

## Garibashvili Unveils Georgia's Infrastructure Plan, Stresses Significance of Middle Corridor at World Economic Forum

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

During the Diplomacy Dialogue on the Western Balkans at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili reiterated his appreciation to EU leaders for their crucial support in granting Georgia EU candidate status. Emphasizing Georgia's swift economic development, the Prime Minister showcased the country's ongoing progress.

"In the last three years, Georgia's economy grew very fast and right now we're one of the fastest developing economies in the world.

Two years ago, Georgia's economy grew by 10.5%, also in 2022 by 10.4%. Last year, 7%. Inflation is very low; in the last seven months, it was below 1%. This year, we expect to have more than 5% of economic growth. This is a very conservative assessment.

Therefore, it's a very good, stable situation. Politically also, Georgia is very stable. Also, you mentioned trade, and everything is growing.

Of course, we are expanding our trade connections and relationships. I also want to mention that FDI was also a record number last year. Therefore, especially after the decision that was made in December that Georgia became an EU candidate country, we expect more FDIs to flow into Georgia.

My dear colleague, President Vucic, mentioned connectivity. Of course, Georgia, as you know, has a very important



geostrategic location. We're absolutely committed to the development of this so-called Middle Corridor, which is becoming a very interesting and attractive alternative route," Garibashvili stated.

Garibashvili unveiled Georgia's comprehensive plan for infrastructure development and strategic collaboration, emphasizing the importance of the Middle Corridor. He outlined a clear roadmap involving Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and

Georgia, with a focus on expanding port capacity and modernizing crucial transportation avenues.

"We have a very clear plan on how to develop this corridor – Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and vice versa. We know exactly what needs to be done.

It means the expansion of port capacity. It means the modernization of our railways, airports, roads infrastructure et cetera. I'll share with you recent updates about these very impor-

tant projects.

This year, we want to start construction of a new Deep Sea Port in Anaklia, Georgia, on the Black Sea. Also, the railway modernization is in progress, and this will be completed this year, and the capacity of the railroad in Georgia will be doubled, which will reach more than 48 million tons.

We're also going to start the construction of a new airport because we want to position ourselves as an aviation hub. Geor-

gia, because of its location, has the full potential to develop and position itself as an aviation hub as well.

All the infrastructure projects such as the road, and east-west highway, everything is going to be completed this year. Other important projects also will be completed in two years' time," Gharibashvili said.

Prime Minister Garibashvili emphasized the significance of China's interest in the Middle Corridor.

"I also want to mention the importance of China's interest in this alternative route, the so-called Middle Corridor. I had a very successful trip to China last year. I met with President Xi Jinping, and we decided to elevate our partnership to the strategic level. China's interest was declared several months ago by President Xi regarding the Middle Corridor. And I think this will give more impetus and more energy to the development of this corridor.

Once again, I want to take this opportunity and publicly thank all the EU leaders who supported the historic decision to grant Georgia the EU candidate status. This is a huge achievement of our government because since we came to power in 2012, we made enormous efforts and big progress on our EU integration path – Association Agreement, Free Trade Agreement, Visa Free, and now this was culminated by this decision that Georgia became EU candidate country," Garibashvili stated.

## United National Movement Files Lawsuit Against Kakha Kaladze in the Prosecutor's Office

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

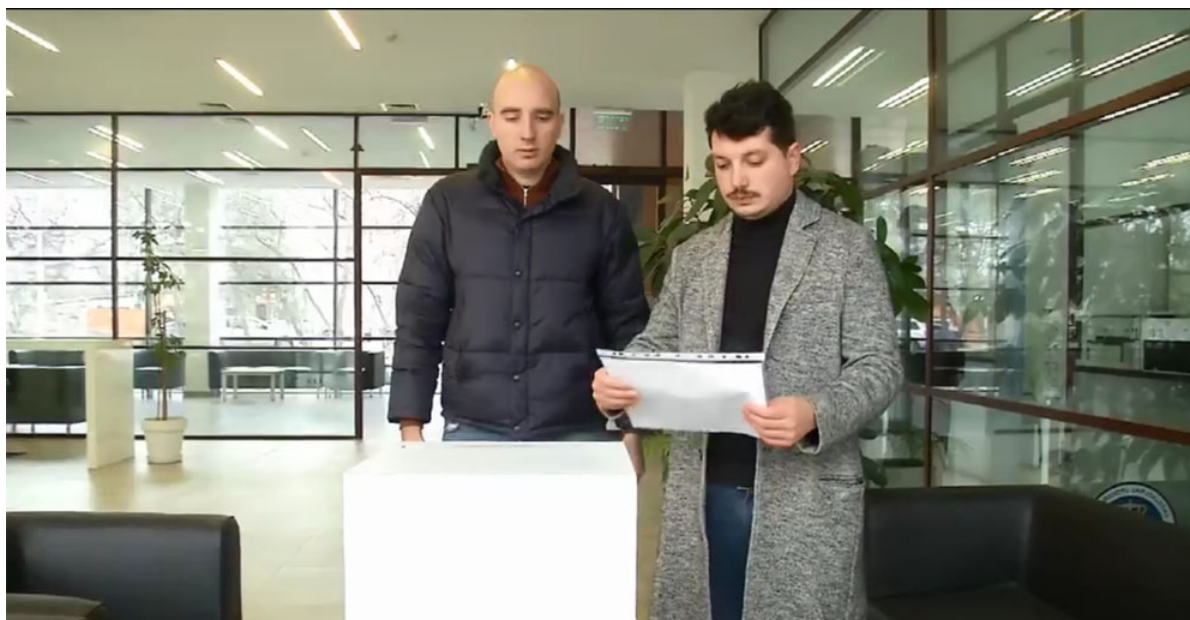
son.

The United National Movement has accused the Mayor of Tbilisi, Kakha Kaladze, of corrupt activities and filed a lawsuit against him in the prosecutor's office.

According to party members, the funds allocated by Tbilisi City Hall for the rehabilitation of Tsereteli Avenue have been embezzled. They are calling for an investigation into the 17 million GEL that Kakha Kaladze provided to the companies associated with the donor of the Georgian Dream and friend of Bera Ivanishvili, Bidzina Ivanishvili's

Irakli Pavlenishvili, the Deputy General Secretary of UNM, urged the Mayor of Tbilisi to respond not only to UNM's inquiries but also to those from the general population of Tbilisi.

"In the next few days, the city council session will take place. We urge [Kaladze] to attend and address not only the questions posed by the United National Movement but also those of the people of Tbilisi concerning the rehabilitation of Tsereteli Avenue. Among these are inquiries regarding the Digomi swamps, the Varketili metro



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6576; Euro - 2.8941; GBP - 3.3704; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9924; Swiss Franc - 3.0738

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ceiling, and the rehabilitation of Chavchavadze Avenue. Instead of making dismissive comments and insulting people, he has the

responsibility to provide answers to the public," stated Pavlenishvili.

The United National Movement lawyer Lasha Tkesheladze accused Kakha Kaladze of en-

gaging in corrupt schemes.

"When the rehabilitation of Tsereteli Avenue was starting, [Kaladze] signed a tens of millions contract with a member of the Georgian Dream City Coun-

cil of Gardabani. Today, we see that this money was wasted, stolen, and now that it wasn't enough for Kaladze, he established a new corruption scheme and signed a 17 million contract

with the donors of 'Georgian Dream' and Bera Ivanishvili's friend. We all know very well that this is corruption; this is a criminal offense," said lawyer Lasha Tkesheladze.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### Bidzina Ivanishvili's Money Laundering Complaint Against Credit Suisse Dismissed After Investigation



Bidzina Ivanishvili, the honorary chairman and founder of Georgian Dream, filed a money laundering complaint against Credit Suisse, a Swiss multinational investment bank and financial services company. How-

ever, the investigation did not uncover any evidence of money laundering, and his complaint was dismissed.

Bloomberg reported that the investigation found no evidence confirming the alleged money laundering by former banker Patrice Lescaudron or any other representative of Credit Suisse.

Lescaudron, was accused of

forging signatures, making unauthorized customer account withdrawals, and illegally transferring millions from Ivanishvili's accounts.

Ivanishvili's representative stated that they strongly dis-

agree with the reasoning that overlooks evidence indicating the customer relationship manager's intention to hide and launder the proceeds of his fraud. Additionally, according to Bloomberg's report, Ivanishvili's team plans to file an appeal in the case.

### Irakli Gharibashvili Highlights 'Decade of Peace' Amid Ongoing Russian Occupation Since 2008



During the discussion held in Davos, Switzerland, Georgia's Prime Minister, Irakli Gharibashvili, stated that since 2008, the country has managed to maintain peace and stability despite ongoing Russian occupation of Georgian territories.

"We survived the war in 2008, and since then, Russia has built military bases on our territory and continues to occupy our territo-

ries. However, despite this security challenge, we have managed to ensure a decade of unprecedented and continuous peace and stability, fostering prosperity and economic growth in Georgia," said Gharibashvili.

According to Gharibashvili, since the restoration of independence, Georgia has never experienced such a peaceful and stable situation as it is now.

Tbilisi Urban Forest (Narikala Ridge Forest), Georgia, became one of 40 works, shortlisted from 362 nominations from 20 different countries by the Contemporary Architecture/Mies van der Rohe Awards (EUMies Awards) jury.

The awards are given every second year to works completed within the previous two years by architects from Creative Europe participating countries. They recognise and commend excellence and innovation in the field of architecture.

The Narikala Botanical Gar-

## Georgia on the shortlist for 2024 EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture



den is located in the very centre of the capital. It was created in the mid-20th century by Soviet biologists who planted pine monocultures to reduce erosion and cool the city. The ageing plantations suffered significant die-off from pests and fungi, posing a fire hazard and public safety risk.

In 2020, the city of Tbilisi initiated a project to repopulate the Tbilisi Urban Forest with a biodiverse palette of endemic and climate-adapted species. A new approach to afforestation that combines ecology, technology and aesthetics was created and

tested in Narikala.

This February, the EUMies jury will announce the finalists. Then, the jury members will visit these works and take their final decision.

In April, the Architecture and Emerging Winners will be announced, and the awards ceremony will take place in May at the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion in Barcelona. The Architecture Prize winner and the Emerging Architecture Prize Winner will receive a trophy and respectively Euro 60 000 and Euro 30 000.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

### Weather

Friday, January 19

Day Mostly Cloudy  
High: 10°C

Night Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 2°C

Saturday, January 20

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 14°C

Night Clear  
Low: 3°C

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