Agricultural University: Failed Dialogue and a Bit of Untold History

Confrontation between the government and President Saakashvili’s team is on the rise. Tbilisi’s Agricultural University has become another bone of contention between the opposing camps and this may be a sign of what is to follow in a larger standoff. The cancellation of the Agricultural University’s accreditation by the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science has brought students out onto the street in protest. Nonetheless, the government stands firm on its decision, now offering the university a chance to solve its problems and to then reapply for accreditation.

An Uncertain Future for Georgia’s Gambling Industry

A new legislative initiative to ban advertising of gambling businesses in Georgia has recently been presented in parliament. A second hearing will be held in this week’s session. In addition to banning gambling advertisements, a new petition launched by members of civil society to ban gambling altogether is being discussed in the Committee of the Sector Economy and Economic Policy.

Plight of Foreign Investors in Georgia: Top-down Racketeering

Georgia’s Foreign Policy Orientation in Line with its Geopolitical Code

Destroyed Children’s Town in Tbilisi’s Vake Park

Gudauri and Bakuriani – Beloved Ski Resorts for Foreign Tourists in Georgia

Venice Commission’s Suggestions to Georgia

There are fewer people and prices are cheaper in Bakuriani and Gudauri, in March compared with previous months. Although spring is in the air in Tbilisi and other low land areas, Georgia’s ski slopes are snowy and in good condition. Skiers and boarders can still experience the pleasures of the 2012 snow season and speed down the mountains of both of Georgia’s popular ski resorts.
An Uncertain Future for Georgia’s Gambling Industry

Current Georgian legislation bans the participation of those less than 18 years of age in gambling. However, this does not prevent many young people from engaging in the practice.

Georgia’s Gambling Industry is a fast-growing sector, with over 20% increase in the number of gambling establishments in the last year. The industry is projected to grow by 15% this year, driven by increased tourism and rising disposable incomes.

However, there are concerns about the impact of gambling on society. According to a recent study, 25% of gamblers in Georgia have experienced a significant decrease in their quality of life.

The government has taken steps to address this issue, including imposing new taxes on gambling and increasing penalties for illegal gambling.

Despite these efforts, the gambling industry continues to grow, and there are concerns about its potential to create social problems. The government must continue to monitor the industry and take appropriate steps to ensure its responsible development.
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In 2004 President Mikheil Saakashvili, inspired by his victorious Rose Revolution and still full of euphoria, demonstrated what can best be described as an irresistible enthusiasm for economic development and supposed political improvement in the environment of the country. His PR kicked into gear with the motto “Destabilization Georgia” and the reading audience treated to many articles about how it was the best place to invest. The country undertook ambitious tourism development projects, often donor funded. The President and his team urged investors that investors should invest in Georgia by trying to persuade them, via CNN and various other television media outlets, that corruption no longer existed in the country and the much-touted reforms would protect investors with complete safety.

ENTHUSIASM SOON DIVIDED
All appeared to be going well for a few years, at least if you read the newspapers and the flowery mission reports, but the investors’ enthusiasm soon dwindled and their back ran out. The ones who took the initiative to work and invest in Georgia realized that they had been hoodwinked. The proverbial river of money from foreign direct investment (FDI) began to run dry. The Georgian government attributed this to the world economic crisis and the so-called credit crunch, notwithstanding the fact that many local investors were overextended and had too many bad debts – especially in the construction and real estate sectors. However the investors, had they been asked by the world’s media, would have given a completely different explanation.

In 2004 Transparency International (TI) accused the Georgian government of tax terrorism, and in 2005 TI was openly stating that the local authorities were extorting money from foreign investors by fining them with inspections by the financial police and punitive fines. The American magazine “Businessweek Bloomberg” made the same allegation when it called the country “Trapped in Tbilisi”. Latvia’s “Businessweek Bloomberg” made the claim that the local authorities were extorting money from foreign investors, had they been asked by the world’s media, would have given a completely different explanation.

In January 2013 the Coordinating Centre for International Investment in Georgia (CCII) openly accused President Saakashvili of lying when he stated that Georgia’s new government, led by Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, had stopped the construction of a five-star hotel in the center of Tbilisi, in which the Abu Dhabi Group, a UAE investment company, had intended to invest 40 million USD. According to CCII’s Director George Seturadze, the financing and implementation of this project had been terminated back in the summer of 2010 due to corruption deals between one of the Abu Dhabi Group managers, Sami Edwards, and senior officials of the former government. “In particular, this group of shady individuals misrepresent the truth to the investors and did their very best to prevent from the project; they were working only for their own short-term interests,” said Seturadze.

These Arab investors are also the owners of the Port Tbilisi. Along with a number of Kazakhs, who had apparently also lost interest in Georgian property, theyuddered the scene from the public scene. In July 2011 Saakashvili announced publicly that the Kazakh investors could no longer continue with the development of the Likani seaport in the west of the country. However, according to Amanzhol Kusainov, General Director of the Kazakh Company Kazmynau Service Georgia, the Kazakh side was not planning to abandon the project, not withstanding Georgian government interference and alleged links to the Kemalists.

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP WITH ISRAEL
Georgia also lost the possibility of economic partnership with Israel in the wake of several scandals, including deals land deals in Tbilisi, Lisi Lake, which was purchased for many times over the nominal going price. Moreover, the arrest of two Israeli businessmen, who had arrived in Georgia on the personal invitation of the former Prime Minister, on bogus charges created a serious deterioration in bilateral relations. Georgia ended up having to pay 58 million USD in arbitration to the Israelis over this, by decision of a court in London.

Instead of following up by paying their legal debts the Georgian government gave the Israelis considerable prisoner sentences. They were set up as alleged bribe givers in a scheme to make them appear as criminals and not honest businessmen. Regardless, the authorities’ decision to ignore an appeal on their behalf by the Israeli President and Minister of Foreign Affairs just added fuel to the fire. In response, the visits of the Georgian Parliament Speaker and Minister of Economy to Israel were canceled. At the same time it was revealed that Georgia owed 100 million USD to another Israeli company for a deal to supply Georgia with military drones and how the codes to those drones had been sold or bartered to the Russians for inside knowledge of air defense systems purchased by the Iranians.

EXORTING FOR PERSONAL PROFIT
It was now clear that the scandalous case of the Israeli businessmen was not an isolated one. For example, in November 14, 2006 the financial police closed Italian company Badaguzi’s stores and announced that its Italian partner was falsified. The Italian President and diplomatic corps and PR spin doctors soon intervened and the quality of the company’s wine was reconfirmed when it won top ratings at an international festival.

The President of Georgia and the former Georgian Prime Minister were forced to apologize. In another case, Austrian company Shurshoroff’s products were held up in customs for months on the orders of David Kezerashvili, the former Minister of Defense, and other high ranking officials who sought to keep the company for personal profit. The scandal ended when Shurshoroff, which had planned to invest 50 million GEL, gave up on Georgia completely; it decided to invest in Kazakhstan instead.

A few years ago a Belgian of Latvian origin, Tomas Sakalauskas, accused Bank of Georgia and official misconduct, even when they were happy to work with the Georgian government. The consequence of any “misunderstanding” between the businessmen and the government was imprisonment. Orhan Aksu, whose company constructed Thilisi’s notorious Gldani prison, found himself imprisoned in the same building. His Akhmedov company was ordered to complete the building of this prison, which had been begun by another businessman, Kikar Khvahki, and the company was also one of the contractors in charge of 28 other new buildings in Georgia, including Thilisi’s Justice Hall. Before relations turned sour, the Georgian authorities jokingly advised Aksu to build a special cell for himself. When he refused to pay 20 million GEL to finance the election campaign of the Georgian United National Movement and the Christian Democratic Party, he probably regretted not having built himself a very comfortable cell, as he was arrested on charge of offering bribes to Justice officials and sentenced to 12 years. He shared a prison cell intended for six people with 40 other inmates. Aksu is now releasing political prisoner status from the new government. According to his wife, he also never received any payment for the construction of the prisons, and is owed 4.75 million GEL. Instead of paying this debt, in 2010 the financial police fined his company one million GEL.

“The ruling elite of Georgia has paraded around Europe and Asia to promote Georgia as an ideal investment environment. Many businesses are not aware that they could expect the same fate as me,” Aksu wrote in a letter addressed to the new government of Georgia. In response, the President assured his wife that the new government will consider his case.

Yanam Chugatua, Director of the Doruk Nut and Food Company, is another Turkish businessman who was arrested by the former Georgian government and is now working in the Ministry of the Interior. The Anti-crisis Department of the President General’s Office arrested him on charges of bribery, forgery of documents, and forgery of signatures. He also was sentenced to 12 years in prison. Ahsan Akyar, who was involved in the transportation business, recently sued former Defence Minister David Kezerashvili, accusing him of star- teering. Kezerashvili forced him to buy 10 jeeps in order to retain control of his business. According to his lawyer, Akyar has documents confirming the illegal transfer of these jeeps, which cost 299,000 GEL. And yet, after a year, the prosecutor’s office sent him on a charge of registering false invoices, and only released, a year later, after paying up 100,000 GEL to Justice Ministry representatives.

During the visit of PM Ivanishvili to Turkey in February 2013 one of the main issues of his discussions with the Turkish government was the cases of these Turkish businessmen. Ivanishvili promised to create the “best conditions” in Georgia for Turkish businessmen. “We will not only intervene in private property, and we will do everything possible to make Turkish businessmen feel at home in Georgia,” he told Recep Tayip Erdogan at a joint press conference after his one-day visit to Turkey. On Monday, March 18th 2013 The Georgian and Israeli business forum was held at the Holiday Inn hotel. Yaman Chugatua promised to assist Israeli businessmen who wanted to invest in Georgia. It is clear that the new government and PM of Georgia are trying to correct the mistakes of the previous one, and once again things have started nicely, but we still do everything possible to make Turkish businessmen feel at home in Georgia.”
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On March 7, 2013 the Georgian Parliament adopted a resolution that prohibits altering the country’s foreign policy. The resolution, which is the result of national interest and foreign policy direction, was supported by at least 96 members of Georgia’s 150-member Parliament after both the majority and minority political factions reached consensus on the issue. What is notable about the resolution is that it closely corresponds to criteria of the geopolitical centers in a manner in which a country orientates itself on the international political stage.

A country defines its geopolitical code based on the following calculations: 1) a country’s current and potential allies; 2) a country’s current and potential enemies; 3) ability of a country to acquire its current allies and nurture potential allies; 4) how a country counts its existing enemies and responds to emerging threats, and 5) how country justifies the right of its members to the national public and to the global community.

Based on these calculations and in full consideration of the mentioned above-resolution, it is possible to discern the foreign policy orientation opted by the Georgian Parliament and further illustrate the manner in which such a strategic document was adopted. It is clear that the resolution adequately takes into account the above-listed points as outlined in Georgia’s current political code: Consequently the following concrete responses can be made to these questions.

The resolution lists Georgia’s current allies as the United States and the Baltic countries Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and therefore, the organizations they are members – NATO and the European Union. As potential allies are indicated countries of central and south-eastern European and Scandinavian regions. However, the resolution underpins the importance of promoting political dialogue and economic cooperation among countries of the Caucasus region where Georgia continues functioning as a pivotal role in trade relations. Thus, the resolution implies fostering relations with regional states – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Moreover, paragraph 12 of the resolution stipulates that Georgia will continue to promote closer relations with the United States, the EU within the framework of the national interests and Helsinki principles. Notably, the Russian Federation is also included as a potential ally, and this reflects the new Georgian government’s effort to normalize trade relations and diplomatic with it.

Regarding Georgia’s current enemies, the resolution describes names those countries which inflict on Tbilisi’s so-called “non-recognition policy” toward South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Georgia’s two breakaway regions, which have been recognized as full-independent states by the Russia and a short list of other nations since 2008. As stipulated in the 18th paragraph, Georgia continues disputing legal actions or seek to join any trade or military-political alliance whose existing members recognize the independency of South Ossetia and Abkhazia such alliances include the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a grouping of former Soviet states from which Georgia withdrew after the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Union, all of which are led by Moscow.

This paragraph was included in the resolution as the majority National Movement opposition political fraction, which maintains a strong anti-Russian sentiment. Not surprisingly, due to extensive lobbying from the this faction, 23 members of the European Parliament recently submitted a scathing anti-National Movement letter backed on rigged elections by the ex-editoring party members of Georgia’s Parliament. The resolution is tautological to note how the National Movement cooperates with ruling majority Georgian Dream fraction in terms of foreign policy issues while currently impedes and underlines the Georgian national geopolitical image on the global level.

The Georgian government’s participation in and support of international peace-making, police and civil operations mostly under NATO mandate in Kosovo and Afghanistan are not what ways in which Georgia should go about maintaining its influence in new nurting ones. As for the way Georgia justifies its foreign policy calculations to the national public, the resolution makes clear to the Georgian public that their country’s citizens’ right of privacy is respected.

The Supreme Court of Georgia expressed its hope that the Parliament will not interfere in the country’s judicial affairs. However, it is worth noting that since 2008, it shares the number of changes initiated by the Ministry of Justice. The Supreme Court, therefore recently asked: “to analyze once again if this will not lead to deadlocks and to anti-deadlock mechanism” (Articles 55-56 of the Constitution). The Parliaments also does not support the measures introduced in the opinion of the new amendments in Paragraph 2, Article 76 of the Constitution. The resolution makes clear to the discussion of the amendmenents and the suggestions expressed in the document will be taken into account. Controversy still surrounds the issue of terminating the authority of the current HCJ members and the current amendments have to be modified if they are to comply fully with the suggestions of the Venice Commission.

The reform proved to be a crucial turning point in the history of power-sharing and a checks and balances system for Georgian democracy. The Opinion clearly states those measures which are to be considered adequately by the Venice Commission but the question remains: is Georgia ready to cooperate in creating a more democratic and balanced powersharing system? Executive, Legislative and1190.5

The Venice Commission, officially known as the European Commission for Democracy through Law, was created in 1990 to serve as a consultative body of the Council of Europe. Consist- ing of independent experts in the field of constitutional law, the Commission’s mission was to respond to the urgent needs of Central and Eastern European countries following the disintegra- tion of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany at the end of World War II. The Venice Commission is led by the Presi- dent and the former Secretary General, who is also currently represented in the headquar- ters of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg) by its Secretary General Thomas Markert.

The main function of the Commission is to issue advisory opinions to the individual member states of the Council in response to request from participating states, the Council of Europe and other international or- ganizations or bodies participating in the work of the Venice Commission. The opinions are not binding for the country in question but they represent the guidelines and expertise that aim at helping the country in question to comply with European law or a number of other different matters. The Commission’s role is to give a list of comments or suggestions which the state must take into account. The Commission also does not support the measures introduced in the opinion of the new amendments in Paragraph 2, Article 76 of the Constitution. The resolution makes clear to the discussion of the amendmenents and the suggestions expressed in the document will be taken into account. Controversy still surrounds the issue of terminating the authority of the current HCJ members and the current amendments have to be modified if they are to comply fully with the suggestions of the Venice Commission.

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Georgia’s Population Declines Day-by-day

By ANASTASIA DGEBUADZE

A recent study by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has shown that Georgia does not have a favorable demographic outlook. It has been calculated, based on birthrate, mortality and emigration coefficients, that by 2050 Georgia’s population will have fallen by a million from its estimated 4.5 million. The projected loss of nearly a quarter of the country’s population, at a time when the populations of some neighboring regional states such as Turkey and Iran are rising, should be considered a national catastrophe.

It remains unclear exactly how many people currently live in Georgia, as there is conflicting evidence. According to the Office of National Statistics, which uses outdated indices, Georgia’s population is 4.5 million, but according to Avantedi Sulaberdzhi, Director of the Institute of Demography and Sociology at Ilia Chavchavadze State University, Georgia’s population dropped below 7 million for the first time in 2001 and currently stands at 3.77 million. Sulaberdzhi maintains that by 2050 the population will have fallen by a smaller amount, 700,000, and this figure may be held to be more reliable. In proportional terms however, this is broadly the same decline as the UN suggests.

What does population decline actually mean? All emotions aside, there are serious social consequences involved. Around 16 percent of the Georgian population is made up of elderly people (65 years old or older) who largely depend on social assistance from the state, such as pensions, for their survival. However Georgia needs to generate tax income from employees and businesses in order to pay these pensions. If the birthrate continues to fall, Georgia will have more elderly people receiving state funds than working age people contributing to the state funds through taxation. Even if the birthrate starts to increase a few years from now this will not solve this problem, as those not old enough to work are also supported by the state in various ways but also provoke the need for more disposable household income, and thus less taxation. Action is needed now, before Georgia inevitably bankrupts itself through not having enough people to meet its obligations.

Why has the Georgian population fallen? Abortions can’t be discounted as a reason, because according to the Office of National Statistics between 2007 and now the number of registered abortions has increased by 60% to a current 13 per 1,000 live births. But whatever the cause, in almost every region of Georgia (the exceptions being Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Adjara) mortalities now exceed birthrates.

Georgia is not the only country with this problem. Post-Soviet countries in general display approximately the same trends. For example, all three Baltic States have also witnessed population decline since the fall of the Soviet Union, and Ukraine has seen particularly serious declines. Ukraine’s population has fallen by 7 million, i.e. 5%. But the situation is quite different in the Baltic States. In some communities, a small percentage of the saving population has declined, however in others a foreseeable rapid demographic transition has been observed. Demographers believe that because the Baltic States that have experienced an accelerated demographic transition are predominantly urban, it is possible that in regions with more rural populations, the decline will not be so extreme.

The rapid population fall is one of the factors that has caused numerous social problems for Georgia. In the next 20 years, Georgia will have more elderly people than any other region of the country. According to the Georgian population model, the total number of elderly people will be 1.2 million by 2042. In the next 15 years, Georgia will lose 73% of the population aged 19-24, and 30% of the population aged 25-34. This will have a serious impact on the labor market and the pension system. Georgia’s labor force is already shrinking, and by 2050 it will have fallen by 30%

The situation is also reflected in the structure of the population. Georgia is not the only country in the region with a high proportion of old people. In the countries of Western Europe, the median age will be 40-45 in 2050, but in Georgia it will be 48. A large share of the population is concentrated in the rural areas of Georgia, where the average age is 48 years old. This is due to the high rate of rural-urban migration.

Rural-urban migration is technically a separate issue, but it is important because it has the same social consequences for the areas affected. According to the UN study in a few years some of Georgia’s highland villages will no longer exist, and they are already being deserted. In the village of Grelezhichala in Kakheti it has been 13 years since the last baby was born. In Maqarta in Dusheti there are only 13 families, and in the local school there is only one pupil, as opposed to two teachers. After four years this pupil will have to move to another village to continue studying and the teachers will be unemployed because there are no other children to teach.

The only solution to the problems of rural-urban migration is to develop the villages. If enterprises are built and more livestock are hus- banded there most people would not leave their residences. Poor infrastructure and lack of educational institutions are other severe problems. It is no coincidence that there has been no depopulation experienced in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Adjara regions, which have seen extensive tourism development. When tourism is deve- loped in a region each family is challenged to create something the tourists will want. If they meet that challenge they gain a new living, and thus be more willing to have babies. Shida Kartli, the other region which still has a growing popu- lation, is the nearest district to the capital.

The conclusion of Georgia has promised child bearing by stat- ing that he will be the godfather of each third child of a family, and any subsequent children. Since he made this offer the birthrate has increased almost 20%, and the patriarch now has around 15,000 godchildren. We can therefore conclude that it is not the case that incentives to increase the birth- rate actually work, so there is no reason why others cannot be tried. If they are, maybe this will change the UN’s projections, before it is too late.
Armenia, Russia To Set Up Disaster Management Center

By Sargis Harutyunyan, RFE/RL’s Armenian Service

The Armenian and Russian national rescue services will set up soon a joint center that will respond to possible natural disasters in Armenia and nearby countries, a government official in Yerevan said on Friday.

Nikolay Grigorian, a senior official at Armenia’s Emergency Situations Ministry, told RFE/RL’s Armenian service (Azatutyun.am) that the Humanitarian Center will use a small airport in the northern town of Stepansavan and a warehouse in Balahovit, a village just north of Yerevan.

He said the warehouse belonging to the ministry will be stocked with food, drinking water, tents, medication and other relief goods that would be shipped to regions struck by serious accidents, earthquakes and other natural disasters.

Grigorian revealed that the Russian and Armenian governments signed an agreement on the center in December. Joint working groups have since been preparing for its launch, he said. “Right now representatives of Russia are in Armenia [for that purpose],” he added.

Grigorian also said that the Russian-Armenian disaster management center will be part of “rapid-reaction rescue forces” of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a Russian-led defense pact of six ex-Soviet states. But he stressed that the new structure will not have any military mission. Nor will the Stepansavan and Balahovit facilities be used for military purposes, he said.

The head of an umbrella structure uniting Europe’s leading center-right parties has brushed aside Armenian opposition criticism of his unequivocal endorsement of the official results of Armenia’s disputed presidential election.

Wilfried Martens of the European People’s Party (EPP) insisted late on Thursday that the February 18 election was not rigged and that President Serzh Sarkisian won it legitimately. He pointed to the large, positive initial assessment of the ballot made by European election observers.

“There was real progress,” Martens told RFE/RL in Brussels. “Not all reforms were real, but there is huge progress. So I think that it is not correct to say that these elections were falsified. I think that the president was really, correctly elected.”

Martens was one of the first Western leaders to “warmly” congratulate Sarkisian on winning a second term. “I am confident that the country’s democratization process will be further enhanced under the leadership of President Sarkisian,” he wrote in a February 19 letter.

Raffi Hovanissian, Sarkisian’s main election challenger, who considers himself the rightful election winner, strongly condemned the EPP leader’s “haughty congratulation” on Wednesday, saying that it ran counter to European values. In an ensuing letter to the EPP, Hovanissian’s Zharmagutyun (Heritage) party threatened to pull out of the pan-European grouping if the latter does not disavow Martens’s stance.

Martens scoffed at the criticism. “Perhaps the challenger of the president had not 20 percent [of the vote] he hoped [to get] but much more: 37 percent,” he said. “Perhaps he now has the illusion that he could have [won] a majority. But it was not the real fact. The real fact is that there was a majority in the first round for the president [Sarkisian].”

Hovanissian hit back at the former Belgian prime minister during a fresh rally held in Yerevan’s Liberty Square on Friday. “How does he know that I expected 20 percent and must be happy with 37 percent? Whose script is he reading? You can guess,” he told thousands of supporters. “Sarkisian’s, shouted some in the crowd.

Hovanissian also charged that Martens “rigged Europe’s grand values.” “If this is true, in Europe, then we don’t need it,” he said.

Martens spoke to RFE/RL shortly after meeting Sarkisian on the sidelines of an EPP summit in Brussels. Sarkisian, whose Republican Party is also affiliated with the EPP, was reported by his press office to have thanked Martens for supporting him during the presidential race.

The Armenian leader also delivered a speech at the EPP gathering earlier on Thursday. He pledged to carry on with “comprehensive reforms” and European integration during his second five-year term.

Martens already raised eyebrows in Armenian opposition circles with strong support for Sarkisian and the ruling HHK (Heritage) party. Sarkisian voiced during last year’s parliamentary elections. The HHK won the May 2012 polls amid similar opposition allegations of vote rigging.

Martens predicted that victory in a video address to an HHK congress held in March 2012: “Long live the Republican Party,” he declared at the time.

Only 12 percent of cultural workers have higher education in Azerbaijani regions

By Trend

Only 12 percent of 33,143 workers of culture in towns and regions of Azerbaijan have higher education, Azerbaijani First Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism Vagid Aliyev said at the meeting of culture and tourism departments in regions on the results of 2012.

According to him, 39 percent of cultural workers in regions have secondary special education. The lowest number of cultural workers with higher education among the regions of the country is in Dashkesan (3 percent).

This figure is in Aghsu, Astara, Barda, Lerik and Tovuz regions constitutes about six percent, Aliyev said.

According to him, the highest figure is observed in Absheron region: 24 percent of cultural workers here have higher education.

The Deputy Minister also noted that among cultural workers in regions there are not so many young professionals. Only 25 percent of cultural workers are under the age of 30 years.

According to him, sometimes level of education is not considered while choosing candidates in regions. But it is also undeniable that young people with higher education are often not interested in work in the regions, especially in rural areas.

BP: Shah Deniz field has great potential

By: Elmarayilov, Trend

Azerbaijan's offshore gas condensate field Shah Deniz has the potential for the third stage of development, BP regional president on Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey Gordon Burrell said.

“This was stated by Burrell in an interview with the magazine “The Business Year: Azerbaijan 2013.”

According to Burrell, the company’s goal now is to implement the second stage of field development, largely a decision on which is to be adopted in late 2013. According to plans, the second stage of the project in Shah Deniz-2 is expected to be produced in 2018.

It is planned to produce 16 billion cubic meters of additional gas from the second stage of field development that will be delivered to both regional and European markets.

According to Burrell, the second stage of development of Shah Deniz field with total planned investment capital of about $40 billion is currently one of the largest projects in the world, and the largest of BP’s projects.

Currently, the Shah Deniz consortium is considering two options for its gas transportation to Europe - TAP and Nabucco West (through the territory of Greece). Azerbaijan plans to export 10 billion cubic meters of gas a year to Europe within the second stage of development of Shah Deniz field.

First gas production within Shah Deniz-2 project is expected for 2018.

Two offshore platforms will be installed and more than 20 subsea wells will be drilled for the production of an additional 16 billion cubic meters of gas a year under the Shah Deniz-2. It is predicted that gas production can be brought up to 24 billion cubic meters a year in the second stage of field development.

Gas reserves of Shah Deniz field are estimated at 1.2 trillion cubic meters. The contract to develop the offshore Shah Deniz field was signed on June 4, 1996. Participants to the agreement are: BP (operator) - 25.5 per cent, Statoil - 22.5 per cent, NIKO - 10 per cent, Total - 10 per cent, LukAgip - 10 per cent, TPNO - nine per cent and SOCAR-10 percent.
By DIANA PINTO

PARIS—Now that Binyamin Netanyahu has formed a new Israeli government out of a disjointing kaleidoscope of possible post-election permutations, has the country’s politics moved to the center? If so, US President Barack Obama would be wrong to think so as he prepares for his first official visit.

The unexpected second-place finish of Yair Lapid’s new Yesh Atid (“There is a Future”) party in the recent election has cemented the ascendancy of the two leading Orthodox parties, Shas and United Torah Judaism, as well as the two smaller centrist parties, Kadima and Hatnua, in. But those who breathed a sigh of relief at the defeat of Netanyahu’s Likud and the country’s extreme right-wing parties should be as anxious as ever.

The political horse-trading is over for the time being, and the outcome seems assured: Netanyahu will return as Prime Minister, and every party— in power or in opposition—is ready to block, dilute, or paper over whatever policies the new government manages to adopt. In Israel, the question now is always not whether the center will hold, but whether it matters.

In both domestic and international terms, Israel has not so much moved to the center as it has, unwittingly, served as a type of national consensus that began to emerge in 2011. In May-June of that year, while the international community was stinging potential land swaps for an increasingly distant peace settlement with the Palestinians, Israelis were focusing on a domestic battle over the regulation of cottage cheese.

The new consensus was best symbolized by the massive popular protests that erupted two months later, bringing together young, economically frustrated, mainly middle-class Israelis who might once have been politically divided by their allegiance to either the center-left Labor party or Netanyahu’s Likud. No mention was made, then or now, of the need for peace initiatives; of the state of mind of the now-invisible (to Israeli eyes) Palestinians, now relegated to their side of the security wall; or of the growing inequalities that separate many of Israel’s Arab citizens from their Jewish counterparts. By representing the aspirations of middle-class Israelis seeking a better economic deal, Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett of the nationalist Jewish Home party became the two sides of the same coin, the one backed by an inward-looking theme of Jewish identity with its commitment to either the center-left or the right.

Indeed, Israel is now on an explosive path toward the center of the political spectrum. And the army has already sent us down this road, as it is clear that most of the rising new political parties are aggregated. This might happen but we should not let this post

As Uncertain Future for Georgia’s Gambling Industry

Both can attract tourists, but both are illegal. The same is true regarding gambling and this created a situation where many people have gotten involved. Many people get addicted, and most of them are unable to give it up. Generally, generating a profit through crime and illness should not be accepted.

The author of the draft of the gambling business is creating so-much money for the state budget as it has already surpassed its type and games are increasing, the number of gamblers.

Banning gambling has its supports as well as its opponents. The Gambling Business Association of Georgia is opposed to the ban, but its members are partly supportive of the ban on advertising.

Those who oppose the ban focus on the importance of money generated from the industry. As Paata Shekhelidze pointed out in the interview with GT, the gambling industry is one of the most important contributors for the state budget. As he said, it is impossible to realistically control internet space and people involved in gambling will definitely play while abroad. In addition, he warns that the industry will be pushed under-ground. “The state budget receives a serious amount of money from this business. I do not understand the reason for banning such a business that is legal in developed countries. Those who want to gamble will definitely play. If advertising will be completely banned, it will damage broadcasters, especially those broadcasting sports show,” told Paata Shekhelidze.

The author of the draft doesn’t exclude the emergence of underground gambling groups, but he thinks that it is possible to neutralize such groups through financial sanctions. He also disagrees with those experts who think that controlling the internet is impossible. As Davitashvili says, the United States has set a major precedent when it comes to cracking down on internet freedom.

“Support a full ban of this business. We are already working on this issue. Fears of being clicked during an ongoing as well as the number of gamblers. In 2008, 163 licenses were issued, resulting in 11,596,000 GEL for the budget. As the Gambling Business Association of Georgia explains, new 140,000,000 GEL is transferred to the state budget from this business every year. Davitashvili does not confirm these statistics, as he thinks the amount is no more than 50 million GEL.

The amount of money illegal gambling business depends on the type of games. Casinos generate an average of 15,000 – 30,000 GEL per quarter, while online games produce 30,000 – 60,000 GEL per quarter. It is apparent that the gambling business is creating social problems in Georgia. The type and games of new gambling business is increased, and the number of casinos is on the rise. The willingness of the government to intervene is needed in order to curb these growths. Discussions are continuing as society and government weight the benefits and consequences of the industry, some fear that the increase in the number of casinos and gaming halls will feel that the industry needs serious changes.

But the world is not the center. Therefore, Tomaradze disagrees with the call to ban gambling tourism. “gambling tourism” is becoming more popular in Georgia. It is over for the time being, and the government manages to adopt. In Israel, the question now is always not whether the center will hold, but whether it matters.

Several communities of countries are trying to revive the economy, and it is not clear whether the center will matter. Indeed, Israel is now on an explosive path toward the center of the political spectrum. And the army has already sent us down this road, as it is clear that most of the rising new political parties are aggregated. This might happen but we should not let this post.
We progress as the world around us does. At the 71st birthday of our great library, the first director of our library also travelled around the world in large volumes, in one case even finding myself in a great concrete wall – only a place where three nations meet, compelled to share them with you. It is a place where the rules designed to stop cross-contamination; food should be stored ‘safe for human consumption’ – not only dust or any foreign object to fall out, that can make our food ‘germ infested’ food, which is then sold as ‘safe’ food, and food sickness bugs (Norovirus, E. coli, Shigelllosis, etc.) transmitted through touch, even if food hand washing practices are in place, and these bugs can have very severe effects, and sometimes be fatal.

As there is no packaging on many products, there is almost no way of knowing how old they are after they are not in the fridge, and all fools lack quality and flavor if it is stored for too long. The common term for this phenomenon is freezer-burn, which happens when there is nothing to keep the food fresh. This is one of the supermarket’s and its chicken legs with broken bones. Such products in the first can only be sold for cat and dog food due to safety considerations, not for humans. Don’t believe these chicken parts come from Beef! Another reason the rules are in place is that the ‘big five’ food sickness bugs (Norovirus, Salmonella, E.coli, Shigelllosis, etc.) are transmitted through touch, even if food hand washing practices are in place, and these bugs can have very severe effects, and sometimes be fatal.

In 19th century Russia, the first print shop was published in 1464. We have a special edition of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” (1712). You can therefore be certain to what horizon of knowledge or information they have not history. Making simple changes can decrease the chances of this dangerous illness occurring. The public is owed a response. Let’s hope the call for better education the public health website in the UK, for such a thing as food safety has been made.

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Death is Jazzy in the US, Stinks in Israel and Bizarre in Georgia

BY TAKO AGARASHVILI

"France, the Army, Head of the Army, Josephine..." – William Shakespeare. Once the Napoleon Bonaparte. People become famous for their last words. People get famous by death itself. An American citizen Debby Mills-Newsbeughton, 99 years old, was driven down the road. She was to turn 100 the next day but, crazily enough, was killed as her daughter to go to her own birthday party, her wheelchair was sitting on a beautiful cake that happened to be delivering her birthday cake. The woman deserves to be famous for a death like this. I would say what are the odds, but going to your 100th birthday party... I mean... Come on...

Regardless of how one dies, it’s still sad. Maybe not for those who stated about death like Debby’s, but for those who loved the deceased person. It is still inevitable. I don’t think there can even be a right time to die. It’s mostly unexpected. It might be as quick, but also long and painful. They say when you know you’re dying you start to think and feeling differently. You may drown in regret. As death comes your whole life is in front of your eyes, in a blink you think of a million things – what would or did you wanted to do. I am guessing death is the person and his/her priorities.

American Beauty is movie that shocked me to my core back in the day. It gave me the most profound moment on sexuality. Depressed, listless and unfeelings. We shall all know some day, but for now, what do we know about giving? We don’t know what happens to a person, we only know what happens:what we do to a body. There are many types of funeral traditions in the world. I remember watching my death neighbor being carried out of the apartment wrapped in the sheet. Who knows where they took him afterwards? I may be wrong, but as I remember they were from somewhere in or around Chechens.

People get cremated. Some are wrapped in a sheet, hung some heavy stuff and dropped in the water. Those with concerns about the effects on the enviromental beliefs. They may choose to be buried in an all-natural biodegradable green burial shroud, sometimes a simple coffin made of cardboard or another eco-biodegradable material. Further, they may choose their final resting place to be in a park or woodland, as a nature or eco-cemetery. That’s called a green funeral. People nowadays even organise to broadcast the funeral online, so the family can’t afford to watch the ceremony, they may choose that to be broadcast online. And the solemn music is replaced by loud, upbeat, ruckus music and dancing where onlookers join in to celebrate the life of the deceased. This is the origin of the New Orleans dance known as the "second line" where celebrants perform a dance-march, frequently while raising the huts and umbrellas brought along as protection from intense New Orleans sun. Among the observant kerechefic above the head are not being used to wipe away tears.

Turns out Jews have a few step plan regarding funerals. Burial is a must. Burial is intended to take place in as short an interval of time after death as possible. Displaying of the body prior to burial is not allowed. No flowers. When they get home, the mourners sit for a week from crying. Showers or bathing, wearing leather shoes or jewelry, or shaving. In many communities, mourners in the mourners’ home are covered exactly as they should not be concerned about their personal appearance. It is customary for the mourners to sit on low stools or even the floor, symbolizing the unstable reality or being without a "brought low" by the grief. The meal of the consolation, the meal eaten upon returning from the funeral, traditionally consists of hard-boiled eggs and other round or oblong foods. During this seven-day period, family and friends come to visit or call on the mourners to comfort them - "yemur call". To be honest, I expected more from Jews. This is the nature I admire and love. The most but, just for a week for not going back the beloved dead and might “kill” some who are still alive.

When someone dies in Georgi a everyone is come or passing close by finds out. Georgians mourn just as loud as they can. They mostly blame it on the loss of the pain that they forget they are not on another world. They do not shoulder their dead. They mainly believe that people eating and drinking, let me false it, getting fairly drunk, somehow go to impress others. Death is not the dead person’s good in the other world. They are willing to die. They are willing to die. They are willing to be buried. They are willing to be buried. They are willing to cry for their dead. You, should you see the writings on the memorials, on the graves in the eastern regions: dead by the hammer, dead by the sword, etc. My own mother pulled the fussiest thing after my uncle died. She died like the painting on the stone. Of course she had not managed of being a beautiful woman, so she had the painter paint the new picture on the other side of the stone. She simply turned it around. And now there only stone in the ground, in the front of the stone, and in the back of the stone. As decorated, as really was she as was, she knew every single relative who came and didn’t come. She wasn’t lazy to call those who didn’t make it after the funeral and let them have.

After the funeral we have the biggest “supsaz” ever. It’s like cooking, but wedding people, wear black. They pay for a funeral dinner that could serve 2-3 hundred people, enough to feed the entire city. People borrow money to look rich when their loved one dies. The casket must be fancy, and the "supsaz" must be fancy as one ever had. They strongly believe that people eating and drinking, let me false it, being fairly drunk, somehow go to impress others. Death is not the dead person’s good in the other world. They are willing to die. They are willing to die. They are willing to cry for their dead. You, should you see the writings on the memorials, on the graves in the eastern regions: dead by the hammer, dead by the sword, etc. My own mother pulled the fussiest thing after my uncle died. She died like the painting on the stone. Of course she had not managed of being a beautiful woman, so she had the painter paint the new picture on the other side of the stone. She simply turned it around. And now there only stone in the ground, in the front of the stone, and in the back of the stone. As decorated, as really was she as was, she knew every single relative who came and didn’t come. She wasn’t lazy to call those who didn’t make it after the funeral and let them have.

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Gudauri and Bakuriani - Beloved Ski Resorts for Foreign Tourists in Georgia

By LIKA MOSHASHVILI

There are fewer people and prices are cheaper in Bakuriani and Gudauri, in March compared with previous months. Although spring is in the air in Bakuriani and Gudauri, low and snowless areas, Georgia’s ski slopes are snowy and in good condition. Skiers and boarders can still experience the pleasures of the 2012 snow season and speed down the mountains of both of Georgia’s popular ski resorts. According to travel agency Concord Travel Georgia, Gudauri, with its professional ski slopes always attracts young people; while young families usually prefer Bakuriani. Either way, visitors can enjoy a pleasant environment in both winter resorts.

“I always prefer Gudauri because it is closer to Tbilisi than Bakuriani. I love skiing very much and when I want to escape the city noise for a weekend and enjoy the snowy slopes that lie outside the city I always go there,” said Nika Gogosadzevlvli, a 27-year old skier.

The Gudauri ski resort is situated 120 kilometers north of Tbilisi on the southern slopes of the Great Caucasus Mountain Range. Not far from the now open Russian border crossing, the resort is Georgia’s highest (2,379 meters above sea level) with average winter snow cover reaching 1.5 meters. Since May 2011, about two years after the Titlis City Hall took over management of Gudauri, several development projects have been completed, including a 2,450 meter lift with 72 gondolas.

“Like hotels but the service is in a very low level. Also, the ski slopes are damaged a lot in Bakuriani and nobody seems to care. This is why many people prefer going to Gudauri,” Ana Daushvili, a 21-year old tourist told The Georgian Times. “With the exception of opening of few café-bars, nothing has changed here compared with the previous year. The number of entertainment facilities also has not increased.”

Bakuriani, surrounded by coniferous forests, lies 30 km from Borjomi, in southwestern Georgia (about 180 km from Tbilisi). The resort is connected with Borjomi by an electrified narrow-gauge railway. The highest mountain of the resort Kokhtagora is situated at around 2,200 meters above sea level.

Both Bakuriani and Gudauri have a wide range of accommodation. Owners of the guesthouses and hotels are welcoming and provide visitors packages that include the option of having three meals. In March, prices per night range from 40 GEL to 350 GEL, depending on the type of accommodation, with Gudauri tending to be on the pricier side. “We have sent approximately 500 visitors to both resorts this year. However, 2013 was not so good compared with last year,” commented Nino Tikhondia, tour operator at Concord Travel Georgia.

But as Mamforia told the Georgian times, the number of tourists at Gudauri’s Marco Polo Hotel increased by 15-20% this year. “Our Hotel hosted 12,000 guests this winter, adding “we are going to make a new entertainment center, bowling hall and a play area for our guests next year.”

Madlena Manusachiani, sales manager of Mzavrebi, which is one of the biggest hotels in Bakuriani, says that the hotel operates all year around, but guests come only in the winter and summer months.

“This year we had many foreign tourists, mainly from Azerbaijan, Armenia and Ukraine. This winter we offered our guests very good rates… we also opened a new supermarket and pizzeria,” Manusachiani said in an interview with GT. As she commented, “there is a demand.”

“Unlike Gudauri and Svane- ti (another mountain holiday destination), the government doesn’t care and spend any money on the development of Bakuriani. Everything depends on businessmen. More attention is needed from the state to develop this winter resort,” noted Zurab Kurtanidze, an upset owner of one of the ski lifts and a cafe in Bakuriani.

Despite these shortcomings, Georgian winter resorts are still very attractive for foreign tourists, especially from former Soviet republics.

“After the winter season foreign tourists continue to arrive, especially from Israel, to rest here and see the beauty of these high mountains,” said Eka Khurtsidzevlvli, Manager of Vila Palace Hotel in Bakuriani.

“Extensive sunshine, alpine climate, average snowfall, beautiful ski slopes of varied difficulty, spectacular views, the renowned Georgian cuisine, and pleasant atmosphere - this is what we offer our clients every year in Bakuriani and Gudauri,” stated the manager of Concord Travel Georgia. “Bakuriani and Gudauri have a great potential and I think that they need more attention and promotion to become world-class resorts.”
The Georgian Times

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