions and international initiatives by small states. We are entering a new era for the global economy, being shaped by three driving forces: digitalisation, and the new industrial revolution; the sustainable development imperative; and economic multipolarity and state nationalism. The Club can become a generator of novel development strategies and growth models for small states as we confront this new era,” he stated.

“Armenia is among few countries in the world which has a Ministry of High-Tech industry. It testifies to the importance we attach to the development of technologies. Artificial intelligence has already become a priority on our technological development agenda, and we are striving to make Armenia a world hub when it comes to AI. Toward that end, we encourage and support startups working in this particular area at the state level. As for e-governance, we view it as an essential tool for governing in the 21st century and are taking decisive steps to introduce it in Armenia at all levels of governance,” he added.

He reminded that Armenia is not only a small state, but a global nation with advancing ambitions, and the compatriots from the diaspora are an important asset and act as ambassadors for Armenian startups and products in the global market.

## Georgian Armenians send 27 ventilators to Armenia



The “Hayastan” All Armenian Fund launched the “United Against the Pandemic” fundraising campaign within days of the outbreak in Armenia. The campaign has been widely supported by Armenian communities, organizations and partners around the world with the sole purpose of

supporting the homeland to overcome the Pandemic as quickly and painlessly as possible.

The latest supporter of this global campaign is the Georgian based “Friends of Armenia, Georgia” initiative. What began as an individual effort by Pavel Oganezov, the director of “Aliq Media” who coordinated the purchase of 10 oxygen concentrators for the Armenian healthcare sector evolved into more involvement and coordination by the Armenian community leading to a further 17 concentrators purchased. As a result, a total of 27 devices were handed to the Hayastan All Armenian Fund at the Georgia-Armenia border late last night.

The Armenian community in Georgia continues its support to the homeland with the “One mask, one life” fundraiser with all funds used to purchase masks for their compatriots in Armenia. The Hayastan All Armenian Fund will coordinate the transportation and logistics related to all of these initiatives and ensure that they are delivered to those most in need.

This initiative has spurred further involvement from other communities with Belgium and Luxemburg also joining the global campaign.

We are grateful to all our donors for their unconditional trust and support. United we can overcome this Pandemic.

# ICT Leading Managers: Armenians as a Global Nation should Use Competitive Advantages to Get Niches Opening under Pandemic Crisis, or an employee is the highest value and many more...

**Scripted, translated from Armenian and commented  
by Gourgen James Khazhakian,  
Chief Correspondent**

*In The Highlights issue # 1287 we've informed our Reader on "The Unprecedented Challenges of our Times", the next webinar by "At the Crossroads" Discussion Platform (dedicated to Armenia and Armenians' future in the 21<sup>st</sup> century) with the following speakers – leading reps of ICT industry **Hovik Musayelyan**, Director of "Synopsis Armenia" (Moderator), **Armen Baldryan**, CEO of "Unicom" CJSC and **Ralph C. Yirikian**, Viva-MTS Founding General Manager. As it was said, during the webinar, the following issues were discussed:*

- What is happening to the world today?
- Transformation of education – how to train specialists in the current situation?
- What new opportunities will appear in the IT and telecommunications sector?
- What lessons should we learn from the epidemic?
- What image of an Armenian businessman has developed in Armenia today, does the society sympathize with successful people?
- What do we mean by "a small country – a global nation"?

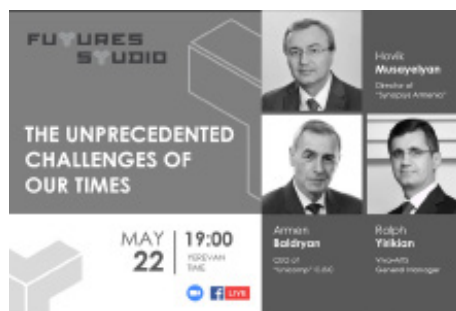
*Due to some reasons, we've experienced a delay with publication of this very topical script... Yes, namely a script (and not a general report, observation, analysis etc) as we'd like not to miss a thing and to convey the atmosphere of that active and lively discussion on vitally important issues...*

## 1. What is happening to the world today?

Hovik Musayelyan: ...This really unprecedented situation has changed, one can say, the world order, and in the opinion of many and many this is the most serious world crisis

after WWII. In fact, the global economy has collapsed.

If yet a month or two ago we were more or less optimistic in our forecast on the end of this crisis, i.e. it will be over in a couple of month, now it's obvious that it will be much longer, and so we have to learn how to live under pandemic, to work, and to unite our effort to overcome it ASAP.



The fact that two EU member countries – Italy and Spain assaulted heavily by COVID19 declared they did not feel themselves fully-fledged EU members as they were "left alone" for fighting pandemic (as the European Union, as it was found, had no enough sufficient means and system to stop it), is an evidence of the pandemic' being extremely serious, and the losses will be the huge ones...

Ralph Yirikian: I think it provided with opportunity to get new experience, especially in sense of more frequent and active online work regime, and make changes in our mind both in personal or business terms; notably, before current pandemic, there were companies going to work in online regime more actively, and one of them was Viva-MTS, but we could not even imagine its real scale, so it has become an opportunity to get lessons, and why not – to improve our work and to make it more efficient.

Both SMS and larger businesses should think how to work with the higher efficiency in online regime, for example, to create Virtual Desktop Infrastructure Platforms that would allow to work with no

visiting office, i.e. from your home, garage, from the forest etc. Current crisis gave us a chance to attach importance both to technology as well as the trust to each other.

Armen Baldryan: Indeed, we are in crisis now, however it gives new opportunities...

Look: it is for 15-20 years we all speak about giving a strong impetus to our economy via wider use of technology, and several steps have been done, but for me personally speed of those steps is not sufficient. Now it is the right time to increase the pace as we see that those companies that have been using technology widely before this COVID19 pandemic, definitely will overcome current crisis with minimal losses.

And there is a clear message to companies and the Government indeed: there is no alternative to economy digitalization. From another side, new niches in the world market of technological solutions will open soon, and we the Armenian companies must find our niches.

At the same time I cannot imagine business and our work in general with no man-to-man contacts, so I believe that combination of technology and human contacts will give good results.

## 2. Transformation of education – how to train specialists in the current situation?

Hovik Musayelyan: It seems to me that in current situation education is on the forefront, it is becoming more and more crucial in economy...Today online education is fashionable...And it is time to work out new curricula combining the so-called classical education and online.

And here universities could have losses as the big number of organizations can offer better curricula...My friends, what do you think on this issue?

Ralph Yirikian: Mr Musayelyan, would you please to tell



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that our companies (Viva-MTS and Synopsys Armenia, plus Unicom) belong to that firms which considers their investment in education as social responsibility as we do believe that it is a catalyst that will allow to have better generations... And also please tell about our joint educational programs both implemented already and those that are in process?

Hovik Musayelyan: Yes, together we did a lot of educational programs!

...From the very first days of the State of Emergency was declared, we in Synopsys Armenia switched off our education to online regime – lessons, lab work, and now – diplomas, exams. Notably, it is a quite long time we have been using online education, in particular, based on various educational products developed under leadership of Professor **Vazgen Melikian**, Director of Synopsys Armenia Educational Dept.

And I agree with you, Mr Yirikian that our corporate responsibility approaches to education are right and our companies success is reasoned mainly by this fact.

Armen Baldryan: ...Many years we have been speaking about use of technology in education, but have been receiving often opinions that education is conservative, and so that technology could even endanger the education...

However, in this couple of months, in terms of technology use in education it has been done much more than in previous ten years...But here we have had several problems such as, for instance, accessibility to PC, others....And if we will not resolve problems very soon, definitely, in case of – God forbid !! – second wave of pandemic we will have greater problems...This is a great message to all of us – companies, universities, Govt., parents. And we have to be ready to overcome all the difficulties, and have very good results after the pandemia is over...

### 3. *What new opportunities will appear in the IT and telecommunications sector?*

Hovik Musayelyan: ...Well, we've just

talked on education...

As to business, let me tell smth: Although in IT it is a widespread thing that this or that specialist works online from his/her home, but, if someone would say us yet a couple of months ago that most of 1,000 employees-strong staff of Synopsys Armenia will work in such a regime, most probably we would consider it a kind of disaster, really...

But !! – surprisingly, within these two months since State of Emergency was declared, our Company has had no losses. So it is a precedent.

Ralph Yirikian: I talked about this issue in the very beginning of the discussion, but now I'll add something.

When our Company was transforming



from (just) telecom services operator to a digital services provider, we, already then, have started to digitalize various platforms – both inner, for the Company's needs, and external ones, solutions, applications etc – for clients. Otherwise, already then we in fact prepared our subscribers to use various platforms we offer with no limit – be it social ones, and the recent – Skype, ZOOM, and new ones will come soon.

So the clients can work effectively with not necessary coming to their workplaces.

And, if there is a mutual trust between manager and this or another employee, the 100% job can be done.

And, I'll tell you more: local companies should start turning from the so-called vertical structure of management to horizontal one. People should learn how to work in groups, then – group-to-group contacts, plus online individually etc.

BUT! At least for us Viva-MTS, the biggest capital is our Employee him/herself, or, as we say – member of Viva-MTS fam-

ily, so rising of efficiency and speed of work does NOT mean, not at all that we should cut number of workplaces, i.e. fire people...

Besides it companies should think to cut their expenses in this or that sphere.

I might point out (proudly-**edit.**) that within the current pandemic NO workplace was cut in Viva-MTS, vice versa – we have got new employees, salaries were paid with NO cuts and delays, no matter some of my colleagues have been from home or even not working at all (!!! – **edit.**), and this is the only way to strengthen furthermore mutual trust.

Hovik Musayelyan: I absolutely agree with you Mr Yirikian. We Synopsys Armenia too, in these hard times fired no employee, and even hired new ones, salaries were paid with no cuts and delays, and this will be kept how long the quarantine is on. Yes, it is wrong approach to cut workplaces/people now, and you are right when speaking about restructurization of expenses...

Armen Baldryan: In our Company, Unicom, situation is in fact the same with you two. You know, one of our best clients asked me: how can I be confident that my employee who is at own home, is working sitting at the PC, and not, for instance, laying in the bed?

The answer is very clear: are you absolutely sure that employee working hard when sitting in your office??

The question here is in mutual trust between employer and employee. In general, I think ICT companies should have no big losses as they were ready for online work regime...But we have seen that other branches of our economy were not ready for the work in current situation.

What I will advise them is a kind of workplaces "transformation", i.e. hiring of specialists who are able work effectively in such a situations, and also non-stop trainings. And it is obvious now already that approaches to employees, their skills, even to entities' structure will change, and we all – the businesses, employers and employees plus the Govt. should work together with no delay.

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Hovik Musayelyan: Mr Baldryan, I agree with you in that sense if we could evaluate current situation in right way, we have success.

4. And the next issue of our talks, - *“What lessons should we learn from the epidemic?”* is logically coming out from the above mentioned.

And it seems we talked about those lessons discussing previous questions.

However, I want to stress some points.

First, I agree with Mr Baldryan that ICT sphere have had no serious losses within this period, vice versa, some companies have had profit...So I think people/youngsters' motivation to become ICT specialists that was pretty high in the recent decades, is now increasing even more. And already today I receive calls from parents who ask me about universities with good ICT education.

And, indeed, number of those who would like to become doctor will increase drastically as well as we see how prestige of this profession rocketed 'cause of their heroic job fighting pandemia. Taking advantage of this occasion, I would like to say the great “thank you!” to our doctors!

Ralph Yirikian: I share what you've just said, and I “liked” when you were speaking...)))

Armen Baldryan: Just one more thing – we should be self-isolated, but act together.

### 5. *What image of an Armenian businessman has developed in Armenia today, does the society sympathize with successful people?*

Hovik Musayelyan: The question is an all-encompassing and very important as public perception of businessmen, charity, successful people in Armenia differs.

...Within decades we have been hearing from the people that if a man is building castles, has numerous businesses, is rich etc. it means that he necessary gained those

money in a not fair, legal way...So it has been a *cliché*...

So let's try to make clear this socially important issue...

...A wise man said a long ago: that man is a poor who has nothing but money...

Rich men in the Armenian (and not only) history were *Alexander Mantashev* (Mantashyants), *Galoust Gyulbenkyan*, *Aramyants*, *Kirkorian*, others who were the REAL, great benefactors and philanthropists for the Nation who were doing their all good deeds with no PR...And today we have such successful people, i.e. “richmen” who are their worthy inheritors...Guys, we all three are members of the Board of the



Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia (UMBA, President *Arsen V. Ghazaryan* for who Mantashyants has been a role model businessman and who initiated paying tribute to him at the state level – the RA Govt erected the Benefactor's monument at the Abovyan str. in Yerevan, and 3 March that is Mantashyants' birthday was officially proclaimed as the Businessman Day ), and we know such people among us...

So here you are a classical example: Mr *Ralph C. Yirikian*, Founding General Manager of Viva-MTS who brought to Armenia very notion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and has been teaching the local businessmen this very important “subject” for the years in row, generating numerous social programs aimed at strengthening our country's economy, assistance to the vari-

ous social groups and many more...

Ralph Yirikian: ...I do not like much to speak about myself, you all know it, and when we'll gather around a cup of tea, I'll “push” you, dear Hovik (smiles)...

...In reality, the very first steps to success begin in the family and at school.

Due to the combination of spiritual-moral, linguistic, historical, and cultural education, an inner world is shaped in a kid and a teenager, an image and thereafter a goal.

Indeed, a person, first of all, must desire and have the will to overcome all possible and impossible obstacles and hardships, again – to “climb mountains”, mostly without help, and, importantly – to “catch” opportunities that opens or leads to uneasy road to SUCCESS..

And...While a person on this road to success, SHOULD NOT be an egoist, should remain humble, should think about the own family, about the close circle, about the Country, about the Flag (showing back to the Armenian Tricolor waving proudly at the roof of Yirikian's home), the identity!

And ONLY when a person can bring together all this, than that person could be considered a successful one.

Mr Musayelyan, you've just touched upon social investment, yes, this is also a very important component of a REAL success, - in case of companies it is CSR, but when a person who is, especially, inside such a company wants to make smth good for the SOCIETY, should do it in a SILENT way, with no ads.

And the combination of this two forms a new, the highest kind of social investment – in the name of the whole country.

Hovik Musayelyan: ...I have to stress here two moments.

First: A couple of years ago GM of a well known large company said me smth like the following: Oh, everyday we see at TV screen that VivaCell-MTS did this, or that...Probably they are doing it for their own PR...Ok, I told him, but let me ask you: why others are not doing the same, as you said, for their own PR, ah??! And why you yourself don't go to your boss and do not offer to do the same – for your “company's PR”?? ‘Cause you realize very well that how it is difficult to convince the owners, especially

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the foreign ones (as in Viva-MTS case) to approve CSR budget!

In spite of all the attempts from Mr Yirikian to interrupt him, Dr Musayelyan continued:

...Few years we the Armenian business reps including all three of us were coming back from Artsakh...When we stopped near Dadivank Monastery, a pearl of the Armenian ancient architecture, accidentally we found out that beautiful frescos restoration (that were almost erased by Azeris before liberation of Artsakh in 1992-94 Patriotic War) and several chapels around the Monastery was sponsored from own pocket by...who d'you think?? Mr Ralph Yirikian...And we his friends even had no idea about it!

And the same I can say about Mr Baldryan...

Armen Baldryan:...Mr Musayelyan, can we return to the main question??

...Armenia is a small country, we all live in narrow neighborhoods, and almost everyone knows how this or that person gains money: doing well in school, studying in university, learning more and more, and after that working hard, or, softly speaking, breaking the law. And so the attitude is deserved one in the most of cases...

It is we the business people who should care about what do people think about us.

Here the problem is also in the mentality of people: some thirty years ago we've started our transition from Soviet stereotypes to the new reality, but as we see the process is not completed: if a person, besides getting the so-called official salary has had also another profit, - no matter it was gained due to hard work, he/she could be considered even a kind of "criminal", and, alas, fragments of such an old mentality remain...I think the transparency is the core thing here...

Hovik Musayelyan:...Sometime some people ask me about average salary in IT sphere, and, getting the answer, they are almost shouting: wow!!, i.e. "the poor others", not thinking just for while that an IT specialist should study in fact the whole life to reach such a salary level. And I agree with PM *Pashinyan* that we must become

a country where people receive high salary, i.e. technologically developed state. Only then mentality of people on "the poor/the rich" will change.

## 6. *What do we mean by "a small country – a global nation"?*

Hovik Musayelyan:...Look, how many huge empires sunk into oblivion, how many civilizations disappeared, but we the Armenians survived in spite of all really undescrivable hardships, wars, genocides, keeping our really unique genetical code, our identity.

...We are a small country of 3 mln population, and 7 mln Armenians living abroad.



Have we aspirations to become a global nation? I think yes, as we can be interesting for the world first of all with our solutions of the complicated technological problems, mathematical modelling, and we have a lot of to offer in tems of AI, artificial intelligence that is a very popular direction in today's world...

Ralph Yirikian: Yes, undoubtedly, we are a global nation with our rich history, culture, our Kingdoms, our being the first nation that adopted Christianity as the state religion, and many more...

There is no a country in the world where the Armenian trace could not be found.

Yes, absolutely!

Armen Baldryan: Look, within centuries, prominent Armenians living abroad their Homeland, have been striving, first of all, to be helpful to countries of their residence, let's say, in global scale, and only then – to the Land of Ancestors...And I think it is right approach, as when you are refer-

ring Armenia, let's say, from a global point of view, you are able to be useful for our country much more when your "starting point" is Armenia. So in these terms Armenians are definitely a global nation.

Let me tell you a short story.

By a virtue of my job, I am a frequent traveler. And once, when I was hosted by GM of an internationally-recognized company, this gentleman shown me collection of souvenirs brought from numerous countries. To my surprise and pleasure, I've seen there a lot of Armenian souvenirs from all over the world though he never visited Armenia...

This story is a one more evidence of the Armenians' being a global nation.

Indeed, this is a matter of pride, but for me it is the highest responsibility, first of all.

Hovik Musayelyan:...Well, dear Armen, your story reminded me a similar one happened in 2010...

When the first ever Laureate of the Armenian State Award for Outstanding Contribution to Humanity through IT (GIT Award), Intel Retired Chief Dr *Craig Barrett* was in Armenia to receive the Award personally, he told us that when he (having Jewish origins) visited Jerusalem, he noticed that the most of souvenirs there were the Armenian ones...

**(Editor's note.** The Highlights and this author have been covering GIT Awarding since its very establishment till present).

But let's touch upon our "negative features" as well.

...Sometimes we the Armenians are a kind of arrogant, especially when referring to our past – millenia-old history, culture, heritage and our Genius...

Then, a natural question arises: why Armenia is not in the list of developed countries or close to them??

...In my opinion, the most important "mean" for that is to unite and to put to the table of the world our Nation's competitive advantages portfolio packed as befits those very Heritage and the Genius...

*And then the time for some questions from the audience has come...*

## Maestro Orbelian doesn't Wish the Case of «Bolshoi» Theatre to be Repeated in Yerevan and thus Waiting for the RA Government Decision in the US

*Translated from Armenian, edited and compiled by Gourgen James Khazhakian, Chief Correspondent*

*Online conversation with the General and Artistic Director of the Al. Spendiaryan National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet Constantine G. Orbelian*

-Dear Maestro, you have been staying in the US for this period of self-isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic the end of which is still unclear...

May we assume that you keep in touch with your colleagues from the world renowned theatres to find the ways out of the current situations?

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports has been holding consultations these days on theatre and concert organizations activities' restart, but there is no particular statement yet...

The administration of the La Sacala Opera reported that they will raise the curtain in September with a symbolic concert, according to them.

It is clear that the Opera House is a complicated structure and comprises several collectives (orchestra, choir, ballet troupe, soloists, solo dancers and so forth) and it is impossible to stage a performance at the time of the pandemic.

Even though, there are some chamber pieces that could be staged within a short period with small number of musicians and soloists known from the world opera literature.

Also, some ballet performances could be staged with the participation of small dancing groups, again with the chamber group.

We would like your comments on this.

-Well, every theatre and concert hall will be facing specific challenges while resuming its activities. Everything depends on the way of their activities to begin. I mean the rehearsals of the orchestra, choir and ballet.

So far no orchestra has found solution to working under "social-distancing" condition.

It's just unreal to rehearse wearing respiratory masks and following two-meter distance.

Artists are not able to sing in a choir with masks covering their faces, let alone the re-



hearsals of the ballet artists.

Thus, all the countries that have terminated the activities of all the major concert, opera and sports complexes (except for Belarus and Sweden), have cancelled everything - concerts, musical and art festivals, performances and sportive events. For instance, the Metropolitan Opera has cancelled all the performances until autumn, and the Carnegie Hall until October 7.

Since the vaccine for Covid-19 hasn't been discovered yet and there is no medicine for that, it is very difficult to resume our professional activities.

Lie us, our colleagues are "stand-by".

At this moment safe rehearsing remains the main issue. By the time a reliable remedy will have been discovered and the situation will have been changed accordingly, how should we persuade people to go to the theatres again and seat directly side by side.

Will they be obliged to wear masks as it is now with the airplane flights? Will there be a need for taking their temperature to make sure they are healthy and not infected? Will all the staff of the theatres be tested for the Covid-19 before going to work? Too many questions still remain unanswered.

As I've mentioned above, the Metropolitan Opera Theatre, starting mid-March until the end of the theatrical season has

cancelled all the performances and intends to resume the Theatre activities (no terms are specified) when the situation is relatively safe.

We do not want to have the increase in numbers of infected people because of our activities. We will strictly follow the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health to prevent further spread of the virus.

**Aravot Daily,**  
Samvel Danielyan

**The Highlights note:** *Probably, our esteemed colleague S.D. means in the headline a holiday pop-folk concert held at the glorious stage of the Bolshoi Theatre of Russia (??!) in spring resulted COVID19 infection of many.*

P.S. As in her interview with an Armenian media outlet Theatre Deputy Director Karineh Kirakosyan said, they will "continue activities on the online platform" and the programs are connected with that format.

We will record a series of concerts and broadcast them on the Theatre Facebook page, Mrs Kirakosyan said, and a recent example is celebration of the Republic Day on 28 May with such a concert (four soloists accompanied by a string quartet and piano). Reportedly, they are going to celebrate the holiday of the medical workers with an online concert, thus expressing gratitude to doctors for their dedicated work.

According to Kirakosyan, the number of views of the Theater's Facebook page during the period of the quarantine has reached 5 mln. She stressed that they are in daily contact with Maestro Orbelian, coordinating with him all the plans and activities.

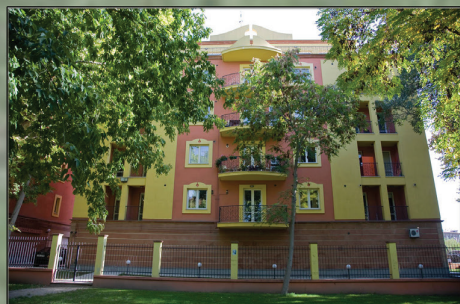
"And as Maestro Orbelian says, when an opera house in the world finds a safe and secure way to work, we will follow its example", Karineh Kirakosyan concluded.

To note, Opera House Young Artists Opera Program (Director Levon Javadyan) has also been active in recording concerts (following FB broadcasting) dedicated to various remarkable days such as Genocide Commemoration Day 24 April, Victory Day 9 May, birthdays of the world genius like the great Russian poet A.S. Pushkin, others.



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## Valuable Silver Belts from the Funds of the “Preservation Service” SNCO

*Edited and translated from Armenian by Gourgen James Khazhakian,*

*Chief Correspondent*



From the ancient times to the present day, the belt, as a part of clothing, has been widely used and was important in the life of the Armenian people. The belt has played a multifunctional and symbolic role in the traditional clothing complex.

The belt, as a piece of traditional clothing, played multifunctional



and symbolic role: first of all applied, then social, ritual, defensive, symbolic (for example, the red belt was used exclusively by married women), as well as aesthetic, significance. For men, the belt was also a sign of power.

Metal - silver, gold, gold-plated and having only metal clasp belts are made by casting, engraving, twinning, embossing, and silver plating techniques. The belts made in different regions or historical-ethnographic regions of Armenia are distinguished by their typical technique, clasp, ornaments and ornamental complex. The silver belts made by the masters of Alexandropol, Shushi and Tiflis in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are an integral part of the “Preservation Service” ethnography fund.

They have been transferred from



the Museums in Harich and Dilijan and have been kept in the funds of the SNCO since 1988. The masters put their seals on the silver belts that allow to determine their period. The silver belts kept in the funds of the SNCO have their own peculiarities, which is reflected in the method of preparation, the pattern of ornaments and the clasp.

Those made in Alexandropol are

thick belt made of a clasp, silver pieces with ornaments which are put on a leather strap in a way that allows them to be bent, but after tying it together it looks like a single-pieced silver belt.

They have a thin clasp, and the lower edge of the pieces is lined with fine silver lace that is typical of this region. In ancient times, kings and other dignitaries wore luxurious, diamond-shaped belts. The rich tied the belt especially on solemn days.

Sometimes magical properties have been attributed to the belt, it



has been used against evil eye, a favorable talisman.



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