

EU calls for faster reforms In Armenia



Belgium - EU Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy Johannes Hahn (L) and Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian speak at a meeting of the EU-Armenia Cooperation Council, Brussels, 18 Jan 2016.

The European Union has urged the Armenian authorities to speed up political reforms promised by them and "appropriately" implement sweeping constitutional changes that were enacted through a disputed referendum held last month.

Senior EU officials also reaffirmed the 28-nation bloc's commitment to deepen relations with the South Caucasus country "in all areas possible" during an annual

meeting of the EU-Armenia Cooperation Council held in Brussels late on Monday.

The meeting was chaired by Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian. The EU was represented by Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy Johannes Hahn and Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders.

"The Cooperation Council reviewed recent political, economic and social

reforms in Armenia," read an EU statement released after the meeting.

"The EU took note of progress achieved in implementing these reforms and of Armenia's commitment to continue on this positive trajectory, while at the same time encouraging Armenia to accelerate reforms in specific areas, notably democracy and the rule of law, anti-corruption

continued on page 4

In This Issue

- Armenian Amb. addresses UN debate, deplores Azeri violence** p.5
- Armenia calls for activation of transport corridors in the region** p.6
- Turkish Minister admits delay in Hrant Dink murder probe** p.10
- Worldwide Congratulations to the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia** p.p.12-13
- Story about one photo and two Genocides** p.p.14-15

ASHGABAT 2017:

at the dawn of the future V Asian Games

Currently Turkmenistan is one of the most dynamically developing nations in the world. The high speed of development can be observed through a variety of economic sectors.

Moreover, regionally, Turkmenistan is acquiring the status of a sports state, where the health and lifestyle has become a priority of the state politics. Due to state programs and policy, the development of high

performance sport has become a guide for each sports clubs even in the most remote cities of the country.

Our country is Neutral and this year the Neutrality of the country is celebrating its 20th anniversary. This jubilee is significant for us, because our state offers all the necessary conditions for life and devel-

continued on page 2

ASHGABAT 2017: at the dawn of the future V Asian Games

From page 1

opment, first and foremost, for life in peace and harmony. In Neutral Turkmenistan the care of citizens' health, development of mass sports and recreation movement are the prior directions of the state politics, which aims to consolidate nation's health and bring up a physically strong and spiritually wealthy new generation. In view of this fact, it is of great importance to create all the necessary conditions for holding big sports events, among which Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games play a significant role. The Games contribute not only to increasing of international sports prestige of Turkmenistan, but also to further training of highly qualified sportsmen and popularization of different kinds of sport in our country.

The bilateral agreement about hosting the fifth Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games in Ashgabat in 2017 was signed between Olympic Committee of Asia and National Olympic Committee of Turkmenistan and also the city administration of Ashgabat on the 19th of December 2010. The news, that Turkmenistan was the first city in Central Asian region to get the right to host 2017 Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games, became a significant event in the life of Turkmenistan.

The 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games will be held in the white-marbled city of Ashgabat, "the pearl of Asia", in 2017. For the first time a great number of countries (guests from 62 countries, including 45 countries of Asia, 17 Pacific countries) will be received. For comparison 42 countries for 9 kinds of sport took part in the games in Incheon in 2013. We also expect 5 thousand athletes from 21 kinds of sport, 2,5 thousand coaches, more than 10 thousand foreign guests, more than 1,5 thousand technical staff members and over 10 thousand volunteers. Approximately 150-200 thousand sport fans are supposed to arrive in Ashgabat in September 2017. Opening and closing Ceremonies of the Games will be held at the open air stadium with the capacity of 45000 spectators. For the sake of transportation convenience on the vast territory, a monorail way will connect Olympic Village for 12 thousand "residents" with other venues of Olympic Park.

The sports venues, which have no analogues in Central Asia, are being built in our Olympic Park with the square of 156 hectares. Our Olympic Park is one of the unique objects in Central Asia; it includes over 30 multi-purpose venues, Paralympic Complex and Medical Rehabilitation Center. Having the variety of top-level sports venues at disposal, which will be soon put into operation, it is the exigencies of modern time to organize major international sports events, (strange sentence, Russian version is also strange) The ven-

ues will be provided with high quality sports equipment manufactured by leading world companies, also the peculiarities of venue decorations will be taken into account. Moreover all sportsmen and participants will be offered all the necessary conditions. Major competitions change image of cities, force their development, thus Ashgabat truly has a bright future.

Executive Committee of the 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games is implementing complex and massive projects on Games preparation, temporal character of which demands high-level organizational, activities and effective cooperation with various institutions, organizations and companies. It is especially important to share know-how with leading countries, which have great experience in keeping major international sports events. Such closest partners of Turkmenistan are Olympic Council of Asia, National Olympic Committees of different countries, Sports Federations.

On the 3-5 April 2014 the International Exhibition "Ashgabat - the capital of Asiada 2017" was held in the Exhibition Palace of Ashgabat City. Over 60 world sports companies participated there. At the beginning of the exhibition sports equipment, sports requisites and sports clothing were presented. Companies from Russia, Great Britain, Germany, France, Holland, Italy, Austria, Spain and many others presented their achievements and services. Among them there are also companies, which take first steps to establish mutually beneficial connections with our country.

On the 8-10 April 2014 the opening ceremony of Masterclass "Asiada Cuisine 2017" took place in the National tourist zone "Awaza". Experienced cookery experts from over 20 countries - Great Britain, Germany, China, Korea, Malaysia, India, Nepal, Japan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the Ukraine and others - arrived to Turkmenistan to participate in this event. The forum participants were introduced to the peculiarities of the national traditional cuisine of Turkmenistan. As it was pointed, agriculture and animal farming have developed since ancient times and the products of these sectors contributed to the development of the local cuisine. Currently, Turkmen culinary art has a great potential for further development. Foreign delegation representatives pointed the significance of this event. It allows not only to represent culinary peculiarities of Asian and other countries, but also important for strengthening of relations between different countries.

In a period of time between the 30th April and 3rd of May the 54th International Conference of the Sports Group of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union took place in Ashgabat. During this conference



the foreign delegates were informed about the process of preparation for Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games and discussed issues relating broadcasting of sports competitions in different parts of the world during AIMAG 2017.

On the 27th of May 2014 the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov held a meeting with AIMAG 2017 Organizing Committee. With the purpose of thorough preparation for the Games, the President appointed the staff of the Organizing Committee and gave a permission to sign an agreement with the British company "CSM Sport & Entertainment LLP trading as CSM Strategies" on the AIMAG general plan development.

Belt Wrestling World Championship took place in Ashgabat at the end of November 2014. About 250 sportsmen from 25 countries - the Russian Federation, Korea, India, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Georgia, Pakistan, Mongolia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Israel, the Ukraine, Moldavia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Denmark, etc. - participated in it. In our country belt wrestling is considered to be not only a kind of sport, but also a tradition, a historical and cultural heritage. Today, belt wrestling is one of the most dynamically developing kinds of sport, it is recognized in 70 countries and every year it becomes more and more popular in the international sports stage. "Goresh" Wrestling World Championship will be held in Turkmenistan for the first time. The aim is to popularize and develop the belt wrestling in Turkmenistan and the world, to strengthen and expand international sports relationship, to share experience with different nations, to preserve ancient traditions, healthy lifestyle, ideas of friendship and peace.

The next important event was the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of participating of 17 Pacific Countries in the Games between the Organizing Committee of the fifth Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games, Olympic Council of Asia and National Olympic Committees of the Pacific Countries on the 28th of

November 2014. 19 kinds of sport are included into the Games 2017. In his speech at the signing ceremony, the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov offered to include two more kinds of sport - hurdle racing and Turkmen national "goresh" wrestling.

1. Chess	12. Weightlifting
2. Futsal (powerlifting)	
3. Tennis	13. Basketball
4. Muay Thai	14. Taewondo (WTF)
5. Sambo	15. Sport Dance
6. Kurash	16. Kick-Boxing
7. Jiu-Jitsu	17. Belt Wrestling
8. Bowling	18. Greco-Roman Wrestling
9. Cycling (Track)	19. Snooker (Billiards)
10. Swimming (50)	20. Hurdle Racing
11. Light Athletics	21. National "Goresh" Wrestling

During the above-mentioned event also Sports Media Forum took place, where the representatives of international mass media organizations, accredited in Turkmenistan, participated.

Our country is an object of regard of many international public members. In April 2015 the International conference "Asiada 2017 and the Role of Turkmenistan in Development of Sport for Progress and Peace" was held in Ashgabat. Within this conference international and Turkmen Sports specialists, media experts, the representatives of field-specific departments, sport clubs and some international press agencies participated in the international Sports Media Forum. Among the guests there were delegates of both Asian and European countries - the United Arab Emirates, China, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Qatar, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Great Britain, Austria, France, etc. Ashgabat - 2017 will become an excellent opportunity to show the world the progress of our country, achieved under the leadership of Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, both in sports and economy, cultural and humanitarian area and other sectors of political and social life. Strict requirements will be specified to the organization of sports competitions and providing conditions for effective work of mass media.

Currently the main goal of Turkmenistan is to host innovative Asian Games. These Games are of great importance for Turkmenistan, which will contribute to increasing of international prestige of Turkmenistan; it is an important step to the integration into the international sports movement. The Games will be helpful for establishing of the atmosphere of trust and sympathy in the region and the world, and also will stimulate the national economy, cultural life and tourism industry.

Another important event of this year is the 43th meeting of Olympic Council of Asia General Assembly, which took place on September 15 and 16. The delegates of National Olympic Committees of Asian and Pacific Region Countries, heads of IOC and OCA took part in the meeting, which was held in the Olympic Park. Also within this forum the Executive and Finance Committee of OCA held meetings. Also at the beginning of the meeting two beautiful hotels in the Olympic Park celebrated its grand opening. The head of the country expressed his confidence, that this important event, which took place in Turkmenistan for the first time, plays a significant role in sports development in the whole Asian region, offers a wonderful opportunity to get acquainted with our country and our progress in sports.

Much, work for preparation for the most major event in sports life of Turkmenistan has been done by the 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games Organizing Committee - agreements with leading international companies were signed, famous coaches were invited for training our sportsmen and so on.

In March 2015 the 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games Executive Committee together with the Union of Entrepreneurs

and Industrialists of Turkmenistan and the Central Council of Makhtumkuli Youth Organization announced a competition for creating a motto of Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games 2017. This motto should become a reflection of inner feelings of Turkmen people, their peacefulness, their devotion to sport and love to their independent neutral fatherland. The motto of the Games has been chosen. Here it is in three languages: "Sagdynlyk. Ruhubelentlik.Dostluk." (tm) - "Health. Inspiration. Friendship." (eng) - "Здоровье. Воодушевление. Дружба." (rus).

In September 2015 the 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games Executive Committee announced a bid for international countries for operational planning in all activity directions, mentioned in Asiada - 2017 Master Plan. At the present time a tender winner is being defined.

The 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games Executive Committee was established in December 2013. Considering difficult tasks, which the Committee has to fulfill, new departments were initiated in September 2015.

For the purpose of the coverage of the Games events, an international bid to create an informational website was announced. "Asman oky" company won the bid. This company is working now on a website platform and its data protection. It is planned to complete the work on the main platform of the website and open the first phase of the official website of the Games by the end of this year.

We are planning to start test competitions at the beginning of 2016. These test events will give an opportunity to estimate the readiness of sports infrastructure and its reliability for the upcoming Games.

Volunteers are one of the most important parts of AIMAG 2017 team. They are pledge of successful Games. The main part of volunteers will consist of young students, who will take part in various activities, ranging from meeting delegates at the airport to helping in organizing Opening and Closing ceremonies. Currently, volunteers are being linguistically prepared and also provided training in various directions. Without doubt they will contribute to the successful Games.

Turkmenistan is acquiring the status of a sports state, where the health and lifestyle has become a priority of the state politics. Due to state programs and policy, the development of high performance sport has become a guide for each sports clubs even in the most remote cities of the country.

Thanks to the politics of our honored President, Turkmenistan has been transformed economically and socially. Though our country has been commercialized, people stay socially secured. And in future the major aim of Turkmenistan is to host innovative Asian Games.

These Games are of great importance for Turkmenistan, which will contribute to increasing of international prestige of Turkmenistan; it is an important step to the integration into the international sports movement. The Games will be helpful for establishing of the atmosphere of trust and sympathy in the region and the world, and also will stimulate the national economy, cultural life and tourism industry.

It is commonly known that the best example is the personal example. Our Head of the state is a follower of healthy life style and he always finds time for physical training. The President points out that regular trainings strengthen a person not only physically, but also bring up self-control, diligence and determination.

The 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games, which take place in Turkmenistan for the first time and become the first massive world sports event, will bring unique knowledge, skills and experience, development of patriotic feeling, engaging young generations in sports, volunteer movement progress and so on.

I am glad, that I am a part of AIMAG 2017 team and we believe that the Games will be held at a high organizational level.

*Shirin Nazarova,
Specialist of Executive committee
on preparation of V Asian Games (AIMAG 2017)*

President Sargsyan hands in State Awards 2015

Guided by the August 22, 2002 Presidential decree NH-1164-N on the Establishment and Bestowal of State Awards of the Republic of Armenia, and taking into consideration suggestions of the Award Commission, President Serzh Sargsyan signed a decree to confer state awards of the Republic of Armenia for year 2015 in a number of areas. On January 20, at the Presidential Palace there took place the Award ceremony.

State awards of the Republic of Armenia for year 2015 have been awarded in the areas of arts and literature, architecture and urban development, hard and natural sciences.

In different spheres of arts and literature such as literature and political journalism, music and cinematography state awards were conferred on Hakop Hakopyan (Hakop Movses) for the book of poems *The Seventh Chase* (in the area of literature and political journalism), on Vartan Adjemyan for the Theater of the Sound piece written for the string orchestra, timpani and piano (in the area of music), Vahe Kevorkov (director), Samvel (cameraman), Hayk Badalyan (cameraman), Anna Derdzakyan (scriptwriter) and Arthur Parsyan (editing) for *Armenia: From Sea to Sea* documentary (in the area of cinematography). In the area of architecture and urban development state awards have been handed to Narek Sargsyan (architect), Paul Chatalbashyan (designer) and Stepan Akhoyan (Director of Small White House Ltd.) for the government's administrative compound on Vazgen Sargsyan Street in Yerevan. In the area of

hard and natural sciences state awards were conferred on Ashot Saghyan, Anna Mkrtychyan and Hayarpi Simonyan for the research on the Technology for the Efficient Small-Scale Production of the New Generation of Protein Amino Acids. The chairpersons of the sub-commissions presented the nominated works and conclusions reached by the sub-commissions as a result of their deliberations as well as the works which received awards and their authors.

This year, awards have not been conferred in the areas of visual arts, theater, social and humanitarian sciences. The chairpersons of the corresponding sub-commissions informed that after the secret ballot, the nominations in the mentioned areas for 2015 did not receive the necessary number of the votes.

After the ceremony of handing the state awards, the President of Armenia in his speech congratulated all the winners.

Congratulatory Remarks by President Serzh Sargsyan at the ceremony of bestowing state awards

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Today, we bestow state awards of the Republic of Armenia on artists and scientists. I am confident that a new scientific achievement or a new artistic work is duly appreciated later, after it passes the test of time. It doesn't mean that we have to wait a hundred or two hundred years to appreciate, to evaluate who did what. I am also confident that the contemporaries

are responsible for those who create and those who invent. We have the responsibility to state out loud what we accept as a value and what we do not. This is an essential method for the reassertion of the society's and the state's system of values.

I see the very meaning of the Republic of Armenia's state awards first and foremost in that reassertion. We point out, highlight and present to the public things which deserve recognition here and today.

Dear Attendees,

This year we have nomination areas with regard to which I certainly have mixed feelings. On one hand, I am sad that we don't have awardees in the areas of, for instance, theater, arts, humanitarian and social sciences; on the other hand, I am glad that the relevant sub-commissions have demonstrated strict approach because if we lower the bar, we will simply devalue our state awards. Hence, I encourage and urge the members and chairpersons of the sub-commissions which didn't give as nominations this year, to carry on in the same spirit. I am hopeful that in coming years in these areas we will be having really outstanding nominations.

Dear Awardees,

I thank you for your important work and once again I congratulate you on receiving these prestigious awards. I wish you new scientific and artistic achievements for the benefit of our country, our science and culture.

Thank you.

EU calls for faster reforms...

From page 1

tion, human rights and fundamental freedoms, constitutional and judicial reform," it said.

"Particular attention was drawn to the need for reform of the electoral system, to the need to appropriately implement the new constitution and assure media freedom, as well as to the important role of civil society," added the statement.

It referred to a long list of constitutional amendments envisaging Armenia's transition to the parliamentary system of government, which is due to be completed in 2018. President Serzh Sarkisian's administration pushed through the amendments in a December 6 referendum that was marred by opposition allegations of serious fraud.

The EU warned in the wake of the referendum that failure to properly investigate

the alleged fraud would call into question the legitimacy of its official results indicating a "Yes" vote for Sarkisian's amendments. It latest statement did not assess the Armenian authorities' purported efforts to identify and punish those responsible for vote irregularities.

"Based on shared values, Armenia is interested in working with the EU on to the continuous promotion of human rights and rule of law, consolidation of democratic institutions and improvement of judiciary, good governance, fight against corruption, strengthening the civil society," Nalbandian told the press after the meeting. "We are thankful to the EU for its valuable support in this regard."

Nalbandian described the Armenian constitutional reform as "another important step" towards democratization. He

argued that the amendments were largely endorsed by legal experts from the Council of Europe.

The Brussels meeting took place more than a month after the EU and Armenia officially opened negotiations on a new agreement to deepen their political and economic ties. It is expected that the planned accord will contain many provisions of an Association Agreement which was abandoned by the EU following Sarkisian's unexpected decision in 2013 to seek Armenia's accession to the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

Piotr Switalski, head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, reportedly told Serzh Sargsyan last week that Brussels hopes to conclude those negotiations before the end of this year.

U.S. Embassy regrets Karen Andreasyan's decision to step down as Ombudsman

The US Embassy in Armenia has issued a statement on the resignation of Human Rights Defender Karen Andreasyan:

"We note with regret Karen Andreasyan's decision to step down as Armenia's Human Rights Ombudsman. He has been a tireless and effective champion for those who were defenseless; those who feared their voices might be silenced if they voiced unpopular messages; and any Armenian who fought for his or her rights as a citizen to be respected. We wish him the greatest success in his future endeavors. He will remain a friend, colleague, and contact of the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Government.

Mr. Andreasyan's work was buttressed by the professionalism and dedication of the staff at the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman. One of Mr. Andreasyan's

lasting legacies will undoubtedly be the expansion of the number, and the quality, of staff at this invaluable Armenian institution, which we trust will continue to serve the best interests of the Armenian public under his successor. We are committed to maintaining our close cooperation and partnership with the Office and its staff on issues related to the protection of human rights in Armenia. We look forward to working with the new Human Rights Ombudsman.

The United States remains dedicated to working with the Armenian Government and our Armenian partners to advance the cause of democratic development and human rights in Armenia. Our ultimate goal has been, and will remain, a democratic and prosperous Armenia, living in security and peace with its neighbors."

Andreasyan has given no clear reasons

for his unexpected decision to step down, which was announced on January 12. Armenian commentators have linked the move with his public spats with senior members of President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK).

The ombudsman was attacked by several HHK parliamentarians in October when he presented the National Assembly with an annual report on his activities. He denounced the harsh criticism as a smear campaign ordered by an unnamed government-linked individual.

Andreasyan faced similar verbal attacks from Armen Ashotyan, the education minister and a deputy chairman of the HHK, later in 2015. He dismissed them as baseless.

The HHK leadership has denied forcing Andreasyan to resign.

Armenian Amb. addresses UN debate, deplors Azeri violence

On 19 January Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations, Ambassador Zohrab Mnatsakanyan delivered a statement at the Security Council Open Debate on "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict".

In his statement Ambassador Mnatsakanyan stressed, that Armenia shares the concern of the Secretary General about the disturbing challenges for the protection of civilians in conflict-affected areas, which remain persistent as ever. While the humanitarian aspects of affected populations are of high concern, basic physical security of civilians continues to be wracked. The persistently rising numbers of civilian casualties call for a resolute action.

Ambassador Mnatsakanyan also emphasized, that the question of accountability requires amplified consolidation of the Council in demonstrating resolve against parties, responsible for denying basic security or humanitarian relief to affected populations. The idea of enabling the UN peace operations with a mandate for a preventive, protective and tactical use of force to protect civilians under threat of physical violence needs to be given thorough consideration. The reputation of the Organization is judged not by words of condemnation, but by deliverable protection. Strengthening the capacities of field missions including those of the relevant regional organizations remains an on-going priority. Last, but not least, protection of civilians in armed conflicts is closely tied to the prevention of mass atrocities, including the crime of genocide. A culture of assessing every crisis situation affecting civilian populations through the prism of massive crimes, including the crime of genocide, should be further cultivated within the Organization, - underscored Zohrab Mnatsakanyan.

The Ambassador of Armenia referred to the recent situation in the region, stressing that Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh have been experiencing significant challenges to the security of its civilian populations as a result of the on-going disregard by Azerbaijan to respecting and upholding the 1994 cease-fire agree-

ment. Increasingly, Azerbaijan continues to target civilians across the line of contact with Nagorno Karabakh and the border with Armenia. As a result of intensified cease-fire violations and massive shelling of populated areas with the unprecedented use of heavy artillery, considerable damage has been inflicted on the livelihoods of the bordering villages. In September 2015 three women were killed by Azerbaijani fire. Armenia strongly deplors the purposeful acts of Azerbaijan to violate the cease-fire regime and damage the on-going peace process within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship. Once again, Armenia urges Azerbaijan to heed the calls of the international community and agree without delay to establish an investigative mechanism into the cease-fire violations, and to withdraw snipers. By rejecting such mechanism, Azerbaijan bears full responsibility for the violations and the escalation of tensions.

In conclusion, Ambassador Mnatsakanyan underlined, that the on-going negotiations for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship is a positive example of effective utilization of the capacity of regional organizations in conflict resolution. Armenia highly commends the support of the international community, of the United Nations and of the Secretary General rendered to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairmanship in the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. He stressed that Azerbaijan should be denied the attempts to undermine the efforts of the Co-chairs or to engage in forum and mediation shopping.

The Open debate was presided by José Luis Cancela, Deputy Foreign Minister of Uruguay. Representatives of about eighty state members, including Deputy Foreign Ministers of Spain and Ukraine, as well as Jan Eliasson, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross took part in the Debate.

Government vows more steps to boost Armenian IT sector

The Armenian government approved on January 20 a set of measures for this year which it hopes will help information technology (IT) remain the fastest-growing sector of Armenia's economy.

Preliminary government estimates show output in the sector soaring by nearly 20 percent last year to \$550 million, a figure equivalent to about 5 percent of Gross Domestic Product.

The Armenian IT industry comprising some 450 mostly small and medium-sized firms expanded by an average of 22 percent annually from 2008-2014. It currently employs about 15,000 people.

An annual plan of actions approved by Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan's cabinet is aimed at stimulating continued growth in the export-oriented sector. A statement by Abrahamian's office said the government will look into challenges facing the sector, promote its achievements and seek to improve the quality of IT education in the country.

"The government will continue to consistently support the IT sector," Abrahamyan told reporters last week when he visited the Armenian subsidiary of Synopsys, one of the world's leading microchip designers headquartered in California. He said the government is now working with IT executives on a comprehensive "national program" of supporting the hi-tech industry.



With some 750 employees, the Synopsys branch is the largest IT enterprise in Armenia. The company also runs a special computer science chair at the State Engineering University of Armenia (SEUA) using its curriculum and technical facilities.

The existence of the chair reflects the still inadequate quality of IT education at the SEUA and other Armenian universities, which IT experts and industry executives consider the main obstacle to faster growth of the sector.

In Abrahamian's words, the government is now exploring the possibility of setting up a "third-generation technology university" on the basis of the Soviet-era SEUA. The premier expressed hope that

Synopsys and other Western IT giants present in Armenia would contribute to its creation.

As part of the government efforts, the Armenian Ministry of Education introduced IT, microelectronics and telecommunication as mandatory subjects in five high schools last September. Ten more Armenian schools are due to have such courses starting from the next academic year.

The government also pushed through the parliament in December 2014 a bill offering significant tax breaks to new IT firms employing up to 30 people. According to the Ministry of Economy, 61 local startups qualified for the tax breaks in 2015.

Armenia calls for activation of transport corridors in the region

Armenian Minister of Transport and Communications Gagik Beglaryan on Tuesday called for activation of regional transport corridors between Iran, Armenia, central Asian countries and the Persian Gulf, IRNA reports.

Beglaryan held a meeting with Minister of Roads and Urban Development Abbas Akhundi.

Beglaryan told reporters that he discussed ways to activate Persian Gulf corridor to the Black Sea to develop transit passage for the regional countries.

'I am confident that the outcome of joint cooperation on transport would be very positive. Armenia intends to construct suitable roads to promote transit in the region.'

Beglaryan said that the two sides discussed cooperation on railways and trans-



sit of goods in light of the capacities of the regional states railway networks.

The Armenian minister said that in

talks with Iranian minister, he reached agreement on fixed transport tariffs for the two countries.

World Bank confident about Armenian exchange rate

The Armenian dram's value against the U.S. dollar will likely remain stable despite the continuing depreciation of the Russian ruble, a World Bank official said on January 19.

Armenia's national currency weakened by over 15 percent against the dollar in late 2014 amid a sharp fall in dollar-denominated remittances from Armenian migrant workers in Russia resulting from the collapse of oil prices. The Central Bank of Armenia managed to stop the dram's depreciation by sharply raising interesting rates and tightening minimum reserve requirements for commercial banks.

The dram weakened against the dollar by less than 2 percent in the course of 2015, making it the most stable currency in the former Soviet Union. Its exchange rate remained virtually unchanged even after the drop in oil prices accelerated in October. By comparison, the Russian ruble has lost a further 20 percent of its value against the dollar and the euro in the past three months.

"In the current situation I do not think the dram is jeopardized," Laura Bailey, the head of the World Bank office in Yerevan, told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am).

Bailey insisted that Russia, Azerbaijan and other oil-rich ex-Soviet states have seen their national currencies plummet in value because of their heavy dependence on oil revenues. "I am very



happy to say that I do not see that we are faced with that kind of vulnerability [in Armenia,]" she said.

In recent months, there have been no indications that the Central Bank of Armenia has resorted to heavy dollar interventions in the domestic currency to shore up the dram. In a further sign that the dram is not under strong pressure, the bank repeatedly cut its refinancing rate in the second half of last year.

The benchmark rate currently stands at 8.75 percent, down from 10.5 percent in August 2015.

Lifting of Iran sanctions opens up new perspectives for Armenia: Expert



New perspectives will open up for Armenia after the lifting of Iran sanctions, expert of Iranian studies Vardan Voskanyan told reporters on January 19.

According to him, with Iran-Azerbaijan and Iran-Turkey relations strained for now, Armenia remains the most efficient, the most reliable and the most important route for Iran to the north.

"In this context Armenia can assume a very important role, as it has allied relations with Russia and good relations

with Iran and Georgia," he said.

According to the expert, the fears that Russia will necessarily block Iran's energy projects through Armenia have no basis. "Russia understands that it must participate in the programs, as it's clear that Iran will get to the international market anyway," he said.

"We have the best opportunity to link Iran to the Black Sea through the North-South Highway, and we have to accelerate the process of construction, since every day spared works against Armenia's interest in this new conjuncture," Vardan Voskanyan said.

The expert believes the construction of the Iran-Armenia railway is also realistic. "Funding can be the only obstacle," he said, reminding that China is another party interested in the project.

Vardan Voskanyan said "the unfreezing of Iranian assets will results in the further growth of investments in Armenia, especially considering that Armenia enjoys privileged regimes with both the Eurasian Economic Union and the EU."

Armenian businessman Levon Hayrapetyan pleads not guilty to stealing \$700,000

A prominent Armenian businessman Levon Hayrapetyan pleaded not guilty to stealing \$700,000 from the mother of former Bashkortostan senator Igor Izmaystev who had been convicted of terrorism and sentenced to life in prison, RAPSI reported on Monday from Moscow's Zamoskvoretsky District Court. According to Hayrapetyan's lawyer, the case has been framed up. Investigators believe that the businessman has misled the woman by promising a reduced sentence for her son. In practice, he could not influence the judgment. He faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

Hayrapetyan also stands charged with involvement in an embezzlement case under which Ural Rakhimov, son of the former head of Bashkortostan Murtaza Rakhimov, sold Bashneft, a mid-sized oil company he headed for three years, to the oil-to-telecoms conglomerate Sistema in 2009 at a huge "discount" of \$500 million.

Hayrapetyan holds dual citizenship, has assets abroad and was until recently living in Monaco. Prosecutors presented this information as grounds for arrest. In early October 2014, Hayrapetyan was placed under house arrest. His defense attorney asked the court to release him, citing health problems.



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1 ROOM

- 1696.**Tumanyan str.**, 5/4, stone bld, 1 bedroom, h-3m, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: 160.000 USD.
- 1440.**Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 3rd floor, 110 sq.m., 1 bedroom, h-3m, euro repaired, heating system, furnished, parking. Price: 350.000 USD.
- 1715-**Sayat Nova Ave.**, 5/4, 70sq.m, stone bld, h-4m, 1 bedroom, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: 110.000 USD
- 1680-**Mashtots Ave.**, 5/4, 68sq.m, 1 bedroom, old repair, possibility of gas. Price: 86.000 USD.
- 1674-**Abovyan str.**, 2nd floor, 70sq.m., 1 bedroom, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: 135.000 USD
- 1698-**Aram str.**, Newly built, 14/5, 62sq.m, 1 bedroom, capitally repaired, AC, security system, parking. Price: 120.000 USD.

2 ROOMS

- 3003.**Sayat-Nova str.**, 5/3, 105sq.m, 2bedrooms, stone building, capitally repaired. Price: Negotiable
- 1560.**Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 10/3, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, parking. Price: 400.000 USD.
- 2818.**Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 3rd floor, 120sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, furnished. Price: 400.000USD
- 1156.**Komitas Ave.**, Hambardzumyan str. 5/3, 110sq.m, 2 bedrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, kitchen is furnished. Price: 150.000 USD negotiable.
- 2949.**Aram str.**, Newly built, 1st floor, 143 sq.m, 2 bedrooms, zero state, Price: 2000 USD per sq.m.
- 2300.**Northern ave.**, Newly built, 6/2, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, parking. Price: 400.000 USD.



3 ROOMS

- 3090 **Dzorap Newly built**, 190sq.m, 2 bedrooms, study, 2 bathrooms, capitally renovated, parking. Price: 460.000 USD
- 3090. **Busand str./Near Republic Square/**, Newly built, /6th floor, 116sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms one in master bedroom, capitally renovated, open balcony. Price: 350.000 USD negotiable
- 3046.**Amiryan str.**, Newly built, 9/9, 81sq.m., without divisions. Price: Negotiable.
- 3012.**Aram str.**, Newly built, /7th floor, 136sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, parking, facing to bulvar. Price: 300.000 USD negotiable.
- 2998.**North Ave.**, Newly built, 9/6, 181sq.m, 3bedrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, parking. Price: 700.000 USD
- 2682.**Aram Str.**, Newly built, 13/6 187sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 2 open balconies, capitally repaired, heating system, 2AC, 2 garages, view to garden. Price: 550.000 USD negotiable.
- 2958.**Pushkin str.**, 5/2, 140 sq.m., stone building, 4 bedrooms, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: Negotiable.
- 2895.**Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 3rd floor, 300sq.m, 3bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, AC. Price: negotiable
- 2802.**Amiryan str.**, Newly built, 8/4, 166sq.m, 3bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitally repaired, central heating, AC, security system. Price: 320.000 USD.
- 1104.**Komitas Ave.**, **Aram Khachatryan str.**, 5/2, 125sq.m., stone bld, h-2.75m., 3 bedrooms, office, 2 bathrooms, old repair, gas, garage. Price:

130.000 USD

•2836.**Pushkin str.**, 4/4,5, 400sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC. Price: 460.000 USD.

•2990.**North Ave.**, Newly built, 11th floor, 295sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control, parking. Price: Negotiable.

PREMISES

- 1789.**Charents str.** Land-1270sq.m, 5 storied building, each floor-400sq.m., basement, capitally repaired, parkings. Price: 4.000.000 USD negotiable
- 1598.**Komitas, Nairy Zaryan str.**, 1000 sq.m., working restaurant, 1st line, capitally repaired. Price: negotiable.
- 1603.**Northern Ave.**, Ground floor of the building, 160 sq.m., zero level, window glasses. Price: 2.600.000 USD.

•2035.**Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 220sq.m., 1st line, facade-55m., capitally repaired, h-5m., cellar. Price: Negotiable

•2013.**Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 265sq.m., 1st line, capitally repaired, heating system, cellar. Price: 1.300.000\$ negotiable

•2012.**Mashtots Ave.**, 5/1,2, 140sq.m., window glasses, capitally repaired, AC. Price: 1.100.000\$ negotiable

•2155.**Mashtots ave.**, 3storied building, 540sq.m., each floor-180sq.m., window glasses, parking. Price: 3.600.000 USD

•2020.**Hr. Kochar str.**, Land-300sq.m, 1st line, 4storied building, 1080sq.m., each floor-270sq.m, h-3.6m., without divisions, parkings, 3 access. Price: 1.400.000 USD negotiable

•1986.**Cascade**, Land 1000sq.m. 3storied building 1200sq.m., unfinished, parking. Price: 1.000.000 USD.

•2167.**Sayat Nova str.**, newly built, 38sq. m, capitally repaired. Price: 200.000 USD

•2175.**Tumanyan str.** Ground and 1st floor of the building, 600sq.m, ground floor 300sq.m, 1st floor-220sq.m, basement-80sq.m., - 1st line, zero level, 2 entrances, facade-15m, 4 window glasses, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, Price: 3500 USD per sq.m,

•2172.**Isahakyan str.**, 92sq.m, 1st line, 7 degrees above zero level, facade-9m, 2 window glasses, h-3.20m, 2 halls, cabinet, bathroom, capitally repaired, heating system. Price: 450.000 USD

LANDS

•2122.**Davitashen**, 1800 sq.m., water, gas, electricity, possible to sell separately 600 sq.m., and 1200 sq.m. Price: 150 USD per sq.m.

•2121.**Demirchyan str.**, 1338 sq.m., building permits. Price: 2million USD.

•2013.**Cascade**. 1000 sq.m. building permits, first line, gas, water and electricity possibilities. Price 460.000USD

•1402.**Hr. Kochar Str.**, 1100 sq. m. facade -25 m. Price negotiable.

•2090.**Lori region**, close to Stepanavan, Gyargyar village, 6 hectares, forest 2 hectare has building permits, 3 water source, electricity. Price: 100.000USD.

•2406.**Avan**, Mher Mkrtyan block, 1000 sq.m.,

electricity, gas, water, the district is inhabited. Price: 30USD per sq.m

•2107.**Monument**, 2400sq.m, building permits, building project. Price: 400 USD per sq.m.

•2413.**Ashtarak roadway**, 1000sq.m, building permits, building project. Price: Negotiable

•2414.**Demirchyan str.** land-750sq.m., building permits. Price: 750.000 USD.

PRIVATE HOUSES

•3739.**Nork Marash** Land- 2000sq.m, two separate houses, total bld-600sq.m, capitally repaired, swimming pool, sauna, guard house. 2 car parking, garden. Price: 950.000 USD

•3348.**Blur, Barbyus str.** Land - 800 sq.m, 3 storied bld.-700 sq.m, 4bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitally repaired, climate control. Price: 1.2 million USD

•3146.**Aygestan**, Land-500 sq.m., 5 storied bld-765 sq.m., each floor-180 sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, heating system, elevator. Price: 2.300.000 USD.

•3583.**Nork-Marash**, Land-1100sq.m, 2 storied bld-520sq.m, 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, swimming pool, garden. Price: 1.350.000 USD.

•3432.**Aygedzor**, Land - 1021 sq m , 3 storied bld.-501 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, central heating, AC, boiler room garden, swimming pool, sauna, garage, security system. Price: 1.000.000 USD

•3606.**Avan**, Tsarav Akhbyur/near Botanical garden/, Land-1000sq.m., 3 storied building-750sq.m., 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, 2 kitchens, capitally repaired, heating system swimming pool, garden, sauna, 2 car parking. Price-1.500.000 USD

•3574.**Blur**, Land-779sq.m., 2 storied building-720sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, study, capitally repaired, heating system, sauna swimming pool, garden. Price: 2.000.000 USD

•3590 **Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-450 sq.m., 4 storied building-470sq.m., 3bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: 680.000 USD

•3651.**Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-900sq.m., 5 storied building-800sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitally repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: 1.700.000 USD.

•3401.**Antarayan str**, Newly built, land-700sq.m, 3 storied bld-690sq.m, 5 bedrooms, capitally repaired. Price: 1.300.000 USD

•3712 **Cascade** Newly built, land-450sq.m, 4 storied bld-600sq.m, zero state. Price: 550.000 USD

NEWLY BUILT RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

•142. **Verin Antarayan str.**, 14 floors, 65-133sq.m, capitally renovated, parking. Price: 900-1300 USD

•74.**Cascade**, Verin Antarayin. 136-315 sq m., walls plastered, electricity, water, gas, euro windows, no exploitation fees. Price: 1200 USD per sq.m, parking -15.000 USD.

•107.**Monument**, Verin Antarayin. inhabited, 8 floors, gas, windows, street view -1000 USD per sq.m., city looking -1500 USD per sq.m., parking -4 million USD preliminary.

•87.**Sayat-Nova str.**, 21 floors, 3 bedrooms -188 sq.m., 199 sq.m., Price 1900 USD per sq.m., 2 bedrooms have a beautiful sight - 117 sq.m., 120 sq.m., 124 sq.m., Price: 1700 USD per sq.m., climate control, gas.

•93.**Kievyan str.** Given to the operation in October 2011, 16 floors, walls plastered, windows, exterior doors, h -3, 15 m, gas, parking. Price: 1500-1600USD per sq.m, parking-12 000 USD. Possible with mortgage, for 13 years term.

•94.**Masiv**. 3floors, 8 flats, each flat has 3 bedrooms, 210 sq.m., parking. Price: negotiable.

•130.**Antarayan str.**, 34 flats, 110-275 sq.m., 4 penthouses-200-275sq.m, available services-car wash, cleaning service, garbage removal service, parking. Price: Negotiable

•131.**Busand str.**, commercial, office and residential areas, penthouse, available services-car wash, cleaning service, garbage removal service, parking. Price: Negotiable



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1 ROOM

- 2037. **Baghramyan str.**, 5/2, 60sqm, 1 bedroom, euro repaired, gas, heating system, AC, modern furnished, equipped. Price: negotiable
- 2189. **Vardanants str.**, Newly built, 24/12, 90 sqm, 1 bedroom, capitolly repaired, furnished, equipped. Price: 1000 USD.
- 2099. **Sayat-Nova Ave.**, 12/6, 1 bedroom, capitolly repaired, gas, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: 600 USD.
- 1972. **Northern ave.**, 8/4, 80sqm, 1 bedroom, 2 bathrooms, open kitchen, capitolly repaired, climate control. Price: 1200 USD
- 2171. **Tumanyan str.**, Newly built, 5th floor, 94 sq.m., 1 bedroom, 1 bathroom, capitolly repaired, central heating, furnished, equipped. Price: 1000 USD
- 2367. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 9th floor, 98 sq.m., capitolly repaired, heating system, furnished equipped. Price: Negotiable.

2 ROOMS

- 2302 **North Ave**, Newly built, 11/4, 137sq.m, 2bedrooms, 2bathrooms, capitolly repaired, furnished, parking. Price: 2000 USD
- 1780. **Amiryan str**, Newly built, /13th floor, 82 sq.m, 2 bedrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: 1700 USD negotiable.
- 942. **Teryan str.** 4/3, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped. Price: 1500 USD.
- 1950. **Buzand/Mashtots area**. Newly built, 8th floor, 163 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, climate control, furnished, open balcony. Price: 2500 USD.
- 1681. **Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 6/2, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC, parking. Price: 2000 USD.
- 1535. **Busand str.**, Newly built, 7/4, 82sq.m, 2bedrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC, parking, furnished, equipped. Price: Negotiable.
- 1738. **Amiryan str.**, 8/8, 159sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, parking. Price: Negotiable
- 1951. **Busand str.**, Newly built, 13th floor, 122sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, climate control. Price: 2500 USD
- 1406. **Sayat Nova ave.**, 7/3, 110sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped. Price: Negotiable
- 2109. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 10/4, 137sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, central heating, furnished, equipped, parking. Price: 2000 USD.
- 2243. **Buzand str**, Newly built, 17/4, 125sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: 2000 USD
- **Amiryan str**, Newly built, 14/5, 120sqm, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC, partly furnished. Price 2000 USD



- itally repaired, climate control, AC, parking. Price: 5000 USD
- 2261. **Hin Yerevantsi**, /North Avenue/, Newly built, 10/3, 124sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped, parking. Price: 1700 USD
- 2084. **Tumanyan str.**, 4th floor, 200sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, climate control, parking. Price: 5000 USD
- 2252. **Northern ave**, 7th floor, 350 sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, open balconies, capitolly repaired, climate control, parking. Price Negotiable.

PRIVATE HOUSES

3 ROOMS AND MORE

- 2358 **V. Sargsyan str**, Newly Built, 7/4, 145sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, one guest toilet, capitolly renovated, furnished, underground parking. Price: 3000 USD negotiable
- 2353 **V. Sargsyan str.** 8/5, Newly built, 98sq.m, 2bedrooms, capitolly renovated, furnished, Price 1500 USD
- 2347 **Teryan str.** Newly built, 10/8, 320sq.m, 3bedrooms, office, 3 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, furnished. Price: Negotiable
- 2277. **Kievyan str.** duplex, 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, with or without furniture. Price: Negotiable.
- 2310 **Busand str.**, Newly built, 190sq.m, 3bedrooms, 3bathrooms, capitolly repaired, furnished, parking. Price: 2500 USD
- 2316 **Northern Ave**, Newly built, 6th floor,

- 1335 **Baghramyan str.**, Land-200sq.m, 3storied bld-300sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3bathrooms, capitolly repaired, furnished. Price: 3000 USD
- 1336 **Aygedzor**, Land-1000sq.m, 2 storied bld-240sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, furnished. Price: 2000 USD
- 1337 **Davtashen** Land-406sq.m, 3 storied bld-306sq.m, 4bedrooms, 2bathrooms, capitolly repaired, furnished. Price: 3900 USD
- 1323. **Monument, Babayan str**, Land-400sq.m, 3storied bld-300sq.m, 4bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitolly repaired. Price: Negotiable
- 1248. **Aygedzor**, Land - 1021 sq m ,3 storied bld. - 501 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, capitolly repaired, central heating, AC, sauna, boiler room garden, swimming pool, garage, alarming system, security system. Price: 8000 USD.
- 999. **Aygedzor**, Land -1000 sqm, basement + 2 floors- 310 sqm, capitolly repaired, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, newly furnished, equipped, sauna, swimming-pool. Starting Price: 5000 USD.
- 1094. **Noy block**, Land-450sqm, 2 storied building - 220sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped, swimming pool, garden. Price: 2000USD.

- 1195. **Nork, Armenakyan str.**, Land - 2000 sq.m, 4 storied bld.-520 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, sauna, gym, furnished, swimming-pool, garden. Price: 4.000 USD negotiable.
- 1142. **Djrvej**, Bagrevand community. Land-1000 sq.m., 3 storied bld.-700 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, pantry, playing room, capitolly repaired, no furniture/ can be furnished, if necessary /garage for 2 cars. Price: 4 000 USD.
- 1293. **Nork-Marash**, Land-1100sq.m, 2 storied bld-520 sq.m, 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC, swimming pool, garden. Price: 7.000 USD
- 327. **Nork-Marash**, Land-500sq.m., 4 storied building-600 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped, swimming pool, garden, sauna, 2 car parking. Price-4000 USD
- 1306. **Tsarav Akhbyur** /near Botanical garden/, Land-1000sq.m., 3 storied building-750sq.m., 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, 2 kitchens, capitolly repaired, heating system swimming pool, garden, sauna, 2 car parking, with or without furniture. Price: 6000-8000 USD negotiable
- 1288. **Tsarav Akhbyur** /near Botanical garden/, Land-560sq.m., 4 storied building-560 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4bathrooms, a kitchen, office, capitolly repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped, swimming pool, garden, 2 car parking. Price: 5000 USD
- 1197. **Blur**, Land-779sq.m., 2 storied building-720sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, study, capitolly repaired, heating system, sauna swimming pool, garden. Price: 8000 USD
- 1312. **Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-450sq.m., 4 storied building-470sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: Negotiable
- 1317. **Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-900sq.m., 5 storied building-800sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: Negotiable.
- 1323. **Monument, Babayan str**, Land - 400 sq.m, 3 storied bld-300sq.m, each floor-100sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: Negotiable

PREMISES

- 2049. **Teryan str**, ground floor+basemnet, 1st line, 200sq.m, repaired. Price: 6.000 USD
- 1693. **Malatia-Sebastia** 4 storied building, 1200sq.m, each floor-300sq.m, 2 separate entrances, climate control, 2 elevators, basement, parking. Price: 15USD per sq.m.
- 1526. **Byuzand str.**, 5/semi-basement, 170 sqm., 4-5 degrees below zero level, window glasses, cellar - 50 sq.m., 6 rooms, the largest is 30 sq.m., 2 entrances, 2 lavatories. Price 2000 USD per month, negotiable.
- 1408. **Zarobyan str.**, /parallel to Baghramyan str./, 2 storied building, 600 sqm. ground floor- hall and kitchen, 1st floor 5 rooms, bathroom, open balcony, capitolly repaired, gas, heating system, parking. Price: Negotiable.
- 1462. **Teryan str.**, 3 storied building, 800 sq.m., capitolly repaired, AC, parking. Price: 10.000 USD.
- 1945. **Mashtots Ave.**, 5/1, 2, 140sq.m., window glasses, capitolly repaired, AC. Price: 8000 USD
- 1943. **Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 265sq.m., 1st line, capitolly repaired, heating system, cellar. Price: 7000 USD
- 1868. **Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 220sq.m., 1st line, facade-55m., capitolly repaired, h-5m., cellar. Price: 15.000 USD.
- 2087. **Northern ave.**, Ground floor of the building, 100sq.m, 1st line, zero level, capitolly repaired, window glasses. Price: Negotiable.
- 2033. **Abovyan str**, 388sq.m, Ground floor of the building, 3 degrees above zero level, window glasses, h-3m., basement-235sq.m, capitolly repaired, heating system, AC. Price: 15.000 USD
- 2031. **Vardanants str**, 500sq.m, ground floor of the building, 2 entrances, facade-20m, window glasses, without divisions, ,basement-250sq.m, Price: 8000 USD
- 2027. **Sayat Nova str**, 95sq.m, ground floor of the building, 2 entrances, 7 degrees above zero level, 4 window glasses, capitolly repaired. Price: 4.000 USD

Rally in Istanbul marks murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink 9 years on

Several thousand people gathered on January 19 at the site in Istanbul where Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was gunned down nine years ago, recalling a notorious killing that only recently led to charges against Turkey's security forces, Agence France-Presse reports.

The crowd - estimated at around 2,000 people according to an AFP journalist - marched to the offices of the bilingual Agos weekly in downtown Istanbul where Dink was editor-in-chief.

With Turkish riot police out in force, the crowd chanted anti-government slogans: "Murderer state will account for this," "Shoulder to shoulder against fascism."

"We are all Hrant Dink," "We are all Armenians" read black-and-white placards written in Armenian on one side and Turkish on the other.

"We won't forget we won't forgive" read another at the memorial rally that has become an annual event since the murder of Dink on January 19, 2007.

Dink, 52, was shot dead with two bullets in the back of the head in by a teenage ultranationalist in broad daylight on a busy street outside Agos, but questions still linger about the circumstances of his death.

Ogün Samast, then a 17-year-old jobless high-school dropout, confessed to the murder and was sentenced to nearly



23 years in jail in 2011.

Dink's assassination sent shockwaves through Turkey and grew into a wider scandal after it emerged that the security forces had known of the murder plot, but failed to act.

An Istanbul court last month finally accepted an indictment against 25 public officials, including former police and intelligence chiefs, on charges of "forming a criminal organisation," as well as voluntary manslaughter and negligence.

The accused, including former Istanbul police Chief Celalettin Cerrah, may face a trial.

Every year since Dink's murder thousands have rallied to remember the journalist, whose life-long campaign for reconciliation between Turks and Armenians won him as many enemies as admirers.

Turkish nationalists especially resented that he qualified the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in the final years of the Ottoman Empire, the precursor of modern Turkey, as a genocide, a term Ankara has always rejected.

Almost a decade after Dink's death, activists express growing alarm over the limits on freedom of expression under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Prosecutors last week began a vast investigation into over 1,200 academics for engaging in "terrorist propaganda" by signing a petition condemning the military crackdown in the Kurdish-dominated southeast.

Memorial rallies were also held in Ankara as well as Armenian capital of Yerevan and a few European cities on Tuesday.

Turkish Minister admits delay in Hrant Dink murder probe

Turkish Science, Industry and Technology Minister Fikri Isik admitted that the investigation into the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink had been delayed, and blamed the "parallel state" for the delay, the Hurriyet Daily News reports.

"We accept that there has been a delay [in prosecuting the murder of Dink] because of the attempts of the Parallel State Structure to shadow the probe," Isik responding to questions in the parliament on Jan. 19, the ninth anniversary of the prominent journalist's assassination.

Dink, an outspoken activist for minority rights and former editor-in-chief of weekly Agos, was shot dead outside his office in Istanbul's Sisli district on Jan. 19,

2007 by 17-year-old Ogün Samast, who had traveled to Istanbul from the Black Sea province of Trabzon before the murder.

"I underline that no cause can legitimize any attempt on someone's life. This incident is being worked on with all details," said Isik.

"But nothing remains secret. If we had thought different, we would not make that much effort to investigate all details of this incident and we would not give complete support to the judiciary. At the moment, we want and hope that all related institutions will work effectively in enlightening this incident as well as other unsolved murder incidents," he added.

Isik also added that he wanted to see the instigators of Dink's murder found and



brought to face justice.

Relatives and followers of the case have long claimed that government officials, police, military personnel and members of the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) played a role in Dink's murder by

neglecting their duty to protect the journalist.

On Dec. 9, 2015, the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office approved the indictment prepared against 26 police chiefs into "negligence on public duty" in the killing of Dink.

A total of 26 police officers, including both current and former police chiefs, will be tried as the indictment in the nine-year-long investigation.

The indictment referred to U.S.-based Islamic cleric Fethullah Gülen, a former

ally of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), who the AKP government now accuses of heading a terrorist organization. The officials currently being investigated were suspected of having links to the Gülen movement.

The 26 police officers were charged with one count each of "forming or heading an armed terrorist group," "membership of an armed terrorist group," "power abuse on duty," "manipulating, destroying and/or concealing official documents,"

"deliberate murder," "fabricating official documents by public employees" and "deliberate murder on negligence" in the case filed into public officials at the time of the assassination. All of the 26 were on duty at the time of Dink's murder.

Hakan Bakircioglu, a Dink family lawyer, said on Nov. 4 that not opening a case against former police chiefs Ahmet Ilhan Güler, Celalettin Cerrah, Resat Altay, Engin Dinç and other suspects, would exclude their integral responsibility in Dink's murder.

U.S. begin implementations of changes to Visa Waiver program



The United States on January 22 began implementing changes under the Visa Waiver Program Improvement and Terrorist Travel Prevention Act of 2015 (the Act), the U.S. Embassy in Armenia informs.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) welcomes more than a million passengers arriving to the United States every day and is committed to facilitating legitimate travel while maintaining the highest standards of security and border protection. Under the Act, travelers in the following categories are no longer eligible to travel or be admitted to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP):

- Nationals of VWP countries who have traveled to or been present in Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria on or after March 1, 2011 (with limited exceptions for travel for diplomatic or military purposes in the service of a VWP country).

- Nationals of VWP countries who are also nationals of Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria.

These individuals will still be able to apply for a visa using the regular immigration process at their embassies or con-

sulates. For those who need a U.S. visa for urgent business, medical, or humanitarian travel to the United States, U.S. embassies and consulates stand ready to process applications on an expedited basis.

Beginning January 21, 2016, travelers who currently have valid Electronic System for Travel Authorizations (ESTAs) and who have previously indicated holding dual nationality with one of the four countries listed above on their ESTA applications will have their current ESTAs revoked.

Under the new law, the Secretary of Homeland Security may waive these restrictions if he determines that such a waiver is in the law enforcement or national security interests of the United States. Such waivers will be granted only on a case-by-case basis. As a general matter, categories of travelers who may be eligible for a waiver include:

- Individuals who traveled to Iran, Iraq, Sudan or Syria on behalf of an international organizations, regional organizations, and sub-national governments on official duty;

- Individuals who traveled to Iran,

Iraq, Sudan or Syria on behalf of a humanitarian NGO on official duty;

- Individuals who traveled to Iran, Iraq, Sudan or Syria as a journalist for reporting purposes;

- Individuals who traveled to Iran for legitimate business-related purposes following the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (July 14, 2015); and

- Individuals who have traveled to Iraq for legitimate business-related purposes.

Again, whether ESTA applicants will receive a waiver will be determined on a case-by-case basis, consistent with the terms of the law. In addition, we will continue to explore whether and how the waivers can be used for dual nationals of Iraq, Syria, Iran and Sudan.

Any traveler who receives notification that they are no longer eligible to travel under the VWP are still eligible to travel to the United States with a valid nonimmigrant visa issued by a U.S. embassy or consulate. Such travelers will be required to appear for an interview and obtain a visa in their passports at a U.S. embassy or consulate before traveling to the United States.

The new law does not ban travel to the United States, or admission into the United States, and the great majority of VWP travelers will not be affected by the legislation.

An updated ESTA application with additional questions is scheduled to be released in late February 2016 to address exceptions for diplomatic- and military-related travel provided for in the Act.

Information on visa applications can be found at travel.state.gov.

Current ESTA holders are encouraged to check their ESTA status prior to travel on CBP's website at esta.cbp.dhs.gov.

Edward Tadevosyan, violinist, professor at the Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory, People's Artist of Armenia, Armenia: "I wish the Principal Conductor of the Orchestra and its members to keep going ahead with the same energy...I wish them also to go on in conquering world famous stages, to present the Armenian performing art abroad in the best possible way".

Vasily Ladyuk, baritone, soloist at the Bolshoi Theatre, Russian Federation: "I wish congratulate wholeheartedly the Armenian State Youth Orchestra and its Founder Sergey Smbatyan for the 10th anniversary. Within these years the SYOA obtained wide recognition in the world, and its creative merits are above any benchmark...I wish you to preserve and multiply your traditions and achievements. All the prosperity and many happy returns to this remarkable date to you, dear friends!"

Mario Stefano Pietrodarchi, accordeonist/bandoneonist, Italy: "Hello everybody! I am very happy to come to Armenia to play on the beautiful day - the day of the 10th anniversary of the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia. This orchestra is a really very

good one, so, again, I am happy to play with them and for them...See you soon in Yerevan and thank you for everything!"

Mikayel Hakhnazaryan, cellist, Germany: "I cordially congratulate the SYOA and wish my colleagues to conquer new ever creative heights as the Orchestra is a national pride for us the Armenians."

Marina Domashenko, mezzo soprano, Russian Federation: "Dear friends and honorable colleagues. I want to congratulate the SYOA for its 10th anniversary. You are full of the endless energy, youth, creative bravery, you are eager to create and to conquer new ever heights. So I wish you all the success on the occasion of your birthday. Good luck!"

Yuka Tsuboi, violinist, Japan: "I want to congratulate you for your 10 th anniversary. It has been 10 years already since the time when I visited for the first time Armenia, and I still remember all the nice and exciting memories when we played together...I hope you will enjoy our reunion concert. See you on 25 January."

Uniting to Prevent Violent Extremism By Ban Ki-moon

Violent extremism is a direct assault on the United Nations Charter and a grave threat to international peace and security.

Terrorist groups such as Daesh, Boko Haram and others have brazenly kidnapped young girls, systematically denied women's rights, destroyed cultural institutions, warped the peaceful values of religions, and brutally murdered thousands of innocents around the world.

These groups have become a magnet for foreign terrorist fighters, who are easy prey to simplistic appeals and siren songs.

The threat of violent extremism is not limited to any one religion, nationality or ethnic group. Today, the vast majority of victims worldwide are Muslims.

Addressing this challenge requires a unified response, and compels us to act in a way that solves - rather than multiplies -- the problem.

Many years of experience have proven that short-sighted policies, failed leadership, heavy-handed approaches, a single-minded focus only on security measures and an utter disregard for human rights have often made things worse.

Let us never forget: Terrorist groups are not just seeking to unleash violent action, but to provoke a harsh reaction.

We need cool heads and common sense. We must never be ruled by fear - or provoked by those who strive to exploit it.

Countering violent extremism should not be counter-productive.

This month, I presented to the United Nations General Assembly a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which takes a practical and comprehensive approach to address the drivers of this menace. It focuses on violent extremism which can be conducive to terrorism.

The Plan puts forward more than 70 recommendations for concerted action at the global, regional and national levels, based on five inter-related points:

Number one, we must put prevention first

The international community has every right to defend against this threat using lawful means, but we must pay particular attention to addressing the causes of violent extremism if this problem is to be resolved in the long run.

There is no single pathway to violent extremism. But we know that extremism flourishes when human rights are violated, political space is shrunk, aspirations for inclusion are ignored, and too many people - especially young people - lack prospects and meaning in their lives.

As we see in Syria and Libya and elsewhere, violent extremists make unresolved and prolonged conflicts even more intractable.

We also know the critical elements for success: Good governance. The rule of law. Political participation. Quality education and decent jobs. Full respect for human rights.

We need to make a special effort to reach out to young people and recognize their potential as peacebuilders. The protection and empowerment of women must also be central to our response.

Second, principled leadership and effective institutions

Poisonous ideologies do not emerge from thin air. Oppression, corruption and injustice are greenhouses for resentment. Extremists are adept at cultivating alienation. That is why I have been urging leaders to work harder to build inclusive institutions that are truly accountable to people. I will continue to call on leaders to listen carefully to the grievances of their people and then act to address them.

Third, preventing extremism and promoting human rights go hand-in-hand

All too often, national counter-terrorism strategies have lacked basic elements of due process and respect for the rule of law.

Sweeping definitions of terrorism or violent extremism are often used to criminalize the legitimate actions of opposition groups, civil society organizations and human rights defenders. Governments should not use these types of sweeping definitions as a pretext to attack or silence one's critics.

Once again, violent extremists deliberately seek to incite such over-reactions. We must not fall into the trap.

Fourth, an all-out approach

The Plan proposes an "all of Government" approach.

We must break down the silos between the peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian actors at the national, regional and global levels-including at the United Nations.

The Plan also recognizes that there are no "one size fits all" solutions. We must also engage all of society - religious leaders, women leaders, youth groups leaders in the arts, music and sports, as well as the media and private sector.

Fifth, UN engagement

I intend to strengthen a UN system-wide approach to supporting Member States' efforts to address the drivers of violent extremism.

Above all, the Plan is an urgent call to unity and action that seeks to address this scourge in all its complexity.

Together, let us pledge to forge a new global partnership to prevent violent extremism.

Ban Ki-moon is Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Story about one photo and two Genocides

By S. Yeghiazaryan

Knowing that I am a journalist, Arpine Donavagyan invited me to her house.

I accepted the invitation with pleasure.

Ms. Arpine had very interesting story of her life, but she wanted to tell me the story of her parents, which is full of memories.

Sitting around tea table, Ms Arpine, with sorrow and pain, told me her parents' memories of the bitter past. He took comfort in the fact that this story won't be forgotten and it will read others too. She is the representative of the third generation of Genocide but she speaks about it so impressively as if she lived it all.

One and a half million people's distorted destinies.

It seems, the destinies are repeated, but everyone lives his pain in his own way.

Having six children, her grandfather from the streets took home an orphan in Edessa in 1895 and adopted him, later the orphan was send to Africa for a work.

Till 1915, they sent family photos to their adopted son in Africa, and for completing the family picture he added his photo and sent it back to Edessa.

The roof of our house was leaking, so all the photos were faded and only two photos were preserved.

Photo...These photos have centuries-old history.

The woman in the photo is my grandmother, in her arms is my mother, who, growing up, becomes more resemble to my grandmother and it seems my mother is in that photo. Afterwards, all of them became victims of Genocide and from that big family left only my two uncles and my aunt.

My grandfather, who was a builder, before leaving the house ordered my grandmother to prepare "a pot of kyufta" but unfortunately he had never come back.

All the family of my grandmother was displaced and they take the road of exile.

Before exile my grandmother gave her two-year-old girl, my mother, to an Arab woman and said, if she return she would take the child back, if not, so her girl would be a daughter for an Arab woman.

What kind of feelings would have mother after stripping her swaddle from her chest, no matter for what reason it was, the pain is enormous. They slaughtered my Grandma's family. Some time later, friends of my survived uncles noticed my mother playing in an Arab's yard, and informed my uncles that my mother was alive, and the latter took my mother back with a great difficulty and handed my mother an American orphan-

age in Aleppo.

When my mother became 8 years old, they took her back from the orphanage.

My mother got married in 1929 at the age of 16.

My father's story concerning to Genocide is another pain. He was born in 1900, He was 15 years old, when the destiny gave its first blow.

He was a lovely boy, he always dressed like a girl, tied a headscarf and saved his life, he lay with the corpses and in that way he saved his life twice.

Then he stayed 40 days in the field, where the sky was his blanket, stones were his pillow, he ate grass like an animal, and in that way a lot of people were saved. In this story there was one thing which surprised me, how could an innocent boy lie down next to corpses, live such kind of horrible images and not become insane, how could he search for his relatives in the rows of dead people, took out a faience glass from the pocket of his dead uncle, which he would carry with him during all his lifetime as a relic.

They threw his sister out in front of him, thinking she was dead, but after listening to her cryings, they understood she was alive and saved her.

His relatives were not alive, they became ashes long time ago, but the pain was smoking.

-The wife of my father's uncle had died earlier and my grandmother had to feed to her children.

His uncle's son was a fearless boy, he searched and found his relatives in the rows of dead people, then he became ill with jaundice.

Years later, all their meetings will start with that vodka glass, they will drink from it successively, where tears are more than vodka.

All our meetings were filled with tears. Our traditional dinner "pots of Khashlama" was being served looking at each other's faces like a sinner, remembering our grandfather, who after leaving the house ordered his wife to make Khashlama, and had never come back.

Ms. Arpine was saying, that his father constantly remembered the colour of their stones, he wanted to take the burned bones of his family who were closed in their house, but they showed it him from far away, the risk was very great so they



left the house.

Only one aunt was survived, who married Kadekhchyan Hovhannes in Aleppo, then they went to Uruguay - Monte Vide- with their three sons. Her forth son was born there. Unfortunately they do not know Armenian, but all of them got married Armenian girls. They all have grandchildren but no one of them knows Armeninan.

My uncle traveled to Uruguay with them too, whose two children were killed during the communist movement.

My parental grandmother saw two Genocides, first time she lost her fiancée, second time she lost his husband. Turks stripped her and her daughter and forced them to walk like that. Crouching in shame mother and daughter were trying to close their nakedness.

The woman, who narrowly escaped from the death, had two sons and two daughters, she was very shy, had black hair, and all got surprised, seeing how could her hair remain black after such kind of sorrow.

In 1929, my father had been standing in the street, when my mother was shown to him, who was climbing the stairs, he did not see the face of my mother, but said that liked him and decided to marry. During their marriage they had 6 daughters and one son in Aleppo, and the seventh daughter they had in Armenia. After the birth of the first offspring my father got sick and spent one and a half month in a bed. My mother fell into debts and had to sell all the jewelry.

My mother had been deprived of parental affection and all her saved love and longing she unconditionally gave to us - her children. My mother's love was unlimited.

My father was a great patriot, leaving his only sister and brother-in-law in Aleppo, in 1946 he immigrated to Armenia. At that time I was seven years old.

There were famine, cold, privation in post-war Armenia, and our family like other thousands passed through it.

My mother was a gifted woman, she kept her family sewing cloths and for per cloth she got eggs, milk, flour, soap.

We were living very bitterly.

Our condition was improved in 1962, when the country's condition got better.

My father, who was very honest man, worked in Hoktemberyan canning factory, in the workshop of boxes as a



taskmaster. One year, the factory had 37 mln shortage, 40 people were convicted while my father was not even called for questioning because no one suspected in his honesty.

My father retired in 1965. He was very law-abiding.

Once, his rib was broken in a bread line, and it was the first time that he expressed his thoughts, - For this orders there is no worth to immigrate.

Our family again took the road of exile.

This time it was emigration.

It is nearly 20 years since I have lived here, and during these years I have not been in Armenia.

I miss every stone and shrub, I miss my Yerevan but unfortunately I can not go there.

Arpine has a daughter and two children, now she lives in a comfortable apartment built for the old people. Half of her family lives in Armenia, the other part lives in America. Here it is very appropriate to use the expression "Fate of Armenian". The sad atmosphere of this story was disappeared, when Arpine's grandchild, Nicole, who has beautiful and charming smile, entered in.

This young lady, who looks like a deer, is a champion of Artistic gymnastics. Nicole-Arpine Arzumanyan was born April 28, 2001 in Los Angeles. Her father is a musician, her mother Susie Donavagyan is a health worker. Once, little Nicole saw a performance of artistic gymnastics and she fall in love with this sport, and her parents did their best that their daughter's dreams come true.

Nine and a half year old girl passes very difficult road, she trains four days a week, three hours in a day, Saturdays she trains five hours, and all her efforts give their desired outcome. After one year trainings, Nicole participates in California tournament, and in the second and third years she becomes a champion always occupying the first place.

Now she is preparing for the ninth level, after winning it, she will be engaged in US team. She studies in the ninth class at school, she is an excellent student, and that is probably her mother Susie's condition, which Nicole do with love otherwise she will not be allowed to train.

This is a very expensive sport, the sport is paid in the USA, and her parents, ignoring all the financial difficulties pave the way for beautiful Nicole. The choices of costume design is made by her mother, but it is her tailor grandmother, who thanks to her high professional qualifications gives Nicole even more charming look. Nicole's victories belong to her family, her country, and why not us, because she is an Armenian.

Living in an American environment, her family maintains national traditions. Ms Arpine, who is waiting for the birth of her third grandchildren, is a beloved grandmother, mother, mother-in-law, whose delicious meals make me remember Armenia.

The pain of Arpine Donavagyan's parents is not forgotten. The pain eases her daughter Susie's family, particularly her grandchildren and Nicole victories enliven my hero.

Armenia's history and culture at the Bodleian

An exhibition pays tribute to the suffering of a people as well as celebrates their spirit of survival through objects from antiquity to the 1915 massacre

By Richard Holledge
The Gulf News

It has been well used. Its edges are scruffy and blackened, guttering candles may have spat wax over it and burnt its pages. It looks like an iron was carelessly rested on it. Written in the 11th century, it is the oldest manuscript on display in a sublime exhibition at Oxford's Bodleian Library entitled "Armenia: Masterpieces from an Enduring Culture".

The manuscript is a copy of a commentary on the "Epistle to the Ephesians" by John Chrysostom, the archbishop of Constantinople (now Istanbul) from 397 to 405. The Epistle was an exhortation to the people of Ephesus in what is modern-day Turkey to embrace the Christian faith and is assumed to have been written by St Paul the Apostle, who proselytised the word of Jesus Christ in about AD60.

It is a work of pure clarity and absolute discipline with every line of words straight as a die, all the spacing regular. It is as if it was set by computer rather than by a scribe following lines pricked out by pin on paper, the technique used by ancient Armenians.

The commentary is by no means as beautiful as many of the 100-plus objects on display but there is poignancy about it; the sheer age, the sense that it has been held by thousands of the faithful and pored over, its words reverberating around a church or being read by a family at prayer.

And there is a kind of beauty in its evocation of a history which, in the case of Armenia, has been more chaotic and calamitous than many countries. The exhibition is being staged to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the setting up of the Chair in Armenian Studies at the Bodleian under the aegis of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and to commemorate the year 1915 when Armenians were dispossessed from their lands in Turkey by the rulers of the Ottoman Empire.

What the exhibition demonstrates is that despite conquest and massacre the Armenian diaspora, which spread over the centuries across the globe, has kept its language, its faith and the cultural heritage.



To fully appreciate the exhibition it is important to have a sense of Armenian history - for this is a country that has suffered since the first of its people settled in the Caucasus region of Eurasia some 3,000 years ago with territory that stretched from the Mediterranean to the Caspian Sea.

At the beginning of the 4th century AD it became the first nation in the world to make Christianity its official religion but certainty of faith was insufficient to guarantee security. Control of the region shifted from one empire to another, with the Armenians being subsumed by the Persians from about 500BC, the Romans, the Byzantines and the Ottoman empire that dominated the area from the 16th century to 1920.

A map on the walls of the Weston Library - a newly renovated space for the Bodleian - shows how Armenia, today locked between Georgia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Iran, is one-tenth the size it once was.

What is made clear is how the culture of the country not only survived its vicissitudes but also how its writings became an expression of its identity with vibrant printing centres in many European capitals such as Venice, Rome and Constantinople.

At the heart of this identity was the invention of the alphabet by a monk, Mesrop St Mašo, in AD405. He used 36 signs to reflect sounds of the language and

started a handwriting tradition, used mainly to translate scriptures that lasted until the 19th century when printing took over. The alphabet became the symbol as the protector of Armenian culture and a source of pride and continuity as the reluctant diaspora of exiles grew.

One of the most traumatic expulsions came in 1604 when the Safavid Shah Abbas, whose Persian army had defeated the Ottomans, deported several hundred thousand Armenians from the Ararat Valley in what is today the border between Turkey and Armenia to his new capital of Isfahan in Persia.

An Armenian priest lamented how Abbas "destroyed and made desolate all houses and dwellings so that people hid in fortresses and clefts ... some he found and slaughtered, others he took captive".

Thanks to the resilience of the exiles who built a settlement near Isfahan called New Julfa, creativity flowered out of adversity, resulting in works whose rich decoration adds not just lustre but power to the Christian message.

"Last Judgment" (1609) has a triumphant Christ on a cross of swirling blues, golds and greens while on the facing page Christ is on a throne overlooking the weighing of souls; an angel tugging at the scales to spare the judged from perdition while at the other end, the devil does his damndest. At some stage the figure of the devil has been rubbed out as if to render him powerless, but a recent X-ray

revealed the devil looking less than evil incarnate but a rather bored jobs worth going about his daily chores.

The sumptuous detail of the "Adoration of the Magi", "the Revelation to the Shepherds" (1632) and the triumphant "Christ in Glory" (1631) shows a wonderful use of rich pigments of greens and gold and most valuable of all, lapis lazuli - that was found in mountain caves - for the blue. The draughtsman ship is elegant, often with the letters of the alphabet in the form of birds.

One of the most surprising works from the New Julfa era - to the Bodleian at least - is the "Psalms of David", which was found by an Arabic scholar in Aleppo in the 17th century and bought by the university for £600 after he died in 1703. It was only in 1969 that a scholar at the library realized that the "Psalms" were published in 1638 and, more, was the first to be printed in Iran. Unlike the commentary on the "Epistle to the Ephesians" it has a lengthy colophon - a record of the scribe and the provenance of the book - which reveals the head printer's frustration at lack of experienced scribes, the shortage of typefaces and the fact that they had to make the paper and the ink themselves. There is also an insight into internal politics; the conservative faction in the Armenian Church did not see the advantages of printing and were opposed by the copyists, who feared for their livelihoods.

Sometimes the colophons record the day-to-day life of a scribe - whether they were cold, if they were enjoying themselves - and this records how the monks who wrote the original version of the "Book of Psalms" in 1087 "for one year and five months, day and night without pause work[ed] with the brotherhood of this monastery, because we have not seen this [i.e., printing, from the example] of a master, and we have no teacher, except for the Holy Spirit alone".

Most of the works are religious but storytelling, songs and poetry played a major part in the culture.

The frankly grotesque depiction of Alexander the Great's horse Bucephalus (1544) made up of strange creatures illustrates a romance about the Greek leader and is one of the earliest illuminated secular works.

Some of the most intriguing books are almanacs, or DIY books for humbler folk and merchants, such as guides to the zodi-

ac, calendars and maps and manuals for calculating currency, weights and measures as well as for the playing of musical instruments. These books were often treated as part of a communal service and lent to any family that had an ailing member or was in trouble.

Many of these were printed in Venice and Constantinople as well as Amsterdam and Rome, where techniques were more refined. One of the zodiacs, which examine the characteristics of the star signs Aries and Taurus, is a sophisticated work by a printer called Yakob. He was based in Venice, which by the early 16th century, had become the biggest Armenian community in the West. It is displayed close to the "Psalms of David" which was created more than 100 years later. Yet, tellingly, the standard of work from Venice is considerably more refined compared with the labour-intensive workmanship of the New Julfa scribes.

After centuries of shaky co-existence with their Ottoman overlords in Turkey, a new threat loomed. As the Ottoman Empire began to fall apart at the end of the 19th century, the Sultan, Abdul Hamid II, launched a vicious campaign against the Armenians. Between 1894 and 1896 villages were destroyed and hundreds of thousands were murdered. In 1908, the Sultan was overthrown, a new breed of nationalistic Young Turks took power and on the pretext that many Armenians fought with the Russians against the Turks in the First World War decided to "remove" Armenians from the war zones along the Eastern Front.

On April 24, 1915, the government expelled thousands from their homes and set up killing squads to rid the country of "Christian elements", with the result that by 1922 there were only 388,000 Armenians remaining in the Ottoman Empire.

The loss of life and homes, the subjugation of a people and the resulting migration of refugees intensified the need to preserve the culture and any sense of national identity.

The collection as a whole is a moving testimonial to the spirit of survival over the centuries and to single out anything as a symbol of that durability might be invaluable, but one book has a story of great eloquence.

It springs from a bedraggled "Book of Prayers", printed in Constantinople in 1782, yellowed with time, ragged and

coming apart, its leather binding detached. It has been lent to the exhibition by an Armenian family living in Yorkshire, England, whose forebears have owned the book - or Nareg as it is known - since 1885. The first owner was given the book when he became a priest in Diyarbakır, southeast Turkey, in 1885. He took it with him to Mosul, northern Iraq, where he served with such distinction that when he died was honoured not just by his Christian congregation but also the Muslims.

The book passed to his eldest son, a tailor, who set up an orphanage for the victims of the 1915 expulsion. When he died the book was eventually passed on to the current owner, a surgeon who settled in the UK in 1995 after the Iran-Iraq war.

It was wrapped in pink linen for protection as the family carried it on their travels. Even today the package contains items of devotion such as a cross and a votive image given in thanks by those allowed to borrow the book when in need of spiritual comfort and inspiration.

Touchingly, in 1885, the mother of the original owner sewed up three pouches. In two she placed handfuls of earth, tokens to remind her family of their roots whatever might befall them, and in the other - a triangular scrap of white linen - there is a prayer which is to be used only if the Nareg is lost or destroyed when fleeing for safety. None of the pouches has ever been opened.

For the current owners it is a source of pride that it is on show at the Bodleian - and a source of concern that it is not safe at home. To them, the Nareg represents their deep belief and has an almost mystical power over them. It is a source of protection, still prayed over, still invoked in times of stress and happiness and an object of incalculable value, a poignant symbol of their own part in a tumultuous history and a nation's will to survive.

Dr Gillian Evison, Head of the Bodleian Libraries' Oriental Section, says: "Books are ambassadors of culture. With a history as turbulent as this, they are a portable part of a culture which can be taken with you and help preserve your identity."

Richard Holledge is a writer based in London.

"Armenia: Masterpieces from an Enduring Culture" runs at Oxford's Bodleian Library until February 28.

Mahmoud Abbas joins Armenian Christmas celebrations

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas Monday joined Christmas celebrations according to Armenian Calendar and said Christians of Palestine are "the salt of this land and will never leave," Wafa reports.

He said, during a reception ceremony held by the Armenian community on the occasion of Christmas in the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, that individuals who call to get rid of Christians especially Armenians should "eat their hearts out because Armenians will always remain in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem."

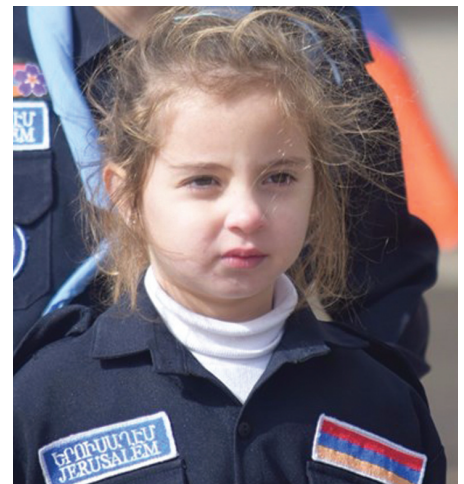
"We would like to convey our best wishes to our beloved Armenian brothers in Palestine, in Armenia and in the entire world. We hope that the upcoming days would bestow us with goodness and love," he said.

"We have sent a letter to His Excellency the Armenian President [Serzh] Sargsyan officially inviting him to visit Palestine and we hope he will accept the invitation," the President added.

"We, Palestinians, have gone through similar experiences with the Armenians; both of us have been repressed, terrorized and banished. As the Armenian people emigrated from their country to ours and then to another place, we are experiencing the same struggle; we emigrated in the 1948 and the refugees in Syria are migrating to the sea, into exile and to places only God knows about," Mahmoud Abbas continued.

"We share many similarities, and here we are truly one nation. We worship the same God and in the same homeland that we take huge care of. We all stand at the same level, you and us and everyone else. Therefore, when some individuals say it is imperative to get rid of the Christians and especially Armenians, we tell them to eat their hearts out, because Armenians will always remain in Jerusalem, Ramallah and Bethlehem. Christians will always be the salt of this earth and will remain on their land and in their country. Whoever wants them to leave must do that instead," President Abbas stated.

*Photos from
Ma'an News Agency*



Zodiac Weekly Forecast

Aries (March 20-April 19)



The new Saturn cycle calls upon you to study your beliefs for flaws. If they are sound, then commit yourself to establish practical ways in which to manifest them. The arena may be legal, religious, philosophical or educational. You must apply what you have learned in the secular world. You must "walk your talk". The world

requires that you expand your mental framework to include a larger social structure.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)



Saturn in Sagittarius will require you to focus on the consequences, responsibilities and liabilities of sharing resources with others. There may be work related to managing your own finances or those of someone else. This is a good period to tackle internal roadblocks that interfere with your ability to achieve genuine intimacy. Resources may

be reduced for a time.

Gemini (May 20-June 20)



The new Saturn cycle rivets attention on the quality of your important relationships. It is time to begin realistically considering your responsibilities in this area and clarify your commitment. Existing relationships will be evaluated and new purposes carved. On the other hand, it may be time to release those persons who are wasting your pre-

cious time and energy

Cancer (June 21-July 21)



This (2015-2017) will be a period of apprenticeship. Now is the time to perfect your broad index of experience and knowledge, to practice until the accumulated bits of wisdom become second nature and highly efficient. Give special attention to routine health regimens. The subsequent cycle (beginning in 2018) will yield the improve-

ment in status resulting from work now.

Leo (July 22-August 21)



This (2015-2017) is the time for intentional application of your creative energy and to take steps toward manifesting your dreams of fulfillment. Something deep inside you, no more than 3 years in your consciousness, wants to be expressed. Don't anticipate grandiose results on this cycle, but there should be reasonably positive

responses from the world if you are on the right track.

Virgo (August 22-September 22)



In terms of worldly influence, you are at the lowest point in the Saturn cycle. It is time now to lay the foundations for the next 28 years and it begins with inner work. We can produce little in the outer world until we develop a sense of a stable internal sanctuary. Define what you must have to feel solidly secure and initiate the steps that will

produce it. Family and property concerns may dominate for a time.

Libra (Sep. 23-Oct. 22)



This is the beginning of a period for you to define and clarify your level of knowledge. You may be called upon to adopt a project requiring close concentration and sharpened communication skills. Learning to speak or write volumes in a few chosen words will become important as this cycle progresses. Work toward efficiency and

streamlining all communication methods over these two years.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

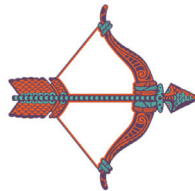


The current Saturn cycle asks you to more clearly define your values. You may have fewer resources available now, whether that refers to money, energy or time. Discrimination will be necessary to maximize efficiency. You are likely to voluntarily forego expenditures on immediate

pleasures for longer range objectives. People commonly purchase a home or make important investments on this cycle.

Sagittarius

(November 22-December 20)



It is time to redefine yourself. The old way was good for a long time but it has outlived its purpose and you must now look at yourself more seriously. What are the potentials not yet developed? What is the best way to contribute your gifts to a greater

whole? Focus your attention on personal identity and tighten up all life agendas to support who you wish to become.

Capricorn (December 21-January 19)



This Saturn cycle asks that you be directed inward and you may choose to withdraw from the world (if not physically, then mentally). Attempts to capitalize on the social and political power of the last few years will fail to make you happy. You may be drawn to work with those who are deprived or mistreated. Now is a time for spiritual refurbishing and R&R before the

next 28 year cycle begins in 2018.

Aquarius (January 20-February 17)



Saturn's current cycle calls you to take responsibility for your niche in life and clarify the role you wish to play in society. You have much knowledge coupled with many social and communications skills and talents. It is time to consider extending these gifts beyond the personal and offer them in service to a larger group. You will experi-

ence the outcome of many years' work during the next two years.

Pisces (February 18-March 19)



This is a highly productive period. For those who are happy with life goals of the recent two years, the following two years brings greater responsibility. Long term goals and desire for achievement in your outer life may press you to temporarily sacrifice personal life and leisure. It is likely you are either adding responsibilities or

departing an old lifestyle to begin a fresh adventure.

18-year-old Tina Garabedian brings Armenian Flag to world sports stage

Laval's 18-year-old Tina Garabedian, who has been with the Laval Figure Skating Club since she was four, along with her partner Simon Proulx-Senecal walked away with a bronze medal in Croatia last month at The Golden Spin of Zagreb tournament, according to The Suburban.

"It was an amazing thing to see the Armenian flag raised," Garabedian's father John Garabedian said. "With tears in my eyes, I witnessed something I had not seen before. My mother nation's flag slowly being raised alongside the Italian (first place) and the US flag (second place)."

Garabedian and Proulx-Senecal will

be competing on Jan. 23 in the European Championships in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. The duo hopes to be wearing the colours of Armenia in the 2018 Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

Garabedian holds dual citizenship granted to her when the Armenian skating federation enthusiastically accepted that she represent the country at the international level.

"As a proud Armenian, she jumped at the opportunity to represent Armenia when her coach, Shawn Winters, suggested the idea. Tina is very proud of her heritage. She went to Armenian school up to the Grade 7 at École Armenienne Sourp Hagop," the proud father boasted.

The duo has begun a fundraising campaign to raise money for their competitions.

"Each international competition costs between \$6,000-10,000. With no support from Armenia we need to be self-financing," John explained. "There are Armenians all over the world. We are trying to encourage them to support the team so they can make sure the Armenian flag stands out on the world stage. They did it in Zagreb and I am certain they can do it again."

According to John, the website donation page has already collected over \$5,000 from Los Angeles, Lebanon, Toronto, Yerevan and London.





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