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# ArAS Newsletter



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## LOCAL NEWS

### Opening Ceremony of the UNESCO Heritage Center at the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory

On October 24, the opening ceremony of the UNESCO Heritage Center at Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) was held, celebrating UNESCO's heritage values.

The UNESCO Heritage Center at the BAO is dedicated to the renowned Markarian Survey, which has been recognized as a documentary heritage in UNESCO's "Memory of the World" International Register since 2011. This designation marks it as one of only 14 Armenian entries and four documentary heritage listings in UNESCO's archives, as well as one of the rare scientific achievements among globally recognized items.



Opening Ceremony

The Markarian Survey, also known as the First Byurakan Survey, was conducted at the BAO, and features unique astronomical records created by the esteemed Armenian astronomer Benjamin Markarian and his colleagues from 1965 to 1980. This survey includes the largest astronomical spectroscopic study ever undertaken, considered one of the greatest achievements in observational astronomy of the 20th century.

These extensive studies were carried out with the 1-meter Schmidt telescope at the Observatory, covering the entire northern sky and part of the southern sky at high galactic latitudes, as well as selected regions of the Milky Way.

Between 2002 and 2007, Areg Mickaelian and his team digitized the survey, resulting in the creation of the Digitized First Byurakan Survey—now the world's largest database of low-dispersion spectra, comprising 40 million spectra. This project also marked Armenia's first digitization initiative across all fields.

## Yet Another Teacher Training Program at the BAO

From October 22 to 24, the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) and the Office of Astronomy for Education (OAE) of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) jointly organized a training course for teachers entitled “From School to Space.”

Astronomy teachers from regional schools of Shirak, Lori, Aragatzotn, Ararat, Gegharkunik, and Syunik participated in the program. When selecting participants, emphasis was placed on representing various regions of Armenia, with a focus on schools that had actively engaged in previous BAO initiatives.

The training course prioritized practical exercises and problem-solving. The participants also had discussions with BAO Director Areg Mickaelian, Hayk Abrahamyan, Sona Farmanyanyan, Andranik Sukiasyan, and Derenik Andreasyan.

In addition to lectures, participants had the opportunity to observe the night sky with a professional telescope and to tour the observatory's 2.6-meter and 1-meter Schmidt telescopes. They also visited the house-museum of V. Ambartsumian. The organizers provided accommodation and meals for all participants, who received international certificates upon completion of the program.

At the end of the course, the participating teachers proposed to extend the initiative by holding lectures in their schools as part of the “From School to Space” lecture series.





## Network for Astronomy School Education

Within the framework of NASE (Network for Astronomy School Education), a project dedicated to the International Day of Light, Varduhi Mkrтчhyan, an assistant astronomer in the department of Astronomical Surveys at the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory, and her student Elsinа Ghazaryan conducted night sky studies with a telescope.

Their project focused on studying the globular star clusters within the Messier catalog. Initially published in 1771, the catalog comprised 45 celestial objects, which French astronomer Charles Messier expanded to 103 by 1774. Over time, other astronomers have further expanded the catalog, bringing the total number of objects to 110.



Left: Areg Mickaelian. Right: Varduhi Mkrтчhyan

## Cosmic Tree Planting at the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory

On October 25, the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory and the Armenia Tree Project organized a nice project “Cosmic Tree” to reaffirm their commitment to environmental restoration. This beautiful location aligned with the Armenia Tree Project mission and ongoing efforts within the Byurakan community.

As part of the community tree planting program, trees were planted in various sites throughout the area. The legacy of astrophysicist Viktor Ambartsumian was honoured as well, who made significant contributions to greening the Observatory’s grounds. According to his colleagues, Ambartsumian had a profound love for trees, often bringing unique specimens from around the world and personally planting them at the observatory. His dedication transformed the Observatory into a vibrant space filled with life.



BAO. 2024.

## ANNIVERSARIES

### Grigor Saiyan's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

On October 1, Armenian astronomer Grigor Saiyan celebrated his 70th anniversary. He was born in 1954.

On September 1, 1976, Grigor Saiyan joined the “Practical Astronomy” department of the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) as a senior laboratory assistant.

In 1985, he assumed the position of a junior researcher. In 1998, G. Saiyan was awarded the degree of physical-mathematical sciences. His research interests are stellar and galactic systems, theoretical physics and theoretical astrophysics.

He finished his work at BAO on July 21, 1998, before relocating to the USA.

Since October 2, 2023, he has been recognized as a foreign employee of the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory.





## OBITUARIES

### Sergei Nersisyan Passed Away

It is with great sadness that we communicate the passing of Sergei Nersisyan, former BAO associate.

Sergei Nersisyan was born on January 6, 1947. He graduated from the Yerevan State University in 1970 and the same year, he started working at the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory as a laboratory assistant. From 1971 to 1973, he served in the USSR army. After returning, he started working at BAO as an assistant astronomer.

S. Nersisyan defended his PhD in 1987. His research interests included investigations of

carbon stars, star clusters, etc. Since 2002 he worked at the Yerevan State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovian as a lecturer in physics and astrophysics. In addition to his scientific work he was interested in writing popular books on astronomical subjects; namely, he was the author of the textbook “*Astronomy*” for schools and the book “*Starry Sky*”.



Sergei Nersisyan



*ArAS News* is the electronic newsletter of the Armenian Astronomical Society. It was distributed to all ArAS members from the beginning of 2002, 4 times a year, typically at the end of each trimester. In 2009-2014, 8 issues annually and since 2015, 12 issues annually have been released.

ArASNews publishes information materials on ArAS, Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory and the Armenian astronomy in general, reports on ArAS Annual Meetings and participation of the Armenian astronomers in important international meetings, articles on occasion of anniversaries of famous Armenian astronomers and ArAS members, acceptance of new ArAS members, achievements of the Armenian astronomers, astronomical education in Armenia, Armenian archaeoastronomy, as well as science articles (reviews) on important studies.

So, if you want to share your studies with the scientific community, send us your articles to [melin.asryan@gmail.com](mailto:melin.asryan@gmail.com). They will be reviewed for the publication in ArAS Newsletters next issues.

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