

Presidents of Armenia, Russia talk Karabakh, Syria, bilateral ties



Meeting of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, Moscow, 10 Mar2016

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Presidents of Armenia, Russia talk Karabakh, Syria, bilateral ties

Armenia firmly supports the position of Russia on the Syrian issue, the country's President Serzh Sargsyan stated at talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow on March 10.

During their meeting the two leaders reportedly discussed "key issues of Russian-Armenian cooperation, prospects of integration processes in the Eurasian space and the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement."

Both expressed satisfaction with the "successful development" of Armenian-Russian relations, with Putin defining them as "strategic partnership".

Armenia is a key military and political ally of Russia in the South Caucasus. It hosts a Russian military base and is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a Moscow-led defense pact of six post-Soviet nations.

In early 2015 Armenia also joined the Eurasian Economic Union, which besides Russia also includes Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Putin and Sargsyan dwelled on the fact that Armenia currently holds the rotating presidency in the CSTO. "It is this organization that is responsible for security issues, for fighting terrorism and organized crime and for calm on our borders," Putin emphasized in remarks reported by the Kremlin press service as well as Sargsyan's official website.

Serzh Sargsyan, for his part, said that Armenia, as the currently presiding country, "pays great attention to the

implementation of the decisions made at the September and December summits of the CSTO."

"We are, of course, concerned over the situation in the regions adjacent to the zone of CSTO responsibility. Like I said during the December session [of the CSTO] and in my other speeches, I



once again openly declare that we firmly support Russia in the Syrian issue. And, of course, we welcome the agreement that you have reached with the United States on the cessation of hostilities [in Syria], which may become a key to the political solution to the problem," the Armenian president stated.

Serzh Sargsyan also thanked Putin for Russian efforts on finding a solution to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. "We remain committed to a peaceful resolution of this conflict," he emphasized.

Along with the United States and France, Russia is a key international peace broker in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in which the settlement process has stalled recently, with both sides accusing each other of hampering progress.

Despite its mediatory role, Russia has supplied both Armenia and Azerbaijan with weapons. In late February, a Russian Foreign Ministry

representative said that in doing so Russia, however, was careful to maintain a "balance of forces" in the region.

During meeting with Putin, Sargsyan spoke about "full mutual understanding in the political, economic, military-technical and humanitarian spheres." "These relations are developing very well," he said.

Putin, on his part, said: "Of course, there are also problems of objective nature; I mean first of all our economic cooperation, even though here we understand that on the whole we can be satisfied with how we have built the basis of our relations. I have no doubts that basing on our joint decisions of previous years we will be developing [our relations] also in this direction."

Earlier on Thursday, Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandyan, who was on the delegation headed by President Sargsyan, held a meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov to discuss cooperation between the two countries' foreign policy departments.

According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry's press service, the two diplomats exchanged views on current international and regional issues.

At the end of the meeting, Nalbandyan and Lavrov signed a plan of consultations between their ministries for 2016-2017. The plan envisages about three dozen consultations in the next couple of years on international and regional issues, issues of information provision, consular and other matters.

President Sargsyan meets outgoing Head of OSCE Office in Yerevan



President Serzh Sargsyan received on March 3 the Head of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office in Yerevan Ambassador Andrey Sorokin who is concluding his mission in our country.

The President thanked Ambassador Sorokin for his active work throughout his tenure in office and noted with satisfaction that under his leadership the OSCE Office in Yerevan in recent years worked efficiently and implemented many programs in different areas.

"Please be assured that you leave in Yerevan not only your accomplishments but also people who highly value your work as well as you human qualities. I wish you success in your future endeavors and in personal life," said President Sargsyan and expressed hope that the new head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan will display the same vigor and readiness for

cooperation, further strengthening relations between Armenia and the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Andrey Sorokin thanked the President of Armenia for warm words and good wishes as well as for the trust and efficient cooperation of the Armenian state bodies with the OSCE Office throughout his tenure in Yerevan. He noted proudly that thanks to the programs implemented in recent years, strong foundation and excellent prerequisites have been established for the future close cooperation between Armenia and OSCE Office in Yerevan and implementation of new programs in a number of areas.

Armenia, EU interested in deepening comprehensive cooperation

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian received on March 1 High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini.

Minister Nalbandian said her first visit to Armenia would positively impact the development and deepening of Armenia-EU relations. Federica Mogherini said, in turn, that the establishment of closer cooperation between Armenia and the European Union will benefit not only the two parties, but also the region, as a whole.

The parties discussed a wide range of issues related to the development of Armenia-EU cooperation, the negotiations on creating a new legal framework for bilateral relations.

Minister Nalbandian reiterated Armenia's willingness to reinforce and expand the comprehensive cooperation in all fields of mutual interest. The parties referred to the joint steps needed for the further development of bilateral ties - political dialogue, mobility, human rights, economic reforms, Armenia's participation in different EU programs.

The Armenian Foreign expressed gratitude to the EU for the long-term support and assistance, which has played a considerable role in the implementation of reforms and capacity development in Armenia.



The interlocutors exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East and stressed the importance of mobilizing the efforts of the international community to fight terrorism. Edward Nalbandian noted that Armenia has provided refuge to more than 20 thousand refugees, thus becoming the third country with the number of Syrian migrants per capita. The Minister said the Armenian side values the possible EU support.

The implementation of the agreement on Iran's nuclear program was also on the agenda.

Edward Nalbandian briefed the EU

High Representative on the negotiations on the settlement of the Karabakh conflict under way within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group. Federica Mogherini reiterated the EU support to the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group towards the resolution of the conflict. The parties agreed that the non-constructive steps and belligerent rhetoric serve to drag out the status quo.

Minister Nalbandian assured of Armenia's willingness to maintain the consistent efforts towards an exceptionally peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict.

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Azerbaijan to blame for lack of solution to Karabakh conflict, Armenian FM says

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian has blamed Azerbaijan for lack of solution to the Karabakh conflict. "We have always appreciated the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. Azerbaijan is to blame for the lack of solution to the Karabakh conflict, not the Co-Chairs or Armenia," Minister Nalbandian said in an interview with Russian Kommersant Daily.

"The Karabakh conflict is one of the rare cases where countries like Russia, the US and France have a common approach. They have made concrete proposals reflected in five statements by Presidents of the co-chairing countries that could lead to a settlement," Edward Nalbandian said. He noted that while Armenia has accepted the proposals, Azerbaijan continues to pretend there have not been any [statements] at all," he said.

Minister Nalbandian stressed that "there is no alternative to peace talks" and reiterated Armenia's willingness to continue to work with the Co-Chairs towards a peaceful resolution of the issue.

Speaking about the military-technical cooperation between Yerevan and Moscow, as well as the supply of Russian weapons to Azerbaijan, the Armenian Foreign Minister said: "We have to make efforts to keep the balance in the region and exclude new escalation. It's well known that Azerbaijan has considerably increased its military expenses, with the military budget reaching several billion dollars. Under these conditions Armenia has to make efforts to keep the balance of power in the region."

"We have allied relations with Russia and close military-technical cooperation. It's no secret that we are buying weapons primarily from Russia. The fact that Russia sells weapons to different countries is natural, because Russia is one of the largest producers of armament and is very competitive on the market. Of course we cannot be delighted by the fact that Azerbaijan buys weapons from Russia and threatens to launch new war every day. We cannot be content with the fact that Baku is buying weapons from our partner,



which is trying hard in cooperation with Armenia and within the framework of the CSTO to maintain peace and stability in our region," Minister Nalbandian said.

As for the perspectives of military-technical relations with Russia, the Armenian Foreign Minister said "the close cooperation will continue into future."

NATO and Armenia committed to partnership



Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian and Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan on March 9 participated in talks in Brussels focused on partnership with NATO.

At the meeting held in the alliance's headquarters, the Armenian ministers discussed with the ambassadors of 28 NATO member states and NATO leaders and senior officials different aspects of the current state of partnership and its prospects.

According to the information released by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nalbandian also presented Armenia's foreign policy priorities, the latest developments in

the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement process, Armenia's participation in fighting international terrorism and conducting peace-keeping missions, addressed the implementation of the agreement on Iran's nuclear program, the Syrian crisis and relevant issues, Armenia's position on current issues in international relations.

Speaking about Armenia-NATO relations, the top Armenian diplomat positively evaluated the "efficient interaction" within the framework of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). He said the fourth Armenia-NATO IPAP for 2014-2016 was being successfully implemented, while the drafting of the next IPAP for 2017-2018 is going to be launched soon.

Defense Minister Ohanyan in his speech addressed the current reforms in Armenia's defense system and expansion of possibilities in the military education. He attached importance to partnership between Armenia and NATO in this context.

According to NATO's official website, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg thanked Armenia for its contributions to NATO's missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo.

The Secretary General welcomed Armenia's commitment to the NATO Building Integrity Program and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Stoltenberg also highlighted "Armenia's sustained cooperation with NATO in the areas of defense reform, enhanced interoperability, defense education reform and civil emergency planning."

President confidante appointed chief of powerful tax agency

Yerevan - (RFE/RL) Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan on March 3 appointed chief of his Surveillance Service Hovhannes Hovsepyan head of the government-affiliated State Revenues Committee (SRC).

The SRC, a body in charge of collecting taxes and customs fees, was separated from the Finance Ministry by Sargsyan's decree on March 1.

The agency was part of the Ministry after its previous head Gagik Khachatryan was appointed finance minister in June 2014. The merger then was criticized by opposition circles and some leading economists as risky considering the conflict of interests of the tax collecting and budget spending institutions.

The ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) effectively admitted the risks involved in having two such agencies under the same roof after Sargsyan's latest decision. Vahram Baghdasaryan, the head of the HHK's parliamentary faction, explained on Wednesday that the step was also conditioned by a cooperation agreement recently signed with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in which the two parties pledged to fight corruption and separate business from power. He, however, strongly denied that it had to do with Khachatryan, whose family is known to have extensive business interests.

The new chief of the SRC is known as a Sargsyan loyalist who has worked at a high position in the presidential administration for eight years. He was also

deputy head of the "Yes" campaign headquarters ahead of last year's constitutional referendum in which amendments that the opposition claims will ensure Sargsyan's continued political clout after he leaves his current office in 2018 were officially approved in a nationwide vote.

Earlier this week, another pro-Sargsyan deputy campaign manager Levon Yolyan was appointed minister of energy and natural resources.

It is remarkable that Hovsepyan, 43, would make strides in his career especially during the period of major nationwide elections. Some two months before the disputed 2008 presidential election in which Sargsyan controversially won his first presidential term Hovsepyan was appointed deputy minister of local government. Opposition members in Armenia claim it is this ministry that uses its extensive administrative resources in the regions to sway elections in favor of the ruling party or a government candidate.

Two months after the bloody suppression of post-election protests in March 2008 Hovsepyan was promoted chief of the Presidential Surveillance Service.

According to Hovsepyan's declaration of incomes submitted to the Ethics Commission on High-Ranking Officials, during the past five years he received donations of more than \$3 million from persons unknown to the general public and has never submitted a declaration of his wife's property, which is also required by Armenian law.



President Sargsyan personally introduced Hovsepyan to his new staff. Remarkably, to his new office the newly appointed chief of the SRC arrived on a posh Mercedes-Benz S-Class car. According to Hovsepyan's declaration, in 2015 he sold one such car for \$150,000 and purchased a Range Rover for \$120,000. His declaration, however, has no mention of his current Mercedes-Benz car.

At the meeting with the SRC staff, President Sargsyan again spoke about reforms, stressing that the main indicator of the agency's effective work under the new leadership will be the ratio of collected taxes and gross domestic product.

"It is no coincidence that I've personally come here today to introduce the new head of the Committee. This means that I will always be ready to personally take part in the process of finding solutions to problems that emerge," Sargsyan stated, in particular.

Armenian-German economic ties: Trends and perspectives

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan held consultations on the current state and perspectives of development of Armenian-German economic ties, the ongoing joint programs and achievements.

Taking into consideration that the Armenian President is going to visit Germany in the near future, the regular sitting of the Armenian-German Inter-Governmental Commission and a business forum are scheduled this year, the discussions focused on preparatory works.

"Germany is our country's number one partner among the EU member states. The commodity turnover has fluctuated

between 350 and 450 mln USD over the past 5-6 years. There are tens of companies with German capital functioning in Armenia, which certainly contributes to the development of our country," President Sargsyan said.

The President said membership in the Eurasian Economic Union is a new opportunity for inviting European countries to invest in Armenia and thus enter the EEU market.

The President stressed the importance of partnership with the German Development Bank (KfW) and praised Germany's technical assistance. "Germany

is a second donor country for Armenia after the United States. Germany has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in technical assistance to Armenia," the President said.

Armenia's Ambassador to Germany Ashot Smbatyan briefed the President on the current state of Armenian-German trade relations, the dynamics of development, the ongoing and future programs, the perspectives of cooperation in a number of spheres of reciprocal interest - information and communication technologies, tourism, healthcare, education and others.

Perspectives of Armenia-NATO cooperation discussed in Yerevan

Issues related to Armenia-NATO relations and perspectives of cooperation were discussed at a conference in Yerevan co-organized by the Armenian Institute of International and Security Affairs, the Armenian Center for National and International Studies with the support of the NATO Office in Tbilisi and the Embassy of Poland in Armenia.

Armenia-NATO relations are seen by many as 'exceptional,' as Armenia continues the effective cooperation with the North-Atlantic Council despite being part of a different security bloc.

"Some objective and subjective factors have somehow affected the relations over the past years, but the cooperation continues to develop dynamically," said Styopa Safaryan, founder of the Armenian Center for National and International Studies.

Poland's Ambassador to Armenia Jerzy Marek Nowakowski noted that there is will on both sides to implement different programs of cooperation.

"There are broad opportunities for cooperation and the North-Atlantic Alliance is ready to provide necessary assistance for the development of comprehensive relations. The cooperation must not be necessarily military, since the Alliance is not just a security organization, but also a system of values. I'm confident that the



deepening of cooperation between Armenia and NATO will continue, since Armenia's interests ties it to democratic states," the Ambassador stated.

Political dialogue has always had an important place in the Armenia-NATO relations ever since 1992, said Gagik Hovhannisyan, Head of Foreign Ministry's NATO Division. He briefed on a number joint programs.

State of Georgia recognizes the Nagorno Karabakh Republic

The State of Georgia has adopted H.R. 1580, resolution recognizing the independence of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic.

The resolution notes that "the Nagorno Karabakh Republic has a long and storied history, holding a cherished place in the Armenian people's history and culture."

The resolution takes note of the fact that the Nagorno Karabakh Republic declared its independence on December 10, 1991, after a long struggle that in some respects continues to this day, that the persistent demand for self-determination was an inspiration to people of many nationalities in the region, becoming one of the catalysts for the breakup of the former Soviet Union.

The document stresses that through the course of the last two decades, the people of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic have shown tenacity and perseverance in the face of war, massacres, economic deprivation, and other tremendous hardships; and for more than 20 years, the Nagorno Karabakh Republic has stayed true and faithful to its citizens by remaining independent while working to bring change and stability to the Caucasus region and by holding free and fair elections and referen-



dums that were widely declared as a model for the region."

"International observers, including the United States, have assessed the May 3, 2015, Parliamentary Elections in the Nagorno Karabakh Republic as free and transparent," the document reads.

Therefore, members of the House of Representatives honor the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and its citizens; recog-

nize the sacrifices, dedication, and resolve shown by the people of the republic in the face of extreme adversity; extend best wishes for peace, prosperity, and continuing success; and encourage the international community to give appropriate recognition to the Nagorno Karabakh Republic as a free, independent, and sovereign democracy.

Armenian-French economic relations: Trends and perspectives

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan on March 4 urged members of his government and the country's diplomatic corps to give a new impetus to Armenia's trade and economic relations with France.

During consultations attended by Armenia's ambassador to France Vigen Chitechian, Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, Economy Minister Artsvik Minasyan, other senior officials, Serzh Sargsyan spoke about major economic activities being carried out in cooperation with French companies and the importance of French capital for Armenia's economy.

"The companies operating in Armenia with the attraction of French capital make a great contribution to the economy of our country. Many of these companies are renowned around the world and actively work in Armenia. It is extremely important that the French Development Agency has started active work in Armenia," the Armenian president said, as quoted by his press office.

Serzh Sargsyan also referred to a major reservoir construction project that would provide water resources to farmers in Armenia's agriculturally important Ararat Valley. "It is common knowledge that still in the 1960s-70s a considerable part of the population of the Ararat Valley dreamed about the construction of this reservoir. An agreement signed at the beginning of this



year gives us confidence that in the next three to four years we will build a reservoir that will have a positive impact on the development of the Ararat Valley and first of all its agriculture. I consider important the circumstance that the Business France Agency has started to work in Armenia," said Sargsyan. "The activities of these agencies and companies with French capital are important not only from the financial point of view, but also because European business culture is being thus introduced in Armenia."

Still, Sargsyan expressed dissatisfaction with the current level of trade and economic relations between Armenia and France, calling for their boost.

"We have a great potential for the development of economic relations with France

and I would like to see what you are doing for achieving at least the minimum level that would suit us, after which we will be able to talk about serious development," he said, addressing the officials.

Sargsyan, in particular, urged embassies to actively assist in the promotion of Armenian state structures and foundations in France and other countries. He also instructed the economy minister to examine problems that companies with French capital encounter in Armenia and assist them as far as possible in finding solutions.

Last month, President Sargsyan hosted similar consultations with members of the government and diplomats on the issue of developing ties with neighboring Iran after the lifting of the bulk of international sanctions from the Islamic Republic.

Armenia, Switzerland sign visa facilitation agreement

On a working visit to Switzerland, Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian had a meeting with Didier Burkhalter, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

Minister Nalbandian hailed the developing relations between the two countries, which, he said, further the continuous high-level dialogue.

Didier Burkhalter noted, in turn, that Switzerland attaches importance to the deepening of relations with friendly Armenia.

The interlocutors discussed a wide range of issues related to bilateral cooperation. Reference was made to commercial-economic, cultural, inter-parliamentary ties and deepening of cooperation within the framework of international organizations.

The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Switzerland discussed urgent regional and international issues. They voiced hope that the Russian-American agreement on Syria truce would pave the way for the establishment of peace and stability in Syria.

Minister Nalbandian briefed his Swiss counterpart on the negotiations on the peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict.



At the end of the meeting Edward Nalbandian and Didier Burkhalter signed an agreement on visa facilitation between the Republic of Armenia and the Swiss Confederation.



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

2 ROOMS

- 2302 **North Ave**, Newly built, 11/4, 137sq.m, 2bedrooms, 2bathrooms, capially repaired, furnished, parking. Price: 2000 USD
- 1780. **Amiryan str**, Newly built, /13th floor, 82 sq.m, 2 bedrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: 1700 USD negotiable.
- 942. **Teryan str.** 4/3, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, capially repaired, heating system, furnisred, equipped. Price: 1500 USD.
- 1950. **Buzand/Mashtots area**. Newly built, 8th floor, 163 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, climate control, furnished, open balcony. Price: 2500 USD.
- 1681. **Northern Ave.**, Newly built, 6/2, 130 sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, parking. Price: 2000 USD.
- 1535. **Busand str.**, Newly built, 7/4, 82sq.m, 2bedrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, parking, furnished, equipped. Price: Negotiable.
- 1738. **Amiryan str.**, 8/8, 159sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, parking. Price: Negotiable
- 1951. **Busand str.**, Newly built, 13th floor, 122sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, climate control. Price: 2500 USD
- 1406. **Sayat Nova ave.**, 7/3, 110sq.m., 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped. Price: Negotiable
- 2109. **Northern ave.**, Newly built, 10/4, 137sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, central heating, furnished, equipped, parking. Price: 2000 USD.
- 2243. **Buzand str**, Newly built, 17/4, 125sq.m, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped. Price: 2000 USD
- **Amiryan str**, Newly built, 14/5, 120sqm, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially 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, capially repaired, heating system, AC, furnished, equipped, parking. Price: 1700 USD
- 2084. **Tumanyan str.**, 4th floor, 200sq.m, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, climate control, parking. Price: 5000 USD
- 2252. **Northern ave**, 7th floor, 350 sq.m., 3 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, open balconies, capially repaired, climate control, parking. Price Negotiable.

PRIVATE HOUSES

- 1335 **Baghramyan str.**, Land-200sq.m, 3storied bld-300sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3bathrooms, capially repaired, furnished. Price: 3000 USD
- 1336 **Aygedzor**, Land-1000sq.m, 2 storied bld-240sq.m, 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, capially repaired, furnished. Price: 2000 USD
- 1337 **Davtashen** Land-406sq.m, 3 storied bld-306sq.m, 4bedrooms, 2bathrooms, capially repaired, furnished. Price: 3900 USD
- 1323. **Monument, Babayan str**, Land-400sq.m, 3storied bld-300sq.m, 4bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, capially repaired. Price: Negotiable
- 1248. **Aygedzor**, Land - 1021 sq m ,3 storied bld. - 501 sq.m., 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, study, capially 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, capially 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, capially repaired, heating system, furnished, equipped, swimming pool, garden. Price: 2000USD.

3 ROOMS AND MORE

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

- 1195. **Nork, Armenakyan str.**, Land - 2000 sq.m, 4 storied bld.-520 sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 4bathrooms, capially 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, capially 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, capially 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, capially 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, capially 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, capially 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, capially 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, capially repaired, heating system, AC, garden. Price: Negotiable
- 1317. **Blur, Barbyus str.**, Land-900sq.m., 5 storied building-800sq.m., 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, capially 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, capially 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, capially repaired, gas, heating system, parking. Price: Negotiable.
- 1462. **Teryan str.**, 3 storied building, 800 sq.m., capially repaired, AC, parking. Price: 10.000 USD.
- 1945. **Mashtots Ave.**, 5/1, 2, 140sq.m., window glasses, capially repaired, AC. Price: 8000 USD
- 1943. **Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 265sq.m., 1st line, capially repaired, heating system, cellar. Price: 7000 USD
- 1868. **Tumanyan str.**, Ground floor of the building, 220sq.m., 1st line, facade-55m., capially repaired, h-5m., cellar. Price: 15.000 USD.
- 2087. **Northern ave.**, Ground floor of the building, 100sq.m, 1st line, zero level, capially 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, capially 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, capially repaired. Price: 4.000 USD

Prof. Armen Mouradyan, Minister of Health: We Must Unite Our Efforts Rather for Protection of the Health than Treatment

International Ministerial Conference "Public Health: New Challenges" 2016 Held in Yerevan



By **Gourgen James Khazhakian**

Chief Correspondent

Opening

Armenia has turned its attention to public health care. Preventive programs are carried out in Armenia in the framework of the motto "Healthcare Should be Valued during Health, not during Disease". This was said by the Minister of Health of Armenia Prof. **Armen Mouradyan** at the opening of the International Ministerial Conference "Public Health: New Challenges" held in Yerevan on 29 February – 2 March. Speaking about the 20th century world wars caused the loss of millions of lives, Mouradyan, mentioning that today the average human life expectancy is 70-75 (and even 80 in several countries) vs 40-45

According to him, the most recent wave of infectious diseases showed that new types of diseases pose challenges for humanity as well, and the healthcare professionals must unite to meet them.

He stressed the importance of the mass vaccination program that is successfully being implemented in Armenia, reaching out immunization programs to more than 95% of the country's population.

Referring to the prevalence of non-communicable diseases, Armen Mouradyan noted that 80% of mortalities in Armenia are linked to 3 diseases: cancer,

– **Veronika Skvortsova**, Iran – **Hassan Hashemi**, Belarus – **Vasily Zharko**, Minister of Labour, Healthcare and Social Issues of Georgia **David Sergeyenko**, Deputy Health Minister of Kazakhstan **Yelzhan Birtanov** arrived in Armenia to attend the Conference. Among the guests of honor was also a high-ranking rep of the WHO Office for Europe Dr **Piroska Ostlin**.

Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan attended the opening of the conference. Welcoming the guests, PM Abrahamyan noted that the preservation of public health is a priority objective to the government of any country, regardless of the level of economic development. Stressing that the Govt increases healthcare funding every year, he said in particular:

"Declaring public health as a priority, the Government of Armenia embarked upon a number of projects for the preservation of public health. These programs meet the "Health



by the beginning of the 20th century, noted that communicable and non-communicable diseases declared a war against humanity as well. *"40 million people die every year from non-communicable diseases worldwide, and 18 million of them are premature deaths: those people were young and so could have do many good things for their families and countries. Look to a 10 year perspective, we are talking about 180 million people, and we ask ourselves: which is the bigger war?"*, Minister Mouradyan said.

diabetes, cardiovascular. *"Defeating these diseases is impossible without public support"*, the RA Health Minister said.

He stressed the importance of promoting healthy lifestyle, fight against smoking, adding that 55% of men above the age of 16, 6-9% of minors, 2-3% of women in Armenia are smokers. Moreover, some 49% of population have been suffering from extra-weight.

At the invitation of the Prime Minister of Armenia **Hovik Abrahamyan** delegations headed by Health Ministers of Russia

"2020" policy of comprehensive approaches under the aegis of the UN World Health Organization. I am confident that the forum will be introduced to successful public health programs implemented in our country. However, I would like to address some of them.

The National Immunization Program, HIV/AIDS and other effective measures in the fight against tuberculosis have always been highly appreciated by international organizations, including the World Health Organization.

Mandatory iodization of salt is also a successful project, which significantly reduced the health problems caused by iodine deficiency among the population. Under the World Bank and Government-supported Disease Prevention and Control program, 50-60 percent of the vulnerable groups will be benefiting from a joint screening program against 3 most common non-communicable diseases for prevention and early detection within three years. Note that such screening programs have never been implemented in independent Armenia."

Talking to journalists

In response to questions from a big crowd of the Armenian and foreign journalists ministers told about main features/successful programs of the healthcare in their countries.

According to the Russian Minister of Health Veronika Skvortsova, public health programs conducted in Russia can be divided into three groups. The first group includes programs associated with the formation of a healthy lifestyle. This is adoption of the law against tobacco smoking, the programs to fight alcoholism, the concept of healthy nutrition programs, measures to limit the use of salt, sugar, trans-fats and some other products harmful to human health. The second group are screening programs. In the Russian Federation, according to the minister, in 2013 they implemented a large-scale screenings that are held annually for children and for adults - once in three years. Due to these programs it's become possible to identify cancers at an early, curable stages in 72% of cases as well as to early identify risk factors for cardiovascular diseases.

The third group of programs is to provide effective medical care in case if a person nonetheless had a stroke, a heart attack or other problem. To this end, Russia has established a three-level system of health care, that, according to the minister, is well-proven and continues to evolve.

Asked by The Highlights correspondent on the role of the state in the drug pricing, Minister Skvortsova stressed that the currency fluctuation in Russia since the end of 2014 revealed all the importance of



the state control of the most important drugs. *"So we in Russia have the list of vital and essential drugs, and their price rise was pretty insignificant. And by the end of 2015 we enlarged that list from 608 to 646 drugs that means 23,500 trademarks. This let us to keep the situation at*



the drug market relatively stable", Veronika Skvortsova said.

Asked by your author if they in Russia refuse the plans to enrich flour, she said she could not comment on this by now as she must examine the problem with colleagues from the Russian Ministry of Agriculture.

Among other issues, Russian Health Minister proposed to create a common

space of biosecurity to fight Zika virus.

Belarusian Minister of Health Vassily Zharko, in turn, noted that the state program of demographic security of Belarus is carried out that includes anti-tuberculosis program, anti-HIV, and anti-alcoholism. There are also programs in the field of cardiology. In general, public health programs help ensure natural population growth, the minister said. Also, in Belarus, according to the Minister, effective immunization program is conducted: 95-97% of the population receive all the existing vaccines. Minister of Health and Medical Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Hashemi, in turn, noted that in Iran there is 1 doctor for 2000 people, health services are mainly free, and 98% of the population have the state health insurance. The IRI's Ministry of Health is the second ministry in Iran with the largest budget as the health sector is very important for the country's leader, Hassan Hashemi said. The reason for 75% of deaths in Iran are non-communicable diseases, mostly cardiovascular problems, the minister said. For the prevention of these diseases programs to promote healthy lifestyle and sports as well as to limit the use of salt and sugar have been implemented. With regard to the prevention of infectious diseases, every child born in Iran receives 10 vaccines. Notably, in the course of the First Armenian-Iranian conference to be held in Yerevan in the autumn, the Ministers of Health of both countries will conduct surgical operations. Joint Armenian-Iranian conference will be of permanent character, the next event will be held in Tehran.

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Prof. Armen Mouradyan, Minister of Health: We Must Unite Our Efforts Rather for Protection of the Health than Treatment

International Ministerial Conference "Public Health: New Challenges" 2016 Held in Yerevan

From page 11

Joint Declaration

On the same day six countries health-care leaders signed a joint declaration on public health. According to the signed declaration, public health is not only the primary factor in the protection of national security, but also a criteria of the effectiveness of social and economic policy.

WHO supports Armenia's actions to improve public health

National health policy of Armenia developed in accordance with the "Health 2020" Program of the World Health Organization, whose main objective is to ensure the health and well-being of the population. Such an opinion was expressed by the Head of the Policy Dept at the WHO Office for Europe Piroaska Ostlin. According to her, WHO European Office is ready to support the implementation of preservation-oriented public health health policy in Armenia: *"We are ready to provide all the necessary tools to support Armenia's actions to improve public health."*

Meeting with the President

On 1 March President *Serzh Sargsyan* received heads of delegations participating at the International Ministerial Conference "Public Health: New Challenges" being held in Yerevan on March 1-2. The President of Armenia welcomed the guests to our country and stressed the importance of the Yerevan Conference on the modern issues and challenges of public health. Underscoring that public health all over the world is viewed as one of vital factors of national security, as well as one of the pri-

mary indicators of the countries' successful social and economic policy, Serzh Sargsyan noted that in the contemporary world problems of public health recognize no boundaries: new viruses and epidemics are not confined within a state and today they pose the most serious threat to the peoples in every country. According to the President, such problems can be efficiently solved only through a closer cooperation, exchange of special experience, by sharing success and achievements with the partners which is exactly what the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan is convened for.

The participants of the meeting thanked the Armenian authorities and in the person of the RA Minister of Health Armen Muradian the officials of the health care



system of Armenia for creating such an important platform for discussions and invitation to participate in the forum. They noted that in the area of public health the field for cooperation is extensive and there are many still unutilized opportunities. The guests stressed with satisfaction that at the Yerevan Conference there have been made pretty interesting and useful reports, presented were facts and references have been made to the programs implemented in the participating states based on best practices. Discussed were also reforms conducted in this area, existing problems and challenges. According to the Ministers, cooperation in this format will considerably promote relations and cooperation between the representatives of the area and will give an impetus to the development of health care.

Closing

Armen Mouradyan: Public Health Programs are Tailored for the Long Term

Closing the conference, Minister of Health of Armenia Prof. Armen Mouradyan said in particular: *"We have identified the vectors of public health development in our countries for the coming years. Memorandum signed by us has indicated that the public health is a priority in the healthcare, and we will continue our research in this area, we will combine our efforts in the fight against smoking, alcohol, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and other risk factors"*.

Talking to a big crowd of reporters, Armen Muradyan stressed that public health programs are of the long-term character, and it is difficult to assess them in a year. In fact, these programs are inherently somewhat far from the conventional understanding of health, namely, rehabilitation of health, but they do not allow to spoil health. It is here that the root of the problem should be found.

Armen Muradyan reminded that 38 years ago in Alma-Ata, all the countries have declared that public health and primary health care are priorities in the healthcare, but to date 95-97% of health care financing worldwide is directed to diagnosis and treatment.

Meanwhile, the solution to the problem, according to the Armenian Minister, is at the stage where it is necessary to create health and protect it.

"We consider it appropriate to involve all our partners in this struggle, understanding that it is a thankless job in the short term. This is the long-term work, the results of which will be seen in many years", - he said, calling professionals and the public segment, in particular, reps of mass media to unite their efforts in this matter.

New Armenian Airline announces entry into market



(Yerevan - (RFE/RL) A new local airline promising some low cost flight options has announced its imminent entry into Armenia's civil aviation market. The bid by the company called "Armenia" comes less than two years after another local airline stopped operating passenger flights citing unfair competition as the main reason.

Since the early 2000s for about a decade Armavia was considered Armenia's national air carrier, but the airline owned by wealthy businessman Mikhail Bagdasarov eventually contracted debts and declared bankruptcy in 2013.

Air Armenia, a private carrier thereto engaged only in cargo transportation, attempted to replace Armavia as Armenia's passenger airline amid the Open Skies policy announced by the Armenian government. The airline, however, soon began to experience difficulties, accusing a Russian air navigation agency of creating unequal conditions for it in its competition with Russian

airlines for destinations. The situation led to Air Armenia's suspending its flights in late 2014.

Now another airline where a majority stake is held by a local businessman is making a bid to regain some of the passenger traffic in the country's civil aviation market. Among the stakeholders of the "Armenia" airline there are also people who have experience of civil aviation management in Georgia.

Tamaz Gaiashvili, who has a 24-percent stake in the company, is director of Georgian Airways. His deputy Robert Oganesyanyan owns 25 percent of the newly established airline.

The owners of "Armenia" say they plan to launch flights already in April. Destinations will include Moscow and other large Russian cities as well as Kyiv, Minsk, Tehran, Dubai, Barcelona, Prague and a number of other European cities.

By the end of the year the company expects to have up to eight passenger jets in its fleet. The new airline's owners also promise affordable ticket prices, starting at around 100 euros (about \$108) in one direction.

"We are going to become competitors not only for Russian airlines. Of course, aviation is a difficult business, and without government support one can hardly have a serious airline in Armenia," Gaiashvili said at a press conference in Yerevan on

Wednesday.

Aviation expert Shahan Petrosyan, however, does not consider realistic the prospect of having two-way flights from Armenia to a European city for just 200 euros.

"It is possible that they can sell a certain number of tickets at discount prices, but the bulk of the tickets will still be priced as usual. I can't imagine how they can do that under the current fuel prices in Armenia, where fuel supply remains monopolized," he said.

Petrosyan doubts that so-called low coasters will be a real prospect in Armenia until airport taxes in Yerevan go down and monopoly on fuel sales is eliminated. "Georgia has no oil of its own either. But there air tickets are twice as less expensive as in Armenia," he said.

The majority stakeholder in the newly created "Armenia" airline is Ashot Torosyan, a hitherto unknown businessman who introduced himself to media as a former dentist. He refused to be drawn on how he managed to become a majority stakeholder in an airline. Some Armenian media, meanwhile, have speculated that in reality the new company may belong to Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan's extended family. Abrahamian's press service, however, has denied the speculations. Gaiashvili also denied there are any Armenian officials among the founders of the "Armenia" airline.

Four Armenians on Forbes' 2016 World's Billionaires List

There are four Armenians on 2016 World's Billionaires list published by Forbes on March 1.

Founder and CEO of Magnit, Russia's biggest supermarket chain and owner of football team Krasnodar Sergei Galitsky (Arutyunyan) (219th) is the world's richest Armenian with an estimated net worth of \$5.7 billion.

Other Armenians on the list include head of Tashir Group Samvel Karapetyan (549th), Argentinean Armenian businessman Eduardo Eurnekian (810th), and Danil Khachaturov (1275th), CEO of Rosgosstrakh Insurance Company.

Volatile stock markets, cratering oil

prices and a stronger dollar led to a dynamic reshuffling of wealth around the globe and a drop in ten-figure fortunes for the first time since 2009. For our 30th annual guide to the world's richest, the Forbes found 1,810 billionaires, down from a record 1,826 a year ago. Their aggregate net worth was \$6.48 trillion, \$570 billion less than last year. It was also the first time since 2010 that the average net worth of a billionaire dropped - it is now \$3.6 billion, \$300 million less than last year.

Bill Gates remains the richest person in the world with a net worth of \$75 billion, despite being \$4.2 billion poorer than

a year ago. He has been No. 1 one for 3 years in a row and topped the list 17 out of 22 years. Also holding steady is Warren Buffett at No. 3. Zara's Amancio Ortega moves up to No. 2 for the first time, displacing Mexico's Carlos Slim, who slips to No. 4. Slim's fortune fell \$27.1 billion to \$50 billion in the past year, as shares of his telecom business América Móvil tumbled.

Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg had the best year of all billionaires. The 31-year-old added \$11.2 billion to his fortune and moved up to No. 6 from 16. He and Amazon's Jeff Bezos both make their first appearance in the top ten of Forbes' annual ranking of the world's wealthiest.

Royce-Sherman letter calls on Obama to press Aliyev on Karabakh peace

In anticipation of President Aliyev's visit to Washington for a Nuclear Summit at the end of March, leaders of the House Foreign Affairs Committee are calling upon President Obama to use this opportunity to personally press the Azerbaijan leader to stop obstructing the implementation of the life-saving Royce-Engel peace proposals for Nagorno Karabakh.

The letter, authored by Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) and Representative Brad Sherman (D-CA), a senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, builds upon an earlier Congressional letter, sent by 85 U.S. Representatives to the State Department last December, in support of three practical peacekeeping measures, known collectively as the Royce-Engel proposals:

- An agreement from all sides not to deploy snipers, heavy arms, or new weaponry along the line of contact.

- The placement of OSCE-monitored, advanced gunfire-locator systems and sound-ranging equipment to determine the source of attacks along the line of contact.

- The deployment of additional OSCE observers along the line of contact to better monitor cease-fire violations.

In response to this earlier letter, the Obama Administration voiced support for the Royce-Engel proposals, specifically commenting that: "...the urgency of implementing such measures has never been greater." Despite this rhetorical support from the Obama Administration - and the longtime backing for these measures by the OSCE Minsk Group, Armenia, and Nagorno Karabakh - their implementation has, to date, been blocked by the Azerbaijani government. The authors of the Royce-Sherman letter seek to overcome this impasse by encouraging President Obama to work on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit with all the key stakeholders in a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement to implement the concrete, common-sense peace-keeping measures that have been proposed by Members of Congress and previously supported by his Administration.

"We join with Chairman Ed Royce and Congressman Brad Sherman in calling upon President Obama not to miss this unique opportunity to call out Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's obstruction of the



life-saving Royce-Engel peace proposals for Nagorno Karabakh," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "Please encourage your U.S. Representative to sign the Royce-Sherman letter by visiting www.anca.org/AliyevDC."

The full text of the Royce-Sherman letter is provided below.

Royce-Sherman Letter to President Obama

Mr. President:

We are writing in advance of planned visits to Washington, DC by the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia for the 4th Nuclear Security Summit, to underscore the importance the United States attaches to ending threats and acts of aggression, deterring a renewed outbreak of war, and creating the conditions for a fair and enduring peace in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

As supporters of a non-violent, negotiated peace, we appreciated the Department of State's letter of November 12, 2015 voicing the Administration's support for our bipartisan appeal, dated October 26, 2015, which was endorsed by 85 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, recommending specific steps to reduce violence, save lives, and keep the peace process moving forward. As you know, this State Department letter reaffirmed the Administration's support for "proposals to withdraw snipers, expand OSCE's role via an OSCE investigative mechanism, and

deploy sensors along the Line of Contact and the Armenia-Azerbaijan international border." We welcome Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh's support for these peace-keeping measures, and remain hopeful that Azerbaijan will lift its objections and allow for their timely implementation.

It is in this spirit that we urge you to work on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit with all the key stakeholders in a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement to implement concrete, common-sense peace-keeping measures that have been proposed by Members of Congress and supported by your Administration:

- An agreement from all sides not to deploy snipers - or, for that matter, any escalation of heavy arms or new weaponry - along the line of contact.

- The placement of OSCE-monitored, advanced gunfire-locator systems and sound-ranging equipment to determine the source of attacks along the line of contact.

- The deployment of additional OSCE observers along the line of contact to better monitor cease-fire violations.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We will continue to support your Administration's efforts within the OSCE Minsk Group to reach a fair and durable resolution of status and security issues related to Nagorno-Karabakh, and look forward to hearing of your actions in this regard.

4,500 Guests Attend Special Armenian Genocide Program in Kremlin Hall



By Harut
Sassounian

Publisher, The
California Courier

The 10th annual Armenian Music Awards (AMA) program was held on February 27, at the Kremlin's Kevorkiev Hall in Moscow, with 4,500 guests in attendance. Many of Armenia's top stars entertained the large crowd with patriotic songs and musical performances for more than four hours.

This year's program, organized by Valeriy Saharyan, recognized the important contributions made by 12 individuals and organizations on the occasion of the Armenian Genocide Centennial, including:

- Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (member of the Russian Parliament),
 - Harut Sassounian (Publisher of The California Courier and President of Armenia Artsakh Fund),
 - Armenia Futura,
 - Sergey Smbatyan (conductor).
- Other honorees, some of whom could not be present, appeared by video or through a representative:
- Valerie Boyer (member of the French Parliament),
 - Vigen Sargsyan (Armenian President's Chief of Staff and Coordinator of Programs organized by the State Centennial Committee of the Armenian Genocide),
 - Armenia's Minister of Culture,
 - Archbishop Ezras Necessian (Primate of Moscow and Nor Nakhichevan),
 - Serj Tankian (System of a Down),
 - Rouben Vardanyan (benefactor and businessman),
 - Artur Janibekyan (Gazprom Media Holding),
 - Ara Vartanyan (Hayastan All-Armenian Fund).

In receiving his award, Zhirinovskiy had strong words for Turkey. Here are excerpts from his remarks:

"The day will come when Armenians will celebrate their festivals in the territory of liberated Western Armenia. That could be a festival bearing the name of your holy mountain - Mount Ararat - and could take place in Kars, Ardahan, Sassoun or Trabizon.... After the downing of the Russian jet, I would have ordered a powerful attack on Turkey. Today, very little would have remained of Turkey.... I wish the dream of Armenians worldwide would become a reality; that those who committed that horrible genocide on April 1915, during World War I, would be punished."

Zhirinovskiy continued his aggressive words stating that Turkey attacked the Armenians who "were living in their homeland, in their land. But the Turks were nomads; their homeland is in Central Asia, in Tashkent. They should go there and leave Anatolia to Armenians, Kurds, and Greeks. And Constantinople should be a free city. Times are changing. It is possible that shortly this would become a reality. Armenians, no one will bother you. Therefore, the descendants of Western Armenia should prepare their documents to get back their lost lands and properties. I am not talking a lot of 'hot air.' I am convinced that Armenians will shortly commemorate not the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, but celebrate the liberation of Western Armenia. And the Armenian flag will fly in Kars, Ardahan, on Ararat, Sassoun, and Trabizon."

I had a hard act to follow after Zhirinovskiy's powerful words. In accepting my award, I made the fol-

lowing brief remarks:

"Genocide is a monstrous crime which has no statutes of limitations. The Turkish government should well know that the Armenian nation will never give up its just rights. Although 100 years have passed, even if 1,000 years should pass, we will continue to demand, and struggle to regain everything that we lost. Turkey must return all our personal and communal properties - and more importantly - our historic lands of Western Armenia. In other words, we demand our confiscated possessions, and compensation for the murder of our 1.5 million holy martyrs."

I then urged the audience not to despair: "One hundred years ago, the powerful and vast Ottoman Empire collapsed and broke apart, turning into the Republic of Turkey within much smaller borders. With God's help and our persistent efforts, I am convinced that the day will come when today's Turkey would also collapse due to internal and external pressures. We must be prepared to take advantage of such an opportunity to liberate our historic lands. Until then, Armenia, Artsakh and the Diaspora should be united into one fist, so that our homeland would become a strong economic, political, and military power. Only such a powerful Armenia can take ownership of its just rights rather than begging for them."

This uplifting four-hour program was broadcast live by Armenia's public television to Armenian communities throughout the world. I am confident that the 4,500 guests at the Kremlin Hall and millions of TV viewers felt a renewed sense of determination to pursue their national goals until their eventual realization.

Atom Egoyan tells a tale of two genocides

By Curt Schleier, *The Forward*

The director Atom Egoyan was in a good mood. And why not? He was comfortably ensconced in a posh Los Angeles hotel the morning after his latest film, "Remember," received an enthusiastic reception at a Museum of Tolerance screening.

But his buzz was soon tempered as we discussed the film and I told him: "I can't write that. And no, I can't write that, either."

The difficulty is that "Remember" is more than a thriller about an older survivor hunting the Nazi who killed his family. It is a film that also offers a "Sixth Sense," "I see dead people" surprise, and some of what Egoyan told me gave away the whole movie.

But, he claimed, he can't help himself. "I get so excited about the conversations people have watching the movie," he said. "You have the tough job of trying to present it in a way that reveals nothing."

Actually, no. Describing the film is not at all difficult. What is hard, though, is figuring out how it got made in the first place.

Zev Gutman (Christopher Plummer) lives in a nursing home. He suffers from dementia, and his wife passed away just a week ago. After the last shiva, his friend Max (Martin Landau) reminds him of a promise Zev made sometime in the past. When his wife died, Zev pledged he'd go out in search of, and kill, the sadistic Auschwitz guard who'd murdered their families. The guard had escaped and was living under the assumed identity of John Kurlander.

Max, confined to a wheel chair and on oxygen, can't go himself. But, although weak of body, he's strong of mind. And he's written step-by-step instructions for Zev to follow when his memory fails. He's also included a wad of cash for Zev's use as he searches North America for the correct John Kurlander of several possibilities on Max's list. There are adventures along the way: He's almost caught at a Canadian border crossing; he runs into an anti-Semitic state trooper, and he murders someone.

The film is tautly written, and performances are excellent.

Still, you don't have to be a Hollywood insider to figure out why "Remember" was not a likely candidate for the silver screen. Most obviously, it features old people. Not that old-people movies don't occasionally break through - witness "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" - but typically those films are uplifting. This is a Holocaust movie.

There's another, perhaps more subtle, factor at play. Egoyan, 55, was nominated for



two Academy Awards - best adapted screenplay and best director - for one of his early films, "The Sweet Hereafter." Many of his subsequent films did well, too, including "Chloe," his 2009 erotic thriller.

But since then, well, not so much. His last two films, "The Captive" and "Devil's Knot," barely raised critical or financial blips. So logic - or at least my logic - would dictate that you look for a property with a greater chance of financial success.

Not Egoyan: "You have to go with the projects that are unique. I've always been drawn to projects that have some element of risk. Here in my hotel room in Los Angeles, I look out the window and I see billboards for films based on tried-and-true formulas. When you are seized by a project that is original, telling a story that hasn't been told before, that is entertaining and provocative and will lead to a discussion, of course you will take that."

But there are a couple of additional elements that led to Egoyan's decision. One was timing: If he didn't tell this story now, it might never be told. The Nazis and their hunters are dying, and the memory of their atrocities is fading.

Egoyan pointed to the trial of Reinhold Hanning, the SS sergeant on trial in Germany for complicity in the death of 170,000 people at Auschwitz-Birkenau. He is 94, and all the witnesses are in their 90s as well. So this may be the last significant Nazi trial.

Timing also became a factor in the casting. Maximilian Schell (one of the stars of "Judgment at Nuremberg") was hired to play a role, but he died before filming began. A veteran German actor took ill and was unable to take part.

But perhaps the most important reason for

Egoyan tackling this project is his affinity for the material. He was born in Egypt of Armenian parents. He was named Atom in honor of the first nuclear power plant in that country. His sister's birth name was Molecule.

"That was later changed to Eve, so we became Atom and Eve, so we stood out like a sore thumb," he said.

In 1962, the rise of Arab nationalism in Egypt, where the Armenian community was targeted, forced his parents to leave. They ended up in Victoria, British Columbia, where, like many first-generation immigrants, Egoyan felt out of place.

"We were the only Armenian family there. I was always aware of being an outsider. I wanted nothing more than to assimilate. There was nothing that gave me a sense of pride [in being Armenian]. I wanted to avoid and escape from that.

"That changed when I went to university and met other Armenian students and became active in the movement to figure out what we are going to do with this history. I became consumed by that."

Egoyan's paternal grandparents were survivors of the genocide, a genocide that has never been acknowledged by the Ottoman Empire or Turkey. "That's why this story ['Remember'] had such a strong appeal to me," Egoyan explained. "It was about the denial of justice. It is what Max feels. He's at the end of his life, and he feels this sense of rage, this sense of injustice."

He notes that, growing up, "I probably knew more about the Holocaust than the Armenian genocide." But the knowledge of it "was buried inside me, because the sense of trauma was transmitted to me in some way. And that's why I was drawn to this film."

William Saroyan house in Fresno bought, will become museum



The central Fresno house where famed Armenian-American author William Saroyan spent the last 17 years of his life may soon be turned into a museum to host literary and cultural events, Fresno Bee reports.

The simple stucco tract house at 2729 W. Griffith Way, just west of Cooper Middle School, was purchased last summer by the Intellectual Renaissance Foundation based in Studio City, according to Fresno County public records.

The foundation plans to renovate the 1,228-square-foot house built in 1964. The organization belongs to Artur Janibekyan, a Moscow-based media mogul born in Armenia who is a big supporter of Armenian arts and culture.

The house, which has had three different owners since Saroyan's death in 1981, was a rental home for years and attracted squatters. Last summer, the boarded, vacant house fell into foreclosure and was scheduled to be sold at auction, but it was purchased before the public sale, said Berj Apkarian, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia in Fresno.

Public records show Brian J. and Fatima B. Mosby of Fresno bought the property in May and sold it to the foundation in August.

The Fresno consulate has been collaborating with the foundation since last year to create a new museum and cultural center for "people to truly enjoy what William Saroyan represented as an

author, as a writer and as an artist," Apkarian said.

"The Republic of Armenia and its Ministry of Diaspora and the consulate are very much interested to preserve this historical property," he said.

While details about the project were not available Monday, Apkarian mentioned possibly relocating the house outside of the residential neighborhood where it currently is located.

The three-bedroom, one-bathroom house is on the local register of historic resources. A plaque honoring the Oscar and Pulitzer Prize-winning author was installed outside the house in 1989. It lists 10 pieces of Saroyan's work written while living in the home.

"This is fantastic news for the Armenian community, but most of all for the Fresno community," Apkarian said. "Restoring an icon's house is a great project and it should bring, hopefully, visitors and create excitement in the community."

Larry Balakian, who was involved with the William Saroyan Festival in 2002 and the centennial in 2008, was pleased to hear about the preservation plans and encouraged people to embrace it.

"I think anything to preserve the William Saroyan legacy in this community, worldwide, is definitely the right step forward," Balakian said. "I think the entire community needs to embrace the project."

Sergey Smbatyan joins the legendary Swiss Gart

Sergey Smbatyan, the artistic director and principal conductor of the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia became the member of the outstanding organization "Swiss Gart" (Swiss Global Art Management Gart).

Having more than thirty years of experience in management, organizing exclusive events and international festivals, the Swiss Gart decided to bring together a team of experts from different countries in one Global Art Management. Collaborating with the most prestigious venues, concert halls and the leading orchestras, it worked both with big names, and with "the stars of tomorrow" - artists of the younger generation, helping them to build their career.

The activity of Swiss Gart is not limited to classical music as it also works with renowned jazz and pop musicians, famous actors and dancers, theatre and ballet collectives, opera houses and composers.

Swiss Gart produces exclusive art shows and delivers artistic programs. Numerous governmental and non-governmental organizations, international organizations, including UNESCO apply for the services of Swiss Gart.

Swiss Gart and its team initiate world's leading cultural programs. Its large team provides services which are prepared very meticulously, considering every slightest details. The cast of Swiss Gart includes such artists as the conductor Sergey Smbatyan, violinist, conductor and pedagogue Pinchas Zukerman, American actor, producer, director and screenwriter John Malkovich, violinist Soyoung Yoon, mezzo-soprano Carlie Paoli, as well as artists and ensembles of Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Korean Chamber Orchestra and many others.

In the framework of cooperation with Swiss Gart, Sergey Smbatyan performed with John Malkovich and Pinchas Zukerman.



Tigran Hamasyan gave open air concert in support of Gumri's homeless people



A world-renowned pianist has joined a campaign initiated by an activist in the Armenian city of Gyumri to buy apartments to some of the families who continue to live in makeshift housing more than 27 years after their homes were destroyed in a powerful quake.

Despite promises of the authorities to provide all families who lost their homes in the deadly 1988 earthquake with new residences, more than 3,000 households are still officially homeless in the country's second largest city, living in temporary lodgings known as domiks.

Last month local photographer Hayk Barseghyan, who had photographed the families and the conditions in which

they lived for one of his projects, decided to launch a crowd-funding campaign at one of the British websites to help a few of them. He has set the goal of raising about \$175,000 within a couple of months to buy homes to 13 families who now live in domiks deprived of all conveniences.

The campaign has so far raised about \$40,000, but unless the goal is met by a deadline, the money pledged by the donors will be returned to them.

To boost the campaign, Tigran Hamasyan, a 28-year-old award-winning jazz pianist famous far beyond Armenia, traveled to his native Gyumri, some 120 kilometers to the northwest of capital Yerevan, on Saturday to give an



open-air concert in support of the cause.

He says he originally planned to play inside one of the makeshift houses, but eventually ended up having an outdoor concert in front of an audience of over a thousand listeners, some of whom had come also from other areas of Armenia.

"It's a shame that people still live in these conditions," Hamasyan said, hoping that the crowd funding campaign will eventually achieve its goal. "It's a terrible feeling that one cannot describe with words. I feel ashamed as a man who comes from this town."

Hamasyan's concert helped raise some money for the cause immediately, with Barseghyan hoping that the campaign will manage to meet the target by March 20.

Armenian town in Lebanon part of EU-funded tourism project

The Armenian town of Anjar in Lebanon is part of an EU-funded project aimed at highlighting the history of the Umayyad dynasty via an ambitious tourism trail around the Mediterranean basin linking three continents.

The Independent - At its peak in the eighth century, it was the largest empire in the world, linking East and West and giving rise to a rich heritage of art, architecture, literature and science.

But even in its native countries, the legacy of the Umayyad dynasty has fallen largely into obscurity. Now, a new EU-funded project aims to highlight the shared history via an ambitious tourism trail around the Mediterranean basin linking three continents.

It is a bold concept for a tourism initiative at a time when relations between East and West are strained by terrorism, a refugee crisis and Islamophobia. The Umayyads are historically known as aggressive expansionists, but the project seeks to examine a lesser acknowledged by-product: the opening of new channels of communication between different cultures. Linking Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Italy, Spain and Portugal, the trail will cost more than €4m to develop.

"This route seeks to publicize the profound human, cultural, artistic and scientific relationship between East and West," explained a booklet produced by project leader El Legado Andalusi (Andalusian Public Foundation). "To forge links and strengthen the relations between the different peoples they encompass, united by a common past."

The locations on the trail are disparate, even obscure: a small, out-of-the-way Lebanese town near the Syrian border known for its Armenian community; a former center of Islamic learning in the heart of Tunisia; a Spanish city famed for its cathedral built within a mosque; a Roman Catholic island at the southern tip of Italy. But together they create a picture of one of the greatest eras of Arab innovation.

"Umayyad is a euphemism for cultural exchange in the Mediterranean," said Abdallah Kahlil, a heritage expert for the Lebanese part of the trail and an assistant



professor at the Lebanese American University. "During the heyday of the Umayyad presence in Spain in the 10th century, we had the Fatimids in Egypt, the Byzantines in Constantinople, the Normans in France, and there was continuous cultural exchange between them."

Before moving to Cordoba in Spain in AD750, the Umayyad capital was Damascus, where they built the Great Mosque. With Syria off limits today, the trail starts in Lebanon. In the ancient city of Baalbek is the Umayyad Mosque, a miniature of its sister in Syria's capital. The structure, which dates back to the seventh or eighth century, was originally a Byzantine church, and before that was the site of the city's Roman forum, granite and limestone columns from which were used to build the mosque.

This exemplifies the Umayyad attitude of reusing rather than razing previous civilizations, said Rima Abou Baker of Lebanon's Safadi Foundation, which is in charge of boosting local involvement in the trail. "The Umayyads really had respect for others," she said. "They preserved what was there and tried to innovate and bring new ideas and new architecture to all the countries they passed through. Through this project people can learn that Islamic culture is not what we are seeing in the news now."

In Anjar, the small Lebanese town

near the Syrian border, sightseers can wander the well-preserved ruins of what would have been a palatial Umayyad city, displaying a mix of Roman-Byzantine and Islamic architectural styles typical of the period. An Umayyad museum is planned.

In Baalbek and Anjar, tourists will likely have the place entirely to themselves. Embassies counsel against travel to the Bekaa Valley due to vague security concerns, meaning that while both cities are usually safe, very few people make it there.

"We are worried a bit about the situation," said Ms Abou Baker. "We know that for now it's a bit hard to bring international tourists here, so we are counting on local communities and tourists."

For Lebanon's project co-ordinator Dr Rachid Chamoun, such concerns are pointless. "If we want to base future projects on fears about conflicts, we would never do anything," he said. "Maybe Lebanon now is safer than Paris or London, or even the US with its gun crime. Are there any safe places in the world?"

Instead, he is focused on creating the best possible experience for those who do come to try out the trails. "These trips put you in contact with Lebanon's gastronomy, its natural reserves, the social fabric of cities," he said. "We hope it will bring people closer together."

For The First Time The Paintings of Iranian Miniaturists Will Be Displayed In Armenia



For the first time Armenian art lovers have a unique opportunity to get acquainted with the 54 compositions of dozens of Iranian contemporary miniaturists. "Iranian miniature" unique exposition will open on March 10, in The National Gallery of Armenia.

On March 10, about this announced the director of Armenian National Gallery Arman Tsaturyan during the meeting with journalists. He signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Iran-Armenian cooperation with his Iranian counterpart Majid Mola Norouzi, who is the head of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

According to A. Tsaturyan, the Memorandum of bilateral cooperation supposes the organization of Armenian and Iranian painters' exhibition.



As he said, a year ago the cultural center of Islamic Republic of Iran organized the exhibition of Armenian-Iranian painter Edman Ayvazyan for deepening bilateral cultural links of the countries. Both in Armenian and in Iran the reaction of it has exceeded expectations.

As A. Tsaturyan mentioned, due to the grand interest of this exhibition, the cooperation between two countries continued and now other painters' exhibitions are also going to organize.

"I am happy to be in Armenian and especially in the Armenian National Gallery which is one of the best in the world: It is a great honor to organize the



exhibition of Iranian miniaturists in such kind of Gallery", - said the head of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art Majid Mola Norouzi.

As the head of Cultural Center of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Armenia Majid Meshkin mentioned, Armenian and Iranian sides were obliged to organize such kind of dialogue earlier



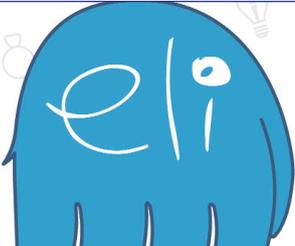
because both nations need peace.

According to him, the miniature came from Iran then it was developed in China, afterwards the Iranian miniature has honorary place in the world of the painting arts.

It is noteworthy that the exhibition of the contemporary Iranian miniaturists is initiated by the Armenian National Gallery, the cultural center of Islamic Republic of Iran and Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

The organizers assured that such kind of exhibitions will organize both in Armenian and in Iran more often.





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