

"LRADOU"

Armenian Community Quarterly Newsletter

**Produced by the Office of the Armenian Representative
in the House of Parliament of Cyprus, Mr Vartkes Mahdessian**

9 B&C Kastorias Str., Ayia Paraskevi, 2002 Strovolos
Tel. 22 454540, Fax. 22 424642, e-mail: office@armenianmp.com

Issue No. 2, December 2006

With the opening of schools, the Representative Office has dealt with and resolved issues related to assistance for fees and academic guidance. Matters related to residency permits, hospital registration and labour issues are being reviewed by the relative government Ministry within the context of the rights of a religious minority. Representative Mahdessian attended the 3rd Diaspora Conference in Yerevan and held meetings with various state officials.

ARMENIAN PRESIDENT'S VISIT – The President of the Republic of Armenia, Mr Robert Kocharyan arrived in Cyprus for a three-day state visit on November 22. This was a historic visit, as political, social and other ties were improved between Cyprus and Armenia. Mr Vartkes Mahdessian accompanied the Armenian president on most of his official visits and banquet with the President of Cyprus, Mr Tassos Papadopoulos, as well as meetings with House of Representatives President Demetris Christofias and Greek Cypriot party leaders, the Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus, Chrysostomos II, a brief encounter with the Armenian community (that was changed from the original plan of a reception, by order of the Embassy of Armenia in Athens), a short visit to the Nareg elementary school in Nicosia and the laying of the foundation stone for the Genocide Survivors' memorial in Larnaca, at the spot where the first refugees landed. Mr Mahdessian addressed the ceremony in Greek and paid tribute to the efforts of the previous Representative, the late Bedros Kalaydjian.

3-MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT – All documentation work continues to be processed by the Representative Office free of charge. However, applicants for renewals or assistance are urged to complete their paperwork 15 days prior to the expiry of their relative permits. The following work was also concluded:

- Seven people secured jobs and improved terms of pay;
- A young man who was about to be deported for overstaying his permit was granted a year's extended work permit;
- Mr Mahdessian personally intervened in the case of a citizenship application that had received baseless allegations against the character of the applicant;
- A young man from Iraq, put on Stop List at Larnaca airport, was allowed to enter Cyprus, granted political asylum status and given a work permit.

The Representative Office announced that due to the absence of any consular assistance, the Office is also certifying the validity of expired passports of the Republic of Armenia.

- Six scholarships were secured for five students from Cyprus and one from Bulgaria for studies at Intercollege, Americanos College and Frederick Institute of Technology.
- Former Melkonian students received full scholarships until the completion of their studies in 2009.
- Armenian students newly enrolled at the English School were allowed to join the comprehensive Greek classes and not that of the traditional 'floaters'.
- Representative Mahdessian congratulated Dickran and Seta Ouzounian for their continued benevolence that sustains homes in the Spitak earthquake zone.
- On October 17 Mr Mahdessian sent a congratulatory note to the French National Assembly for passing a law that punished Genocide denial. He also praised the work by Representative Patrick Devedjian and made relative statements to the local media, radio and television. He also sent a congratulatory note to the parliament of Argentina for recognising the Genocide.
- On October 23 Representative Mahdessian congratulated Marios Garoyan on his election as president of the Democratic Party (DIKO). He also congratulated Archbishop Chrysostomos II for his accession to the throne of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus.

MEETINGS WITH PUBLIC OFFICIALS – Representative Mahdessian had meetings with various public officials.

- With Attorney General Petros Clerides to discuss the issue of the Melkonian;
- With the Education Minister Pefkios Georgiades to secure the previously rejected grants of the Melkonian students;
- With Interior Minister Neocles Sylikiotis to discuss residency and citizenship cases;
- With Labour and Social Insurance Minister, Dr. Antonis Vassiliou;
- A courtesy visit to the Chief of Police, Charalambos Koulentis;
- With Law Commissioner Leda Koursoumba for the revision of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

COMMUNITY ISSUES – Representative Mahdessian informed the editors and publishers of the “Azad Tzayn” and “Artsagang” newspapers that they would receive a state grant depending on the number of issues published.

Following a request from the Foreign Ministry, Mr Mahdessian prepared a dossier on the Armenian community’s religious properties in the occupied north.

A project outline and budget prepared by the architectural firm 4arc+ for the restoration of the Old Armenian Cemetery was presented to the Ministry of Interior requesting financial assistance.

Mr Mahdessian met with Prof. Heinz A. Richete of Mannheim University who is compiling a book on “The Minority Groups of Cyprus.”

Representative Mahdessian, accompanied by Archbishop Varoujan Hergelian and architect John Guevherian, had a second meeting with UNDP-ACT officials and received assurances that architectural tenders would be issued in early-2007 and the restoration work completed by the end of 2008.

Mr Mahdessian and his wife, Maggie, attended the events to mark the memory of past Representatives Aram and Bedros Kalaydjian, organised by the SD Hunchak Party, and to commemorate the 160th anniversary of the establishment of the Armenian

Evangelical Church and the 60th anniversary of the consecration of the church in present-day occupied Nicosia.

Representative Mahdessian also granted interviews to the following publications: “Armenika” (Athens), “Azad Tzayn” and “Dzaghig” (Beirut).

Mr Mahdessian hosted the President of the Piounik football team, Garen Haroutyunian, and the Medical Officer of the Armenian national U-19 team, Dr Vahakn Ordian, visiting Cyprus to take part in a European tournament.

Two representatives have been appointed to the Family Court.

Finally, Mr Mahdessian convened five advisory committees to deal with community issues: Advisory Council, Cyprus-Armenia, EU/European Affairs, Cultural and Welfare, and Youth.