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Issue 11

Monthly Newsletter

May 2002

Turkmen-American Project at Seit Djemaletdin Mosque Presented in Annau

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The National Administration for Presentation of Cultural and Historical Monuments of Turkmenistan and the U.S. Embassy presented the completed mosaic restoration project at the Seit Djemaletdin Mosque in Annau on May 16, 2002. Mukhamed Mamedov, Director of the Administration, and Ambassador Laura Kennedy gave opening remarks on the importance of international cooperation, including in the cultural realm. Ruslan Mamedov, archeologist and manager of the project gave a brief presentation on the restoration work. The project, funded by the U.S. Department of State Cultural Preservation Fund, had been opened only last October.

Over the past seven months, the team of archeologists and historians restored the tomb of Seit Djemaletdin to its original condition, strengthened part of ruins and recovered 30% of the mosaic tile which had graced the arch of the main portal, and cleared and relaid the floor of the prayer square. The restored mosaic, depicting Chinese dragons and Arabic script, will be displayed in an on-site museum once further funding is secured.

Seit Djemaletdin Mosque is a unique architectural monument. According to the



The ruins of Seit Jemaletdin Mosque at a glance



Historian Rulan Mamedov (left) describes his team's work while Maya Meredith, Ambassador Laura Kennedy, and Director Mamedov look on

inscriptions on its facade and interior, the mosque was constructed when Khorasan was ruled by Timurid governor-general Abu'l-Kasim Baber Bakhadur-khan (1446-1457). The construction was financed by his representative Mukhamed Khudaidot, who had chosen the site near the tomb of his father Jamal-Ad-Din, born in Annau.

The mosque was part of a great religious complex which included a funeral hall (ziyaratkhana), a cloister for strolling Sufi monks (khangah), rooms (khujra) for pilgrims and probably, a religious educational establishment (madrasa). The mosaic panels of the Annau mosque is typical of the architecture of Central Asia in the 14th-15th centuries.

The U.S. Department of State Cultural Preservation Fund was established in 2001 by the U.S. Congress to "show a different American face to other countries, one that is non-commercial, non-political, and non-military. By taking a leading role in efforts to preserve cultural heritage, we show our respect for other cultures." To date, it has supported about one hundred projects worldwide.

Dr. Hibba Abugideiri Speaks about Islam in America

Dr. Hibba Abugideiri, a Sudanese-born professor of Middle Eastern History of George Washington University, spoke about Islam in America while she was in Ashgabat May 11-20, 2002. Dr. Abugideiri gave lectures on Islam in America to students at Turkmen State University and other educational institutions. She also led discussion groups with journalists, teachers, alumni, and community and religious leaders to promote tolerance and understanding. She described the Muslim-American community and also engaged her audiences in lively discussions on the causes and effects of the September 11 attacks and the War on Terrorism.

In her lectures, Dr. Abugideiri described Islam in America, from the community's demographics to religious practices. She explained how Muslim-Americans had adapted Islam to fit secular American society, as Muslims everywhere adapted their religion to the local context. With teachers at the International School and at the Professional Organization of English Teachers (POET), Dr. Abugideiri discussed teaching methodology for use in a multi-ethnic classroom setting. She also touched upon women's and gender issues, in particular in secondary and higher educational institutions.

On Saturday, May 18, Professor Abugideiri gave a public lecture at the Turkish Cultural Center for interested individuals. The topic of her lecture was the Muslim-American community, its cultural identity, religious practices, and historical development as well as Muslim-American women and their role in the family.

This was Dr. Abugideiri's second trip to Central Asia. She said she had traveled here because she felt it important for Muslims around the world to talk with each other about promoting tolerance and peace in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks.



Dr. Hibba Abugideiri (fourth from the right) with journalists

U.S. National Defense University Students visit Turkmenistan

A group of ten students from the United States National Defense University visited Turkmenistan May 16-20, 2002, as part of the group's regional field studies program. This field study is one of the culminating events that allow students to draw together all parts of their ten-month course of study at the university, which focuses on national security strategy and the national security policy process.

The students were Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels of the U.S. military, as well as civilian equivalents from the Department of the Navy and the U.S. State Department. After completing their studies, students will serve in senior staff positions in military and civilian agencies responsible for developing U.S. national security policy.

While in Turkmenistan, the group met with Ministry of Defense officials, U.S. Embassy representatives, and local representatives from several international and non-governmental agencies. Meetings focused on the current security situation in Turkmenistan as well as possible future reforms.

In addition to their official program, the students had the opportunity to visit several historical sites in Ashgabat, Mary, and the ancient city of Merv.

Round Table for American Business Representatives in Ashgabat

U.S. Ambassador Laura E. Kennedy conducted a roundtable for American businesspeople in Turkmenistan on May 3, 2002. Twenty-two representatives from twenty companies gathered for the roundtable at the offices of IPC Motors, the official distributor of DaimlerChrysler in Turkmenistan. Officials from USAID and the Public Affairs office of the U.S. Embassy also attended the meeting.

Ambassador Kennedy led a discussion with business representatives about trends in Turkmenistan's business environment. Issues of primary concern to businesses were the lack of currency conversion, banking problems, and the need for faster Internet access to conduct business efficiently. Ambassador Kennedy updated the audience about U.S. Department of Commerce programs available at the Embassy that are aimed at promoting U.S. export and investment. The meeting ended with IPC Motors unveiling new models of U.S. and Europe-made vehicles.

Exhibition of Student Papers on Tuberculosis Prevention

More than twenty students of the tuberculosis faculty of Turkmen State Medical Institute presented their papers on tuberculosis prevention at the Tuberculosis Hospital in Ashgabat at a special exhibition on May 10, 2002. This exhibition was a part of the Directly Observed Therapy Short course (DOTS) Program on tuberculosis instruction, which USAID contractor Project Hope developed. The exhibition, under the motto "World without Tuberculosis" is the result of six months of work by the students and faculty.



Faculty member showing students' work

Project Hope has trained teachers under the DOTS program for the past year. Since March, teachers of the tuberculosis department have passed on this knowledge to their students, teaching the DOTS program themselves. Project Hope provided the faculty with a training center, including one computer.

The exhibition is the first in Ashgabat devoted to the prevention of tuberculosis. Organizers hope to hold similar public events in the future.



One of the posters from the exhibition

ACCELS Workshop for Staff of Educational Centers

ACCELS organized a two-day workshop for 25 staff members of seven private educational centers in Ashgabat on May 20-21, 2002. The event helped to create a network among the centers as well as improve teaching and management skills of the educational center's staff. Nine alumni of the Teaching Excellency Awards program and other USG-sponsored exchange programs assisted in organizing the event. Participants came from Mary, Turkmenabat, Dashoguz, Balkanabat, and Turkmenbashi to attend. The participants discussed issues such as cooperation among educational centers, professional development, management, customer service, and communication skills. During the workshop participants used brainstorming and self-assessment tools, problem solving skills and other exercises during small group work. The participants concluded that educators need to focus on sustainable development of educational centers in Turkmenistan as well as improving professionalism in their organizations.

Regional English Language Officer Trains Teachers Throughout Turkmenistan

Regional English Language Officer Julie Kim, an American diplomat based at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, made her second visit to Turkmenistan May 23-30, 2002, to support English language teaching development in Turkmenistan. Ms. Kim was accompanied by Ms. Elena Vestri, an American English Language Fellow working in Uzbekistan. Ms. Kim and Ms. Vestri conducted workshops for teachers at language study centers in Mary, Bairam-Ali and Turkmenabat. Their workshops focused on communicative language teaching, English for specific purposes, and finding resources for teaching English through the Internet. Teachers responded very positively to the workshops, as they were exposed to new methods and techniques of teaching English, and because it gave them an opportunity to meet native speakers and practice their own language skills.

Ambassador Mann Visits Ashgabat

Ambassador Steven Mann, Special Advisor on Caspian Basin Energy Diplomacy, visited Ashgabat May 10-13, 2002. Ambassador Mann met with Yolly Gurbanmuradov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Khoshgeldy Babayev, Director of the Institute of Oil and Gas, to discuss oil and gas issues in the Caspian region. During the meetings he noted U.S. support for a trans-Afghan pipeline would be contingent on the commercial viability of such a project. Ambassador Mann brought a team of delimitation experts who met with and advised staff of the Ministry of Oil and Gas on how international standards apply to the Caspian Sea delimitation issue. This was Ambassador Mann's second trip to the region in his current capacity. He served as U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan from 1998 to 2001.

Brad Camp Arrives as New USAID Director in Turkmenistan

Brad Camp returned to Turkmenistan May 26, 2002, to assume his new duties as Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). He will lead USAID's outreach in Turkmenistan, which focuses on the health, business, and civil society fields. Mr. Camp has five years of experience working in Turkmenistan as Director of American Councils (ACCELS) and as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

"I am really happy to be back here. Working in Turkmenistan over the past seven years has helped me realize a great deal of satisfaction and joy can come from small successes," Mr. Camp said. As a volunteer, he taught English at school 11 in Turkmenabat in 1995-1997. He managed a range of USG-sponsored exchange programs as ACCELS Director in Turkmenistan from 1997 to 2000.

Mr. Camp rejoined ACCELS in 2001 as regional director for the Caucasus and Turkmenistan, living in Tbilisi, Georgia. In May 2002, Mr. Camp was appointed country representative for the United States Agency for International Development in Turkmenistan.

Mr. Camp holds a Master's degree in economics from the University of Dallas and a Master's in international management from New York University. He completed his undergraduate study in journalism and educational psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He worked as district manager for 102 General Motors dealerships in the Southwest.

Mr. Camp was born in Owensboro, Kentucky. In his free time, Mr. Camp enjoys watching movies, reading and journaling. He is an avid NASCAR fan, and while in Tbilisi, started kickboxing.



Brad Camp at a recent NASCAR race

U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat presents
American Culture Week
June 28 - July 4, 2002
Dedicated to America's Independence Day

We invite you to the following events:

- A conference "Interdisciplinary Studies of Turkmenistan - United States relations," at the Center for American Studies at Turkmen State University, June 28, 2002;
- A photo exhibition at the National Library of Turkmenistan on July 1, 2002;
- A public concert of American music on July 3, 2002, place TBD;

If you have any comments on the newsletter,
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