

E-Articles

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Shusha's cultural heritage to be televised

By Laman Ismayilova

Azerbaijan Television (AzTV) has launched a new project within the Year of the City of Shusha. A new project called "My Shusha" will consist of a series of programs.

Each issue will be devoted to one of the topics - ancient quarters, springs, mosques, historical monuments, etc. Honored Art Worker Ilham Rahimli, together with two natives of the city, will acquaint the audience with them during walks around the city.

Shusha is a symbol of the history and culture of Azerbaijan, a strategically important point on the way to Khankendi, the largest city in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the republic.

In 2021, Shusha city was declared Azerbaijan's cultural capital. The city has historically been one of the country's most important centers of historical, cultural, socio-political life. Shusha was liberated from Armenian occupation during the Second Karabakh War in 2020.

After liberation, major cultural events were held in Shusha, including the Khari Bulbul Music Festival, the Vagif Poetry Days and the Uzeyir Hajibayli International Music Festival.

Last year, the Khari Bulbul Music Festival once again welcomed talented musicians in Shusha.

On the first day, the audience was delighted by the traditional music of different peoples living in Azerbaijan.

The concert themed "Multiculturalism in Azerbaijani music" conveyed the message to the whole world that everyone, regardless of nationality or religion, has a single homeland.

Furthermore, the Vagif Poetry Days were held for the first time in the poet's native city after its liberation from Armenia's three-decade occupation.

Until 1991, the cultural event was held annually in Azerbaijan on national leader Heydar Aliyev's relevant instructions.

The Vagif Poetry Days 2021 united folk poets, mugham singers and many other cultural figures.

Next, Azerbaijan's cultural capital hosted a gala concert within the 13th Uzeyir Hajibayli International Music Festival.

The tradition of celebrating the great composer's birthday as a holiday was laid by eminent conductor Niyazi, who used to celebrate this day each year after Uzeyir Hajibayli's death.

The Azerbaijani State Song and Dance Ensemble performed at the concert under the baton of People's Artist Aghaverdi Pashayev.

For young talents, a new program "Youth echoes of the art of Uzeyir" was presented as part of the festival.

This year, the city also gets ready to host some of the greatest cultural events.

"Year of Shusha": Step towards new goals

By **Sabina Mammadli**

The announcement of 2022 as the "Year of Shusha" gives grounds to say that greater work will be done for Azerbaijan in the coming period.

At the start of the year, President Ilham Aliyev declared 2022 as the "Year of Shusha". Considering the historical and cultural significance of the second capital for the Azerbaijani nation, this is a big step in the promotion of our country.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Regional Affairs Siyavush Novruzov made the remarks in his article entitled "Year of Shusha - towards new goals for a strong Azerbaijan", Azertag said.

In the article, he talked about last year's wins and future goals.

A look back at 2021

In his congratulatory speech on the Solidarity Day of World Azerbaijanis and the New Year, the head of state expressed confidence that the country had achieved all the goals set for the year and the successful development of Azerbaijan.

Novruzov stated that significant work has been done to accelerate economic development, strengthen Azerbaijan's international position, strengthen the historic victory at the diplomatic level, as well as to carry out reconstruction work on the liberated territories. At the same time, conceptual, systemic measures related to the socio-economic development of the regions have been successfully continued.

Restoration of Shusha

According to the chairman, the head of state not only pays special attention to the implementation of restoration work in Shusha but also to the restoration and protection of historical and cultural heritage. He noted that Aliyev visited Shusha seven times last year.

Novruzov stressed that the General Plan of Shusha was prepared in a short time, the bust of the great poet Molla Panah Vagif and the museum-mausoleum complex were restored to their original appearance, the house-museum of vocalist Bulbul and the statue of composer Uzeyir Hajibayli were opened, historical, religious and architectural monuments, music festivals, the organization of the Vagif Poetry Days in front of the magnificent mausoleum have also been restored.

Further, Novruzov stated that the victorious and powerful Azerbaijani state, under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, is confidently moving towards new goals.

"The Year of Shusha promises important and new successes for our country in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres, as well as in the field of diplomacy," he finalized.

Historical and diplomatic aspects

Meanwhile, MP Sevil Mikayilova said that the proclamation of 2022 as the "Year of Shusha" will open new opportunities to show the world the determination of Azerbaijan in the restoration of the liberated territories.

She noted that this announcement will accelerate the return of the population to those areas.

"The work carried out will also allow our people and former IDPs to return to the liberated territories more quickly and safely," she added.

According to Mikayilova, President Ilham Aliyev's announcement of 2022 as the "Year of Shusha" has further increased the importance and historical significance of this year. It will strengthen the victory of Azerbaijan in the Patriotic War in the political and diplomatic spheres.

"The whole world, visitors to Shusha, foreign diplomats, and politicians will witness that Shusha is an important part of Azerbaijan's history. Along with that, they will understand the glorious victory of the Azerbaijani army and the courage with which it liberated our lands," she added.

Shusha, which was occupied by Armenian forces on May 8, 1992, was liberated from Armenia's occupation on November 8, 2020. The city, which played a critical role in liberating Karabakh, is located on the road to Khankandi, the region's largest city.

A Moscow-brokered ceasefire deal that Baku and Yerevan signed on November 10, 2020, brought an end to six weeks of fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani army declared a victory against the Armenian troops. The signed agreement obliged Armenia to withdraw its troops from the Azerbaijani lands that it has occupied since the early 1990s.

The peace agreement stipulated the return of Azerbaijan's Armenian-occupied Kalbajar, Aghdam and Lachin regions and withdraw its troops from the Azerbaijani lands that it has occupied since the early 1990s.

Before the signing of the deal, the Azerbaijani army had liberated around 300 villages, settlements, city centers, and historic Shusha city.

On May 7, 2021 President Aliyev declared the historic Shusha city the country's cultural capital. An immediate inventory of the damage to the city, its historical and cultural heritage and nature was carried out, and restoration work was started. In order to ensure the efficiency of restoration works, great attention was paid to public administration in Shusha. A special envoy of the Azerbaijani president was appointed in the city.

Azernews. – 2022. – January 11-13. - №. 2.- P. 4.

Shirin Malikova: Shusha rises like phoenix

By **Laman Ismayilova**

The Carpet Museum continues to successfully promote Azerbaijan's carpet weaving art through multiple international projects and exhibitions.

The museum participated at Selvedge World Fair 2021, Divi Juliji International Art Festival, and signed an agreement with the State Hermitage Museum, one of the largest artistic and cultural and historical museums in Russia.

Moreover, the Carpet Museum in Shusha is expected to resume its activity after being liberated from a three-decade occupation.

In her interview with Azernews, the museum's director, ICOM Azerbaijan National Committee President Shirin Malikova spoke about the Carpet Museum's activities and its future projects.

Shusha Carpet Museum

Karabakh carpets are characterized by bright colors and vegetative motives. In the 18th century, the Karabakh carpet-weaving school was assembled in Shusha. This carpet school is famous for its pileless carpets, including shadda, zili, verni, kilim and palas products.

Speaking about Azerbaijan's carpet weaving art, Shirin Malikova touched upon the Carpet Museum in Shusha.

"In 1987, the Carpet Museum opened in Shusha. The museum displayed carpets produced in Karabakh, including not only pile and pileless carpets but also jewelry, embroidery, traditional costumes. In 1992, the museum's exhibits had to be urgently transported from the city due to Armenia's invasion of the Karabakh region. Around 183 of 246 exhibits were saved. And all these decades, while Karabakh was occupied by the Armenians, the Carpet Museum's Shusha branch was temporarily based in the museum's main building in Baku. These exhibits were included in the museum's main exposition," said Malikova.

"Now Shusha, which is rapidly rising from the ruins like a phoenix from the ashes. Karabakh's decorative and applied arts have been demonstrated at the exhibition, a first sign proving that the art of Karabakh is returning to its native land. The exhibition also displayed art pieces stored at the Shusha branch. The restoration of the city is proceeding at a tremendous pace and I believe that the Shusha Carpet Museum will finally re-open in its homeland," she added.

Selvedge World Fair 2021

Shirin Malikova was invited to the Selvedge World Fair 2021 as a member of the selection committee. More than 150 artists from 75 countries took part in the international fair.

The Carpet Museum director hosted the session held as part of the "Create Day". She provided insight into Azerbaijan's carpet weaving art and highlighted the Carpet Museum's innovative projects.

The session brought together artists from New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan, India, Egypt, Austria, the United Kingdom, Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Canada.

The Carpet Museum also pleased art lovers with fascinating virtual tours through its extensive collections.

The session was followed by Eldar Mikayilzade, known for his outstanding works in the carpet weaving art.

Divi Juliji International Art Festival

The 4th Divi Juliji International Art Festival took place in Latvia on July 30-31.

The festival was dedicated to the memory of two famous artists born in this city - Julius Straume and Julius Madernieks.

The Carpet Museum director, Shirin Malikova, addressed the 4th International Scientific and Practical Internet Conference.

"I have taken part in the 4th International Scientific and Practical Internet Conference held as part of the festival. During the conference, I delivered a lecture on Azerbaijan's carpet weaving art which also provided insight into Julius Straume's activity who led the Caucasian Handicraft Committee. I also touched upon the museum's future projects and publications," said Malikova.

Carpet Art. Evolution of Meanings

The Kazan Kremlin Historic-Architectural and Art Museum-Reserve displayed majestic Azerbaijani carpets in July.

The large-scale exposition "Carpet Art. Evolution of Meanings" was organized in partnership with Azerbaijan's National Carpet Museum.

The exposition showcased modern rugs by carpet artist Chingiz Babayev, who works under the creative pseudonym CHINGIZ as well as traditional carpets centuries woven across Azerbaijan. Every single one of these carpets embodies a particular regional tradition based on their ornamental features, colors, and technical solutions. This exhibition will also open at the Carpet Museum on September 23," Malikova added.

Partnership with State Hermitage Museum

The museum actively cooperates with international partners and cooperation with the Hermitage Museum is another important step taken in this direction.

Speaking about this partnership, Malikova noted the joint inclusive programs for visually impaired people.

"The inclusive program is based on the old carwood technique, which combines a smooth background, made in a lint-free way, and a pile ornament. This convex ornament is good for tactile reading. For the Hermitage exposition, the museum's Traditional Technologies Department created mini-rugs that reflect fragments of the ornament of the Pazyryk rug, known as the world's oldest carpet," she said

"The Hermitage staff determined the original wool colors of the Pazyryk carpet kept in this museum, and our staff developed sketches of carpet fragments and weaved rugs with convex patterns on them from yarn hand-dyed with natural dyes. Now we are going to jointly present this project of the two museums to the public at the 9th St. Petersburg International Cultural Forum, where Azerbaijan received the honorary status of a guest country," she added.

New exhibits and future plans

The Carpet Museum stores over 14,000 exhibits of the finest Azerbaijani carpets.

This year, the museum's collection has been enriched with carpets and examples of the applied arts. The museum actively informs art lovers about new exhibits and upcoming events on social networking platforms.

The Carpet Museum is getting ready for new exhibitions, including international ones. Moreover, the museum plans to release a new book about the collection of pileless carpets. The publication will provide insight into the works of eminent carpet artist Kamil Aliyev, who created numerous samples of Azerbaijan's carpet weaving art.

In November, the Carpet Museum will also hold an international scientific and practical conference to mark the 100th anniversary of the carpet artist.

In conclusion, the carpet museum director invited art lovers to follow the museum on social networks to learn more about future events.

Turkey's religious leader visits liberated Shusha

By **Vugar Khalilov**

Turkey's religious leader Ali Erbash has visited Azerbaijan's Shusha city liberated from Armenia's occupation in 2020, Yeni Shafak newspaper reported on October 27.

Erbash visited the historical Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque in Shusha and recited prayer together with the head of the Mushafs review and recitation board, Hafiz Osman Shahin, in the mosque, the report added.

"We were also fortunate to recite the adhan at the Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque, which is the symbol of the liberation of Shusha, the heart of Karabakh, from the occupation. May Allah Almighty not deprive our geography of the peace of Islam and the sounds of prayer until the end of the day," Erbash wrote on his social media account.

It should be noted that Erbash was in Azerbaijan as a member of the Turkish delegation led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that came for a one-day official visit on October 26.

As a part of Erdogan's official visit, the Azerbaijani and Turkish presidents inaugurated the Fuzuli international Airport, laid the foundation for the Zangazur corridor and a smart village in Zangilan.

This was Erdogan's second visit to Azerbaijan's liberated territories since the 44-day war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

On June 15, the two countries signed a memorandum of alliance that cemented the existing military, political and economic cooperation.

The Shusha Declaration on Allied Relations that President Ilham Aliyev and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed during the first official visit to Shusha eight months after Azerbaijan's victory in the war with Armenia, also focuses on defence cooperation.

It affirms joint efforts by the two armies in the face of foreign threats. The declaration also pledges joint efforts for the restructuring and modernization of the armed forces. Moreover, the two nations affirm to encourage the execution of joint projects with the aim of developing capabilities in the field of sea, air, and space.

President Ilham Aliyev said on October 26 that the Shusha Declaration signed in the city of Shusha is a historic document. He stressed that the declaration officially raised Azerbaijani-Turkish relations to the level of alliance.

Shusha, which was occupied by Armenian forces on May 8, 1992, was liberated from Armenia's occupation on November 8, 2020. The city, which played a critical role in liberating Karabakh, is located on the road to Khankandi, the region's largest city.

A Russia-brokered ceasefire deal that Azerbaijan and Armenia signed on November 10, 2020, brought an end to the 44-day war between the two countries. The Azerbaijani army declared a victory against the Armenian troops. The signed agreement obliged Armenia to withdraw its troops from the Azerbaijani lands that it had occupied.

Azerbaijan blocked Armenia-Iran-Europe drug trafficking route

By Vafa Ismayilova

President Ilham Aliyev has said that Azerbaijan blocked the drug trafficking route from Iran to Armenia and then to Europe that used to pass through the country's liberated Jabrayil region, Azertag has reported.

He made the remarks in an address to the session of the Council of the CIS Heads of State held in the format of a video conference on October 15.

Drug trafficking route

"Over the past year, after Azerbaijan had regained control over the 130-kilometer section of the state border with Iran which was under the control of Armenia for about 30 years and thereby blocked a drug trafficking route from Iran through Jabrayil district of Azerbaijan to Armenia and further to Europe," he said.

The president added that the volume of heroin Azerbaijan had seized on other sections of the Azerbaijani-Iranian border doubled compared to the same period of previous years.

"This suggests that for about 30 years, Armenia, in collusion with Iran, used the occupied territories of Azerbaijan to carry out drug trafficking to Europe," Aliyev said.

He stressed that during the years of occupation, he had repeatedly stated that the occupied territories were used for drug trafficking and training of international terrorists.

Mine maps, "POWs"

Later, he spoke about Azerbaijan's readiness for talks with Armenia over the border delimitation.

"War and the conflict are now things of the past. We are ready to start negotiations with Armenia on the delimitation of borders on the condition of mutual recognition of territorial integrity. We are also ready to start negotiations on a peace agreement with Armenia," he said.

The head of state noted that Azerbaijan is ready to normalize relations as a victorious country.

"We do hope that Armenia will not pass up on this historic opportunity," he added.

Aliyev stressed that Armenia refuses to provide Azerbaijan with maps of mines it had planted on liberated Azerbaijani territories.

"Since the war ended, more than 150 Azerbaijani citizens have been killed or seriously injured by landmines," he said.

Aliyev stressed that Armenia was refusing to provide Azerbaijan with full maps of mined areas.

"The accuracy of the few maps provided to Azerbaijan so far is about 25 percent," he added.

The president also touched on the so-called prisoners of war issue raised by Armenia.

"Azerbaijan handed over all prisoners of war detained during the war before Armenia handed over Azerbaijani prisoners of war to us. More than two weeks after the signing of the Tripartite Declaration, a group of 62 saboteurs was sent from Armenia's Shirak region to the rear of the Azerbaijani armed forces in late November last year to carry out provocations on the liberated territories. Azerbaijani servicemen captured and disarmed the group," he said.

Aliyev stressed that those saboteurs cannot be considered prisoners of war under international conventions.

Destructions

Speaking about Armenian destructions he said that houses and buildings on the occupied territories were taken apart brick by brick and sold to Armenia and Iran.

"Severe damage has also been caused to nature. About 60,000 hectares of forest have been cut down and sold to Armenia and Iran," Aliyev said.

"Almost all buildings and historical sites in the liberated territories had been destroyed for 30 years. Out of 67 mosques in the liberated areas, 65 were completely destroyed," the president added.

He touched on destructions in Shusha as well.

"Armenia has destroyed 16 of the 17 mosques in Shusha in the years of occupation. One mosque was left to demonstrate 'tolerance' and an attempt was made to portray it as a Persian mosque with the help of so-called experts from Iran," Aliyev noted.

He stressed that the city of Aghdam is called the "Hiroshima of the Caucasus".

"In the city of Fuzuli and all villages of Fuzuli district, 100 percent of buildings and houses have been destroyed. The same holds true for the city of Aghdam and Aghdam district. The city of Aghdam was called the 'Hiroshima of the Caucasus'. In Jabrayil district, only two buildings remained standing, and those were used by

servicemen of the Armenian armed forces. The situation is not dissimilar in Zangilan, Gubadli, Lachin and Kalbajar districts," he said.

Aliyev noted that the Karabakh conflict had been consigned to history and that Azerbaijan resolved the conflict militarily as the long-running process of negotiations was fruitless.

"Therefore, Azerbaijan decided to resolve the conflict by military and political means."

The president underlined the illegal exploitation of Azerbaijan's gold deposits and other natural resources.

"With the participation of a European company, the transboundary Okhchuchay River was systematically polluted, which led to an environmental disaster already confirmed by reputable international experts. Such is the real picture in the liberated territories, and this has been observed by thousands of politicians, diplomats, and journalists from many countries who have visited the liberated territories in less than one year, including representatives of the CIS countries," he added.

Russia's role in ceasefire

The head of state hailed Russia's role in achieving a ceasefire.

"I would like to emphasize once again the special role of Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin in the cessation of hostilities. This allowed both sides the opportunity to avoid thousands of casualties," Aliyev said.

He stressed that in accordance with the trilateral statement, Armenia withdrew its occupying forces from the occupied parts of Aghdam, Lachin and Kalbajar regions of Azerbaijan.

"Prior to that, the armed forces of Azerbaijan had liberated more than 300 towns and villages on the battlefield. Thus, as already mentioned, the conflict was resolved by both military and political means. According to the Trilateral Statement, Russian peacekeepers have been deployed in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. A working group chaired by the deputy prime ministers of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia has been set up to resolve the issue of opening transport communications," he added.

Azerbaijan's focus to future: Restoration of liberated lands

By Ayya Lmahamad

With a peace deal now in place and restoration of territorial integrity, Azerbaijan has shifted its focus to the future.

After Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War and liberation of its territories, hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis displaced from there in the early 90s have hope to finally return home. However, it is a long road due to mines, lack of housing, and infrastructure.

Rebuilding communities, restoring prosperity, and preserving the region's rich cultural heritage is the cornerstone of the country's current policy.

Nowadays, the process of restoration of Azerbaijani territories liberated from the Armenian occupation is proceeding at a rapid pace.

The restoration of these territories means building the infrastructure of a modern state and its economy from scratch: demining the territory, the restoration of transport infrastructure, the construction of houses and industrial buildings, etc.

As a result of Armenian aggression and occupation of Azerbaijani lands for almost three decades, all cities, including hundreds of settlements, houses, public and private property, numerous infrastructure facilities were completely destroyed. Everything on these territories was destroyed not during the war, but during the occupation period.

Speaking about the scale of destructions on Azerbaijani liberated territories, President Ilham Aliyev said in an interview with Igor Korotchenko, editor-in-chief of Russia's influential *Natsionalnaya Oborona* (National Defence) magazine, that “we will have to build, equip an area equal to the territory of a country that is not the smallest in the world – Lebanon”.

Azerbaijan started to restore and rehabilitate its lands immediately after the end of hostilities.

The main source of funds for the reconstruction is the national budget. The Azerbaijani government has allocated \$1.3bn for the reconstruction of the liberated territories in 2021. In particular, these funds will be used to restore the infrastructure (electricity, gas, water, communications, roads, education, health, etc), as well as cultural and historical monuments.

Electricity supply

Within the large-scale reconstruction, the liberated lands are planned to be supplied with power by late 2021. In this context, Azerishig is providing power lines to government buildings in the newly-liberated territories in line with the presidential decree and the project “Azerishig in Karabakh”.

Roads construction

The roads are being built in all directions - the Victory Road to Shusha, the second highway Fuzuli-Shusha, roads to the Armenian border at Zangilan, Gubadli, tunnels from Goygol to Kalbajar, the road from Fuzuli to Aghdam, from Fuzuli to Hadrut, to Jabrayil.

The 101-km-long Victory Road, which extends from the Hajigabul-Minjivan-Zangazur corridor to Shusha, is being constructed under Karabakh's development plan and will be ready for commissioning soon. The Victory Road commemorates the path which was used by the Azerbaijani armed forces for liberating the territories from Armenian occupation in the 2020 Second Karabakh War.

Smart city concept

Earlier, President Aliyev stated that by reconstructing generating capacities and power transmission lines, Karabakh will turn into a “green energy” zone.

On May 3, the president signed a decree on measures to create a “green energy” zone in the country's liberated territories.

Under the decree, an amount of \$1.3 million shall be allocated from the Presidential Reserve Fund envisaged in the 2021 state budget to attract a specialized international consulting company to develop an appropriate concept and master plan on the creation of a “green energy” zone on Azerbaijan's liberated territories.

In line with this, in June, the country's Energy Ministry and BP signed an Implementation Agreement to build a 240MW solar power plant in liberated Zangilan and Jabrayil regions. The new agreement with BP will help create a “green energy” zone in Azerbaijan's liberated territories.

Azerbaijan has already presented the first pilot project of a “smart village” to be created in the liberated territories, as part of the 2020-2022 National Action Plan. Thus, the first project covers Zangilan's Aghali I, II,

III villages. The project will be implemented mainly on five components - housing sector, production sector, social services, smart agriculture and alternative energy.

Airports

The groundbreaking ceremony for the airport's construction took place back on 14 January. The first Karabakh aircraft of Azerbaijan Airlines landed at the newly-built Fuzuli International Airport on September 5.

The construction of international airports in Lachin and Zangilan regions is also continuing under the presidential order.

Infrastructure reconstruction

The restoration process of infrastructure and business entities is also underway. Shops, bakeries, dental offices are already operating there. In addition, ATMs of different banks have been installed.

In early May, President Aliyev laid the foundation stone of a new mosque and a school in Shusha and also inaugurated 110/35/10 kV Shusha substation, the newly-renovated Khari Bulbul hotel and a 48-apartment block and the cottages under the hotel.

IDPs return

President Aliyev said in the interview with Korotchenko that IDPs will be able to return to liberated Shusha and Zangilan in 2021-22. He stated that a new housing complex for 25 houses will be built within a year, a maximum of one and a half years, and it will be possible already to return people to Shusha. Aliyev added that first people will move into Zangilan 2022, perhaps even by the end of 2021.

He also noted that master plans for Aghdam and Shusha cities had been approved, and Aghdam had already started to be restored.

Minefields

The minefields remain the biggest problem during the restoration. The mine maps that Armenia had submitted to Azerbaijan are reliable for about 25 percent.

However, the rapid reconstruction of liberated lands, the planning and implementation of important infrastructure projects there give grounds to say that these lands will soon revive and prosper.

Shusha welcomes former residents as traces of Armenian damage fade

BY KENAN KIRAN

After nearly three decades of Armenian occupation, Azerbaijan's city of Shusha – once known as the Pearl of Karabakh – is ready to welcome back its former residents as the traces of the destructive occupation are erased.

The Azerbaijani military launched the operation on Sept. 27, 2020, and it was over by Nov. 10, 2020. Shusha was a clear reflection of the impact of the occupation, with many of its buildings uninhabitable. The city that was once known as the Pearl of Karabakh was referred to as a ghost town after the occupation.

It has been reported that rebuilding efforts have begun, roads have been constructed and police and soldiers, along with their families, have settled in Shusha. With nearly 20% of Karabakh under construction, those with homes in Shusha are expected to begin returning soon.

As Azerbaijani authorities take inventory of the damage done to the city's historical buildings, the military has been clearing mines and improvised explosives planted by Armenians. Azerbaijan aims to restore and renovate the buildings and monuments once full inventory has been taken. The city's historical church, which had been damaged in bombing and shelling, is also being renovated.

During the occupation, the Armenian forces destroyed many historical monuments in Shusha. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev signed the "Shusha Declaration" between the two countries on June 15, 202 at a palace that had also been visibly damaged. Moreover, Armenia demolished 15 of the 17 mosques in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh.

Now, former residents of Shusha have the opportunity to return to their homelands after nearly three decades of occupation.

Ekber Goşala is among those who returned to the city after 30 years. "It is our first time in 30 years. Shusha is our city and cultural capital that does not leave us even if we leave. Being at the place where the Azerbaijan and Turkey interstate declaration was signed gives Shusha a different meaning. We have no Shusha other than Shusha. It is good that our cultural capital is freed from the occupation and reintroduced not only to Azerbaijan but also to the Turkish world and to humanity and culture. The Armenians turned the city of Shusha into hell because it was not theirs. A person does not make or destroy his own home and city like this. This is a war-torn city."

Cemile Elekberova echoed that Shusha's original inhabitants will soon come back to the region. "I came to Shusha for the first time after liberation from the occupation. The danger of mines continues in Shusha. After the mine clearance is over, our Azerbaijani brothers will come to Shusha. The houses of Azerbaijanis stand in Shusha. I met an 11-year-old brother living in Shusha and asked him, 'Have you seen your own house?' First, he went to look at his own home. After the occupation of Shusha by Armenia in 1992, we did not see any change in our houses, our title deeds remain. They destroyed some of our homes. The people of Shusha will soon return to their homes."

Akşin Guluyev, who resettled in Shusha, said: "My grandfather was residing in Shusha before the occupation. My father lives here. Our origin was in Shusha. After the end of the occupation, I now live in Shusha. On top of the mountains, on the top of the rock, Shusha. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is very popular in Shusha, his activities in our country are very supported. Erdoğan also has a lot of sympathy and affection for our country. We also love Erdoğan very much. We are one nation, two states. Azerbaijan-Turkey brotherhood will never be shaken."

Erdoğan in June visited the symbolic city of Shusha and other liberated areas in a show of solidarity and reflection of the strong historical ties between the two countries. On that historic visit, **Turkey and Azerbaijan signed a memorandum of alliance to carry relations further in several fields.**

Erdoğan was the first leader to visit the historic city following its liberation by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces in November last year. It had been occupied by Armenia on May 8, 1992, spanning 28 years.

The town has significant military value since it is located on strategic high ground about 10 kilometers (6 miles) south of the region's capital Stepanakert (Khankendi) and on the road linking the city with Armenian territory. Besides its strategic importance, the town is seen as an emblem of Azerbaijani history and culture due to its many historic sites, which are currently being restored. Many prominent Azerbaijani musicians and scholars were born in the city.

Reconstruction works are ongoing in Shusha, Azerbaijan, Sept. 2, 2021. (Sabah Photo)

Fresh clashes erupted between Azerbaijan and Armenia on Sept. 27. The Armenian military maintained its attacks on civilians and Azerbaijani forces for 44 days, even violating two humanitarian cease-fire agreements. Relations between the former Soviet republics have been tense since 1991 when the Armenian military occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory recognized as part of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan seized back swaths of its Armenian-occupied territory last year in the conflict that erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflict claimed 6,000 lives and ended with a Russian-brokered truce in November 2020.

According to the deal, all transportation lines that were closed due to the Karabakh issue were to reopen. With the opening of new transportation lines, the rebuilding of liberated cities and the restoration of historical monuments, Azerbaijan intends to transform the region into an economic and tourism hub.

Meeting two months after a cease-fire was declared for the Caucasus' Nagorno-Karabakh region, the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a pact to develop economic ties and infrastructure to benefit the entire region. While the Karabakh truce has largely held, the border region has witnessed several skirmishes.

Erdoğan has frequently called for **a six-nation platform comprising of Turkey, Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia for permanent peace, stability and cooperation in the region.**

Now, work is underway to clear the retaken territories of land mines, repair infrastructure destroyed in the fighting and work on transit routes for the region that have been paralyzed for nearly three decades amid the conflict.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/shusha-welcomes-former-residents-as-traces-of-armenian-damage-fade>

Shusha might be declared Asian region's Capital of Islamic Culture

By **Laman Ismayilova**

Azerbaijani Ambassador to Morocco Oktay Gurbanov has met with ICESCO Director General Salim M. AlMalik to discuss ICESCO's initiative to declare Shusha Asian region's Capital of Islamic Culture next year.

In his speech, Salim M. AlMalik noted that ICESCO will take all necessary measures to implement this important initiative at a high level.

At the same time, a delegation of technical experts will visit Azerbaijan's liberated territories to identify Islamic heritage monuments and include them in the Islamic World Heritage List.

The members of the delegation will work with the relevant structures of Azerbaijan on a draft plan for the restoration of historical monuments.

In January, ICESCO Director-General Salim bin Mohammed AlMalik visited Fuzuli region to witness the consequences of Armenian vandalism.

Hundreds of cultural institutions, including 927 libraries with 4.6 million books, 808 palaces of culture, clubs and other cultural institutions, 85 music and art schools were destroyed by Armenian occupants.

The ICESCO delegation first inspected the ruins of Fuzuli and saw traces of Armenian vandalism in the city cemetery.

During the inspection of the destroyed Juma Mosque, it was revealed that Armenians kept cattle and pigs there, as in other mosques.

The ICESCO delegation then visited the ancient caravanserais and the remains of a 17th-century mosque in the village of Gargabazari, as well as the ruins of a destroyed mosque in the village of Gochahmadli.

The sides also exchanged views on other projects implemented by Azerbaijan and ICESCO in the fields of science, education and culture.

Azerbaijan and ICESCO have been enjoying successful partnership in education, culture and science since 1991.

These relations have entered into a new stage after Azerbaijani First Vice-President Mehriban Aliyeva was awarded as ICESCO Goodwill Ambassador on November 24, 2006.

Mehriban Aliyeva was honored for her services in the development of education and dialogue between civilizations.

The country also closely cooperates with various ICESCO organizations, including the Islamic Development Bank, the Islamic Conference of Parliamentary Union, etc.

Over the past years, Azerbaijan and ICESCO have built strong ties, based on common values.

The visit of the ICESCO delegation to Azerbaijan early in January was an important step in this direction. Moreover, ICESCO has proposed to declare Shusha as the capital of the Islamic world.

Azerbaijan implemented numerous international projects with ICESCO. Baku (2009) and Nakhchivan (2018) were named the Capital of Islamic Culture.

Azerbaijan's capital hosted the meeting of the ICESCO culture ministers in 2009. The 12th General Conference and the 36th meeting of the ICESCO Executive Board were held as well.

ICESCO is also one of the main partners of the Baku Process initiated by President Ilham Aliyev and adopted by the United Nations. The organization has been an official partner in the 5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue held in 2011.

The organization will also assist Azerbaijan in the restoration of monuments destroyed as a result of Armenian aggression. Training courses will be organized for specialists in this field.

Spectacular concert held in Shusha

By **Laman Ismayilova**

Heydar Aliyev Foundation has presented a spectacular music composition in Shusha, known as Azerbaijan's cultural capital.

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, First Lady Emine Erdogan attended the event.

The music composition "Musical heritage and Karabakh horses on the Jidir Duzu plain" brought together ballet troupe of the Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater, the Fikrat Amirov State Song and Dance Ensemble, the State Dance Ensemble, Baku Choreography Academy and "Mirvari" dance ensemble.

Their performance featured graceful Karabakh horses of the Azerbaijan Equestrian Federation and the "Natig" rhythm group. Azerbaijani and Turkish folk songs were also performed as part of the gala event.

Furthermore, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was presented with a Karabakh horse "Zafar", one of the oldest horse breeds as well as "Khari Bulbul" composition that featured two Khari Bulbul flowers, uniting and embodying the eternal friendship and brotherhood between Azerbaijan and Turkey.

The participants of the event organized in Shusha were also presented with a collection of publications of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation called "Cultural Heritage of Karabakh".

The collection includes separate publications in the fields of literature, music, architecture, folk art and carpet weaving. In connection with the trip to Shusha, the guests were also awarded commemorative medals.

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva and Turkish President Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, First Lady Emine Erdogan also viewed the "Khan Gizi" spring, recently restored in Shusha. The Turkish President was informed of the spring.

The water supply was funded by the daughter of the last Karabakh khan-Mehtiguli Khan, Azerbaijan's prominent poetess Khurshidbanu Natavan.

Throughout her life, the poetess was involved in educational and charity activities.

She arranged the construction of the water pipeline for Shusha citizens. Therefore, the city residents named the water pipeline Khan's daughter's spring (Khan Gizi spring).

The opening of the first water pipeline in Shusha took place on August 18, 1873 with the participation of guests from Shirvan, Sheki, Ganja, Nakhchivan and other places. The feast was organized in the Khan garden with national songs and dances.

The heads of the states also visited the monuments of famous Azerbaijani personalities Natavan, Bulbul, and Uzeyir Hajibayov in Shusha.

Wonderful music fills up Shusha city

By Laman Ismayilova

Breathtaking music filled up every corner of Shusha city known as Azerbaijan's cultural capital.

After 29 years, Khari Bulbul Music Festival once again welcomed talented musicians in Shusha.

The spectacular event was held for the first time since the liberation of Shusha from the Armenian occupation.

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, their daughters Leyla Aliyeva and Arzu Aliyeva attended the festival.

Khari Bulbul Music Festival began with the performance of young khanende (mugham singer) Kanan Bayramli. Bayati Shiraz mugham was performed at the concert.

On the first day, the audience was also delighted by the music compositions of different peoples living in Azerbaijan.

The concert themed "Multiculturalism in Azerbaijani music" conveyed the message to the whole world that everyone, regardless of nationality or religion, has a single homeland.

Next day, People's Artists Rauf Abdullayev, Yalchin Adigozalov, Honored Artist Fuad Ibrahimov and the Uzeyir Hajibayli Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra conducted by Murtuza Bulbul, the Azerbaijan State Choir Capella under the artistic direction of People's Artist Gulbaji Imanova. Also featuring in the concert were works by Uzeyir Hajibayli, Fikrat Amirov, Gara Garayev, Alakbar Taghiyev, Muslim Magomayev, Niyazi, Tofiq Guliyev, Vasif Adigozalov and many others thrilled the audience with stunning performances.

People's Artists Alim Gasimov, Azerin, Dinara Aliyeva, Elchin Azizov, Alikhan Samadov, Farhad Badalbayli, Mansum Ibrahimov, Murad Adigozalzade, Natig Shirinov, Polad Bulbuloglu, Samir Jafarov, Teyyub Aslanov, Yusif Eyvazov, Honored Artists Fargana Gasimova, Miralam Miralamov, Sahib Pashazade, Shahriyar Imanov, Shirzad Fataliyev also left no one indifferent.

A video featuring words of Azerbaijan's national leader Heydar Aliyev was screened at the festival.

"I want to go to Shusha together with you. We will go there, believe me we will. Shusha is the pupil of the eye for Azerbaijan, a source of pride for every Azerbaijani. Shusha is a symbol of our culture and history. Shusha is dear to everyone. But Shusha is not alone – the mountains of Lachin are also very dear. We can never live without Lachin. A beautiful city such as Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zangilan, Gubadli, the springs of Kalbajar, that hot water spring of Kalbajar. We cannot live without them," said in the video.

The video footage of the statement made by the Commander-in-Chief, President Ilham Aliyev after the liberation of Shusha city on November 8, 2020 was also shown as part of the festival.

"I am happy to have fulfilled my father's will. We have liberated Shusha! This is a great victory! The souls of our martyrs and of the Great Leader are happy today! Let your eyes be clear, Azerbaijan! Let your eyes be clear, Azerbaijanis of the world! Dear Shusha, you are free! Dear Shusha, we are back! Dear Shusha, we will revive you! Shusha is ours! Karabakh is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!," the statement said.

After the concert, President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva met with the artists participating in the festival.

Khari Bulbul music festival used to be held in Shusha every year before the city's occupation by Armenian forces in 1992. The festival resumed after Shusha's liberation on November 8, 2020.

The large-scale event gets its name from the flower Khari Bulbul which grows only in Shusha.

This flower has a unique appearance which makes it look like a nightingale or bulbul in Azerbaijani.

The word "Khari" means "thorny". Two petals of the flower resemble wings, while another one looks like a bird's head. Many legends, poems and songs are associated with this beautiful flower.

The festival was held for the first time in 1989, bringing together musicians from Japan, the USA, Turkey, Germany, Israel, Italy, Spain and other countries.

The opening ceremony took place at the stadium in Aghdam. The gala event featured spectacular concerts and performances in Jydyr Duzu, Isa Bulag spring as well as the streets and squares of Shusha city. Scientific and theoretical discussions were held as part of the event.

The festival's guests also visited the sights of Karabakh, beautiful nature surrounded by amazing mountains, participated in various events, accompanied by performances of musical and dance ensembles.

The festival's closing ceremony took place in Agdam, near the spring garden of the poetess Khurshidbanu Natavan, called "Bouquet of Khari Bulbul". The concert programs were also held in Agjabadi, Barda and Baku.

The 4th Khari Bulbul Music Festival was supposed to gather musicians from more than 30 countries.

However, the city was captured by Armenia on May 8, 1992. Shusha was liberated by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces on November 8, 2020.

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Karabakh's Azerbaijani community decries Armenianization of region

By **Abdul Kerimkhanov**

Nagorno-Karabakh's Azerbaijani Community have voiced their concerns over increased Armenianization of Azerbaijan's historical monuments in the region occupied by Armenian forces in the early 1990s.

In a statement issued on 25 January, the community members stated that the regime set up in Nagorno-Karabakh have been conducting the Armenianization policy under the cover of "restoring" the historical and cultural monuments in Azerbaijan's occupied territories.

In particular, the community said that Armenian separatists in the region are vandalizing Shusha fortress in Nagorno-Karabakh under the guise of restoring it. The fortress was built by Panahali khan Javanshir, the founder of Karabakh Khanate in the 18th century. Earlier, the same thing happened to the Upper Govharagha mosque in Shusha considered an architectural pearl of Nagorno Karabakh which Armenians have renamed the "Persian cultural center".

The Community didn't rule out that in the future the same vandalism will be applied to the historical monuments situated in Aghdere and Lachin regions.

"It is well known that thousands of our cultural, historical and religious monuments in Azerbaijan's occupied territories have been subjected to the Armenian aggression. Some parts of these monuments have been completely erased from the earth. And the remaining monuments have been brought into unfit condition," the message reads.

As noted in the statement, along with occupying Azerbaijani lands, subjecting Azerbaijani people to genocide and displacing thousands of people from their native land, Armenia also destroys Azerbaijani historical monuments.

"Currently Armenia implements pseudo and false "repair and rehabilitation" works in order to erase this stain from itself," the statement reads.

The Community reminded that all the monuments situated in occupied territories had been erected by Azerbaijanis and bear handprints of country's ancestors. Furthermore, they called on the international organizations to take measures to stop Armenia's actions that set a precedence of jeopardizing cultural-historical heritage worldwide.

The community members stressed that the destruction of Azerbaijani heritage are in stark contrast with obligations undertaken by Armenia to UNESCO and are also the manifestation of this country's attempts to deceive the international community and to give a cultural and civil veneer to its vandalism actions, the statement concluded.

Historically, Karabakh was a part of the ancient Azerbaijan state-Caucasian Albania, which mostly consisted of Turks and Caucasian tribes.

The examples of material culture, numismatic evidences discovered in Khankendi, Aghdere, Khojavend, Shusha of Upland Karabakh, Berde, Terter, Aghdam, Aghjabedi, Fizuli, Beylegan as well as Lachin and Kalbajar of Lowland Karabakh during investigations reflect thoroughly the ancient material culture of Karabakh, ethno-cultural state, social-economic standards of people, their living conditions, and generally the economic, social, and cultural history of this part of Azerbaijan.

The main population of this region consisted of ethnic groups belonging to the Caucasian language group and being of Turkish origin living in the area between river Aras and Great Caucasus for thousand years by origin, language, and culture.

President Aliyev urges phased settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

By Rasana Gasimova

President Ilham Aliyev has called for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in stages, saying that the conflict cannot be resolved within one day.

Aliyev made the remark during the panel discussions with the participation of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held on February 15 as part of the Munich Security Conference.

“The first phase should be the liberation of part of the occupied territories, return of the Azerbaijani IDPs to those territories, resettlement of that territory. In the meantime, the process of normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh to be discussed later, when both sides are ready. Because without the process on the ground, without beginning of liberation of the territories, it will not be possible to agree on the status. Our position in the status must not interfere with territorial integrity of Azerbaijan,” Aliyev said.

The head of state noted that Azerbaijan is a multi-confessional and a multi-national country, and there are many national minorities in Azerbaijan who live in peace and dignity. He said that when Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is fully restored Armenians as national minority will enjoy all the rights and privileges as any other representative of any other nation living in the country.

History of Karabakh

Aliyev stressed that in order to talk about how to resolve the conflict, one needs to go back and look to the history of the issue.

“Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan. This is historical truth, and this is based on the international law norms. The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is recognized by the whole world, and Nagorno-Karabakh is an integrated part of our country,” he said.

“From historical point of view, back in 1805 the khan of Karabakh Ibrahim khan signed a treaty with general of Russian Empire Tsitsianov. Under this treaty, the Karabakh khanate, Azerbaijani Karabakh khanate as an independent country became under the rule of the Russian Empire. In that treaty which was called Kurakchay treaty - the text of this treaty is on internet - nothing is said about Armenian population of Karabakh.”

“Other treaties were signed in 1813 and 1828-Gulustan and Turkmanchay. Under these treaties the rest part of Azerbaijan became part of Russian Empire and Dagestan, Georgia and Armenia also. So, this is a historical part of the issue. Then during the period when Russian Empire collapsed, and Georgian and Azerbaijani Democratic Republics were established, one of the first decrees of Azerbaijani Democratic Republic in 1918 was to transfer Yerevan from Azerbaijan to Armenia and to announce it a capital of Armenia. This is also a historical fact. If you give something to someone that means that this something belonged to you.”

“In 1921, the Caucasus bureau of the Bolshevik party made a decision to retain Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan, to retain and not to transfer as some Armenian historians want to present. This is also the historical fact and the other historical fact is that in 1923 the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic issued a decree on the creation of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous district inside Azerbaijan,” the president emphasized.

“So, this is a history, and then, in the end of 80s Armenia launched an aggression against Azerbaijan. 300,000 Azerbaijanis were deported from the territory of Armenia. And then in the beginning of 90s Armenia already launched an aggression against Azerbaijan Republic and as a result of that aggression almost 20 percent of our territories are under occupation and one million of Azerbaijanis became refugees and IDPs.”

Aliyev noted that Azerbaijani people were subject of ethnic cleansing and in 1992, previous Armenian regime committed a war crime, genocide of Khojaly, as a result of which, 613 innocent civilians among them 106 women and 63 children were brutally killed. More than ten countries recognize the Khojaly genocide.

“Coming to the international law issue, once again, Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan; United Nations Security Council adopted four resolutions demanding withdrawal of Armenian troops, from the occupied territories. These resolutions are not resolved. Therefore, any solution which will be achieved as a result of peaceful negotiation must provide preservation of internationally recognized territorial integrity of Azerbaijan,” he added.

“When we talk about the international community, we talk primarily about the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs' efforts. They should at last very clearly explain to Armenian side that Nagorno-Karabakh is not Armenia. That Nagorno-Karabakh is not an independent country,” the president stressed.

He also said that there should be more international pressure on Armenia in order to implement resolutions of Security Council, because there is no higher international body than the Security Council of the United Nations.

The president reminded the four UN Security Council resolutions that call for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories.

“Not only Nagorno-Karabakh but also seven districts surrounding it are occupied. Armenia wants to hide it. Seven districts where Armenians never lived,” Aliyev noted.

“In the last Soviet Census of 1989, the population of Nagorno-Karabakh was identified as 189,000 people. Out of which 139,000 Armenians, 48,000 Azerbaijanis and some other representatives of other people. So all Azerbaijanis were ethnically cleansed from Nagorno-Karabakh and from our ancient city of Shusha, then all Azerbaijanis were ethnically cleansed from seven districts, they committed the genocide against our people, against our culture, they destroyed our mosques, they destroyed our graves, they changed the name of our cities.”

“They now publish the map of Nagorno-Karabakh which consists of all the occupied territories, and then, they say that we should agree with these realities. Therefore, international community should explain that Nagorno-Karabakh is Azerbaijan, and second, put a serious pressure on aggressor to stop.”

Aliyev noted that Prime Minister Pashinyan's statements about creating sustainable peace do not correlate with the Armenian sniper killing Azerbaijani soldier on the line of contact on February 15.

Responding to Pashinyan's comment where he repeated the conspiracy theory voiced in some Armenian circles, alleging that Azerbaijanis themselves were involved in the Khojaly massacre of 1992, Aliyev noted: “To say that Azerbaijanis themselves brutally killed 63 children, 100 women and 1000 people are still missing, is a peak of cynicism.”

“Who committed the genocide in Khojaly, their names are well known. They were local Armenians, Armenians from Armenia and Armenians from diaspora. The names of these people are well-known, and many books and international articles were published about that,” Aliyev went on saying.

“If Nagorno-Karabakh is an ancient Armenian territory why does not it have the ancient Armenian name for the capital? Because the ancient name for the capital is Khankandi. The village of the khan. And the Stepanakert because Shaumyan's name was Stephan, kert means city in Armenian. Stepanakert was named in the name of that Bolshevik. So that once again proves that there was no Armenian historical legacy on those territories,” he said.

Aliyev also noted Armenian leader always found excuses to disrupt negotiations on the conflict in the very decisive moment.

Negotiations format

Commenting on Pashinyan's statement about self-defense forces of Nagorno-Karabakh, Aliyev stressed that more than 80 percent of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh army are citizens of Armenia.

“There is no Nagorno-Karabakh army. There is no Nagorno-Karabakh republic, [there are] Only two parties to the conflict - Armenia and Azerbaijan. Ask the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. Who are the parties to the conflict? They will say the same. Armenia and Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh is not.”

“We are ready to talk to Nagorno-Karabakh in case, Armenia stops funding this illegal entity, pulls back all their military troops from Nagorno-Karabakh and completely withdraws from our territory. And then, we will have arguments to talk to these people. Until then, there is no way and they want to keep status quo unchanged. They think that they can keep this territories under occupation forever, and I am sure that will not be the case, and our territorial integrity must be restored.”

Aliyev reminded that recently, there was an exchange of journalists from both countries.

“We want to try every opportunity to find a peaceful settlement. To persuade Armenian people that they cannot live like that forever. They need to find solution with us, and live in the future, in peace as neighbours,” the head of state said.

Karabakh music. Majestic melodies that touch soul

By **Laman Ismayilova**

Karabakh music has always taken a special place in Azerbaijan's music history. Famous for its fascinating melodies, it had been widely performed at many public celebrations and religious ceremonies.

The history of Karabakh music is closely connected with the art of ashigs, which brilliantly unites poetry, storytelling, dance, and vocal and instrumental music into traditional performance art.

Ashiq Valeh was one of the greatest representatives of ashig art in Karabakh. Valeh was the stage name of the ashig. His real name was Sefi. At a young age, Sefi became a student of ashig Samed, who taught him the art of playing saz and poetry.

Over his life, ashig Valeh delighted listeners with beautiful music pieces such as "Karabakh shikeste", "Kesme shikeste", "Bash Saritel" and "Orta Saritel".

In general, Ashig Huseyn (1800-1880), Ashig Ali (1807-1917), Ashig Alasgar (1821-1926), Ashig Aziz (1825-1918), Ashig Mahammad (1834-1914), Molla Juma (1855-1919) and others left an incredible mark on Karabakh ashig art.

Karabakh also brought up the first female representative of this art-Ashig Pari. She was known as one of the pioneering women among ashigs.

In the 19th century, culture life was booming in the heart of Karabakh - the city of Shusha.

First time in Azerbaijan's cultural history, a number of cultural institutions and events, including European and Eastern concerts, music, science and art meetings, theater, library were established in Shusha.

Various musical meetings, clubs and schools opened here. Young talents were taught by founders of Shusha's music schools Kharrat Gulu and Molla Ibrahim.

Kharrat Gulu Mahammad oghlu (1823-1883) is considered one of the most prominent Azerbaijani singers of that time. Famous for his beautiful voice, Kharrat Gulu masterly performed poems and ghazals and shared his skills with talented singers.

Through his activities, Kharrat Gulu significantly contributed to Azerbaijan's performing art and opened the way to many talents such as Haji Husu, Mashadi Isi, Sadikhjan, Abdulbagi Zulalov, Jabbar Garyagdioghlu and others.

Thanks to the joint efforts of mugham singer Haji Husu and scholar and eminent musician Mir Mohsun Navvab, meetings between musicians were regularly organized in Shusha after the death of Kharrat Gulu.

The first Orient concert took place in Shusha in 1901. Lead by the prominent Azerbaijani playwright Abdurrahim Hagverdiyev, the concert featured performances of such cultural figures as Jabbar Garyagdioghlu, Meshedi Dadash, tar musicians Sadikhjan, Agha Bagdaguloghlu, ashigs Najafgulu, Abbasgulu and many others

Shusha Vocal School has entered the history of Eastern music. There was a time when Shusha was also called "the Italy of the Caucasus" as it was often compared to Italian Vocal School.

Azernews .- 2020. - October 3-5. - №. 61.- P.7.

President Aliyev: Azerbaijan to build international airport in Fuzuli in 2021

By **Vafa Ismayilova**

President Ilham Aliyev has said that Azerbaijan will build an international airport in its recently- liberated Fuzuli region in 2021.

Aliyev made the remarks on January 5 at a video meeting with Anar Karimov, whom he appointed as culture minister.

"An international airport will be built in Fuzuli on my instructions. This instruction has already been given. Places are being identified now. Mine clearance work will be carried out. I have ordered that an international airport be established in Fuzuli this year. At least a runway should be put into operation. The distance from there to Shusha is short," Aliyev said.

The president said that the new airport will open new opportunities to invite foreign guests to Shusha.

"In Soviet times, you had to go to Shusha either from Khankandi or through the Lachin corridor. We are building a new road now. Of course, those roads are there too, and our citizens, those engaged in repair work there these days are using these roads - the Aghdam-Khankandi-Shusha road and the Lachin corridor. In other words, these roads are open to us. We should be able to go there whenever we want, and it will be the case. However, the construction of the Fuzuli international airport will create opportunities to invite foreign guests to Shusha. It will be possible to come there and then travel a short distance to Shusha," he said.

Shusha - the capital of Azerbaijani culture

In his speech, the head of state declared Shusha to be capital of Azerbaijani culture. The city was liberated from the Armenian occupation on November 8, 2020.

"I declare Shusha to be the capital of Azerbaijani culture. The city of Shusha deserves that. I think that it can be considered not only the cultural capital of Azerbaijan but also of the entire region. The cultural life of Shusha should be rich. Work has already begun on the restoration of Shusha. A large delegation was sent there on my instruction. So the housing stock and historical sites must be inspected, the damage must be accurately calculated, and we must begin the restoration of Shusha. However, the original appearance and the historical image of Shusha must be restored without wasting time, but at the same time without haste."

Aliyev stressed that all mosques in Shusha must be overhauled, restored and their original appearance returned to them. The president said that the repair of the Shusha mosque during the years of Armenian occupation was a propaganda step.

"The Armenians allegedly wanted to repair a mosque in Shusha, but it was just a propaganda step. After all, you have destroyed more than 60 mosques, including one in Zangilan... How come you allegedly repair a mosque in Shusha? Just say for the sake of propaganda that, yes, we respect the Muslim religion here," he said.

Aliyev condemned foreign specialists involvement in the mosque's repair without Azerbaijan's permission. "How can you go to the territory of Azerbaijan without our permission, allegedly repair our mosque together with the occupying Armenians? What international norms does it fit into? Which moral frames does that fit into? What company or people can ever do that? These are our historical sites, so you should ask us. But they went to the occupied lands of another country and did some work there for yourselves. The historical appearance of the mosque was changed. Therefore, I am ordering you to revise the mosque's interior. We do not need that renovation. We will renovate it and return its original appearance to the mosque. Then we will open it."

The president stressed that a recently-published photo that shows former Armenian President Kocharyan standing in front of a mosque in the occupied city of Aghdam with his thugs and bandits infuriated Azerbaijani people.

"Insulting inscriptions can be seen on the walls of the Aghdam mosque. Notice who led Armenia, what executioner, someone with such mundane moral values!" Aliyev said.

Protection of cultural, religious sites top priority

Speaking to the newly-appointed culture minister, Anar Karimov, the president said that the protection of Azerbaijan's cultural and religious sites will be the ministry's top priority.

"There are still quite a few historical sites that are in an unbearable condition. I think that the Ministry of Culture should quickly inspect and list them and prepare new lists of cultural centres that are in disrepair. Because the lists of sites protected by the state were not prepared accurately in the past. There was a biased approach," he

said.

Aliyev stressed that the manipulation of such lists had dealt a huge blow to Azerbaijan's cultural heritage and those responsible for violations were held accountable, including criminal liability.

"Therefore, you must seriously combat all these violations," he told Karimov.

The president added that Azerbaijan should enrich its cultural life even more in the future.

"I do hope that after the vaccination is applied this year, the pandemic will gradually fade away. We are waiting for the vaccine in the coming days, after which normal life will be restored. Our cultural life must be very rich, competitions and festivals must be organized. We must both promote Azerbaijani culture in the world and continue to invite foreign guests," he said.

Aliyev described the restoration of cultural facilities and cultural centres in the destroyed areas as one of the top priorities.

"The operational headquarters has already been instructed on this issue. You are also represented there. Therefore, all our destroyed historical sites and cultural centres should be listed. Their previous appearance should be identified. Their restoration or reconstruction must not detract from their original and authentic identity. In general, we must be very sensitive in the restoration of our semi-destroyed historical sites. We must restore the true appearance of those historical sites," he said.

Aliyev instructed Karimov to restore the conduct of two national festivals in Shusha.

"The Poetry Days of Vagif must be restored in Shusha, the 'Khari Bulbul' festival must be restored. A new road is being built to Shusha now. However, this road runs through an area with very difficult terrain. But we will achieve this. Plan your work so that these two events are held in Shusha this year," he said.

Cultural genocide against Azerbaijan

Speaking about Armenia's cultural genocide against Azerbaijan, Aliyev called on the world to see acts committed by the Armenians.

"They have committed cultural genocide against us. The whole world, their patrons, and friends should see this. Foreign patrons who try to introduce it as a civilized nation surrounded by Muslims and those who believe in that, open your eyes to this, look what they have done! They are wild. Man does not act like that. This atrocity had to be stopped and it was... They are defying all the neighbours. They are making baseless claims, claims of land, territorial claims. They want to appropriate everything. They are stealing our music. Go and look it up, the authors of most of the music they present as their own is either Uzeyir Hajibayli or another Azerbaijani composer. They are stealing our cuisine. They are stealing the cuisine of neighbouring nations. They are stealing historical sites. They are trying to steal churches from other nations, from neighbouring nations."

UNESCO must visit liberated lands

Furthermore, Aliyev urged UNESCO experts to evaluate Armenia's destruction in Azerbaijan's liberated lands, adding that Azerbaijan is ready to continue cooperation with UNESCO if only the latter maintains its international status.

"Let them go and see what the Armenians have done to Muslim sites. Why hasn't UNESCO raised this issue for 30 years? We have applied to them many times. These appeals are documented in the form of letters. Two years ago, the new UNESCO leadership was asked to send a mission here, to send a mission to the occupied lands and see what is left of our historical sites. What was the response of the UNESCO leadership? They said that they did not want to politicize the issue. Okay, if you did not want to politicize the issue two years ago, why do you want to politicize it now? Let them give an answer, provide a very simple answer, a logical answer. There is no reply," Aliyev said.

The president reminded that he appealed to UNESCO from liberated Zangilan on December 23, urging them to evaluate Armenia's destruction of an Azerbaijani mosque in that region.

"Did any reaction follow? No! This is what the Armenians have destroyed. But what have we destroyed? What have we done? We have only repaired and protected sites. So, you know, we can't just ignore such unfounded approaches."

Aliyev added that UNESCO has a lot of information about Azerbaijan's contribution to the world's cultural heritage and said that the country played an active role in the restoration of both Muslim and Christian religious sites.

"The multicultural society in Azerbaijan should be an example for many countries. It is not me saying that it is what the world's religious leaders are saying. Let them look at the statements of Pope Francis, who visited

Baku, pay attention to the statements of the leaders of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Let them watch the speeches of other religious leaders, Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim religious leaders who have repeatedly visited Baku. Who can ever accuse us that the sites of other religions are in danger in Azerbaijan? Only novice politicians, populists, certain 'politicians' who have no idea about our region but act on the orders of the Armenian lobby or at least try to do so can criticize us. Is there a basis for such claims? No!" he said.

The head of state noted that an ICESCO mission will visit Azerbaijan at Baku's invitation in January and hold meetings here.

"I think they should also go to the liberated lands. Then a group of experts should come. They must send a mission to record the destruction of Muslim sites by Armenians and state this in their report. Of course, let's create the maximum opportunity provided that all security measures are observed because there are still a lot of mines in those areas and security measures must be taken," he said.

Azernews. - 2020. - January 7-8. - №. 1.- P.1-2.

Shusha Musical Theater's actors awarded

By **Laman Ismayilova**

Members of the Shusha State Musical Theater have been awarded with honorable certificates.

The theater workers, including Honored Artists Nazir Rustamov, Teymur Mammadov, actresses Bahar Gamzayeva, Pustakhanim Zeynalova, chief artist Valeh Mammadov were among the recipients, Trend Life reported.

Presenting certificates of honor to the actors, the chairman of Azerbaijan Theater Workers Union, People's Artist Azer Pasha Nematov spoke about the history of the Shusha State Musical Theater and stressed its significance for national culture.

He praised the Shusha State Musical Theater for its contribution to the Azerbaijani theater art.

In their remarks, the director of the Shusha State Musical Theater, Honored Artist Yadigar Muradov and the recipients expressed gratitude to the Azerbaijan Theater Workers Union, for the high appraisal of their work.

Shusha Musical Drama Theater has been operating since 1938. In 1992, the theater moved to Baku due to the Nagorno-Karabakh war.

In 2018, Shusha State Musical Drama Theater opened its doors after the major reconstruction.

The reconstruction works were commissioned by the State Service for the Protection, Development and Restoration of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture.

On the second floor there are rooms for sound and light operators, a film projection room. The stage was reconstructed as well. The building was provided with new telecommunication systems.

The theater successfully stages works of such prominent figures as Fatali Akhundov, Abdurrahim bey Hagverdiyev, Jafar Jabbarly, Samad Vurgun, etc.

Azernews. - 2021. - April 20-21. - №. 39.- P. 7.

Heydar Aliyev Foundation presents book about Karabakh culture

By **Laman İsmayilova**

Heydar Aliyev Foundation has presented the "Cultural Heritage of Karabakh" book.

The collection includes separate publications covering various art fields from literature and music to Azerbaijan's carpet weaving art and architecture.

The book has been recently presented to the guests of the event organized in Shusha.

President of Azerbaijan İlham Aliyev, First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, First Lady Emine Erdoğan attended the event.

Notably, Heydar Aliyev Foundation is actively working on the restoration of religious and cultural monuments in the territories liberated from Armenian occupation.

As a result of Armenian vandalism, hundreds of cultural institutions were destroyed on Azerbaijan's occupied territories.

Over 700 historical and cultural monuments registered by the state before the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were looted, including the 11 and 15-span Khudaferin bridges in Jabrayil, Ganjasar and Khudavend sanctuaries in Kalbajar, the mausoleum in Aghdam's Khachin Turbetli village, Azykh cave in Fuzuli as well as Shusha state historical and architectural reserve.

Local and foreign experts are working on the restoration of Azerbaijan's liberated territories.

The clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan resumed after Armenia launched large-scale attacks on Azerbaijani forces and civilians on September 27.

The 44 days of war ended with the Russian brokered peace deal signed on November 10 by the Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders.

The peace agreement ended the 30-years-old conflict between Baku and Yerevan over Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region that along with the seven adjacent districts came under the occupation of Armenian armed forces in the war in the early 1990s.

For about three decades, Armenia failed to implement the UN Security Council resolutions demanding the withdrawal of the Armenian troops, which was the main obstacle to the resolution of the conflict.

Azernews. - 2021. - June 19-21. - №. 61.- P. 1.

Baku condemns Yerevan's claims about alliance deal with Ankara

By **Vafa Ismayilova**

Armenia shows it is far from peace, cooperation and development by rejecting the regional cooperation platform proposed by Baku and Ankara, the Foreign Ministry said on June 18.

The ministry made the remarks in a comment on the Armenian Foreign Ministry's allegations that the Shusha Declaration on Allied Relations newly-signed by the Azerbaijani and Turkish leaders is against the Armenian people.

“By rejecting the regional cooperation platform proposed by the leaders of Azerbaijan and Turkey and presenting it as a ‘threat to the Armenian people’ and ‘threat to the region’, the Armenian Foreign Ministry clearly demonstrates how far Armenia is from peace, cooperation and development,” the ministry said.

The statement added that the Armenian Foreign Ministry still fails to realize that it was indeed Armenia's decades-long aggressive policy, its claims to the territory of the neighboring state, its policy of serving the interests of a group of persons rather than the welfare of its population, and finally, its revanchist position that have been directed against the Armenian people.

“This uncompromising position of Armenia is a major impediment to peace and security in the region,” the ministry noted.

It said that it is “quintessentially hypocritical for the Armenian Foreign Ministry to speak of international law since Armenia has grossly violated the fundamental norms of international law for decades, including the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders, as well as the human rights of up to one million Azerbaijanis”.

The statement stressed that Armenia must first learn to respect international law while referring to it.

The ministry underlined that a new regional situation and unique opportunities for regional cooperation have emerged with the liberation of Azerbaijani territories.

“Realizing this situation, it would be Armenia's decision either to take advantage of cooperation or vice versa. As stated in the Shusha Declaration, Azerbaijan and Turkey will continue their joint efforts to ensure global and regional peace, stability and security in accordance with the principles and norms of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations,” the statement added.

The Shusha Declaration on Allied Relations, which was signed during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's first official visit to Shusha, Karabakh on June 15 eight months after Azerbaijan's victory in the war with Armenia, focuses on defence cooperation, promoting regional stability and prosperity, and establishing new transportation routes.

It affirms joint efforts by the two armies in the face of foreign threats. The declaration also pledges joint efforts for the restructuring and modernization of the armed forces. Moreover, the two nations affirm to encourage the execution of joint projects with the aim of developing capabilities in the field of sea, air, and space.

Azernews. - 2021. - June 19-21. - №. 61.- P. 2.

Baku, Ankara sign historic alliance deal

By **Vafa Ismayilova**

President Ilham Aliyev has said that Azerbaijan and Turkey have established a qualitatively new relationship and a newly-signed joint declaration on allied ties raises bilateral relations to the highest peak.

He made the remarks after the ceremony of signing the joint declaration with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan on June 15 in the city of Shusha liberated from the Armenian occupation in a 44-day war in 2020.

“My dear brother has visited Azerbaijan a number of times, but we are together in the Karabakh land, in Shusha for the first time. This visit has a historic significance because the Joint Declaration, the Declaration on allied relations, signed today raises our relations to the highest peak. The name of the Declaration is the Declaration on allied relations, and this name in itself indicates everything, it says it all. Today we have established a qualitatively new relationship, and all the provisions of this Declaration are a guarantee of our future cooperation,” he said.

Aliyev said that Azerbaijan and Turkey "are setting a unique example of cooperation and alliance on a global scale".

The president noted that every issue reflected in the document is of great importance. He said that at the international level, it underscored Azerbaijani-Turkish cooperation, joint activities, political relations, economic and trade relations, culture, education, sports, youth policy, and practically all other areas.

“It demonstrates the importance of energy security and the Southern Gas Corridor for Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Europe. Every issue reflected in it is of great importance. I would like to highlight two issues among them. First, the issue of cooperation in the field of defence. The issues of defence industry and mutual military assistance are reflected in this Declaration. This is a historic achievement. We are showing again that we will always be together. We will continue to ensure each other's security, just as Turkey and Azerbaijan have been together on all issues so far. This will continue to be the case,” Aliyev said.

Zangazur corridor

The head of state noted that the second important issue in the document is about transport and that it contains “very clear statements about the opening of the Zangazur corridor”.

“This is the result of a new geopolitical situation that has emerged as a result of the second Karabakh war. Today, we are not only talking about the Zangazur corridor, which will connect Turkey and Azerbaijan by rail and road, we are creating this corridor through tangible work. It is important that this issue is reflected in the Joint Declaration on allied relations,” he added.

Aliyev said that the signed declaration is based on history.

“The Joint Declaration refers to the historic Kars Agreement. The historic Kars agreement was signed exactly 100 years ago. This also has a great symbolic meaning. The Joint Declaration on allied relations signed in the liberated city of Shusha after 100 years shows the direction of our future cooperation,” he added.

He reiterated that Turkey and Azerbaijan are the closest countries in the world and there are factors that bind the two countries together. He stressed history, culture, common ethnic roots, language, religion, national values, national interests and the two nations' brotherhood.

Aliyev said that the visit is of great interest and the statements made in the ancient city of Shusha will reverberate in the whole world.

“The historic significance of this visit will be spoken about for many years to come,” he said.

Aliyev said that the Azerbaijani and Turkish flags waving in Shusha show the two countries' unity. He underlined Erdogan's “unequivocal, clear and open support for Azerbaijan” from the first days of the second Karabakh war, which inspired Azerbaijan and simultaneously “stopped all the forces and circles that were going to intervene”.

The president stressed the Turkish media's activities during the Karabakh war, saying that they risked their lives to show the real situation at the most dangerous moments of the war and to convey it to the international audiences.

“I personally often watched the reports on Turkish TV channels during the war and saw again that it was not only about professionalism but also about solidarity and love. The true voice of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan's just cause was conveyed to the world from the most dangerous places, from places where bombs were falling. The

Turkish media immediately went there and prepared reports," he added.

Azerbaijan's victory

Aliyev stressed that Azerbaijan put an end to Armenia's nearly 30-year occupation with Turkey's political and moral support.

"The occupation, which lasted nearly 30 years, came to an end. Azerbaijan put an end to this with the support of brotherly Turkey. Thirty years of negotiations had yielded no results. This shows again that where there is a will, resolve, strength and justice, everything is possible. Of course, inspired by this support from an ally like Turkey in the second Karabakh war, Azerbaijan fulfilled its historic mission, restored justice, and restored its territorial integrity," he said.

In turn, Erdogan said that "fortunately, as a result of the 44-day war, Karabakh returned to its owners and was liberated from Armenian oppression and occupation".

Paying tribute to the memory of national leader Heydar Aliyev on the occasion of 15 June - National Salvation Day, he said that along with Aliyev he shared the joy of the heroic victory of the Azerbaijani Army in Karabakh in Baku on 10 December 2020.

"There were completely different excitement and jubilation on that day. Six months later, I am very pleased to be alongside him in ancient Shusha. Fortunately, we have fulfilled our promise," he said.

Erdogan called for the recognition of Azerbaijan's victory in the war.

"We call on everyone who has influence in the region to see the realities, accept the Victory of the Azerbaijani people and look to the future. Following the ceasefire in the region, new opportunities for cooperation have emerged for all parties. We are direct witnesses of the keen interest of our Azerbaijani brothers in this issue," he said.

Six-sided platform

He stressed that Turkey also wants to channel its geographic ties into deep cooperation.

"We want Armenia to accept the hand of solidarity extended to it with good intentions and to take advantage of the opportunity to jointly shape a common future. We are talking about a six-sided platform. As you know, this platform includes Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and Iran. Together with this six-party platform, we want tranquility and peace in the region," Erdogan said.

The Turkish president stressed Azerbaijan's, Turkey's, and Russia's commitment to doing everything to ensure the said thanks to which, the region will turn into a region of peace.

"We very much want this historic opportunity not to be wasted due to the intentions, expressions, and activities that are not based on reality. The main condition is that everyone who wishes to benefit from the new reality and abandon the policies of hatred and incitement is focused on promoting peace and cooperation," he said.

The president added that while creating such an environment everything possible will be done to normalize relations with Armenia.

"We are confident that this encouraging process will be continued in a very healthy form if the ceasefire agreement signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia ends with a comprehensive and forward-looking peace treaty," Erdogan stressed.

He described as very important the Zangazur project and once again expressed support for it.

"We consider very important and support the South Zangazur corridor project of Azerbaijan. With the implementation of this project, a new common corridor will be opened, which can be used by everyone from East to West. This is of great importance," the Turkish president said.

Commenting on the Shusha Declaration, Erdogan said that Azerbaijan and Turkey outlined a roadmap for bilateral ties at a new stage.

"The Declaration, consisting of eleven A4 pages, is turning into reality in Shusha today. This is extremely important. The Declaration between Turkey and Azerbaijan covers a number of issues. As we take forward-looking steps, we see that this document expresses a determination that encompasses not only two countries, but also the entire region," he noted.

The president stressed that Turkey plans to open a consulate general in ancient Shusha in the near future and that Ankara will ensure the implementation of activities planned in the region in a faster and more efficient manner.

Kremlin says Baku, Moscow in close talks over Iskander-M missile fragments found in Shusha

By **Vafa Ismayilova**

Russian presidential press secretary Dmitriy Peskov has said that the Russian and Azerbaijani military are conducting a close dialogue over the fragments of the Iskander-M missile systems found in Shusha by Azerbaijan's mine experts, TASS has reported.

He made the remarks in an interview with journalists in Moscow on April 13.

"The military conduct a close dialogue, during which all relevant issues are being discussed," Peskov said, asked if the Russian and Azerbaijani leaders focused on the issue in their phone conversation in April.

Earlier, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said that he discussed with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on April 1 the information about the discovery of Iskander-M missile fragments in Shusha.

"I asked this question in a conversation with [Russian President] Vladimir Putin, which took place on April 1. The people of Azerbaijan should know the answer. About two weeks have passed," Aliyev said at the "New vision for South Caucasus: Post-conflict development and cooperation" conference held at ADA University in Baku on April 13.

He added that the Azerbaijani Defence Ministry addressed to Russian counterparts an official inquiry on the subject on April 4.

"We provided photos, videos and other materials, and asked the question: what kind of missiles are they, and what happened. Nine days have passed, but there is no answer," Aliyev said.

The Azerbaijani leader questioned how the Iskander-M missiles had appeared in Shusha.

"The Iskanders are here... How did they get to Shusha? Where were they launched from? Who launched them? We are waiting for answers," Aliyev stressed.

On April 2, Azerbaijan's Mine Action Agency demonstrated the found fragments of the Iskander missile systems that were used by Armenia against Azerbaijan during the hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh in autumn 2020. On the same day, the Russian president's press secretary said that the Iskander missiles were not used during the escalation of the conflict in the region in 2020.

Representatives of the Azerbaijani public recently urged a thorough investigation into the firing of a missile from the Iskander-M operational-tactical system at Shusha city, which was liberated from Armenia's occupation on November 8, 2020.

The hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia resumed after that latter started firing at Azerbaijani civilians and military positions starting September 27, 2020. The war ended on November 10 with the signing of a trilateral peace deal by the Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders.

The peace agreement stipulated the return of Azerbaijan's Armenian-occupied Kalbajar, Aghdam and Lachin regions. Before the signing of the deal, the Azerbaijani army had liberated around 300 villages, settlements, city centres and historic Shusha city. The Azerbaijani army declared a victory against the Armenian troops. The signed agreement obliged Armenia to withdraw its troops from the Azerbaijani lands that it has occupied since the early 1990s.

Azernews. - 2021. - April 15-16. - №. 37.- P. 4.

Iskandar missile launch at Shusha raises public concern

By **Ayya Lmahamad**

Representatives of the Azerbaijani public have urged a thorough investigation into the firing of a missile from the Iskander-M operational-tactical system at Shusha city, which was liberated from Armenia's occupation on November 8, 2020.

On April 2, Azerbaijan's Mine Action Agency reported that the Iskander missile's fragments had been found in two areas in Shusha city and that the missiles had exploded. After the modification codes on those fragments were checked it was defined that the missile at Shusha city was fired from the Iskander-M tactical ballistic missile system.

At the end of the 44-day Karabakh war, former Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and Colonel General Movses Hakobyan stated that the Iskander missiles struck Shusha city.

This was followed by a comment from Prime Minister Pashinyan that the warheads did not explode or only exploded at 10 percent capacity. Nevertheless, the Russian Defence Ministry's official representative Igor Konashenkov then categorically denied the use of Iskander missiles in Karabakh, saying that according to the ministry's objective and reliable information, none of the missile systems of this type was used during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Close investigation

The head of the Azerbaijani parliamentary committee on science and education, Bakhtiyar Aliyev, named as a war crime the firing of the missile in question.

Aliyev stressed the need to investigate the case and underlined that the UN Security Council resolutions and international conventions strictly prohibit the transfer of such weapons to Armenia.

"The transfer to Armenia of such a destructive weapon, which belongs to the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing country, and the use of the missile system against Azerbaijan cast doubt on its [Russia's] peacekeeping and neutrality," he said.

Meanwhile, political expert Elchin Mirzabayli believes that the manufacturing country is responsible for the use of the Iskander-M missile system against Azerbaijan during military operations carried out to liberate its lands from Armenia's occupation.

It should be noted that Russia repeatedly emphasized that this missile system is intended only for use by the Russian armed forces and its sale or transfer to any country is impossible.

However, despite Russia's denial of selling or transferring these missiles to Armenia, their use against Azerbaijan is a fact.

"Thus, the use of Iskander-M by the armed formations in Armenia and in the previously occupied Azerbaijani territories confirms that these missile systems were illegally delivered to Armenia by criminal groups engaged in the arms trade. Either Russia is holding back the truth about the sale of Iskander-M missiles to Armenia, or its leadership has not been informed about it. Anyway, the fact must be seriously investigated," Mirzabayli said.

MP and political analyst Rasim Musabayov said that modern missile systems of this class have explosion-locking mechanism to prevent their unauthorized use. He noted that either the Armenian military didn't have the appropriate codes, or they simply didn't know about it.

Musabayov stressed if the rockets had worked normally and exploded over Shusha, it could only prolong the war, increase the scale of mutual losses, but would not change the final defeat for the Armenians.

Appeal to Russian embassy

Amid aforesaid concerns, a group of Azerbaijani journalists appealed to the Russian embassy, calling for an official reaction from Moscow on the case.

"We hope that the Russian side will express its official position in the near future and officially announce the start of the investigation," summed up the journalists.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin denied having no information about the fragments of the Iskander missile found. Asked to comment on relevant reports from Azerbaijan, Russian presidential spokesperson Dmitriy Peskov said that "I cannot say anything about the missile, I have no information".

It should be noted that Azerbaijan still continues operational search work and demining operations in all

cities and regions liberated during the 44-day war.

Some experts believe that Armenia has spent \$350 million to mine lands in and around Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region that were liberated from occupation in the 44-day war.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on February 26 described Armenia's failure to provide the maps of mined areas in liberated lands as the main difficulty for Azerbaijani IPDs to return to their homes. He said that this can also be considered to be a war crime as several servicemen and civilians were killed in mine blasts on liberated territories after the war.

A Moscow-brokered ceasefire deal that Baku and Yerevan signed on November 10 brought an end to six weeks of fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani army declared a victory against the Armenian troops. The signed agreement obliged Armenia to withdraw its troops from the Azerbaijani lands that it has occupied since the early 1990s.

Azernews. - 2021. - April 10-12. - №. 35.- P. 4.

President Aliyev: Great return to liberated lands begins

By Vafa Ismayilova

President Ilham Aliyev has said that Azerbaijan will restore its ancestral lands of Karabakh in a short period of time following the country's victory in the 44-day-war with Armenia.

Aliyev made the remarks during his visit to Shusha on January 14, for the first time since the city's liberation on November 8.

"The great return begins. All work has begun. I am sure that just as we drove the enemy out of our lands in a short time - in a matter of 44 days - we will restore our ancestral lands of Karabakh in a short time. Karabakh is Azerbaijan!"

Aliyev reminded that he visited Shusha 39 years ago - first on 14 January.

"Here I am again today, on 14 January. This time I came as the Commander-in-Chief of the victorious Azerbaijani Army, the triumphant Azerbaijani Army. I have come as the Commander-in-Chief of the Army that broke the enemy's back," he said.

The president said that Azerbaijan won the war at the expense of the lives and blood of its martyrs.

As part of his visit to Shusha, Aliyev laid a foundation stone for the Fuzuli-Shusha highway on the 27th km of the Ahmadbayli-Fuzuli-Shusha highway, as well as an airport in Fuzuli region.

The president said that after the liberation of Shusha on November 8, the process of restoring the city and all its historic buildings began and that attempts to Armenianize Shusha have been stopped.

"For 30 years, they tried to Armenianize Shusha, but they failed. This is an alien city to them. If they ever considered it their own, they would not have brought it to this condition. The real owners of Shusha are back, we are back. Shusha is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!" Aliyev said.

He harshly criticized Armenia's destruction of Azerbaijan's religious monuments, including about 70 mosques.

Speaking about Armenia's desecration and destruction of Azerbaijani mosques, Aliyev said that the country destroying the mosques cannot be a friend to Muslim countries.

"I have said that Armenia cannot be friends with Muslim countries. A country that has brought mosques to this condition cannot be friends with Muslim states. This is hypocrisy, and viewing Armenia as a friendly country is hypocrisy and ungodliness. How can leaders of Muslim countries be friends with a country that has destroyed mosques? Let them answer. Let them answer to their own people, not to me. Can they be friends with a country that has destroyed mosques and put cows there? Let their people answer this," Aliyev said this after visiting the Saatli Mosque in Shusha.

He invited all those believing in the friendship between Armenia and Muslim countries to visit Azerbaijan's liberated territories.

"If anyone still believes in this, let them come to Shusha, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil and other liberated lands of ours and see what Armenian leaders have done to Muslim mosques, what they have done to the temples that are sacred to every Muslim. They have destroyed and desecrated them, kept pigs and cows in them, wrote obscenities on the walls of our mosques. Can such a country be friends with Muslim states? Of course not!" he said.

Aliyev stressed that Azerbaijan will continue to protect temples belonging to all religions.

"Monuments of all religions are protected in our country - churches, synagogues, as well as the Armenian church in the centre of Baku are protected and repaired by the state."

He recalled his visit to liberated Zangilan in late December 2020, adding that against the background of a destroyed mosque there he had turned to international organizations urging them to prepare their reports on the situation not in their cabinets, but in Azerbaijan's liberated lands.

Aliyev also spoke about repairs in Shusha's Yukhari Govharagha Mosque without Azerbaijan's permission. "They allegedly renovated the Yukhari Govharagha Mosque with a foreign company to create an image. We do not need this renovation. This renovation is a symbol of hypocrisy, this pursues the end of creating an image that the Armenian leadership is repairing mosques."

Referring to the foreign company involved in the repair work, Aliyev said: "They came to our lands illegally without our permission, stayed there for months, allegedly repaired this mosque in collaboration with the criminal junta of Armenia. We do not need such repairs."

Aliyev stressed that Azerbaijan will repair and rebuild all the Armenian-destroyed mosques.

Making a speech in front of the destroyed mausoleum of Azerbaijani poet Molla Panah Vagif, Aliyev said that it was also a victim of Armenian vandalism.

“They have destroyed our mosques, graves, historical sites and all our buildings. This mausoleum was also destroyed by the contemptible enemy. In this part of the mausoleum, there were patterns. Pictures of that are available. All of that has been demolished and looted, and the mausoleum is destroyed,” he said.

“The mausoleum of Molla Panah Vagif, built on the initiative of great leader Heydar Aliyev, was inaugurated exactly 39 years ago - on 14 January 1982. I remember that historic day. Because at that time, along with my father, I was standing right here.”

The president stressed that former Armenian leaders Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan were perpetrators of the destructions on liberated territories.

Furthermore, Aliyev touched upon attempts by separatist forces in Armenia to disrupt the November 10 peace deal, saying that any such attempt will be punished.

Commenting about the restoration of Shusha, Aliyev said:

“We are already starting the reconstruction of Shusha. A master plan is being prepared. All buildings have been inspected. Shusha will become one of the most beautiful cities in the world as the cultural capital of Azerbaijan. In fact, it has always been the case. The enemy has simply destroyed all our historical sites. But we will restore them. We will return their real appearance to them. The people of Azerbaijan will live in Shusha forever. Shusha is ours! Karabakh is Azerbaijan!”

Aliyev said that Vagif Poetry Days and the Khari Bulbul festival will be restored in Shusha in 2021.

Touching upon the six-week-war that started with Armenia's attacks on Azerbaijani civilians and positions and which lasted between September 27 and November 10, 2020, Aliyev said that justice prevailed during the war.

“Our cause was one of justice. Armenia's cause is a cause of aggression. Justice has prevailed at the expense of the strength, at the expense of our resolve, at the expense of our policies and at the expense of our unity! Kudos to the people of Azerbaijan! Long live Azerbaijan!” he said.

Aliyev noted that the construction of the so-called parliament building was left unfinished in Nagorno-Karabakh as the true owners of the region are back to native lands.

“The parliament went to hell and the status went to hell. Karabakh is Azerbaijan!” Aliyev stressed.

Azerbaijan's Shusha city, along with 300 villages, city centers, settlements were liberated from the Armenian occupation during the Second Karabakh war, known as Patriotic War in Azerbaijan.

Azernews. - 2020. - January 15-16. - №. 5.- P. 1-2.

ICESCO proposes to declare Shusha as capital of Islamic world

By Laman Ismayilova

ICESCO proposes to declare Azerbaijan's Shusha as the capital of Islamic world. The initiative was announced at the press conference between ICESCO Director General Salim AlMalik and the Azerbaijan Culture Minister Anar Karimov.

"We have proposed to move ICESCO regional center to Shusha in the future. The opening of a regional office in Baku is appropriate for the current situation, but after the city of Shusha is restored and life returns to normal, the proposal to move the ICESCO regional office to Shusha may be realized," ICESCO Director General said.

Speaking at a press conference, the Culture Minister Anar Karimov regarded the visit of the ICESCO delegation to Azerbaijan as an important event in the country's life. He emphasized that partnership with ICESCO has expanded since the election of First Vice-President of Azerbaijan Mehriban Aliyeva as Goodwill Ambassador to the organization.

"Over the past time, Azerbaijan has implemented numerous international projects with ICESCO. Baku (2009) and Nakhchivan (2018) were named the Capital of Islamic Culture. Azerbaijan's capital hosted the meeting of ICESCO Culture Ministers in 2009. The 12th General Conference and the 36th meeting of the Executive Board of ICESCO were held as well," the Minister said.

"Moreover, ICESCO has implemented numerous projects and events in different directions. ICESCO is one of the main partners of the Baku Process initiated by President Ilham Aliyev and adopted by the United Nations. The organization has been an official partner in the 5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue held in 2011," he added.

Anar Karimov touched upon Azerbaijan's territories liberated from Armenian occupation after 30 years.

The Culture Minister stressed the importance of Shusha city, which is considered the cradle of Azerbaijani culture.

As a result of the Armenian occupation, a number of cities were completely destroyed, all cultural property was looted, historical monuments and cultural institutions were destroyed, especially monuments and mosques of Islamic heritage.

The Minister said that an inventory was carried out in the liberated territories, adding that information had been obtained in 6 regions.

According to the information to date, about 399 cultural institutions have been found in those areas. At the same time, 372 historical and cultural monuments have been identified. Moreover, 195 of them are located in Shusha.

"Currently, the Culture Ministry is preparing a road map. Both local and foreign experts are expected to be involved in this process. As for the restoration of monuments, we have already made a classification. Of course, first of all, we must start with the monuments of world importance. Restoration work will begin in Shusha. As you know, the city of Shusha has been cleared of mines. The city has been declared Azerbaijan's cultural capital. The monuments in Aghdam, Fuzuli and other regions will be restored as well," said the minister.

"Apart from ethnic cleansing, Armenians also carried out cultural cleansing in the occupied territories. This is a crime against humanity. We believe that ICESCO will prepare a report and send a technical staff. We plan to open a regional center of the organization this year. The center will contribute to the development of relations between Azerbaijan and ICESCO as well as regional countries," he added.

Karimov said that ICESCO will hold events in this regard within the framework of declaring 2021 the "Year of Nizami Ganjavi" in Azerbaijan. The events will play an important role in conveying Nizami Ganjavi's contribution to the Islamic world to the international community.

ICESCO Director General Salim AlMalik congratulated the people of Azerbaijan on the historic victory.

"Every country that is a member of our organization is important to us. This year we celebrate the victory of our member country Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is a friendly and hospitable country. We have come here not only to support and celebrate the Victory, but also to see what is happening in the liberated lands. During our visit, we saw the destruction of Azerbaijan's centuries-old cultural heritage. It is a crime against humanity. We visited Fuzuli, where libraries, schools, cemeteries and even roads were destroyed. During our visit to Aghdam, we only witnessed the remains of the walls of destroyed buildings. We went to the mosque, theater building as well. Only the walls of these monuments remain undestroyed. Those who committed it should take responsibility for their

actions," said ICESCO general.

"ICESCO technical mission will visit Azerbaijan soon. The technical mission will arrive in the liberated areas by the end of February. The team will be formed after the return of the ICESCO delegation. The team will include member countries as well as non-member states. At the end of next week, we will appoint experts to organize a visit of the technical mission," he added.

Azernews. - 2020. - January 15-16. - №. 5.- P. 1-2.

Former Azerbaijani hostages recount torture in Armenian captivity

By Vafa Ismayilova

Azerbaijanis released from the Armenian captivity in December 2020, as part of the November 10 trilateral peace deal, have spoken about brutal tortures they were subjected to during the captivity, local news sources have reported.

At a news conference held in Baku on January 7 by the Azerbaijani State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons, former captives Dilgam Asgarov, Shahbaz Guliyev and Amin Musayev unveiled details about inhumane treatment they had faced in captivity. The head of a working group at the State Commission, Ismayil Akhundov, also attended the meeting.

Six years of tortures in captivity

Dilgam Asgarov and Shahbaz Guliyev who were illegally detained by Armenian forces in July 2014 while visiting their relatives' graves in Azerbaijan's then-occupied Kalbajar region, talked about the trauma of torture that lasted six years.

"I remained in Shusha's prison for six years and five months. I was not allowed to go for a walk. I was twice electrocuted in Khankandi. They aimed to urge me to speak against the Azerbaijani nation and government. I did not allow it as much as I could. Journalists from abroad even came there. They were also in prison that day. I was forced to give an interview to those journalists. I did not do so and demanded that I could do so only in Kalbajar," he said.

Speaking about his illegal detention, Asgarov said: "I did not cross to Armenia. I went to my ancestral land. That was not my first visit. I was arrested in my own native land. They took me to Khankhandi. They broke my fingers. There are still fractures in my head... At the time of my arrest, I weighed more than 100 kilograms, but later I lost 55 kilograms. I had no power."

Asgarov said that he was beaten by the butt of an assault rifle while being taken to trial every time.

"There was a case when 15 people beat me in front of their 'prosecutor'. I counted them all. All this happened during the 'investigation'. I was powerless and could not stand up," he said.

Asgarov added that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) failed to take any steps to prevent the tortures although they knew about that.

"The ICRC provided no food either. For a year, this committee did not help. Although, one side of me got completely paralyzed. The ICRC knew about all the tortures I was subjected to, but they did not take any measures."

He noted that he demanded from the ICRC that his rights be secured.

"Only after that, they gave me a radio. I heard on the radio that our head of state was taking measures to [solve the problems related to] our hunger and captivity," he said.

Asgarov noted that the ICRC started to show interest in their affair after a year of his stay in captivity.

"While there, I had hope... I also hoped that we would be released. While there I said an Azerbaijani soldier will come here so."

He said that when the Azerbaijani army approached Shusha, Armenia took all their convicts out of the prison. According to Asgarov, they learned about the approach of the Azerbaijani army by the sounds of shots.

"The head of the Shusha prison immediately ordered the transfer of the Armenian prisoners, but they didn't take us. They just cancelled our daytime walk. For about 10 days we didn't go out for a walk. The Armenians got scared when the Azerbaijani soldiers continued the offensive. The head of the prison tried to exert psychological pressure by intimidating us. But we were happy from the mere thought that the Azerbaijani soldiers were liberating their lands," Asgarov added.

Azerbaijani Shahbaz Guliyev, who was also freed from the Armenian captivity as part of the all-for-all principle on December 14, spoke about the torture he went through.

"I was in terrible condition. Armenians beat me up every night. They also tortured me - by turning on terrible sounds so loud I nearly went deaf. Although we went to visit the graves of our loved ones, we were passed off as saboteurs," he said.

"They broke my arm and kicked a doctor of ICRC out of my room. The Armenians didn't allow the doctors to help us. I was constantly beaten throughout the year, being forced to say that I am a saboteur. But I didn't. After long negotiations, the ICRC sent a doctor to me, who put me in a plaster cast without fixing the fracture," Guliyev

said.

Shahbaz Guliyev said that despite all the horror, he didn't lose the hope that he will return to Azerbaijan.

It should be noted that a third Azerbaijani, Hasan Hasanov, who accompanied Asgarov and Guliyev in Kalbajar, was shot dead by Armenian forces.

Azerbaijani soldier Amin Musayev, who was taken hostage in a battle near Khankendi during the 44-day-war, said he considered suicide so as not to be captured by Armenians soldiers after he got injured.

“I noticed them, but they caught me off guard by getting close behind. Then they put me in a car, covered with a wet blanket. Throughout the entire journey, the Armenians stopped and beat me. Then I lost consciousness and woke up only in a hospital,” Musayev said.

Musayev said he was tortured even in the hospital, adding that some burning liquid would be poured over his neck in the hospital at night.

“It was either boiling water or some kind of scalding liquid. The doctor bandaged my wound every 2-3 days. For 33 days, I was subjected to inhumane tortures, having been deliberately operated in a way that I would remain disabled. Immediately after my release, I underwent surgery again in Azerbaijan. Armenians couldn't come to terms with the defeat and took revenge by torturing us. After 33 days, they blindfolded me, took me to the airport, and put me on a plane.”

Fourteen Azerbaijani prisoners of war returned to the country on December 14 as part of the “all-for-all” exchange of prisoners and hostages agreed with Armenia.

The prisoner swap took place in line with the trilateral peace agreement signed on November 10 that stipulates the exchange of prisoners as well as bodies of soldiers following the 44-day-war. The exchange was facilitated by Russian peacekeepers that have been deployed to Nagorno-Karabakh under the peace agreement.

The November 10 trilateral agreement signed between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia, followed the 44-day-war that started with Armenia's firing at Azerbaijani positions and civilians.

The peace agreement stipulated the return of Armenian-occupied Kalbajar, Aghdam and Lachin regions to Azerbaijan's control. Before the signing of the agreement, Azerbaijan had liberated around 300 city centres, settlements and villages, including historic Shusha city.

Azernews. - 2020. - January 9-10. - №. 2.- P.1-2.

Carpet Museum director talks on revival of carpet weaving in Shusha

By **Laman Ismayilova**

Despite the pandemic, the year 2020 was full of exciting events for the National Carpet Museum. The Carpet Museum delighted art lovers in the virtual space, providing detailed information about its numerous exhibits.

In her interview with Azernews, the director of the National Carpet Museum Shirin Melikova provided insight into the museum's activities over the past year.

Virtual projects

"The National Carpet Museum was the first in the country to hold a virtual exhibition last March. The museum displayed new exhibits acquired in 2019. The exhibition was not initially planned to be held virtually. However, the museum staff quickly got their bearings and managed to hold a virtual exhibition amid coronavirus pandemic. Since the quarantine started, the Carpet Museum has been actively working in virtual space, which completely replaced our work in real life. Now, the Carpet Museum successfully maintains a number of headings virtually in three languages, covering all aspects of the museum's activities, as well as the history of local arts and crafts. Among our subscribers are not only citizens of Azerbaijan, but also foreigners. The Carpet Museum actively conducts virtual exhibitions and quizzes, workshops for kids and adults, educational lectures, talks about carpet weaving art with the leading experts in this field from all over the world, and much more," the museum's director told Azernews.

"I would like to especially note "Carpet Stories project" which covered people from all over the world. Within the framework of the project, people sent us photos of their beloved carpets and shared the history behind them. During the Patriotic War, the Carpet Museum provided insight into the pile and pileless carpets of the liberated regions. In addition, our designers prepared "Carpet Map of Karabakh", which turned into the museum's most reposted publication. As the country's regions were liberated, these territories had gradually turned from black to white to color. After the Victory Day, the entire map was finally brimmed with bright colors and ornaments of Karabakh carpets.

Enriched museum collection

In 2020, the Carpet Museum enriched its collection with beautiful pile carpets purchased by the Culture Ministry at Sartirana Textile Show in Italy. The 19th century Guba carpet "Ugakh" was donated to the Carpet Museum, while Karabakh carpet "Chelebi" enriched the collection of the museum's Shusha branch.

"Earlier, the Italian carpet collector Erminio Bottini presented us with a stunning Sor-Sor carpet. This prayer carpet of the Shirvan group was woven in 1811. The carpet never ceases to amaze with its perfect compositional construction and harmony of colors. The 18th century Karabakh carpet was another exhibit donated by the museum. This carpet belongs to the group of late dragon carpets," said Shirin Melikova.

Shusha Carpet Museum

The Shusha branch of the Carpet Museum and Folk Applied Arts (as the National Carpet Museum was then called) was opened on May 19, 1987. It was located in Mehmandarov's mansion - a historical and architectural monument of the 18th century.

The museum was well known for its extensive collection of the fascinating Karabakh carpets, a complete set of women's Karabakh costumes. The traditional costume is distinguished by its patterns inspired by the clothing of the eminent poetess Khurshidbanu Natavan.

After the Armenian occupation, most of the museum's exhibits were saved and transferred to Baku.

Shusha Carpet Museum will be restored. Work is already underway in this direction. The project will be first presented to the public as a 3D drafting.

Partnership and cooperation agreements

In 2020, the Carpet Museum focused on cooperation with the world leading museum organizations.

"I would like to note the exhibition "Echo of Soviet Azerbaijan. Carpet. Embroidery. Poster " held at the Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow in partnership with the Mardjani Foundation. Since it took place back in February, we managed to hold it in a real format," said Melikova.

The Carpet Museum director also touched upon the exhibition "Azerbaijani carpets in the collection of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art held in Istanbul last March as well as the presentation of the book-catalog of the same name.

"The exhibition was the result of a two-year joint Azerbaijani-Turkish cultural project, initiated by the Carpet Museum. The project focused on the update of the symbols of the Azerbaijani carpets kept in the Istanbul museum under the guidance of prominent national carpet experts. Among them were Doctor of Science Kubra Aliyeva, Honored Artist, Expert of the Academy of Arts Mammadhuseyn Huseynov, Doctor of Philosophy in the field of art history Telman Ibrahimov and Ayten Akhmadova," she added.

Speaking about relations with foreign countries, Shirin Melikova noted that the Carpet Museum won Travelers' Choice Awards for the fourth time in a row last year.

The honorable award proves once again that the professional activity of the National Carpet Museum is highly appreciated by visitors from all over the world.

Future perspectives

The Carpet Museum is expected to hold multiple conferences, exhibitions and other events in real or virtual format.

In the near future, the Carpet Museum will mark the 100th anniversary of the carpet artist Kamil Aliyev, who enriched Azerbaijan's carpet weaving art with a realistic portrait genre.

The Museum also continues the carpet production from undyed wool. Five replicas of classic carpets have been already presented to the audience.

The Carpet Museum focuses on the expanding of partnership with other museums. Numerous exhibitions and book presentations are expected to be held this year.

National Carpet Museum, which became the first inclusive museum in the country, will further develop its inclusiveness, accessibility for all groups of the population, including people with special needs.

Azernews. - 2020. - January 12-13. - №. 3.- P. 7.

Azerbaijani monuments in Armenian occupation

By **Laman Ismayilova**

The Cultural Ministry has provided insight into historical and cultural sites located on Azerbaijan's territories occupied by Armenia.

The initiative is carried out through the project "Karabakh is the cradle of our culture" which aims at spreading facts about Armenian vandalism against Azerbaijan.

Fuzuli Museum of History and Ethnography

After the occupation of the Fuzuli region by Armenia in 1993, the Museum of History and Ethnography of Fuzuli has resumed its activities in Baku based on partially saved exhibits. A new building for the museum was built in Horadiz settlement.

Artistic design works were carried out at the museum in 2014. The area of the museum is 345 m². The museum's collection includes 5,197 exhibits.

Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque

The Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque (The Upper Govhar Agha Mosque) in Shusha was constructed by Karbalayi Safikhan Sultanhuseyn oglu Garabaghi by the instruction of Govhar agha, daughter of Ibrahimkhalil khan, in 1883-1884. A mosque had been built with cane and thatch in the place of today's mosque during the power of Panahali khan. The mosque constructed by Panahali khan was replaced with stone by Ibrahimkhalil khan in 1768.

Later, in its place, the mosque called "Yukhari Govhar Agha" was constructed that existed up until today. Armenia is willing to falsify the history by making serious changes in the interior of the mosque as "restoration". Dissemination of photos of the mosque on various internet sources proves it clearly.

Mammadbeyli tomb

The tomb, located in Mammadbeyli village of Zangilan region was built in 1305 in honor of Muhammad al-Haj's son Yahya.

The architect and builder of the tomb is Ali Majdaddin, who created monuments on the Great Silk Road during the 14th century. The current state of the tomb after the occupation of Zangilan district by Armenia is unknown.

Gargabazar Caravanserai

Although it is named after the village where the Caravanserai was built in the center of Gargabazar village of Fuzuli region in 1681, this historical monument is sometimes called Shah Abbas caravanserai.

A relic of the 17th century - Gargabazar Caravanserai was located on an ancient caravan route that was very important for the silk trade.

The caravanserai is considered one of the immovable historical monuments of Azerbaijan.

After the occupation of Gargabazar village by Armenians, they turned this historical and architectural monument into a cattle barn.

Aghdam Bread Museum

The Aghdam Bread Museum, the second bread museum in the world and the first and only in the CIS, was opened in November 1983.

Fossilized ancient grains, rare sorts of cereals, numerous valuable books on grain farming, manuscripts, also labor tools - wooden plough, threshing board, toothed sickle, reaping hook, hand-mill and thresher were among the exhibits collected in the museum.

A missile fired by Armenians on August 12, 1992, put an end to the existence of the Aghdam Bread Museum and about 1,500 exhibits in the museum were burned down.

Kalbajar Museum of History and Ethnography

Kalbajar Museum of History and Ethnography was established in 1982. After the occupation of Kalbajar region by Armenia, the museum ceased to exist, its collection was completely lost. Since 1993, the museum has

been partially restored in Baku. It is currently operating on the ground floor of a residential building in Mehdiabad. The museum houses nearly 6,237 exhibits.

Shusha Branch of the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum

The Shusha Branch of the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum began its activity on May 19, 1987 in Shusha in an 18th-century mansion owned by General Samad Bey Mehmandarov.

Because of the occupation of Karabakh by Armenia, the exhibits in the branch that could be transported were evacuated and brought to Baku. Since then, the rescued objects have been stored at the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum.

Melik Ajdar Mausoleum

Two tombs rise side by side in a large cemetery near the village of Cicimli (Dzhidzhimli) in Lachin region.

The oldest of them is a tomb monument, visited as a shrine and known to the locals as the tomb of Melik Ajdar (inv. 311). The epitaph on the tomb, built in the 14th century, is in Arabic. The inscription is not fully readable due to exposure to erosion.

Lachin Historical and Ethnographic Museum

The Lachin Museum of History and Ethnography, rich in exhibits of high artistic and historical value, was founded in 1979. More than 5,000 exhibits were collected in the main fund of the museum. In general, the museum collected around 10,000 exhibits.

As a result of the occupation of the city of Lachin by Armenia in 1992, the museum building was razed to the ground, its exhibits were destroyed and looted. More than five thousand valuable exhibits were pillaged and smuggled to Armenia and now the stolen exhibits of the Lachin Historical and Ethnographic Museum are exhibited in a number of countries "as samples of Armenian culture."

The museum has resumed its activities in Baku. The museum is mainly engaged in collecting, and so far 1089 items have been included in the museum's fund.

Azernews. - 2020. - October 22-23. - №. 69.- P.7.

**Karabakh's Azerbaijani community: Mutual visits of Azerbaijani,
Armenian journalists contribute to dialogue**

By **Abdul Kerimkhanov**

Head of the Azerbaijani community of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region Tural Ganjaliyev has said that mutual visits of Azerbaijani and Armenian journalists that were held recently under auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group, contribute to dialogue.

"The visit of Armenian journalists, including a journalist from the Armenian community of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan to Baku, Ganja and Guba, and the visit of Azerbaijani journalists to Shusha and Khankendi and meetings with the local Armenian community contribute to the dialogue between the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan," Ganjaliyev said in the statement published at the Community's website on November 26.

As was noted, a group of journalists from Azerbaijan and Armenia, including from the Armenian community of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region, has recently made mutual visits. The visits were organized by the personal representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk and his representatives in Baku, Yerevan and Khankendi.

"During the visit, Armenian journalists met with their Azerbaijani colleagues, representatives of civil society and research centers, visited Russian Orthodox, Catholic churches, Jewish synagogues peacefully functioning in the country, as well as the ASAN service, the DOST center, Ganja and Guba cities. Also, Armenian journalists were familiarized with the Armenian church in downtown Baku, which stores books in Armenian," the statement reads.

It should be noted the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh also participated in the meetings with Armenian journalists.

The statement notes that Armenian journalists got acquainted with the development of Azerbaijan, the multicultural environment in the country, became eyewitnesses of peace and stability, the state's concern for citizens and the prosperity of the regions.

"Azerbaijani journalists on OSCE vehicles visited Armenia, the occupied Shusha and Khankendi towns, met and held discussions with the Armenian community of Nagorno-Karabakh," the Community's message reads.

Ganjaliyev recalled that the Azerbaijani side has always supported and encouraged dialogue, peaceful coexistence of the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

Baku seeks to ensure equal access to negotiations of the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in the region.

The information about the mutual visit of Azerbaijani and Armenian journalists was circulated on November 23.

Three journalists from Armenia - Artem Yerkanyan, David Alaverdyan and Edgar Elbakyan visited Azerbaijan, in particular, Baku and Ganja.

On the Azerbaijani side, Elchin Valiyev, Elshan Rustamov and Orkhan Yelchuev visited Armenia and occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Nagorno-Karabakh is Azerbaijan's breakaway region which along with seven surrounding regions came under occupation of Armenian forces in a war in the early 1990s. So far, Armenia has failed to implement four UN Security Council resolutions on withdrawal of its armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions. Around one million Azerbaijanis have been expelled from their homes as a result of occupation.

The OSCE Minsk Group co-chaired by the U.S., France and Russia have been mediating the peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan for over two decades now.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT: THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

History of the conflict

Vugar PANAHOV,
Baku State University

The history of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict is connected with the policy of establishment of Great Armenia ('from sea to sea') that is being continued by Armenia today. At the beginning of XIX century, a base for further territorial pretensions of the Armenians towards Azerbaijan was laid by the Armenians' migration from Iran and Syria to the territory of Azerbaijan. That very political atmosphere was observed in the world, in particular around such states like Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the USA, Great Britain, France and Germany forced all these states to act extremely cautiously. Russian Empire was interested in establishing of so-called strong point to secure itself from the South. Such station was Armenia located between the Ottoman Empire and Azerbaijan, both of which were moslem Turkic-speaking countries. Russian Empire moving Armenians to the territory of Zangazur, Zangibasar and Vedibasar districts of Azerbaijan to the coastal territories of the lake of Geychah (now the lake of Sevan), as well as to the territory of Irevan and Garabagh khanates of Azerbaijan, promoted the appearance of the further problem reached to the XXI c.

During the centuries the Armenians migrated to the territory of Azerbaijan began to force out the Azerbaijanians from their historical territories of habitation. The first stage of creating "Great Armenia" was planned moppingUp Armenia from the Azerbaijanians.

There were four stages of driving out of the Azerbaijanians from Armenia in XX century are known as: 1)1905-1907s; 2)1918-1920s; 3)1948-1953s; 4)1988-1990s.

As a result of the Armenians' policy more than 500 thousands of Azerbaijanians were exiled during the years of 1918-1920s. As far back as in 1918 just established the Republic of Armenia began to put forth territorial pretensions against Georgia and Azerbaijan.

After the establishment of Soviet power in Azerbaijan with the support of Moscow, Armenia achieved the autonomy for Upper Garabagh.

Under the decision of the Caucasus Bureau Plenum dated June 5, 1921, Upper Garabagh was left within the Azerbaijan SSR that granted it a wide territorial autonomy.

Legislative fastening of Upper Garabagh status as an autonomous region of Azerbaijan SSR was realized on July 7, 1923 by the decree of Azerbaijan Central Executive Committee on establishment of Upper Garabagh autonomous region firstly with the centre in Shusha and then in Khankandih. In autumn, the first secretary of the Central Committee of Armenian Communist Party Arutyunov brought in the proposal on inclusion of Upper Garabagh Autonomous Region into Armenian SSR. Soviet government did not consider this matter. Last time the problem in a wider scale was raised in 1988.The Initiators of this were pro-Armenian circles of M.S.Gorbachev. On the eve of the fall of Soviet Empire the Center decided to apply to old imperial methods -"divide and rule".

All the territory of the former USSR was covered by the seats of ethnic conflicts such as the conflicts of Upper Garabagh, Georgia and Abkhazia, Predniestria and etc.

As a result, in 1988 the Supreme Soviet of Armenian SSR came to a decision to include the region of Upper Garabagh into the Armenia SSR without Azerbaijan SSR's consent.

After it, the already begun process of expatriation of the Azerbaijanians, for centuries living in the territories which today form a part of Armenia, assumed mass character. Soon after the conflict developed into a large-scale war which was continued till May 12, 1994. In this period, with Russia's assistance, Armenian side actively formed its military forces, the army was equipped by modern kinds of weapons, crew was prepared by Russian and foreign instructors. At the end of 1991 Armenian's army numbered more than 140 thousand people. This military advantage let Armenia occupy the whole territory of Upper Garabagh and to May 1992. Scorched-earth policy has been carried out in all the occupied territories. On the night of 25/26 February, 1992 Armenian aggressors with the participation of Motorized Infantry Detachment no. 366 of Russian army located at that time in Khankandi (Stepanakert) arranged a real genocide in the town of Khojalih. During the night they killed 613 people, where 63 of them were children, 106 women, 70 old men, 55 people were killed with peculiar cruelty, 8 families were annihilated completely, and 150 people missed. Monstrous mockeries over the alive and the dead bodies took place as well.

A part of Khojalih's population was captivated, and another part was missed. Khojalih events are bright evidence of genocide policy carried out by Armenia towards Azerbaijani people. Armenian occupational forces captured the town of Shusha. It was the last town in Upper Garabagh populated by the Azerbaijanians and thereby, the Armenians reached the border of Upper Garabagh region.

But thereafter, the occupation went on with the towns of Lachin, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fizulih, Jabrayil, Gubadli, Zangilan located beyond the administrative border of Upper Garabagh region. The occupation of these seven towns henceforth confirmed the Armenian occupational policy in the whole. Armenian invaders had occupied 20% of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan to May 1994, and more than 1mln Azerbaijanians became internally displaced persons and forced migrants. 750 settlements, 4 thousand industrial and agricultural enterprises, 180 thousand civil buildings, about one thousand educational objects, 700 medical institutions, mosques, fortresses, historical and cultural monuments were left under Armenian occupation. Casualties were more than 25 thousand people, more than 50 thousand people became disabled persons, and 5 thousand of our compatriots were captured.

In 1993-1994 President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev repeatedly addressed with letters to the UN Security Council, OSCE Minsk Group, and heads of states with the purpose to prevent war escalation, against Azerbaijan.

As a result, UN Security Council accepted 4 resolutions (No.822 in April, nN.853 in July, No.874 in October and No.884 in November) in 1993, demanding an immediate cessations of hostilities, withdrawal of occupational forces from the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, restoration of its territorial integrity and returning of refugees to their own territories was attracted in these resolutions. But Armenia is still ignoring all these resolutions.

And on May 12, 1994 the ceasefire agreement has been reached as a result of hard negotiation.

In early 1992, OSCE Minsk Group was established whose task was the regulation of Upper Garabagh conflict. It consisted of 11 states and the institute of OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen with participation of Russia, USA and France. Co-chairmen advanced 3 real proposals to date. For now by cochairman put forward three real proposals. The first two proposals - "The Package" and "By stages" were admitted by Azerbaijan side with certain reservations as the base of conflict regulation. But Armenia did not agree with these proposals.

The third proposal conditionally called "Common State" infringing upon the national interests of Azerbaijani side. That's why Azerbaijani side declined present proposal.

The conflict has not been regulated up to now because of the Armenia's nonconstructive position. International organizations which treating indifferent to this conflict are also guilty on some degree. As regards this, former Prime Minister and incumbent President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev who addressing to 58th session of UN General Assembly said: 'I have to note with great regret that the passive attitude of the world community to the problem promotes increasing of Armenia's presumption in realization of its destructive policy. Both OSCE Minsk Group and UN Security Council retreated in the face of the aggressor and, thereby prejudiced their ability to carry out serious aims and functions.

Aggressor's impunity prejudices not only international security but also the principles and norms of international law. Such kind of attitude in most cases attitude costs dearly to the international community.

World community has to realize that in the presence of such kind of conflicts with them could make international security hard reached aim of course.

Therefore in order to speak on such notions like collaboration, territorial inviolability of the frontiers it is necessary for the first time to call the aggressor in the person of Armenia to an account.

The origin of the idea on national self-determination goes back to the Age of Enlightenment and is connected with the names of such thinkers as Lock, Gracy, de Vattel, and Russo. Public idea of leading! European states came to denial of] absolutism and tried to substantiate theoretically "people's sovereignty" through the theory of'naturalright'.

There was declared in the first French Constitution adopted on September 3, 1791 that: firstly, all people are free and have equal rights since their birthday; secondly, the aim of each state is 'providing of natural and inalienable human rights' and, finally, the source of sovereignty is based in nation in essence'. Founders of USA who were fighting for independence of North American states from England hold the same opinion; some earlier than in Europe they consolidated an idea of self-determination in their Declaration of Independence announcing the right of people to change or annul the form of government if it had become ruinous for providing of "inalienable rights" granted by the Creator'. They reckoned the right for freedom and aspiration for the happiness.

The term of "Nations self-determination" for the first time was announced during the Berlin Congress in

1878, approximately at the same time the concept of the right to 'self-determination' was put in operation, "Nations right" by the II Congress of International' in 1896..

The present principle appeared in the period when colonialism reached its apogee in the world. In this period the peoples being under the yoke of colonial states were waging a fight against such type of exploitation. United Nations Organization was established in 1945. The "Principle of equality and self-determination of peoples" the aim of which was defence of interests of the peoples of colonies and assistance to their liberation was in its Statue (i.2 art.I).

After 1955 the works were carried out on creating of norms in some concrete fields of international law on the basis of the UN Charter. So, in 1960 was accepted the Declaration on Concession of Independence to Colonial States and Peoples (Resolution no. 1514 (XV) of General Assembly) that which was being considered as an official interpretation of content of peoples' self-determination principle by UN.

Armenia affirms that they (Garabagh's Armenians) act under the principle of equality and self-determination of peoples to legalize their acts contradicting to international law. They also assert that this principle is directed to the defence of their rights and there is no question of violation of norms of international law.

There is of course a necessity to consider the present principle more thoroughly.

A whole series of documents of such kinds regarding to self-determination problem followed the adoption of UN GA resolution no.1514 (XV): resolution no.1803 (XVII) on Inalienable Sovereignty on Natural Resources dated December 14, 1962, resolution no.2105 (XX) on Fulfillment of Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial States and Peoples dated December 20, 1965 (legality of fight of peoples who are under the colonial supremacy for the right of self-determination was admitted and all the peoples were proposed to render them a material and moral support in this document and etc.).

The contents of the principle were firstly disclosed in Declaration on the Principles of International Law Regarding Friendly Attitude and Collaboration between States according to UN Statue dated October 24, 1970 (Declaration on Principles of International Law 1970). The process of decolonization underwent actively in this period that assisted to the determination of the principle trend. 'All the peoples have the right to determine freely their political course without interference from without and carry out their economic, social and cultural development...!'

The international Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966 (Section 1, Art.I, i.1), OSCE Final Act 1975, i.VIII, Paris Charter for New Europe 1990, Vena Declaration and Action Program on modern international law adopted on Worldwide Conference on Human Rights on July 23, 1993 in Vena also announced this as well.

Let us concern the applicability of the present principle towards the Upper Garabagh conflict.

As it was mentioned above the contents of the principle were firstly disclosed minutely in the Declaration on the Principles of International Law in 1970. There announced: 'Every state has to assist to the realization of the principle of equality and self-determination of peoples by means of mutual and independent actions according to provisions of the Statue and to render assistance to UN in carrying out the obligations entrusted by the Statue regarding to fulfillment of present principle with the aim to:

c) Put an end to colonialism immediately, meaning peoples' subjection to foreign yoke, rule and exploitation contradicts to the Statue of United Nations Organizations'.

As it became clear that the principle firstly directs against colonialism. Now we live in XXI century and talking about colonialism is rather ridiculous. The upper Garabagh is an integral part of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

G.B.Starushenko writes: 'It is possible to talk about nation's right only in that case when only one nation lives within self-determined territory'. But we deal with the territory where the nationality of the majority of resident population is the Azerbaijanians.

The declaration of principles of the international law of 1970 states that '...all the nations have a right to determine their political status without any interference in any form...'. Therefore, as Upper Garabagh refers to Azerbaijan territory, foreign interference is out of question.

In application of this principle even to the colonial nations the right to self-determination should .not be exercised at the expense or to the prejudice of another people (nation) inhabiting in the same territory. Otherwise according to English international law expert I. Brownlie, 'as to violation of settled and generally recognized rules of the international law (jus cogens), the legalization of such violation by subsequent recognition or acquiescence is less likely'; in other words jus ex injuria non oritur (a right cannot arise from delinquency). Armenia did the same. Stating that it favoured the provision of the execution of self-determination principle by Garabagh Armenians, Armenia disrupted the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan and violated a number of

main principles of the international law including the principle of use of force and threat, the principle of respect for human rights, the principle of inviolability of frontiers, and of course one of the main principles violated by the Armenian side is the principle of territorial integrity. Addressing to the 49th Session of the UN General Assembly, the national leader of the Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev said: 'The Republic of Armenia under the pretext of realization of right to self-determination of the ethnic Armenian group inhabiting the Upper Garabagh region of Azerbaijan, obviously realizes the plans of the annexation of the territory of Azerbaijan, on the forcible change of its frontiers and banishment of Azerbaijan people from its native land'.

All this is covered up by arbitrary interpretation of people's right to self-determination as a right of any ethnic community to declare its independence itself and enter the territory of another country. Such interpretation of the right to self-determination contradicts the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state. Any efforts to absolutize the right leads to severe conflicts, which we witnessed in our region and other parts of our country'.

Former UN General Secretary Butros Gali also expressed his concerns on this issue: 'if each ethnic, religious or linguistic group demands statehood, then the separation will be endless and the achievement of peace, security and economic well-fare in the world will be more difficult'.

So, the Armenian side wants to create a right from delinquency. But the declaration of the principles of international law - 1970 (Resolution 2625 (XXV)) states that the General Assembly proceeding on the idea that 'the principle of equality and self-determination of nations is the significant contribution to the modern international law and that its sufficient application is of paramount importance to the assistance to development of relations among countries based on respect for the principle of sovereign equality, is confirmed that any effort directed to at partial or full violation of national unity and territorial integrity of a state or a country as well as of their political independence is incompatible with the aims and principles of the Charter'.

Except of all these the declaration of the 1970 and the other statutory acts adopted on the basis of the Declaration and the UN Charter, fix the important restrictive rule:

'Nothing in the given above principles should be interpreted as confirmation or encouragement of any actions which may lead to partition of territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent countries observing in their actions the principle of equality and self-determination of nations, as it is stated above, and as a result, having the governments representing all the nation inhabiting on the territory irrespective of race, religion, and colour'.

Thus, it is recognized that only the nations dependent of a colony or foreign country have a right to 'outer' self-determination; it is 'indirectly' recognized that a part independent country's population can exercise the right when it is impossible to realize internal self-determination, that is to participate equally in the administration of the country.

According to the item 1 of the article 54 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan of 1995 'Citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan have a right to impartially participate in the political life of the society and state'. Item 1, article 55 states that the 'Citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan have a right to participate in the administration of the country'. (The provision is fixed in the General Declaration of Human Rights 1948)

As it is obvious from the above mentioned, all the citizens of Azerbaijan Republic without any distinction as to race, religion and nationality have equal rights and obligations. As it is noted by E.H. Arechaga 'government of the country, which along with others, observes the main postulate of self-determination (that is, presentation of the whole nation in the government) automatically becomes protected by the preventive clause from the claim for self-determination and separation by a part or group of population inhabiting the territory'.

It would be important to touch upon the subject of separation. As it is known, the Azerbaijan side has more than once proposed the highest autonomous status for the Upper Garabagh, which stipulates all the conditions for self-determination within the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan. However, the Armenian side sticking to its separatist ideas keeps to the position of separation of Upper Garabagh region from the Republic of Azerbaijan and of making of Upper Garabagh an independent country or of joining it to Armenia. But the Republic of Azerbaijan will never agree with this as this contradicts to both the international law and the national interests of our Republic.

According to Paris Charter for New Europe (the total document of UNOSC, adopted in Paris on November 21, 1990), member-states of the Council, standing up for the strengthening of the world and security declared the following: 'We again confirm the equality of nations and their rights to master of their own destiny, in accordance with the UN Charter and corresponding rules of the international law, including those which refer to the territorial integrity of states'.

It becomes obvious from the above stated that in the execution of right to self-determination international law does not allow substitution of self-determination separation. The eminent American lawyer Max M. Kampelman notes that, 'unlike the right to self-determination, recognized in international law and reflected on the UN Charter and other important sources, right to separation is not right stipulated in the international law'. Kampelman also noted the inadmissibility of inclusion of right to separation into the principle of self-determination. It is very important order to avoid the violence and chaos in the world policy.

'The declaration of rights of people referring to national or ethnic religious and linguistic minorities adopted in 1992 by the UN states that 'nothing contained in the declaration authorize any activity contradicting to the goals and principles of the United Nations Organization including the principles of respect for sovereign equality and political independence of the countries', Comments to the mentioned Declaration clearly highlights that 'the right of minorities could not serve as the basis for claims for separation from the country and its partition'. The same conclusion was reflected in the general recommendation No XXI (48) of the UN Committee for the elimination of racial discrimination, which also states 'the international law does not recognize the rights of nations to unilateral separation from either country'.

The international law experts studying this issue say the right of nation to separation is recognized in the following cases:

1) when the people inhabiting the states, the constitution of which directly stipulates the right to separation in the realization of right to self-determination; 2) when the nation inhabiting the territory occupied or annexed after the adoption of UN Charter, i.e. after the year 1945; 3) the right of colonized nations or nations dependent on a foreign country; 4) when the nation inhabiting the states, where authorities do not observe the principle of equality and self-determination of nations.

Basing on the above stated rules of the international law and other sources of modern international law we confidently said that the principle of self-determination is inapplicable to Upper Garabagh conflict. Therefore, the actions of Armenian side basing on the international law are out of question. The aggression, breach of territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, mass violation of human rights in the person of 2mln Azerbaijani refugees and displaced persons. The responsibility for these violations rests on the Armenian side. Armenia should treat the problem with necessary understanding, otherwise such a condition is not in its favor of course.

Being an aggressor Armenia tries to pass the actions contradicting the norms of international law as the actions on national minorities in the person of Armenians inhabiting the Garabagh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan, aimed at the acquisition of independence. But the world community recognizes the fact that it is another unsuccessful policy of Armenia. Armenia not only supports the Armenian separatists but also actively participates in continuing occupation as a maternal country'.

'Finding of constructive solutions depends on all the involved countries. The wrong impression that the blame for the existing situation lies with the governments or with the majority of population and that the adaptation effort should be made only on this part. However even in the superficial examination of the situation in the world it is possible to note existence of a number of minorities, which pursue extremely provocative and violent policy. Sometimes they stake that if their provocative actions at worst leads to a large-scale military conflict with the majority of population threatening the basis of their existence itself an external force, either 'the parental country' or any other foreign formation will come to their aid. Such policy is very dangerous'.

Direct participation of Armenia in the occupation of Azerbaijan territories was also confirmed by PASE D. Atkinson: 'According to the information given to me, in the military battles for Upper Garabagh region beside the local Armenians the Armenians from Armenia also took part. At present, soldiers from Armenia are dislocated in the Upper Garabagh region and adjacent areas, the people living in the region are the holders of Armenian passport, and the Armenian government transfers significant budget funds to the zone'.

PASE spoke very strongly on this issue and unequivocally emphasized in the resolution No 1416 adopted on January 25, 2005 the responsibility of Armenia for the occupation of Azerbaijan according to the international law, and declared the process that followed the separation of Upper Garabagh from Azerbaijan as an illegal.

This one is repeatedly proves that the world community interprets everything as it is, and confirms that violation of such generally admitted rules and principles of the international law as inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity of the states will not stay unpunished.

Azerbaijan has repeatedly impressed its commitment to the rules and principles of international law in the settlement of conflicts by means of rules and principles of the international law. But the patience of the Azerbaijan people is endless and let nobody try to abuse it.

The Republic of Azerbaijan can any time exercise its rights to restore its territorial integrity basing on the

principles and rules of the international law. And this day is not so far...

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DAĞLIQ QARABAĞ MÜNAQİŞƏSİ: BƏRABƏRLİK VƏ ÖZ MÜQƏDDƏ-RATINI TƏYİNƏTMƏ HÜQUQU. *Vüqar Pənahov.* Məqalə Ermənistan - Azərbaycan, Dağlıq Qarabağ münaqişəsinin genezisinə həsr olunub. Müəllif beynəlxalq hüququn millətlərin öz müqəddəratını təyinetmə və dövlətin ərazi bütövlüyünün qorunması hüququ kimi prinsiplərini ətraflı təhlil edir.

НАГОРНО-КАРАБАХСКИЙ КОНФЛИКТ: ПРИНЦИП РАВЕНСТВА И

САМООПРЕДЕЛЕНИЯ. *Вюгар Панахов.* Статья посвящена генезису ар мяно-азербайджанского нагорно-карабахского конфликта. Автор подробно останавливается на анализе таких принципов международного права, как право наций на самоопределение и соблюдение территориальной целостности государства.

Dirçəliş-XXI əsr.-2009.-№135-136.-S.391-401.

President: EU accept post-conflict realities

President Ilham Aliyev has said that the European Union, international organizations and neighbours have accepted the realities of the period following the war with Armenia in 2020.

He made the remarks at a meeting dedicated to the results of the first quarter of 2022.

“Our contacts with the European Union have intensified after the war. The European Union has also accepted the realities of the post-conflict period. At the initiative of the President of the European Council, Mr. Charles Michel, trilateral meetings were held in December [2021] and April [2022],” Aliyev said.

Aliyev emphasized that the final communiqué issued in Brussels on April 6 did not include the term “Nagorno-Karabakh.”

“Both the experts and the Azerbaijani public could see that the final communiqué did not contain the expression ‘Nagorno-Karabakh’, which is quite natural. Because Azerbaijan expressed its protest, so there is no word ‘conflict’ either. This is natural because there is no conflict. The conflict has been resolved,” he said.

The president underlined the world's leading international organizations have recognized the new realities as well.

“First of all, an international event has recently been held in Shusha under the UN auspices - an event dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Azerbaijan’s membership in the UN. It was a very significant event. It showed yet again that the UN is a body that fully recognizes the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan,” he said.

Furthermore, Aliyev stated that all neighboring countries have accepted the new post-conflict realities, which he described as a very positive development.

“At the same time, we are pleased with the launch of the 3+3 cooperation format. The first such meeting has been held. There was no agenda for the first meeting, as it was simply a meeting to create this format. We have plans for the second meeting and [agenda] what issues should be discussed there,” he said.

Armenia accepts five principles

He said that the European Union is now working on normalizing Azerbaijani-Armenian relations and added that these issues were discussed at the April meeting.

The president emphasized that Armenia welcomed Azerbaijan's proposal to normalize relations between the two countries, which consisted of five principles.

“Armenia accepts the five principles. So the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is recognized and Armenia renounces its territorial claims to Azerbaijan. In other words, if it accepts the five principles – as it was confirmed at the April meeting – then these are part of these five principles,” he said.

The president underlined that this is a key condition for normalizing bilateral relations. He also added that it was agreed that working groups would be formed on the border issues and the preparation of a peace agreement. In this regard, he noted that the working groups to be set up by late April should start their work soon.

“As you know, the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia have recently had a telephone conversation, which I think was the first time it happened in the last 30 years. We also welcome that,” Aliyev said.

OSCE Minsk Group

Aliyev stressed that the OSCE has fully accepted the new realities.

“I recently had a meeting with the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, and the meeting once again showed that the OSCE also fully accepts the new realities, and this is a very significant event,” he said.

He recalled that immediately after the war, the Minsk Group co-chairs arrived in Baku, adding that it was their first and last visit to Azerbaijan after the war.

Noting that Azerbaijan’s position has always been unequivocal, Aliyev underlined that Azerbaijan had resolved this conflict on its own.

“The Minsk Group was active for 28 years before the second Karabakh war. The co-chair countries have probably made hundreds of visits to Azerbaijan and Armenia over the years. The result is obvious. The result was zero,” he said.

The president added that while the mandate given to the Minsk Group to resolve the conflict is de jure in force, it is already de facto invalid.

“Under the current circumstances, the Minsk Group and its co-chairs are virtually non-functional. This has already been stated by high-ranking officials of these co-chair countries. Therefore, of course, there can be no talk of any group activity,” he said.

He emphasized that the current issue is the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. Aliyev stated that any international organization that can help in this area is certainly welcome to do so. He added that the OSCE can play a role as a credible international organization.

“As I mentioned, during my recent meetings with the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office I stated that the civil society representatives, the media and other influential public figures could hold meetings within the framework of the OSCE, i.e. within this format so that Armenian-Azerbaijani relations could be normalized,” he said.

Region’s future development

Aliyev emphasized that Azerbaijan is in favor of doing tangible work and has a clear vision for the region's future development.

He stated that the majority of the work was completed in 2021, with some completed in the first three months of this year.

“This gives us the opportunity to say, if all this is implemented, that there will be peace in the region, in the whole of the South Caucasus, there will be calm, the risks of war will be greatly reduced, and we can live comfortably,” he said.

The president expressed confidence that Azerbaijan will grow even stronger and stressed that despite 30 years of occupation of its lands, Azerbaijan has achieved full political and economic independence.

In this regard, the president emphasized that Armenia's occupation, ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijanis in the early 1990s, the Khojaly genocide, and Armenian savagery must never be forgotten.

Armenia's armament

The president stressed that in order to establish peace in the region, the process of arming Armenia must be stopped.

“Armenia does not have the money to buy weapons. It never did. In the second Karabakh war, we destroyed Armenia’s military equipment worth about \$4-5 billion. Some of this equipment was taken as spoils of war, and we are using it. Some of it is displayed in the Military Trophies Park. The question is: where does so much money come from in a poor country? Where do these loans come from? Were these loans then repaid or written off?” he said.

He added that if those loans had not been made available to them, there would have been no need for the second Karabakh war.

“Armenia would have meekly come to us seeking an agreement, just as it did when signing the act of capitulation, accepting all our conditions and acting completely differently after the war. Therefore, if money is allocated for the armament of Armenia again, we will consider it as an unfriendly step and will take our steps accordingly,” he added.

Double standards

Stressing that Azerbaijan has not received a single manat in support from anyone, the president added that “no one is helping us, neither during nor after the occupation”.

“In fact, most countries did not even want to call the occupation an occupation,” he said.

Aliyev recalled Azerbaijan's participation in international organizations and bilateral talks during the occupation, noting that it took tremendous effort to incorporate Azerbaijan's territorial integrity principle into those declarations.

He added that “many were refusing, however, it was clear as a day who is the occupier and who is the occupied country”.

“This is double standards, this is injustice. We are still seeing that today, in the Russian-Ukrainian war. In the past, when we were liberating our lands from occupation using the famous ‘Bayraktar’ drones, foreign experts and the media were describing it as a deadly weapon. In the Russian-Ukrainian war, it is called an angel. This is the difference, this is double standards, this is injustice towards us,” he said.

He expressed the hope that international organizations, large foundations, and international non-governmental organizations engaged in charity will heed attention.

“It has been about a year and a half since the war ended. Not a single foundation has helped us. More than 200 people have been killed or seriously injured since the war ended. There are so many foundations and NGOs in the world that deal with this issue. What are they doing? Let them come and help us,” he said.

Noting that Azerbaijan has purchased machinery, equipment and even drones capable of detecting land contaminated with mines, Aliyev stressed that there are not enough specialists, not enough manpower.

“Therefore, let them at least help us in this area. I repeat that we will restore everything on our own anyway,” he said.

Aliyev underlined that Azerbaijan will rebuild both Karabakh and Zangazur as an exemplary region where Azerbaijani citizens will live comfortably and prosperously.

“But my appeal is to international organizations. Those involved in human rights, those championing the principles of justice should pay at least some attention to Azerbaijan and avoid double standards,” he said.

Non-Aligned Movement, Organization of Islamic Cooperation

Noting that Azerbaijan currently chairs the Non-Aligned Movement, the president recalled that with the consent and support of all member states, the chairmanship has been extended for another year.

“This is a manifestation of the great confidence shown to us. The Non-Aligned Movement has demonstrated a fair stance on the past conflict immediately after Azerbaijan became a member of this movement, and I believe that further important events have taken place in this direction since the end of the war,” he said.

Speaking about the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Aliyev noted that during the occupation the OIC adopted numerous resolutions in support of Azerbaijan’s position.

“At a recent meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation at the level of foreign ministers, several other resolutions were adopted in support of Azerbaijan's position, including one dwelling upon the destruction of Azerbaijan's historical and religious sites by Armenians,” he said.

Azernews. – 2022. – April 15-21. - №18. – P. 1,2.

Shusha to host major cultural events

By Laman Ismayilova

Shusha is often considered the cradle of Azerbaijan's music and poetry.

Many prominent musicians like Bulbul (Nightingale), Seyid Shushinski, Khan Shushinski, Uzeyir Hajibayli, Rashid Behbudov, Niyazi, Fikrat Amirov as well as the outstanding writers and thinkers including Khurshidbanu Natavan, Gasim Bay Zakir, Suleyman Sani Akhundov were also born in this iconic place.

The city's historical and cultural riches have turned it into a prominent cultural center.

By the presidential order, 2022 has been declared the Year of Shusha in Azerbaijan.

In response to the announcement, the Azerbaijani Culture Ministry is planning a number of cultural events and projects.

Many cultural projects will be carried out by the Culture Ministry in order to revitalize Shusha's cultural traditions.

Khari Bulbul Music Festival

As in the previous year, Shusha will host the Khari Bulbul International Music Festival.

The cultural event used to be held in Shusha every year before the city's occupation by Armenian forces in 1992. The festival was resumed after Shusha's liberation on November 8, 2020.

Last year, the anticipated festival brought together music groups of different nations living in Azerbaijan on Jidir (Jydyr) Plain.

The festival featured folk and classical music concerts in the midst of the breathtaking nature.

The audience also enjoyed the traditional music of different peoples living in Azerbaijan.

The concert themed "Multiculturalism in Azerbaijani music" conveyed the message to the whole world that everyone, regardless of nationality or religion, has a single homeland.

Vagif Poetry Days

The Vagif Poetry Days will once again welcome its guests in 2022.

Until 1991, the cultural event was held annually in Azerbaijan on late national leader Heydar Aliyev's relevant instructions.

In 2021, the Vagif Poetry Days were held for the first time after so many years.

The Vagif Poetry Days were held outside the Molla Panah Vagif Museum-Mausoleum after its reconstruction.

The mausoleum on the grave of the Azerbaijani poet and statesman was built through instructions of the national leader Heydar Aliyev in 1982.

Eye-catching performances, colorful exhibitions, literary symposiums and heart-touching poems were greeted with great interest by the guests of the Vagif Poetry Days 2021.

Khurshidbanu Natavan Festival of Poetry

The city of Shusha will host another literary festival this year. The Khurshidbanu Natavan Festival of Poetry will be held in the city to mark the poetess's 190th anniversary.

Khurshidbanu Natavan, the daughter of Mehdi Gulu-khan, the last ruler of the Karabakh khanate is considered one of the best Azerbaijani lyrical poets.

The legendary poetess was a great example of intelligence, aristocracy, philanthropy, and classic poetry.

Known as a prominent educator of her time, public figure, philanthropist, she won nationwide love. The legendary poetess left a deep trace in the country's cultural and public life.

For the first time, the literary festival will be held in the poetess's homeland. Famous cultural figures will take part in the event.

Uzeyir Hajibayli International Music Festival

Many concerts within the Uzeyir Hajibayli International Music Festival will be held in Shusha.

Since September 18, 1995, Uzeyir Hajibayli's birthday has been celebrated in Azerbaijan as the Day of the National Music.

In 2021, the festival's first concert was held in Shusha.

The State Song and Dance Ensemble performed at the concert under the baton of People's Artist Agaverdi Pashayev.

People's Artist Mansur Ibrahimov, Honored Artists Gochag Asgarov, Anar Shushali, Nargiz Karimova, Arzu Aliyeva and others pleased the audience with unique examples of Azerbaijan's national music.

Public figures also visited the house of People's Artist Bulbul and Natavan spring, and laid flowers in front of the statues of poetess Natavan, Uzeyir Hajibayli and singer Bulbul.

Cultural gems of Shusha city

The Culture Ministry has launched a new project "Cultural gems of Shusha city".

The project will consist of seven sections for a wide coverage of the city's rich cultural heritage: "Chronicle of Shusha's architecture", "Temple of Azerbaijani music - Shusha", "The hearth of mugham - Shusha", "The school of Karabakh carpet weaving - Shusha", "Literary life of Shusha", "People of Shusha", "Shusha's style of clothing".

Shusha Calling

A radio programme "Shusha Calling" has been launched in Azerbaijan

The radio project is initiated by the Culture Ministry, the State Service for Protection, Development and Restoration of Cultural Heritage as well as AzerNyuMedia and Avto FM.

The project will consist of five parts dedicated to Shusha's culture, history and lifestyle.

The radio programme is aired every Friday. The project manager is Kamran Gasimov, presenter - RJ Yaqut, sound engineer - Yashar Bakhish, consultant - historian Elchin Ahmadov.

Azernews. – 2022. – April 22-28. - № 19. – P.7.

Shusha. Cultural Capital of Turkic World 2023

By Laman Ismayilova

Shusha, known as the pearl of Karabakh, is one of the symbols of Azerbaijan's history and culture.

Founded by Panahali Khan in 1752, the city is replete with historical marvels exuding an epitome of the country's history.

The year 2022 marks the 270th anniversary of the foundation of the city.

The ancient monuments in Shusha offer an insight into the city's history and culture.

Azerbaijan's cultural capital is home to some fascinating sights like Shusha Castle, Bulbul's House-Museum, Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque, Ashaghi Govhar Agha Mosque, etc.

Considering its historical and cultural significance, the city of Shusha has been declared the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023.

The decision was made by the TURKSOY Permanent Council at an extraordinary meeting in Bursa, the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2022.

The meeting chaired by the Term Coordinator of the Permanent Council of TURKSOY and Turkish Minister of Culture and Tourism Mehmet Nuri Ersoy gathered Azerbaijani Culture Minister Anar Karimov, Secretary-General of the Organization of Turkic States Bagdad Amreyev, Secretary-General of TURK-PA (Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking Countries) Mehmet Sureyya Er, Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation President Gunay Afandiyeva and other officials.

At the meeting, Culture Minister Anar Karimov suggested that the city of Shusha in Azerbaijan be declared Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023 and made a presentation on the history of Shusha as well as its cultural heritage and natural landscapes.

The presentation was followed by voting of the TURKSOY Permanent Council as a result of which the city of Shusha in Azerbaijan was unanimously selected as Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023.

The announcement of Shusha city as the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023 gives grounds to say that the ancient city rises from the ashes.

Major work is carried out to restore historical, cultural and religious sights in the city liberated from almost three decades of the Armenian occupation.

Numerous cultural and sports events will be held in the city, including joint projects with the Turkic-speaking states.

At the same time, President Ilham Aliyev signed an order declaring the city of Shusha as Azerbaijan's cultural capital in order to restore Shusha's historical appearance, bring its former glory to the city as well reunite it with the traditionally rich cultural life.

Now Azerbaijan is determined to bring back life to the formerly occupied territories and to turn the city into the major cultural center.

Azernews. – 2022. – April 22-28. - № 19. – P.3.

Victory Congress in Shusha: Major milestone in post-war history

By Sabina Mammadli

The Azerbaijanis worldwide, who played a pivotal role in the country won in the 44-day war with Armenia, will soon come together in the cultural capital Shusha.

As outlined by President Ilham Aliyev, courageous protests of compatriots living abroad against the insidious provocations of the enemy and anti-Azerbaijani circles during the Patriotic War, their selfless service in conveying the truth about Azerbaijan to the world community have made a sizable contribution to the November 2020 victory.

The Shusha-based event is expected to draw 400 diaspora representatives from 65 countries. The preparations for the congress are nearing completion. The congress participants will first visit Baku's Alley of Honors, then the Alleys of Martyrs I and II before departing for Shusha.

Following the official opening ceremony, there will be a report on the activities of the State Committee on Work with Diaspora, discussions on "Challenges facing the Azerbaijani Diaspora in the post-war period", and "Contributions of the Azerbaijani Diaspora to the restoration and reconstruction of Karabakh".

History of World Azerbaijani Congress

Any country's diaspora reflects its power, diversity, and strength. The formation of the Azerbaijani diaspora began on February 1, 1949, with the establishment of the "Azerbaijan Culture Circle" in Ankara, Turkey. In 1956, Saleh bay Sheykhzamanli founded the "Azerbaijan Society of America" in the United States.

World War II marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the Azerbaijan Diaspora. Because of the number of Azerbaijanis taken hostage during the war and those who had to flee to Europe for various reasons after the war, the number of our compatriots living abroad increased dramatically during that time period. Then came the repressions, which resulted in an increase in the number of Azerbaijanis living abroad.

National leader Heydar Aliyev played an indispensable part in the formation of the Azerbaijani diaspora.

Heydar Aliyev worked hard in the 1970s and 1980s to preserve the people's historical memory, develop culture, and popularize Azerbaijan around the world. The formation of the Azerbaijan Cultural Relations Society with the assistance of Azerbaijanis living abroad (the society "Veten" (Motherland)) served to unite compatriots and their relationships with the Motherland. Heydar Aliyev, the country's leader, paid special attention to the expansion of scientific-intellectual potential. Hundreds of Azerbaijanis were able to further their education in the USSR's progressive educational institutions as a result of his efforts.

Heydar Aliyev's speech in Moscow on the January 20th tragedy sparked the organization of all Azerbaijanis around the world.

In addition, in November 2001, Baku hosted the I Congress of World Azerbaijanis. The Congress was significant in terms of uniting all Azerbaijanis living abroad around a common goal: the concept of a single Azerbaijanihood, and it laid the groundwork for a qualitatively new stage in history of the Diaspora movement.

The "State Policy Regarding Azerbaijanis Living in Foreign Countries" law, which was passed in December 2002, identified a priority area and legal principles in this field.

Speaking at the First Congress, the national leader described it as a landmark event in the history of independent Azerbaijan, as well as the history of Azerbaijanis all over the world.

"I want to say it again from the bottom of my heart: each person's nationality is a source of pride for him. I have always been proud, and I am proud today to be an Azerbaijani," he said in his speech.

Following congresses

This is not the first World Azerbaijanis' Congress held in the aftermath of a significant historical event. There appears to be a pattern in this regard. Thus, the previous, fourth congress was held in June 2016, just two months after the successful April battles, which laid the groundwork for future victory and, to some extent, began to change the aura surrounding the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

To give a brief history of these congresses, they were previously held every five years, but the 44-day war and subsequent developments forced a slight change in the schedule this time. There was active work for six years. Thus, 14 coordinating councils covering 31 countries have been established over the past four years, and 18 Azerbaijani houses have been established in 12 countries around the world, including Estonia, Poland, Hungary,

Germany, Ukraine, Turkey, Georgia, and Greece. Azerbaijani "Karabakh" schools have been established abroad at the initiative of First Vice-President Mehriban Aliyeva, teaching over 250 children in their native language.

As mentioned above, 2001 was a very important year in terms of the formation of Azerbaijani diaspora organizations. After the first congress, in 2002, the State Committee for Work with Azerbaijanis Living Abroad (now the State Committee for Work with the Diaspora) was established. Over the past years, the number of diaspora structures has increased. If during the first congress there were a little more than 200 of them, then by 2016, that is, by the World Azerbaijanis' Fourth Congress, Azerbaijanis were already united in 462 organizations.

President Ilham Aliyev stated in his speech at the IV Congress about the Diaspora's tasks that not only the older but also the younger generation of the Diaspora should be connected with Azerbaijan, primarily through knowledge of their native language.

During the congress, the president focused particularly on the issue of unity.

"I really want the diaspora organizations operating abroad to hit one point, to consolidate. In this case, they will become even stronger; respect for them will increase in society. If the public of foreign countries sees that Azerbaijani diaspora organizations do not get along with each other, they act against each other, that will not be good. There are a few cases like this. But today I would like to touch on this topic from this rostrum and note that unity is the main issue," President Ilham Aliyev said.

Significance of fifth World Azerbaijanis congress

The activity of the diaspora during the Patriotic war was especially notable. Approximately 200 rallies were held in over 30 countries around the world, with tens of thousands of our compatriots and friends of Azerbaijan taking part. Azerbaijani communities went to great lengths to inform the world about the truth about the war. Some 300 diaspora organizations in more than 50 countries sent statements and appeals to heads of state, members of parliament, and international organizations, which were also invaluable.

The fact that the fifth Congress coincides with the large-scale reconstruction of our liberated lands is significant both historically and symbolically. It is also known as the Victory Congress.

The main topics of discussion will be the tasks confronting the Azerbaijani diaspora in the postwar period, as well as the Azerbaijani diaspora's contribution to the restoration and reconstruction of Karabakh. Notably, these are the most pressing issues on the minds of Azerbaijanis around the world today.

First Deputy Chairman of the Azerbaijan State Committee on Work with Diaspora Valeh Hajiyev has shared that the congress will be held from April 22 through April 23

"The congress in Shusha will become the Victory Congress. Important decisions will be made that will determine the activities of the diaspora at this forum, organized in the cultural capital of Azerbaijan and the Turkic world," Hajiyev said.

President Ilham Aliyev's purposeful activity, leadership, resolute defense of our national interests, and well-thought-out and determined policy made this a reality.

Kharibulbul festival wraps up in Shusha

By Laman Ismayilova

World-famous musicians gathered in Shusha to join the 5th Kharibulbul International Music Festival.

The large-scale festival brought together Azerbaijani and international musicians from ten countries in Azerbaijan's cultural cradle, Azernews reported.

The history behind Kharibulbul Festival

The festival was first held in 1989 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the renowned mugham singer Seyid Shushinski.

The folk ensembles from the Netherlands, Germany, Israel, and Turkey were invited to take part in the festival's second edition.

Many concerts during the festival were also held in Barda and Agjabadi regions. In total, the second festival was attended by about 170 delegates from different countries.

The final concerts of the second and third festivals were held at the Heydar Aliyev Palace in Baku.

The event was held annually in May until 1992 when the city was captured by Armenia.

The music festival was resumed last year by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation after Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War.

Kharibulbul Festival 2022

In 2022, the festival once again welcomed folk ensembles from Azerbaijan and other countries.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva attended the opening of the festival.

Azerbaijan held the 5th Kharibulbul International Music Festival in its cultural capital in the Year of Shusha and was timed to the 270th anniversary of Shusha.

The festival was remembered for its spectacular pop and folk-jazz concert on Jidir Duzu plain.

Well-known mugham singer, Honored Artist Gochag Asgarov, famous tar performer Arslan Novrasli, and his ethno-jazz band as well as Jangi Pop and Folklore Ensemble conducted by People's Artist Mirjavad Jafarov performed at the gala concert.

Young composer and pianist Etibar Asadli and the TRIGAJDA music project (Bulgaria), Colors of Pakistan Dance Ensemble (Pakistan), and the Bahor State Folk Dance Ensemble (Uzbekistan) also left no one indifferent.

At the final concert, the music fans enjoyed the fascinating Ankara Music and Folk Dance Ensemble of the Turkic World, the Melitassi Folk Dance Ensemble (Georgia), and the Azerbaijan State Dance Ensemble.

Azernews. – 2022. – May 20-26. - № 23. – P. 7.

Magnificent historical mansion in Shusha

By Laman Ismayilova

The Estate of Haji Gulu is a historical and architectural monument in Shusha.

Constructed in 1849 by the order of merchant Gulu Mahammadalioghlu, the three-story building brilliantly reflected the national architectural style. There were 46 rooms and two large halls in the Estate of Haji Gulu.

One of those halls of the Estate of Haji Gulu is supposed to be described in the picture of the Russian artist V. V. Vereshchagin who traveled to Shusha in 1865.

In plan, the home was shaped like an extended rectangle.

A staircase connected the service area of the ground floor with the second floor (dining and living areas).

The third floor consisted of a large hall and guest rooms located next to it.

On the facade overlooking the courtyard, there was an open three-storey veranda.

A staircase built on the back of the house led to the veranda.

There was a large living room in the Estate of Haji Gulu, typical for the wealthy Shusha houses.

The dining room and the bedroom were made in a beautiful architectural style that corresponds to the profile of their use.

Communication with the first floor is assured through the main staircase and another for the servants.

Unlike most of the Shusha houses and palaces, a considerable number of large windows were installed in the Haji Gulu estate. All windows are in the shabaka style.

Shabaka art appeared in Azerbaijani architecture between the 9th and 12th centuries.

The main feature of this art is based on the fact that no glue or nails have been used during the construction of the figures. Little pieces of colored glass are inserted into a wooden lattice usually made from walnut or oak trees.

Folk craftsmen used their compositions with thicknesses of only one millimeter.

Nowadays no one can reach this skill level: the material used by them is glass about three millimeters thick.

After Armenia's occupation, the Estate of Haji Gulu was shelled by artillery fire and its walls were destroyed. Only some parts of the walls have survived until our days.

Azernews. – 2022. – May 27 – June 2. - №24. – P. 7.

Shusha declaration: a tentative sketch of geopolitical ramifications

By Orkhan Amashov

The post-2020 architecture of the South Caucasus has, at its premise, the geopolitical ramifications emanating from Azerbaijan's decisive victory in the Second Karabakh War. The Shusha Declaration, signed on 15 June 2021 and ratified by both countries in February 2022, upgraded the already strong ties between Baku and Ankara into the domain of alliance. This is now a critical element within the whole security construct that is yet to reach its 'cementitious' solidity.

Nonetheless, fundamental linchpins are there. The essence of the Shusha Declaration bespeaks the transformation of the 'emotional vortex' engendered by ethno-linguistic ties between the two countries into a formal legal framework and a more expressive form of realpolitik.

As for any comprehensive document of this kind, it consolidates the pre-existing arrangements, solidifying them into an enhanced mode. Neil Watson, for instance, a British journalist who has written extensively on Azerbaijan over the past decade and is currently on a trip to liberated Aghdam, is of the opinion that the Shusha Declaration "provides an unprecedented level of support and security guarantees" for Baku, thereby entitling Turkey to a greater role in the region and beyond.

Security and defence

In fact, the military-defence dimension of these enhanced relations looms larger than ever. In each key component that made the Azerbaijani military triumph possible in 2020, there is an indubitable Turkish trace. The systemic use of unmanned drone systems, network-centric operational hardware, and informational superiority were integral to Baku's victory. Armenia, on the other hand, was prioritising Soviet-Russian doctrines, relying on its firepower surmounting echeloned defences.

In addition, Ankara's political-diplomatic support for Baku neutralised the intervention of a third party. In the same spirit, Azerbaijan's post-2020 military doctrine is heavily influenced by that which was achieved during the recent war. In this vein, the reconstruction of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces along the lines of the Turkish model, setting in motion the joint military industry and furnishing the commando units that aim to ensure security in the liberated territories are a continuation of the same pattern.

The kaleidoscope of the South Caucasus is still in the making and its fluid content has yet to acquire a crystallised shape. Irish historian Dr Patrick Walsh, who kindly shared his views on the subject, believes that the Shusha Declaration has provided an extra layer of security for Azerbaijan, which it did not possess previously.

"It will certainly make neighbouring countries and regional powers think twice before violating the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan," stated Dr Walsh. To this effect, both Armenia or any other actor desirous of backing Yerevan are effectively neutralised.

The alliance with Azerbaijan enables Turkey to project greater power both westwards and eastwards. As a transit country, pivotal to the export of Azerbaijani energy through the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) segment of the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) to Europe, Ankara is critical to the EU market.

Simultaneously, via Azerbaijan, it is evident that Turkey gains critical access to the Caspian Basin and Central Asia, empowering the Organisation of Turkic States. Many observers agree that, without the Baku-Ankara axis, the whole concept of a wider Turkic unity is neither attractive nor probable.

Geopolitical balance

It has long been understood in Baku that the augmentation of Azerbaijan's international clout necessitates strong ties with all three South Caucasus neighbours. The Moscow Declaration, signed on 22 February, which is yet to be ratified, fits into the grand scheme of the foreign policy design pursued by Baku.

The two documents in question, despite being similar in many ways, are not quite identical. In fact, the Shusha Declaration is more of a framework, envisaging a deeper form of integration, whereas the Moscow document is about mutual obligations.

In many ways, Azerbaijan has managed to re-establish its ties with both Ankara and Moscow in such a way that the common interests of the two heavyweights largely form a certain delicate balance, giving rise to fertile

ground for Baku to entrench its place as a player punching above its weight. Patrick Walsh believes that, since Russia needs for its geopolitical gains to maintain good relations with Ankara, the likelihood of any crisis between the two nations adversely affecting Baku is diminished.

Moscow views post-Soviet geography as a zone of direct interest, where it can, as the Ukrainian crisis proves, act decisively, in an interventionist manner. Turkey's ties with Azerbaijan form one of the reasons why the situation is different from Azerbaijan. In addition to Baku's "treading-a-tightrope" policy in relation to its northern neighbour, the Turkish factor is of great significance.

Dr Walsh, for instance, is of the opinion that Ankara provides a two-layer shield: "If Russia chooses to act militarily against Azerbaijan in a future dispute, it would have two powerful restraining forces against such a decision: the possibility of a Turkish military response and the loss of Azerbaijan to NATO and the West."

In the same vein, Azerbaijan is careful to maintain a healthy equilibrium with Iran. Tehran is yet to come to terms with the post-2020 geopolitics of the region, and its concerns over the Zangazur project remain palpable.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed with Baku in March 2022, envisaging a communications route connecting the Eastern Zangazur region of Azerbaijan with its Nakhchivan exclave via Iranian territory, was a calculated move that tied Iran to the new geopolitical map of the region, somewhat placating its disaffectedness.

As stated at the outset, the whole geopolitical landscape of the region is far from being a finalised domain wherein all is firmly entrenched.

In this vein, the Shusha Declaration is not the last word in Azerbaijani-Turkish relations, nor the ultimate apex beyond which no profusion could be contemplated, but a new point of departure from which an ever-closer union between the two Turkic nations is yet to emerge.

Azernews. – 2022. – June 17-23. - № 27. – P. 4.

Shusha to host major chess tournament

By Laman Ismayilova

Shusha has become an important venue for major political, cultural, and sports events in Karabakh.

The city's historical and cultural riches have turned it into a prominent cultural center that hosted a number of large-scale events like Khari Bulbul International Music Festival, Vagif Poetry Days, Uzeyir Hajibayli International Music Festival, etc.

As for now, Shusha gets ready for an international chess tournament dedicated to the 190th anniversary of great Khurshidbanu Natavan, Azernews reports citing Azerbaijan Chess Federation.

A great literary figure, Khurshidbanu Natavan, the daughter of Mehdi Gulu-khan, the last ruler of the Karabakh khanate is considered one of the best lyrical poetesses of Azerbaijan.

The legendary poetess was a great example of intelligence, aristocracy, philanthropy, and classic poetry.

World-famous chess players are expected to take part in the Shusha tournament to be held on September 21-24. All members of the Azerbaijan national team will also join the competition.

Speaking about the upcoming event, President of the Azerbaijan Chess Federation and Vice-President of the International Chess Federation Mahir Mammadov noted that the chess tournament between male and female chess players will be in rapid and blitz format.

The international chess tournament is co-organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Azerbaijan Chess Federation (ACF).

Along with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Shusha City State Reserve is involved in the organizational work.

Azernews. – 2022. – June 24-30. - № 28. – P. 6.

AzerNews. – 2022. – September 16-22. - №40. – P. 7.

Centuries-old literary tradition revives in Shusha

By Laman Ismayilova

Centuries-old Majlis-Uns literary circle is currently enjoying a remarkable revival in Azerbaijan's cultural center of Shusha.

Majlis-Uns is a literary circle that operated in the second half of the 19th century in the city of Shusha under the leadership of the poetess, daughter of the last Karabakh khan Khurshidbanu Natavan.

Initiated by poet Rahim bay Fen, the literary event was first held in 1864 in the house of poet Haji Abbas Agah.

In 1872, the event was headed by Khurshidbanu Natavan and gained wide popularity.

The literary circle attracted many poets and musicians from Karabakh and other parts of Azerbaijan.

Majlis-Uns promoted the works by such classics as Nizami Ganjavi, Khagani Shirvani, Fuzuli, Nasimi, Molla Panah Vagif, Vidadi, Seyid Azim Shirvani, etc.

The literary circle operated until the death of the poetess in 1897.

Calligraphic manuscripts of many poets, who took part in the event, are stored in the Baku Institute of Manuscripts.

This year Shusha has witnessed the revival of Majlis-Uns. The event was timed to the 190th anniversary of the poetess Khurshidbanu Natavan.

The participants in the event first got acquainted with the exhibition dedicated to the great poetess.

Flowers were laid at the busts of Khurshidbanu Natavan, Bulbul, and Uzeyir Hajibayli.

Azerbaijani Culture Minister Anar Karimov, Chairman of the Azerbaijani Union of Writers Anar Rzayev, Chairman of the Parliamentary Culture Committee Ganira Pashayeva, senior researcher at the Institute of Manuscripts, Ph.D. in Philology Ragub Karimov, poet and translator Salim Babullaoglu as well as representatives of Turkic-speaking countries took part in the event.

In his speech, Anar Karimov stressed that in accordance with the instructions of the country's leadership, large-scale construction work is being carried out in all areas in the territories liberated from the Armenian occupation.

He pointed out that the ministry focuses on projects to restore the cultural infrastructure and return culture to the historical Azerbaijani lands.

The minister drew attention to the fact that after the liberation of Azerbaijani territories, it was decided to establish the Majlis-Uns Public Union to preserve and promote this tradition of Karabakh literary assemblies.

The Union focuses on research and promotion of Karabakh's literary and cultural heritage.

Anar Karimov expressed his confidence that the union will contribute to the work of reviving Azerbaijani culture in the liberated lands and the upbringing of literary generations.

The rich art program was presented as part of the literary event. During the poetry hour, writers from Azerbaijan and other Turkic-speaking countries recited poems dedicated to Khurshidbanu Natavan. Majlis-Uns will remain in people's memories for a long time.

Shusha. Cultural capital of Turkic World 2023

Laman Ismayilova

Renowned for its historical and cultural importance, Shusha city boasts rich cultural scenes and a historical past.

Since 2020, Shusha has miraculously changed and started to flourish again. Azerbaijan is currently restoring the city, which was occupied for almost three decades.

Considering its historical and cultural significance, Shusha has been declared the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023.

In this regard, Azerbaijani Prime Minister Ali Asadov has signed an order, approving the Action Plan for declaring the city of Shusha as the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023.

The Culture Ministry is designated as the coordinating body for the implementation of the activities envisaged by the Action Plan.

The activities provided for by the Action Plan will be financed from the funds allocated to the relevant executive bodies in the state budget for 2023 and other sources not prohibited by law. The order comes into force from the date of its signing.

The official opening of the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023 will take place in Shusha in March.

A vast array of cultural events will be held in Azerbaijan's cultural center as part of the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Culture Ministry, the Special Representative Office of the Azerbaijani president in Shusha as well as the Shusha State Reserve are entrusted with the implementation of the works related to the events.

Kharibulbul International Folklore Festival

The 6th Kharibulbul International Folklore Festival will be held in May, in Shusha, in accordance with the Action Plan.

The festival has been held since 1989 with the participation of musicians from Japan, the USA, Turkiye, Germany, Israel, Italy, Spain, etc. The cultural event was of great importance not only in Azerbaijan but all over the world.

However, the city was captured by Armenia on May 8, 1992. Shusha was liberated by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces on November 8, 2020.

The city once welcomed talented musicians from all over the world in 2021 after the city's liberation.

Last year, the music festival brought together Azerbaijani and international musicians from 10 countries in Azerbaijan's cultural cradle.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva attended the opening of the festival.

In 2023, the festival will be organized by the Azerbaijan Culture Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Special representation of the President of Azerbaijan in Shusha, and the Shusha City State Reserve.

Korkut Ata Turkic World Film Festival

Korkut Ata Turkic Word Film Festival will be held in Shusha in 2023.

Turkish Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism Ahmet Misbah Demircan earlier provided insight into the festival.

"Within the framework of the festival, we have set the goal of creating a foundation for joint production, awarding new films in a competition, and bringing together the ministers of the Turkic republics," the Turkish minister said.

The Korkut Ata Turkic Word Film Festival 2022 was held in Bursa for the second time.

Twenty-two cinema experts from Azerbaijan, 43 from Uzbekistan, 23 from Kyrgyzstan, 21 from Kazakhstan, five from Turkmenistan and 17 from autonomous republics participated in the festival.

Cultural Days of Turkic People

Events featuring the customs and traditions of the Turkic peoples will be held in Shusha under the Action Plan on the declaration of the city of Shusha as the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023.

Within the Cultural Days of Turkic People, it is also planned to organize demonstrations of ancient sports of the Turkic peoples, culinary days of the peoples of the Turkic world, including the visits of travelers, bloggers, and other persons in the field of active and cultural tourism of the Turkic countries to Shusha.

Vagif Poetry Days

Azerbaijan's cultural capital Shusha will once again open its doors to the Vagif Poetry Days. The poetic event will be held in the city for the third time after the nation's victorious army regained the sacred town from a nearly 30-year-long Armenian occupation in 2020.

The large-scale event highlights the role played by Molla Panah Vagif as a poet and a vizier of the Karabakh khanate in the XVIII century.

The Vagif Poetry Days program includes meetings with the poets of the TURKSOY member countries, a book-catalog presentation "Mir Mohsun Navvab's collection of weapons ", as well as an exhibition dedicated to the 190th anniversary of Mir-Mohsun Navvab, well-known poet, artist and music historian.

International festival of Children's Creativity

Shusha will host an international festival of children's creativity this year.

Moreover, Shusha creative workshop international youth camp will also be organized within the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023.

AzerNews. - 2023.- February 24 - March 2. - № 8. - P. 7.

Restored libraries in Shusha to turn into centre for intellectual engagement

Laman Ismayilova

Libraries play a major role in preserving knowledge, fostering education, and promoting cultural heritage.

For centuries, Shusha city has been known as the cultural centre for Azerbaijani people.

With diverse collections, the libraries in Shusha stood as pillars of knowledge, preserving the city's cultural heritage and promoting intellectual growth.

The first library-reading room in Garabagh was established in Shusha. In 1896, the French language teacher of Shusha Realni School, Ahmet Bey Aghaoglu, opened a new library for the people of Shusha under the name of a Muslim reading room in Shusha. Some sources also state that the reading room has been operating for three years and the book fund has reached 500 copies.

At that time, the expansion of the school network in Shusha increased the demand for textbooks, which, in turn, necessitated book printing. Mir-Mohsun Navvab, who was one of the prominent personalities and progressive intellectuals of his time, established a printing house that printed books using the lithography method in early 1884.

As book printing expanded, there was a need for a place where they could be collected and used. Mir-Mohsun Navvab, who understood the importance of learning science, books, and reading, opened the next library and reading room in the courtyard of Govhar Agha Mosque in 1903.

Some sources even mentioned the information about the work of his son, Mirish Agha, in this library. The books printed in the Navvab's printing house were kept in Shusha libraries and presented to a wide readership.

Scholars of the time gathered in those libraries and held discussions about science, education, and literature. Thus, a scientific, cultural, and literary environment was formed in Shusha.

The libraries in Shusha housed an extensive collection of books, manuscripts, and historical documents that reflect the diverse heritage of Azerbaijan.

As a result of Armenian vandalism, hundreds of cultural institutions, including 927 libraries with 4.6 million books and other institutions, were completely destroyed.

After the restoration of its territorial integrity in 2020, Azerbaijan started the restoration works in the liberated territories.

The Culture Ministry launched a campaign, "Let's go with a book to Garabagh," in partnership with the Azerbaijani National Library to restore libraries in Garabagh.

The project aims at restoring the book funds of more than 900 libraries in the liberated territories.

Since 2020, a large number of books have been donated to the Garabagh Book Fund by a number of international organisations working in the field of culture, Turkic-speaking countries, famous foreign and local authors, publishers, and print houses.

The Turkish Professional Union of the Authors of Scientific and Literary Works (ILESAM) donated 10,000 books to the fund of libraries to be restored in Garabagh.

Around 500 books were donated by People's Writer Elchin Afandiyev. The Institute of Education also joined the book campaign, presenting some 5,263 copies of 300 books.

The embassy of Kazakhstan handed over books on science, culture, and history, as well as anthologies of Kazakh prose and poetry.

Around 93,212 books have been collected within the project "Let's go with a book to Garabagh".

In the near future, libraries in Azerbaijan's liberated territories will be restored, serving as community centres for intellectual engagement and lifelong learning.

As Shusha continues to flourish, its libraries will undoubtedly play a major role in shaping the intellectual landscape and preserving Azerbaijan's rich cultural legacy.