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BY ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

Jumber Miladze, a 63-year-old patient from Akhgori who was being transported from occupied Tskhinvali to the territory controlled by Tbilisi with the help of the Red Cross on May 19th, died from a stroke on the way to the Karaleti area before arriving to the hospital.

"It is very unfortunate and, first of all, I express my deepest condolences to the family members of Jumber Miladze," said Ketevan Tsikhelashvili.

Accordingly, for several days now, the patient's family had been trying to evacuate him from the Tskhinvali hospital but in vain. Unfortunately, Jumber Melidze is another victim of the inhuman and illegal restrictions forced onto the population in the conditions of isolation in the Tskhinvali region.

The De facto Security Committee wrote that a few days ago an unauthorised appearance of a car of the Georgian private medical clinic, was recorded on the South Ossetian-Georgian border, ac-



Controversy surrounding Tskhinvali

▶ A patient from Akhgori died on his way from the occupied territory to the area Tbilisi-controlled area.

KETEVAN TSIKHELASHVILI, THE STATE MINISTER FOR RECONCILIATION AND CIVIL AFFAIRS, SAID ON MAY 20TH THAT 14 PEOPLE HAD DIED IN MEDICAL SERVICES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER 2019 AFTER THE OCCUPIED TSKHINVALI CLOSED THE CHECKPOINTS CONNECTING THE REST OF GEORGIA



▶ EU observers emphasise the impartiality of the mission.

cusing the Georgian side and the Lugar Laboratory of trying to obtain biological material from the South Ossetians, with the EU Monitoring Mission assisting this.

"Part of the obligation to take care of our employees is to accompany the staff of the EU Monitoring Mission so that, if necessary, they can quickly provide the necessary assistance, for example, in the event of a car accident. This is especially important in remote areas where emergency medical care is difficult," the mission said in a press release issued on May 21st.

The EU Monitoring Mission also notes that there have been no secret movements, no contacts have been made with any citizens, no samples have been collected and no such intention exists either.

Occupied Tskhinvali closed all checkpoints connecting the rest of Georgia on February 27th to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the region after Tbilisi revealed the first case of the virus in the country the day before.

European Parliament discussed implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Georgia

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

At a meeting of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee in Brussels on May 19th, lawmakers discussed the report of Sven Mikser, a permanent rapporteur on Georgia and a member of the European Parliament. The prepared report on the implementation of the Association Agreement with the European Union (which also includes the draft resolution of the European Parliament) was presented in March, but due to the coronavirus, the process has been delayed.

Sven Mikser, a spokeswoman for the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, said that Georgia had successfully dealt with the fight against the pandemic and received significant financial support from the European Union. The need to implement the agreement reached between the government and the opposition, which has become controversial, was also stressed.

MEPs announced that the March 8 agreement has to be fully implemented, that Giorgi Rurua ("Another Political Prisoner") should be released, that electoral reform must be finalised and quality elections held. To a large extent, the final form of the report and resolution on Georgia will depend on the resolution of these issues. The Georgian government remains in the old position - there are no political prisoners in Georgia, and the Georgian Dream has always been committed to the March 8 agreement.

Mikser announced that implementing the March 8 agreement in accordance with the text and the spirit is important for leaving the political deadlock and reducing political polarization, which is "a vital precondition for sustainable progress in other areas of association policy."

The report stressed on the protection of media freedom and equal access to the media for all political parties - especially during the pre-election period. The need for support for gender equality and the fight against discrimination is also emphasised.

In his report Mikser also highlighted the need for respect for



► The draft resolution is based on the report of the Permanent Rapporteur on Georgia, Estonian MEP Sven Mikser.



► The report was prepared as a result of active communication with the Georgian government, the opposition and civil society.

the highest standards of judicial independence and fair justice, which is one of the key commitments made by Georgia under the Association Agreement.

During the speech at committee discussion he called on the Georgian authorities to fully comply with the recommendations of the Venice Commission before further approval of judges for senior positions. The deadline for changes in the text of the report expired on May 20th. Voting at the committee meeting is scheduled for July 14th, and according to Mikser, the report will be able to reflect the concrete results of the dynamic process, including whether the March 8 agreement will be fully implemented and whether the process will be crowned with constitutional changes.

It is expected that the text of the draft resolution of the European Parliament, which is given in the March 23rd version of the report, will be changed. So far, for example, we find such a record:

MEPs express concern over cases of opposition politicians who have contributed to the increase in mistrust and escalation of tensions between the ruling party and the opposition, leading to the polarization of politics and society, as well as over the recent selection of Supreme Court judges for serious shortcomings.

European Parliament calls on Georgia to respect the highest standards of independence and fair trial in accordance with the Association Agreement and to review the procedures for selecting judges to ensure that the recommendations of the Venice Commission are fully implemented before any new appointments.

Almost all speakers spoke on May 19th about the need to implement the March 8th agreement. In this context, like David McAllister, chairman of the foreign affairs committee (EPP), the need for the release of Giorgi Rurua was emphasized by the representative of the Conservatives and Reformists group, MEP Anna Fotiga.

Like many other MEPs, she wrote on social media about political retribution and the existence of political prisoners in Georgia. Accordingly, she also considered the release of Gigi Ugulava and Irakli Okruashvili as release of political prisoners. However, the President of Georgia, Salome Zurbishvili, responded to her welcoming statement on Twitter, saying, "I have not forgiven political prisoners."


FRIDAY MAY 22

Day  Thunderstorm
High: 31°C

Night  Cloudy
Low: 16°C

SATURDAY MAY 23

Day  Partly Cloudy
High: 17°C

Night  Cloudy/Wind
Low: 10°C

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Bakhvi 1 HPP to be built in Guria with \$16 million US investment

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Georgian government has approved a project to build a small hydroelectric power plant, Bakhvi 1, in Western Georgia, Guria region.

After the May 21st meeting of the government, the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, Natia Turnava, informed the media that a small HPP with a capacity of 12 megawatts will be built in Chokhatauri municipality.

According to Turnava, the project is important not only because it aims to generate local green energy and to permanently employ at least 20 people, but also because it is being implemented with American investment.

As the Economy Minister emphasized, the project was initiated by Cerberus Frontier, a company affiliated with one of the largest US investment funds, Cerberus Capital Management, which will implement the fifth project in the Georgian energy sector.

Natia Turnava says that despite the Coronavirus pandemic, Americans want to expand their investments in Georgia.



► "We will do our best to move the project from the study stage to the construction stage in the near future," Turnava said.

"It is very important that American investors are willing to expand their investments in Georgia, despite the Coronavirus pandemic. This once

again shows that the investment environment we have is very attractive to foreign investors, including American investors," Turnava said.

According to the Minister of Economy, the government will do its best to move the project from the study stage to the construction stage in the near future.

Turnava did not name the cost of the project.

Project foresees the annual output of Bakhvi HPP will be 50 MW/h, and the estimated investment - \$ 16 million. Currently, the project is under research.

It is noteworthy that Guria Region Development Strategy for 2014-2021 said that the potential of water resources in hydropower is not used effectively. The geographical location and climatic conditions of the region allow the construction of small hydropower cascades on the rivers of Guria, with a total capacity of 80-100 MW, which will not only meet the energy needs of the region, but also sell electricity and create additional sources of income.

Founded in 1992, Cerberus is a global leader in alternative investing with approximately \$42 billion in assets across complementary credit, private equity, and real estate platforms. Cerberus Frontier is at the forefront of private investing in some of the world's fastest growing economies with an established record of delivering strong investment returns, while providing unique exposure to untapped frontier markets.



► A total of 25 medium and small mountain rivers flow into Guria with a total length of 598 km. Photo: BM.ge

Japan-Georgia Foreign Ministers' Telephone Talk

ON MAY 21, commencing at around 3:50 p.m. for approximately 20 minutes, Mr. Motegi Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, held a telephone talk with H.E. Mr. David Zalkaliani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. The overview is as follows.

1. At the outset, Minister Motegi stated that the Avi-

gan tablets, requested by the Georgian government, will be provided in the near future and expressed his readiness to provide equipment which will contribute to the improvement of the health and medical system in Georgia. In response, Minister Zalkaliani expressed his appreciation for the assistance from Japan and introduced the

current situation in Georgia and the measures taken by the Government.

Both Ministers shared the view to be gradually suppressing the infection in the two countries, and concurred on the importance of sharing information, lessons learned, and insights of the COVID-19 with other countries and further co-

operation to prevent the spread of the infection.

2. Minister Motegi stated that Japan attaches great emphasis to the relationship with Georgia, which shares fundamental values, such as human rights, democracy and the rule of law and will further support self-sustained development of Georgia. Both Ministers shared

the view to promptly conclude a Japan-Georgia bilateral investment agreement and to further revitalize mutual exchanges between two countries in the fields of economy, business and so on after convergence of the COVID-19. The two Ministers shared the view to continue to work closely in the international arenas as well.

George Tushmalishvili – *Country of Liquid Sun*

How can we characterise the period of Georgian wine making which is connected with the name and activities of Giorgi Tushmalishvili? Georgian wineries were quickly gaining capacity new wineries were being built, the latest scientific and technical achievements were being introduced and there were new brands of wine and champagne and cognac being created which earned international recognition and made their way onto the world market and made Georgian produce famous.

Giorgi Tushmalishvili was born into the family of the Tsinandali Estate Administrator, Aleksandre Tushmalishvili, in 1921 in Tsinandali. He graduated from the Technological Faculty of the Georgian Agricultural Institute in 1943 with the specialty of engineer-technologist of wine making.

Initially, Tushmalishvili started to work at the Kulari farm as a wine maker and then moved to the Crimea in 1945 where he continued his activities as a senior wine maker at the No.1 Winery of "Masindar" centre. Just after coming to work at "Masindar, he was awarded the title of wine maker of the highest category in 1950.

From 1952, Tushmalishvili was transferred to Tbilisi upon the solicitation of the "Samtrest" administration to take the position of senior wine maker and was appointed Head of the Industrial Department of "Samtrest" in 1954. From 1961, he continued his activities as the Director of Tbilisi's Champagne Factory. The quality of Georgian champagne wines increased considerably in that period with the volume of production increasing to seven million bottles. Additionally, several technological innovations were introduced for the production of champagne wines and the factory was re-equipped. In Union-wide exhibitions, the factory's products were awarded first place standings several times by the wine tasting commission.

The main base for conducting the Tenth International Congress of Viticulture and Wine Making in 1962 was the Tbilisi Champagne Factory. Foreign guests were astonished by the technical soundness of the factory's equipment and production processes.

In 1965, Tushmalishvili was appointed as the Chief Wine Maker of "Samtrest." That very year, Georgia's capital Tbilisi for the first time in the Soviet Union -hosted the World Tasting of Wine, Champagne and Cognac Products event. The role of the Chief Wine Maker of "Samtrest" held a great responsibility, as well as pride,



► *George Tushmalishvili*

in the epicenter of these very important events.

In 1967, Tushmalishvili was appointed as the Director of "Samtrest". The volume of Georgian export wines was increasing every year and achieved three million deciliters. Georgian vintage wines earned 160 gold and silver medals in international tasting and obtained recognition throughout the world.

Tushmalishvili's father, Aleksandre, was an agronomist, well-known throughout Kakheti and a good expert in wine making who was also considered to be extremely skilled at establishing farms. He planted his own collection of vines for his son Giorgi in their yard in Tbilisi and commissioned him to take care of the plants with a strict observance of rules. It was the knowledge, obtained under his father's leadership, which formed the basis for the formation of Giorgi Tushmalishvili as a specialist in his field.

Giorgi Tushmalishvili's sister, Tina, recalls: "My father, Aleksandre, completed the Second Gymnasium for Boys in Tbilisi. His elder brothers, Zakaria, Grigol and Nikoloz, were military men. At that time, the sons of princes and nobles were brought up in Russia as military cadets. It was prestigious then, Russians were eager to have Georgian warriors - we had great military talent. His parents learned that my father

was keen on agriculture and took him to an agricultural school. The boys, in addition to their studies, were working on practical activities as well and had their vegetable gardens, other gardens and vineyards. The prominent Georgian gardener, Mikheil Mamulashvili, studied together with my father".

There were many difficult periods for Giorgi Tushmalishvili. He often had to fight against non-professional leaders who made wrong decisions



► *Tushmalishvili family in Tsinandali*



such as trying to develop master plans and construct giant wineries for processing two to 40 thousand tons of grapes, using large reinforced concrete reservoirs instead of oak barrels, harvesting non-conditional grapes, hastening the start of the vintage, not observing the irrigation regimes of vineyards, not taking into consideration the suitability of the plots selected for vineyards into consideration, etc. amongst others.

Tushmalishvili was often invited to the Agricultural In-

stitute of Georgia as the Chairman of the State Examination Commission of Wine Makers - Technologists. He participated in international congresses of viticulture and wine making in Tbilisi, Romania, Chile and Argentina as well as in the activities of international tasting commissions in Yugoslavia in 1956, Hungary in 1964, Tbilisi in 1965 and Yalta in 1970 and obtained gold medals for being the best wine taster everywhere he went.

"I worked in the Crimea for seven years," recalled Tushmalishvili "and hosted even Churchill and Roosevelt. Churchill had a good understanding of drinks. Stalin sent him 75 bottles of Eniseli cognac for his seventy-fifth birthday. We received an answer from Churchill: I'm sorry I didn't turn 100..."

With all his life and activities, Giorgi Tushmalishvili wanted to prove the superiority of Georgia as a wine making country with an excellent quality of produce. "I strongly believe that, with the exception of France, there is no wine making country that could compete with Georgia in terms of quality wine making. Our country has absolutely special soil and climatic conditions. Europeans do not believe that about 500 endemic vine varieties are registered in Georgia - and this is the result of selection during many centuries."