



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

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### **AGBU NEWS**

1. "AGBU Levon Zaven Surmelyan" Printing House Opened at the Writers' Union of Armenia [Azg, 11/04/09]

The long-standing dream of Armenian writers to have their own printing house finally came true registering another memorable page in the Writers' Union chronicles. The joint project of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and the Writers' Union of Armenia (WUA) is successfully accomplished. Yesterday, the official opening ceremony of the "AGBU Levon Zaven Surmelyan Printing House" took place at the Writers' Union of Armenia.

Thanks to the 13 units of modern printing equipment purchased by the "AGBU Levon Zaven Surmelyan Fund" the 200sqm area in the basement of the Writers' Union has turned into a modern printing house. This area is also included in the government-funded renovation project of the whole Writers' Union building. The new printing house will certainly have its impact on the future activities of the WUA, fostering the union's book publishing programs and the creativity of our writers.



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A few words are not enough to describe the whole spectrum of projects carried out by the AGBU in Armenia. AGBU's support touches every sphere – from education to health care, from church-building to science and culture. The projects carried out by AGBU in Armenia include the American University of Armenia, the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, Holy See of St. Etchmiadzin, Vaskenian Theological Seminary, St. Nerses Hospital, Children's Centers, Ultrasound Training and Research Center, Armenian Virtual College, Fundamental Library of the RA National Academy of Sciences, French University of Armenia, projects in Artsakh, etc. In this long list of benevolent activities an important part is occupied by the projects aimed at the development of the Armenian literature and book publishing. Works of many famous Armenian writers, contemporary or classic, and scientific works have been published through AGBU's support, including Levon Zaven Surmelyan's "98.6" and "Techniques of Prose: Measure and Madness", "General Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts of the Mashtots Matenadaran", "Matenadaran Herald", the second scholarly volume of Avetik Isahakian's literary works, Eduard Melkonian's "AGBU History". AGBU also supported the fourth annual pan-Armenian conference of Armenian writers in 2008, accompanied for the first time by a book fair in Yerevan's Charles Aznavour Square.

The next step and the result of the cooperation between AGBU and WUA was the establishment of the printing house. The red ribbon was cut by AGBU President Berge Setrakian and WUA Chairman Levon Ananian. The latter noted that they have a plan of establishing a publishing and printing house and a bookstore in the Writers' Union in the near future. "This printing house has an indescribable meaning and value. In 2012 we are going to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Armenian book publishing and the foundation of the "AGBU Levon Zaven Surmelian Printing House" is one of the turning-points in this long history. And for that I express my deepest gratitude, on behalf of the Writers' Union of Armenia, to the Armenian General Benevolent Union. Levon Zaven Surmelian is one of our prominent writers. This printing house is a tribute of respect to him and his name will be on every book published here".

Kindly emphasizing the efforts of Mr. Torgom Postanjian, Surmelian's executor of will, towards the foundation of this printing house, Mr. Berge Setrakian gladly mentioned that L.Z. Surmelian's name will be remembered through the WUA and this printing house as well.

Writer Vahagn Mughnetsian, Director of the printing house, is sure that the "Surmelian printing house" will differ from others by its high-value and quality production maintaining proper standards and principles of art. It is not yet decided what will be the first publication of the printing house, but it will definitely be printed this year. The printing house has all the necessary printing equipments and a well-trained staff.

P.S. Yesterday, late at night, the delegation of the Writers Union of Armenia headed by Levon Ananian left for USA to participate in the third conference of Armenian writers writing in foreign languages, which will take place in the University of California, on November 6-8. The next conference, initiated by Ara Abrahamian, Chairman of the Union of Armenians of Russia, will take place in 2012 in Moscow.

## POLITICS

### **2. RA President Attended the Session of the Diocesan Representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church [Azg, 11/03/09]**

Yesterday, RA President Serzh Sargsyan visited the Holy See of St. Etchmiadzin to participate in the session of the Diocesan Representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The President welcomed the participants of the session wishing success to all the undertakings of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which are aimed at meeting the spiritual needs of our country and our people.

Speaking about church-state relations President Sargsyan said that they are especially important in this historical period and that everything should be done to maintain harmony in these relations.

"Having normal and regulated church-state relations is not an easy task. Church should not interfere into state affairs and state, in its turn, should not interfere into church issues. This simple formula is not easily realized in real life, because in our case, it is very difficult to distinguish the line between our spiritual and worldly cultures, especially political culture. I think today we are very close to the "golden middle" and that's because of the wise and principal standing of the Catholicos. Certainly, time will do some editing in this sphere, but in fact we are on a right path. State structures are eager to continue and deepen this cooperation, which is already giving its positive results", said Mr. Sargsyan.

President Sargsyan also highly estimated the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church toward the spiritual and aesthetic education and upbringing of our children, emphasizing in particular the activities of Youth Centers and other similar establishments operating under the church. "Today we



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already see the first positive results of these establishments, but the true and greatest results will be seen and felt tomorrow. It is the moral and educational characteristic of the future Armenia. Moral Armenia means invincible Armenia. Educated Armenia means invincible Armenia. That is why this is a strategic issue and I think that the Church should expand its efforts here taking under its wings more and more representatives of our young generation. Whatever we do and no matter how much we do, is never enough in this sphere”, said the President. He mentioned with happiness the fact of continuous re-opening and re-consecration of our old churches and of course the construction and consecration of new ones. It helps create new routes for our diocesan and community spiritual lives, which is an important component of our life and self-organization.

The activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Diaspora are extremely important for every political figure of our country, especially the President. “It is the most reliable link combining Armenians. The commandments and persuasions of the Church about common roots, common goals, general challenges and common future inspire our brothers and sisters abroad, even the most desperate ones. The united position of the whole nation is not only a spiritual but also a huge political capital. It is unacceptable to destroy that capital in conflicts raised around certain non-principal issues”, said Mr. Sargsyan. He also spoke with satisfaction about the international peacekeeping mission of the Armenian Apostolic Church and its active participation in the international ecumenical movement.

President Sargsyan said that despite the huge work accomplished, there are a lot of things to be done. “Both separately and jointly, our state and Armenian Apostolic Church have a lot of things to do, because striving for perfection has no boundaries”.

Serzh Sargsyan spoke about the 10 years of His Holiness Karekin II's tenure, mentioning that Karekin II has become the continuer and developer of the holy traditions of our nation and the church, at the same time proving to be an intellectual of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. “As a rule history is the best judge of the Catholicoses' deeds. Today, I extend my heartfelt message to His Holiness, my gratitude for all the things done by one man during one decade. We wish you new decades of fruitful activities. I believe that from the Holy See you will lead your spiritual flock for many years with the help of the crosier of St. Gregory the Illuminator. I believe that you will witness new achievements of the Armenian nation, and certainly you will have your tangible input in that”, said the President.

President Sargsyan awarded His Holiness Karekin II with the highest state order – Order of Mesrop Mashtots - for his exclusive contribution in preservation and development of national and spiritual values.

Taking the opportunity those present at the session asked questions to the President about the protocols on normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey, and the Karabakh conflict regulation.

Serzh Sargsyan, clarifying the process of the normalization of the Armenia-Turkey relations, underscored that this does not mean to refuse the efforts aimed at the genocide recognition. He noted that the Republic of Armenia as a responsible player of international relations, has always been loyal to the fulfillment of its duties and is ready to move forward in accordance with each letter of the protocols without preconditions and in reasonable terms establishing relations with Turkey. The wide international society, according to Serzh Sargsyan, defends the ratification of the signed protocols and the establishment of relations between Armenia and Turkey without preconditions and in reasonable terms. Serzh Sargsyan also underlined that Armenia has its own strategic ideas on different scenarios of the development of the Armenian and Turkish process and relevant steps will be taken proceeding from these ideas.

Dwelling on the concern that the Turkish side is trying to determine the Armenian and Turkish normalization by the Karabakh issue, Serzh Sargsyan said these two processes have nothing in common. According to him, Armenia goes by the way of solving separately these two issues and has the opinion that these two solutions have to be so to secure long stable peace and development in the region.

### **3. Zharangutiun proposes marking April 24 also as Condemnation Day of Homeland Deprivation [Noyan Tapan, 11/02/09]**

RA National Assembly Zharangutiun (Heritage) faction deputies on November 2 by the order established by the NA Regulations sent a bill On Making an Amendment to the RA Law On RA Holidays and Memory Days to NA Speaker Hovik Abrahamian. The bill proposes restating Article 5 of the law, according to which April 24 is marked as Commemoration Day of Genocide Victims. Zharangutiun proposes marking that commemoration non-working day also as Condemnation Day of Homeland Deprivation.

The motivation attached to Zharangutiun's legislative initiative, in particular, read:



"Genocide's consequence was that the Armenians were deprived of their homeland. The people slaughtered just on its native land was deprived of its historic homeland. This fact is a common tragedy which makes more complete the fact of the Genocide. We should perceive the tragedy within that entity and appreciate the commemoration day in that context. The adoption of that law will complete the real picture of Genocide, will stipulate the condemnation of deprivation of its native heirs of legal and historic rights for the Armenian lands.

The Genocide not only took away lives of 1.5 million innocent people but also deprived millions of Armenians of their own homeland: it is a murder of not only a people but also a culture, a whole way of life, therefore that fact should be also recorded and mentioned. It will not permit to raze this crime from our people's collective memory, which deprived the Armenian generations of their civilization, heritage, and homeland.

It should be recorded that this problem is as actual on the political agenda of the Republic of Armenia as never: not to renounce and to keep the memory of Genocide victims, statehood's dignity. The Republic of Armenia should double the potential of stopping the denial going on for centuries until the international community recognizes aforethought deprivation of a whole people of its homeland. By adopting this law the Republic of Armenia will again value the memory of Genocide victims and the fact of homeland deprivation.

#### **4. According to Hrayr Karapetian, signing of Armenian-Turkish protocols strengthened Turks' positions [Noyan Tapan, 11/02/09]**

The signing of the Armenian-Turkish protocols strengthened the positions of the Turks and gave them a possibility to go further in the respect of bringing forward preconditions. RA NA ARFD faction member Hrayr Karapetian expressed such an opinion at a November 2 press conference. According to him, the matters took such a turn that the Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister took part in the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs' meeting. As to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, according to H. Karapetian, its policy in the issue of normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations is too passive. "Our Foreign Minister classes any statement of the Turks as a statement of "internal consumption" and keeps silence, while Turkey should receive an adequate answer from Armenia," the ARFD figure mentioned.

H. Karapetian mentioned that all structures and departments of Armenia are obliged to act in correspondence with RA National Security Strategy's provisions. And, according to him, those provisions exactly establish that Armenia's blockade by Turkey and Azerbaijan is use of force. In that respect, according to H. Karapetian, all norms of the international law give Armenia a right to raise a question on recognizing the mentioned two countries as aggressors.

H. Karapetian also touched upon the bill placed on the agenda of the NA four-day session last week which proposes adopting a new law On Use of Transport Means for Defence Purpose. In his words, it is envisaged by the bill that state and self-government bodies should provide transport means to the army during peaceful and martial law. According to H. Karapetian, that practice also existed in the past and now the NA should just regulate it by the law.

#### **5. Senator Reid calls Secretary of State for meeting with representatives of American Armenian community [Noyan Tapan, 11/03/09]**

U.S. Senator Harry Reid called Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for meeting with representatives of the American Armenian community. Radio Liberty reported this citing the Asbarez newspaper.

The Democrat Senator elected from Nevada touching upon the last protocols signed between Turkey and Armenia mentioned: "I am convinced you know that this agreement increased the concerns of the Armenian community of the United States. I have received many letters from Nevada, which do not support the creation of an international commission to examine the issue of the genocide and think that the protocols are not fair for Armenia. I also suggest that you meet with representatives of American Armenian organizations for them to have a possibility to share their views with you."

The newspaper added that though the issue of Armenia-Turkey relations is one of the important issues of Obama-Biden administration's foreign political agenda, neither President Obama nor Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have met with the leaders of the American Armenian community.



## BUSINESS

### **6. The 2010 draft state budget intends 95 billion 497 million AMD for the education sphere [Armenpress, 11/03/09]**

The 2010 draft state budget intends 95 billion 497 million AMD for the education sphere. The intended sum is less from this year's factual implementation which by the end of the year is expected to reach 108 billion AMD, deputy finance minister Pavel Safaryan said today at the joint session of the NA's finance-crediting, budget and science, education, culture, and youth affairs standing committees.

According to him in the basis of the next year's budget is the principle that in GDP the specific gravity of education must be three percent. The 90 billion of the intended sum are intermediate expenses, the 472 million expenses of maintenance of the management of administrative apparatus. About 3,9 billion AMD will be provided for the capital expenses in the education sphere of which the 1,6 billion are credit expenses. P. Safaryan said that 1 billion 600 million will be directed for the reforms, and 439 million are intended for the reconstruction of educational establishments.

The average teachers' salary is intended 116,572 AMD.

The deputy education and science minister Ara Avetisyan noted that while preparing the draft budget not only the complete importance of education in the economy, social life was taken into consideration but also the priorities of separate programs not to omit any program from the draft budget.

### **7. State Revenue Committee is getting prepared for the possible opening of the Armenian-Turkish border [Armenpress, 11/03/09]**

State Revenue Committee is getting prepared for the possible opening of the Armenian-Turkish border, deputy head of the Armenian government-affiliated State Revenue Committee Armen Alaverdyan said today at a press conference.

In economic respect Turkey may become such partner for Armenia like Georgia is, and similar taxing regimes must be established for that country as well.

Armenia is member of the World Trade Organization which obliges to apply same regime of taxation toward all the countries. Though there are things to do in respect of administration, means must be undertaken in case of the opening of the border to implement the customs procedures in right way. The customs points will be two – in Akhurik and Margara.

A. Alaverdyan does not share the concerns that in case of the opening of the border the Armenian market will be washed by Turkish products.

## DIASPORA

### **8. Indian Armenians celebrate 10th anniversary of enthronement of his Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians [Noyan Tapan, 11/02/09]**

On 1st November, 2009, the Indian Armenian community celebrated the 10th anniversary of enthronement of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians. The event was held on the premises of the Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Kolkata. Very Rev. Father Khoren Hovhannisyanyan, pastor of Indian Armenians and manager of the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy along with chairperson, Michael Dutt and Susan Ruben and Sunil Sobti, wardens of Mother Church of Holy Nazareth, Kolkata saw through all the arrangements of the day.

In the morning Fr. Khoren conducted the Divine Liturgy. "By visiting India, His Holiness expressed his love for the Indian Armenians and showed that every single Armenian even in the remotest part of the world is important and dear to him. His Holiness brought love and spiritual awakening to his flock in India. It is difficult to express in words the greatness of His Holiness and to speak of his awe-inspiring presence. My reverence for him is much more than what words can express," said Reverend Hovhannisyanyan in his sermon. It was followed by a special prayer for the long life and health of His Holiness.

Thereafter the faithful and guests joined Fr. Khoren in the inaugural ceremony and blessing of a charitable dispensary sponsored by the Armenian Church of Kolkata. The medical unit is named after "His Holiness KAREKIN II." It will have a qualified doctor and a nurse who will attend to the poor and the ailing and will also provide free medical treatment to them. Later a concert was put up by the ACPA choir and lunch served to the guests.



## ARTS

### **9. Yerevan-based 64 distinguished painters donated canvases to Yerevan history Museum [Armenpress, 11/03/09]**

Yerevan-based 64 distinguished painters donated canvases each by one to Yerevan history Museum within the frameworks of “Happy Birthday, Yerevan” initiative. A unique gallery of contemporary painters’ works has been established on the basis of the collection of the donated paintings. The canvases, which have also been framed, snapped and conveyed to laser disks, were exhibited today in the museum. The album of those works has been designed as well.

Armenian Deputy Culture Minister Arev Samuelyan said that Armenian Culture Ministry has been implementing “Speech of Being” program already for several years, the goal of which is to assist the establishment and development process of scientific-technical organizations through donations, to assemble different kinds of museum collections. This donation is within the frameworks of the same initiative.

According to Chairman of Armenian Painters’ Union Karen Aghamyan, any painter wants to exhibit his/her works, and coming forward in this gallery is an honor for a painter. Similar initiative has been undertaken for the second time, the first one was held in Lachine. “I think this will serve an example for many painters in donating their best works to Yerevan History Museum”, he added.

Yerevan Mayor Gagik Beglaryan noted that this event should be infectious for everybody, and not only for painters, as Armenia is the capital of all Armenians, and those donations aim to adorn and beautify the town. He stressed that the urban authority will be consistent that the best works of Armenian art figures are kept and exhibited in Yerevan.

“Today nearly 88 000 samples are kept in Yerevan History Museum, over 1 000 of which belong to the sphere of painting. The donated new canvases were a great complementation to that collection and I am sure that in 100 years the names of the authors of those works will be as famous as the names of many Armenian artists”, he added.

The 64 painters donated one of their works were awarded with diplomas of Armenian Culture Ministry and Yerevan municipality.

### **10. Garo Khachigian's Our State comedy staged in Australia [Noyan Tapan, 11/03/09]**

Hamazkaine Shant Chapter and the Hagop Baronian Theatre Group brought comedy in three acts to over 600 Armenian-Australians on Sunday night with the Garo Khachigian-written Our State (Mer Vijage) play. According to the [www.armenia.com.au](http://www.armenia.com.au) website, brightened by a youthful cast, the play, directed by and starring a veteran of the Sydney-Armenian stage, Mr. Avak Egulian, was a mirror of Armenian organizational life in Australia.

### **11. Galstaun College students perform concert titled Trip to Armenia [Noyan Tapan, 11/03/09]**

Over 400 members of the Armenian Australian community were present at the Galstaun College Primary concert titled Trip to Armenia, which was held at Macquarie University on November 1.

Students from Kindergarten through to year 6 took the gathered on a journey through Armenia's most significant attractions, covering the social, historical and cultural aspect of the country. The concert included solo songs, group songs, dances and acting, as well as violin, piano and poem recitals.

According to the [www.armenia.com.au](http://www.armenia.com.au) website, the Trip to Armenia concert was appropriately dedicated to the Armenian literary anniversary of Tarkmanchats (Translators’ Day).

Principal Kaylar Michaelian thanked the Armenian language and music staff of Galstaun College for their assistance in putting on this impressive concert.

## RELIGION

### **12. Catholicos of All Armenians awarded Saint Mesrop Mashtots order [Noyan Tapan, 11/02/09]**

By RA President Serzh Sargsyan's October 30 decree Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II was awarded Mesrop Mashtots order for his exclusive contribution in preservation and development of national and spiritual values. Noyan Tapan was informed about it by RA President's Press Office.



## SOCIAL

### **13. Eighty percent of Ararat province kindergartens need reconstruction [Armenpress, 11/03/09]**

Today 4636 children attend the 69 operating kindergartens of Ararat province. While in 2004 the number of children attending kindergartens was 3 559 and in 2000 that number was 2924.

Violeta Aloyan, specialist of Department of Education, Culture and Sport of Ararat governor office told Armenpress that today only the 25 percent of the province children go to kindergarten. According to her, there is not a single family, that does not need the services provided by a kindergarten and does not want the child to attend the mentioned preschool establishment. Today the only reason of not attending is the social state. By presenting this fact with great pain, V. Aloyan noted that the child, who has not attended kindergarten, is more inclined to face difficulties at school.

The number of pedagogues in kindergartens is 418, the number of operating groups – 183. There are kindergartens comprised of 12 groups that work with a half-burden, with 6 groups only. Three kindergartens have been closed over the last five years in the province.

This year the inventory, toys, court playground of Aygazard community of the province have been reconstructed and renovated. It wholly burnt out two years ago. Today only the 10 kindergartens of the province are reconstructed. According to V. Aloyan, the 80 percent of kindergartens needs reconstruction, local heating, new inventory, equipment of court games and toys. The part of them, only partially, has been reconstructed during different years. Only 15 of the kindergartens operate all-year round (urban-10, rural-4), 3 of which have a system of local heating, 4 are heated by means of a boiler and 8, by means of a furnace. The rest of the province kindergartens operate from April to November.

The rent of province kindergartens, depending on the decision of the Council of Elders, varies between 2 500-5 000 AMD.

### **14. “Day of Armenia” was announced November 2 in the Banyo Ripoli municipality, Italy [Armenpress, 11/04/09]**

“Day of Armenia” was announced November 2 in the Banyo Ripoli municipality of the Toskana province, Italy, during which the program of restoration of the water system of the Aygebat village of the Armenian province of Shirak has been presented.

According to this program, funded by EU, in the first round the pipeline supplying drinking water to the village is being restored – about seven kilometers, then in the second round the whole inner network of the village will be reconstructed. About 300,000 euros have been provided for the first round.

Armenian Foreign Ministry’s Media and Information Department told Armenpress that after the presentation of the program Armenian ambassador to Italy gave a press conference during which he underscored the establishment of direct ties between the provinces of the two countries. The ambassador thanked for initiating the program and expressed hope that it will serve as an example for other provinces and towns of Italy.

### **15. No cases of A/H1N1 registered in Armenia [Armenpress, 11/04/09]**

No cases of A/H1N1 (swine flu) have been registered in Armenia: the works on preventing the entrance of the infection to the country are under strict control, Armenian Health Minister Harutyun Kushkian said today to the reporters before discussion of the provision of the 2010 draft budget to the health sphere.

The minister said all the necessary anti-epidemic events are being implemented and specialized groups are working in all the border points in 24-hour regime. Today officials of the Hygienic Anti-Epidemic Inspection will leave for Bagratashen to get acquainted with the situation on place.

“Cases have been registered in neighbor countries, we must be very cautious to prevent the entrance of the infection to our republic,” Kushkian said.

In case of revealing the infection Tamiflu medicine may help, which Armenia has.

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*Established in 1906, AGBU ([www.agbu.org](http://www.agbu.org)) is the world's largest non-profit Armenian organization. Headquartered in New York City with an annual budget of \$36 million, AGBU preserves and promotes the Armenian identity and heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs, annually touching the lives of some 400,000 Armenians on six continents.*