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Hebashi Holding Group and Georgia's Oti Real Estate Company present VIRTU, a leap in the real estate investment world

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Chateau Mukhrani: Grand Opening of a Georgian National Treasure

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

Steeped in history, the homestead for the descendants of Georgia's Bagrationi family has opened after years of renovation. Chateau Mukhrani, known for its popular brand of wines, opened its doors for hospitality and events in a ribbon-cutting ceremony that showcased the site's decor. With both a dining and event space, the interior is decorated to elicit the former grandeur of this palatial estate.

Designed in 1873 for Ivane Mukhranbatoni, one of the biggest Georgian landowners of that time and a modernizer of the winemaking industry, its construction took over 12 years. Much of its design and inspiration came from the Chateau of Versailles in France. This vision is reinvigorated by the renowned designer Juan Pablo Molyneux.



Continued on page 8 The entrance to the Chateau's event space. Photo by Mike Godwin

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Prepared for Georgia Today Business by GALT & TAGGART

Markets		Price		w/w		m/m	
BONDS							
GRAIL 07/28	77.65 (YTM 9.17%)	+1.2%	-1.4%	Bank of Georgia (BGE LN)	GBP 21.25	+1.0%	+6.9%
GEBGG 07/23	100.61 (YTM 5.13%)	-0.0%	-0.3%	Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 6.25	+2.5%	+1.0%
GEOCAP 03/24	93.70 (YTM 11.26%)	+0.0%	-0.8%	TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 18.84	+2.3%	+12.5%
SILNET 01/27	92.59 (YTM 10.58%)	-0.1%	-3.7%				
TBC 06/24	98.08 (YTM 7.01%)	+0.3%	-0.5%				
CURRENCIES							
		Price		w/w		m/m	
		GEL / USD		2,7725		+0.6%	
		GEL / EUR		2,7400		+0.7%	
		GEL / GBP		3,1775		+2.2%	
		GEL / CHF		2,7650		+0.5%	
		GEL / RUB		0,0448		+0.4%	
		GEL / TRY		0,1489		+0.5%	
		GEL / AZN		1,6353		+0.3%	
		GEL / AMD		0,0070		+2.2%	
		GEL / UAH		0,0753		+0.9%	
		EUR / USD		1,0120		-0.1%	
		GBP / USD		0,8719		-1.7%	
		CHF / USD		1,0013		+0.0%	
		RUB / USD		61,9275		+0.0%	
		TRY / USD		18,6134		+0.2%	
		AZN / USD		1,6955		-0.0%	
		AMD / USD		395,3900		-1.5%	
COMMODITIES							
		Price		w/w		m/m	
		Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)		94.83		+1.7%	
		Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)		1,633.56		-1.0%	
INDICES							
		Price		w/w		m/m	
		FTSE 100		7,094.53		+1.1%	
		FTSE 250		17,889.93		+3.2%	
		DAX		13,253.74		+2.5%	
		DOW JONES		32,732.95		+3.9%	
		NASDAQ		10,988.15		+0.3%	
		MSCI EM		25.79		+6.6%	
		SP 500		3,871.98		+2.0%	
		MSCI FM		1,972.37		+2.8%	

Georgian Gov't Offers New Support Scheme to Investors for 1,500 MW HPPs Construction

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili on Monday announced a new support scheme for investors for the construction of 1,500 MW power plants within three years.

This move, the PM stated, does not include large projects such as Namakhvani, Nenskra, and Khudoni HPPs, or 800 MW HPPs.

The country will invest about \$2.2 bil-

lion "while we expect at least \$3 billion of investment in the energy sector," the PM said, noting that Russia's war in Ukraine unveiled the energy security and energy independence challenges facing the countries and states.

In this context, the PM noted that "Georgia has big resources, especially hydro resources. Therefore, this resource needs to be utilized as wisely as possible. This is our top priority."



Court of Appeal Leaves Nika Gvaramia in Custody

BY TEAM GT

The Tbilisi Court of Appeals' judicial panel this week gave its decision in the criminal case brought against Nika Gvaramia, Kakhaber Damenia, and Zurab Iashvili.

The General Director of Mtavari Arkhi channel, Gvaramia was given a prison term of three years and six months by the City Court on May 16.

The Prosecutor's Office charged Gvaramia with "abuse of authority against the legal interests of the broadcasting company and use of a large amount of money belonging to him in his official capacity" while he was the director of Rustavi 2.

On November 2, the General Director of the Mtavari Arkhi channel received a prison sentence and an additional charge from the Tbilisi Court of Appeals.

Regarding the incident of increased punishment, which has to do with the aspect of damaging the company, Gvaramia was fined 50,000 GEL. In the second instance, the Prosecutor's Office took the same stand, and Nika Gvaramia was given the term of 3 years and 6 months in jail. The prison sentence stays the same because the terms run concurrently.

Damenia was deemed guilty by the Tbilisi Court of Appeals, whereas Iashvili was acquitted of all charges.

Due to Iashvili's acquittal, both the bail and the property seizure were lifted. He also has the right to request that damages be repaired.

Damenia was found guilty in accordance with Article 220 and given a 50,000 GEL fine.

After asking the court for information, the "Georgian Democracy Initiative," an organization working to enhance the nation's democratic growth, learned that between 2017 and 2021, nobody was given a prison sentence under this article.

After declaring the Gvaramia case verdict, Tbilisi City Court Judge Lasha Chkhikvadze was pulled from the scheduled program in the US by the US Embassy. This incident further fuels public concerns about Georgia's lack of judicial independence.

The initial detention of Gvaramia drew criticism from both domestic and foreign sources. His arrest has been seen by Georgia's civil society and opposition as a direct assault on the free press, democratic ideals, and ambitions toward the country's Euro-Atlantic future. Concerns over Gvaramia's conviction and sentence have also been voiced by President of the European Council, Charles Michel. The detention of Gvaramia has also drawn criticism from a number of MEPs.

REACTIONS TO THE LATEST RULING

"The decision was a demonstration of power. This is a demonstration of the course taken by Ivanishvili's regime," Giga Bokeria, the leader of European Georgia, said after the announcement of the verdict.



"If there were still decent, honest citizens who had any illusions that under this regime it is possible to put our country on the right path, return to the free world, solve the fundamental issues of democracy, this is the end of those illusions. We all want the freedom of this political prisoner, but at the same time we all understand that if the regime decides to release Gvaramia for a trade, even this will not change the essence of our great national problem," he added.

The Public Defender expressed extreme concern regarding the judgment delivered by the Tbilisi Court of Appeal against Gvaramia.

"We remind the public that back in 2019, the Public Defender applied to Tbilisi City Court with a *micus curiae* brief regarding the so-called advertisement episode. According to the Public Defender's assessment, it was inadmissible to convict Nika Gvaramia for mak-

ing a managerial decision (the so-called advertisement episode), which could have theoretically become the subject of a civil law dispute but should not have become the basis for criminal prosecution.

"Unfortunately, the court of the first instance found Nika Gvaramia guilty and did not take into account the fundamental principles of separation of civil and criminal liabilities. The Court of Appeal, instead of correctly evaluating the mentioned legal issues, made an even more severe decision and used imprisonment as a punishment against Nika Gvaramia for the action, which, in its content, is covered by civil law and there is no evidence in the criminal case that would prove the action to be criminal," reads the statement.

The Public Defender noted that the Court of Appeal upheld the decision of the court of the first instance regarding

the conviction of Nika Gvaramia in the so-called car episode. The Public Defender remarks the judgment of the court of the first instance was problematic in that episode as well adding, on the one hand, the issue was similar to the so-called advertisement episode from the point of view of corporate law, and on the other hand, it was completely unfounded in relation to the substantial circumstances.

"The Public Defender's Office has already applied to the Tbilisi Court of Appeal and demanded access to the judgment. Upon receiving the reasoned judgment, the Public Defender will additionally present a detailed assessment of the case to the public.

"The Public Defender reminds the public that on June 8, 2022, she appealed to the President of Georgia and, taking into account the substantial shortcomings of justice, called on her to use the

power to pardon in response to the violated rights of Nika Gvaramia," reads the statement.

The Ruling Party also responded to Wednesday's ruling, with Chairman of Georgian Dream Irakli Kobakhidze noting that if the President of Georgia pardons Gvaramia, it will be "an insult to the institution of the President."

"Salome Zurabishvili was insulted by Nika Gvaramia, who referred to her in inappropriate terms. It was an insult not only to Zurabishvili personally but also to the President's institution. If the President pardons Gvaramia under such circumstances, it will be an insult to the President's institution," he said.

The United States Embassy in Tbilisi noted in a Facebook post that at a time when Georgia's commitment to impartial judiciary and media pluralism is being "closely reviewed," the continued imprisonment of Nika Gvaramia "puts at risk the clear choice of the people of Georgia - and Georgian leaders' stated goal - for a more secure, democratic European future."

The United States Embassy reiterated its "deep concern" regarding the Court's decision in the case of Gvaramia, Iashvili, and Damenia.

"Numerous international and Georgian human rights defenders have raised significant questions about this case from the start, including about the timing and charges, as well as the conviction and sentence," noted the Embassy.

"Even the perception of selective investigations, prosecutions, and convictions diminishes the public's confidence in law enforcement, the prosecution, the courts, and the government itself," it.

The post underlined that the United States will continue to support media freedom and the judicial reforms which are "necessary to build the stable, prosperous democracy the people of Georgia have clearly said they desire."

The spokesperson of the External Action Service of the European Commission issued a statement regarding the Tbilisi Court of Appeal verdict, noting that the European Union is closely monitoring this case.

"The European Union does not comment on the merits of individual court cases, but we note once again that questions have been raised, including by the Public Defender, in relation to this case.

"In this respect, we recall that 'stronger efforts to guarantee a free, professional, pluralistic and independent media environment, notably by ensuring that criminal procedures brought against media owners fulfill the highest legal standards' represents one of the priorities identified by the European Commission.

"The EU will continue to support Georgian authorities in reforming the judiciary with a focus on the independence, transparency, and quality of judicial procedures indispensable for upholding the rule of law.

"The European Union remains committed to supporting Georgia in addressing all 12 priorities in order to live up to the European aspirations of its citizens," reads the statement.



Ukraine Latest: Russia Resumes its Participation in Ukraine Grain Export Deal; 'Partial Mobilization' of Citizens Suspended

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Russia said Wednesday that it will resume its participation in the Black Sea grain initiative, a deal with Ukraine to enable vital agricultural exports from the country, saying it had received assurances from Ukraine that it would not use the humanitarian maritime corridor for military purposes.

Russia had withdrawn from the deal, which was brokered by the UN and Turkey in July to help ease global food shortages and price rises, after it accused Ukraine of attacking its Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol in Crimea last Saturday.

Before last weekend's drone attack, analysts noted that Russia already appeared to be laying rhetorical groundwork for withdrawing from the deal, before reversing course this week.

The grain is critical to feeding populations in some of the world's poorest countries, and a return to a full blockade could have brought famine to millions in Asia and the Middle East.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the announcement from Russia on its resumed participation in the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Guterres "is grateful for the diplomatic efforts of Turkey, and thanks the UN Coordinator, Amir Abdulla, and his team for their work to keep this vital food supply line open," wrote UN Secretary General spokesman Stephane Dujarric.

Dujarric added that the Secretary-General "continues his engagement with all actors towards the renewal and full implementation" of the deal.

ZELENSKY: 40% OF UKRAINE'S ENTIRE ENERGY



Image credits: OCHA/Saviano Abreu

INFRASTRUCTURE SERIOUSLY DAMAGED BY RUSSIAN STRIKES

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said that about 40% of his country's entire energy infrastructure has been seriously damaged by Russian missile and drone strikes, and attacks with such weapons continue to challenge Ukraine's armed forces.

Moscow has carried out several devastating missile and drone strikes against what Ukraine said were civilian targets and critical infrastructure, such as energy facilities.

Iran and Russia have sharply denied reports that Tehran supplied Moscow with a fleet of drones for the Kremlin's war in Ukraine. The Kremlin has also repeatedly denied that it uses Iranian-made drones to target residential and other high civilian areas.

On Wednesday morning, Ukraine's air force said it had shot down 12 out of 13 Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones in cen-

tral and eastern regions of the country overnight. Donetsk, in eastern Ukraine, remains the epicenter of fierce fighting between Ukrainian and Russian forces.

UKRAINE CLAIMS IT HIT SIGNIFICANT RUSSIAN MILITARY SYSTEMS IN KHERSON

Ukrainian officials say that the military struck an important target in the southern region Kherson, as the pro-Russian authorities continue to press civilians to leave.

Serhii Khlan, member of the Kherson Regional Council, said that Ukrainian forces hit Russian air defense systems close to the stadium in Kherson city. Those systems had been used to shell Mykolaiv, sometimes with devastating effect.

Khlan posted a photograph purportedly showing the "remains of the equipment."

Khlan said there had also been further

hits in the area of the Antonivskyi Bridge, where Russian forces and the pro-Russian administration have been operating ferries and pontoon bridges to resupply the west bank, where thousands of Russian troops remain.

He said that in the city of Kakhovka, on the east bank of the river Dnipro, the three streets closest to the river were being forcibly evacuated. He said the "Russians in the city are digging in, setting up concrete trenches."

Khlan said the Russians "are digging in on the east bank, preparing for defense, thinking that this makes our offensive impossible. But the resistance movement and the Armed Forces of Ukraine continue to fight."

RUSSIA'S ECONOMY SHRINKS 5% YEAR-ON-YEAR IN SEPTEMBER, ECONOMY MINISTRY REPORTS

Russia's economy shrank by 5% on an annualized basis in September, the economy ministry said, a sharper contraction than the 4% recorded a month earlier.

Western sanctions and the fallout from Russia sending tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine in February have pushed the country into recession, but Moscow says the West has failed to destroy the Russian economy.

Earlier this year, economists were predicting a double-digit recession for 2022. The economy ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that the country was on track to post a 2.9% contraction this year, and that September's slump was due to a high base effect in comparison with the same month last year.

RUSSIA SUSPENDS 'PARTIAL MOBILIZATION' OF CITIZENS FOR UKRAINE WAR

Russia has announced that its "partial mobilization" of hundreds of thousands

of citizens to fight in the country's war on Ukraine has been completed, bringing to an end a controversial draft that sparked protests and an exodus of men from the country.

The Russian Ministry of Defense said Monday that all partial mobilization activities, including summons deliveries, had been suspended, along with "all activities related to conscription for military service."

Military units will only be accepting volunteers and contractors from now on, a statement from the ministry added.

President Vladimir Putin announced the mobilization in late September after Russia suffered a series of major setbacks on the battlefields in Ukraine. Officials said the draft's target of recruiting 300,000 personnel had been met as of last week.

While Putin has defended the draft, its chaotic execution led to angry demonstrations and prompted hundreds of thousands to flee Russia.

Putin said Tuesday that the mobilization had been "completed" and that "the line has been drawn," a suggestion that there would be no further drafts. He added that 41,000 of those recruited were currently in combat formations of the Russian military, meaning that "almost 260,000 people are not participating in any hostilities, but are being trained."

The rollout of the mobilization was beset by errors. Early on in the process, some residents in areas including Russia's Far East Sakha Republic were conscripted "by mistake," despite not being eligible for mobilization, such as fathers of underage children, according to a local leader there.

After it was announced, protests erupted in ethnic minority regions, and some military enlistment offices were set on fire. The original announcement also sparked rare anti-war demonstrations across Russia.

Kiwi Vegan Café Shows How to Help Beat Climate Change via a Film Screening and Discussion on World Vegan Day



BY KATIE RUTH DAVIES

On November 1, World Vegan Day, Kiwi Vegan Café (at Machabeli 6, Tbilisi), offered interested local and multi-national guests, among them vegans, vegetarians and a few meat-eaters, a screening of the documentary "Eating Our Way to Extinction" and a follow-up discussion with a delicious vegan food buffet and drinks.

The documentary, narrated by academy award winner Kate Winslet and featur-

ing Richard Branson, looks into the impact of diet on the ecological and climate crisis. Eating Our Way to Extinction specifically focuses on animal agriculture to deliver hard truths about our global changing landscapes, taking audiences on a journey around the world from Scotland to the Amazon Rainforest, letting the audience hear stories about food production and its effect on the environment from people at the very forefront of the climate crisis. It also features local activists and celebrities, as well as scientists and those who have worked in the meat industry, who add their verdicts on the most pressing issue

of our generation.

The goal of the documentary directors, Ludo and Otto Brockway, is to create conversations and help people, industry leaders, and governments question their 'everyday choices'. And on November 1, World Vegan Day, such conversations were welcomed at Kiwi Vegan Café.

"I think such awareness-raising and discussions make a significant contribution to the formation of ethical and eco-centric attitudes, and to us all being able to make informed decisions about what we eat," said one of the Kiwi Café screening organizers.

The cycle of informative films, dubbed in Georgian, will continue in Kiwi Vegan Cafe in future.



PM: During 9 Months, Economic Growth in Georgia is 10.2%, which is Unprecedented in all of Europe

Against the background of the current geopolitical challenges and tensions, we maintain high economic growth in the country. During 9 months, economic growth in Georgia is 10.2%. This is unprecedented in all of Europe, - the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, claimed on Monday.

He added that exports have increased by 40% and the growth in nine months was 37.4%. Revenues from exports

amounted to four billion US dollars.

"Tourism is being restored at a fast pace. If we compare it to 2019, this year tourism has already been restored by 97.5%, and the income received from it amounted to 2.5 billion US dollars.

"I don't want to make predictions, but by the end of the year our expectation is that we will maintain this high economic growth and we expect double-digit economic growth at the end of the year," the PM said.

A Nuclear War Cannot Be Won

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

I wonder if the world remembers Ronald Reagan's famous admonition: "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought!"? With these memorable words from this great man in mind, should we admit to the perpetual coexistence of good and evil? Naturally! Then, why did it make sense that the West rejected Russia's appeal not to deploy any strategic arms near her borders and to curb the western military alliance's expansion in her direction? Wouldn't the conceivable western "okay" have saved tens of thousands of innocent civilians and even more combatants? It might! The correctly premeditated, patient and masterfully prepared negotiations on the subject would presumably have saved the day for all of us; east and west, north and south.

Now that the oil is already in the fire, the onrushing peril of a bigger war, possibly a nuclear one, is becoming almost irreversible, and here's why: Historically speaking, any war ends in peace talks eventually, because even a detrimental peace is better than an advantageous war. There is no functioning international organization out there with enough power to officially legalize any law that might secure guaranteed peace in the modern world, so we all depend on the good will of the extant nuke-nations: If they desire peace, there will be peace,



Image source: gizmodo.com

and if not, there might be complete devastation in store for civilization. Isn't this a pain?

And again, if the world is compelled to keep clear of the nukes and their usage in future, why does it always opt to go to war instead of heading for the negotiation table? Is humankind really so mindless? Have we not learned even one lesson from our disastrous history of distress and bloodshed? In order to avert a nuclear catastrophe, verbal tabooing

of the atomic clash alone will not be enough; a conventional military attack has to be internationally prohibited in the first place by some strict ordinance, with compulsory observation by every nation in the world. If this sounds like nothing more than utopia, then we are forever faced with the inevitable prospect of wars and their consequences.

Let's get more specific and throw in the situation with the current war in Ukraine, which the world is getting very

tired of. And tired it becomes in terms of our spending money on it, commenting on it and thinking of it as the precursor to a nuclear calamity. So, what to expect out of it? Ukraine cannot afford to lose so many territories, and after so many sacrifices, both human and financial, it can hardly give up its existential battle half-way through. The unfortunate and catastrophically ruined non-nuclear Ukraine wants its forfeited territories back, it wants the country rebuilt, and

it wants its international status returned to it. And I can't blame it. Russia, one of the most important nuclear nations on the planet, will never, ever put up with defeat, which means to it a complete loss of face. Russia will thus undoubtedly insist on keeping all the newly grabbed lands, demanding once again her prewar claims to be respected and reckoned with.

This is a genuinely tragic geopolitical impasse, where diplomacy seems feeble and irrelevant, and the future looks direr than ever before. And here comes the nastiest question one could ask: Will the world, being on the verge of using either Russia or Ukraine as a scapegoat for the sake of maintaining peace in the world, make that awful choice, or will it rather have the war continue forever as a routine of everyday life? Freezing the conflict is also a possibility, isn't it?

I personally think that keeping both Russia and Ukraine intact and safe is already impossible. One of them will definitely suffer some bad losses, including that loss of face, maybe both. But not even a shadow of the good old days can be seen on the horizon. The habitual peaceful coexistence was so good! Russia and Ukraine could have lived in a happy brotherly neighborhood for hundreds of years to come! Yes, they could, provided the West had thought a little better about the mass deaths and all sorts of atrocities any war is likely to bring about. And within that, nobody would have begrudged our little Georgia the peaceful life it currently enjoys.

Belarus, Abkhazia and the Separatist Regions

BY EMIL AVDALIANI

In late September, the Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko paid a surprise visit to Abkhazia, a separatist region of Georgia which has effectively been under Russian military control since the invasion since the 2008 war.

The visit angered the Georgian government. Though it was, as Lukashenko said himself, only an informal visit, Tbilisi's policy of limiting the spread of recognition of Abkhazia seemed under threat. This was all the more surprising as Georgia and Belarus shared stable and even friendly ties. Trade relations had been developed, as had cooperation between security agencies. Russia's factor was minimized, both sides understood well that there was no need to complicate bilateral relations. Red lines, such as Georgia's territorial integrity, remained uncrossed. Similarly, Tbilisi's position toward the post-election protests and crackdowns in Belarus in 2020 was neutral.

What exactly Lukashenko had in mind when visiting Abkhazia is unclear. He spoke in veiled terms: "We want to build not just a bridge of friendship, but very serious relations," he told Aslan Bzhania, the separatist leader. Tbilisi's reaction was quick. The country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Belarusian ambassador and expressed concerns, demanding additional clarifications from the Belarusian side.

Lukashenko's statements could signal the coming change of Belarus' policy toward separatist regions. Minsk might finally be siding with Moscow on all sensitive issues it has so far managed to maintain a balance on. Yet, it is not the first time he made suggestive statements on Abkhazia. For instance, just before Russia invaded Ukraine in February, Lukashenko hinted that Minsk might recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, another separatist region of Georgia. He might have been playing a messenger's role from Putin, whom, incidentally, he met just before his recent visit to Abkhazia, to relay Moscow's willingness to support the

region more if it agrees to some sensitive demands from the Kremlin.

Lukashenko's September visit and the themes discussed thus cannot be decoupled from Abkhazia-Russia dynamics. Abkhazia's separatist leadership has yet to officially agree to transfer the 186-hectare (460 acre) Bichvinta (Pitsunda) estate where Soviet leaders once spent their summers, and its resort seafront, to the Russian side. The likely decision would be part of an agreement confidentially negotiated in early 2022 between the Kremlin and local leaders, which in turn builds upon the 2020 program aiming at harmonizing the Abkhaz-Russian relationship. In reality, the deal paves the way for the breakaway region's de facto annexation.

Russia's recent behavior brings into question Abkhazia's remaining autonomy vis-a-vis the Kremlin. The Abkhaz population is opposed to the resort's handover, calling for a moratorium on the process. And though the final decision has yet to be made by the region's parliament, the overall feeling is one of inevitability about the final decision. The overwhelming public sentiment is that of betrayal by Abkhaz officials of the region's independence aspirations.

The talks on an unofficial handover of the resort followed the decision to give the non-functioning Sokhumi airport to the Russian tycoon Oleg Deripaska. The airport has been a subject of intense negotiations between the two sides, as the Abkhaz representatives pushed for investments from Russia, while the latter seemed unwilling to commit because of the international community's firm support for Georgia's territorial integrity, which makes it impossible for international airlines to use the airport. The handover hardly looks like an investment, but rather another concession from the Abkhaz side to address Russia's openly imperial ambitions.

Russia has a strategy that rests on cultivating and utilizing fears in Abkhazia. And with nearly 5000 Russian troops in the separatist region as a check against Georgia's NATO aspirations, Abkhazia has little space to resist Russian depredations. Any move to limit cooperation with Moscow would be met with Russian economic and political reprisals.



Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko meets de facto Abkhazia leader Aslan Bzhania in Sukhumi. Source: presidentofabkhazia.org

Russia cleverly exploits the situation through new demands to separatist leaders. Those usually involve rights for Russians to buy land and apartments. Arguably more important is the sale of existing Abkhaz infrastructure, such as electricity grids, water pumping systems, and other facilities. Investment is critical to the Abkhaz economy, which has traditionally been entirely dependent on Russian tourism. Yet, allowing foreigners to buy the land (a right prohibited by the Abkhaz "constitution") is a deeply traumatic concession.

Bzhania blackmailed the population by arguing that the request for the estate's handover came directly from Putin, who

wants to hold official meetings there. The Abkhaz side, Bzhania argued, could not ignore it, because Russia is the security guarantor without which Georgia would be emboldened to enforce its territorial integrity.

Blackmail comes from the Russian side too. Mikhail Shurgalin, the Russian ambassador to Sokhumi, argued during one meeting with Abkhaz non-governmental organizations that a refusal to agree to the Russian request could result in Russia's reconsideration of financial and military support to Abkhazia.

Thus, Lukashenko's September visit might have been part of a carefully-crafted Russian campaign to persuade Abkhazia

to transfer the Bichvinta resort to Moscow. But it also might signal a change in Belarus' foreign policy: Minsk could abandon its long-held policy of non-recognition of separatist regions. This potential scenario would be impossible without the effects the war in Ukraine has on Eurasia. The invasion is causing major geopolitical re-alignment. As Russia's fortunes in Ukraine turn increasingly grim, its allies, among them Belarus and Abkhazia, have more limited options for maneuvering.

Emil Avdaliani is a professor at European University and the Director of Middle East Studies at the Georgian think-tank, Geocase.

Iran Battles Turkish Influence in South Caucasus

BY EMIL AVDALIANI FOR CEPA.ORG

Iran is trying to regain its influence in the South Caucasus. In October, it announced large-scale military exercises, dubbed “Mighty Iran”, near the border with Azerbaijan. The drills, a repeat of last year’s, should be seen as an expression of the growing discomfort within the Islamic Republic toward what it sees as the worsening geopolitical situation in the South Caucasus.

The wargames were held along the Aras river, which mostly separates Iran from Azerbaijan, and involved practicing river crossings, a signal of the offensive possibilities of the drills. The date of the exercises also coincided with October 2020, when Azerbaijan reclaimed lost territories from Armenia along Iran’s northern border.

The South Caucasus are often termed “troubled” by outsiders given a history of invasion, shifting boundaries, and internecine warfare. The three small states of the region, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, are surrounded by a more powerful and populous triad of neighbors; Russia, Turkey, and Iran, each of which has an intimate interest in developments.

Following the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020, Iran’s power in the region diminished, with Turkey the main winner because of its support for Azerbaijan’s military triumph. Iran worries that its closest partner, Armenia, is now seriously weakened, while emboldened Azerbaijan is suspected of pushing for further major territorial changes. The Islamic Republic, therefore, has good reason to try to reshape events to conform to its national interests.

Although Iran is officially silent, the underlying sentiment behind its recent moves is motivated partly by Azerbaijan’s newfound strength and partly by

Turkey’s. The latter has substantially increased its position in the South Caucasus following the 2020 war. Ankara supplied Azerbaijan with modern weaponry, including drones, trained its soldiers, signed an official treaty of alliance, and set its gaze toward the Caspian Sea and further into Central Asia, especially Turkmenistan. Turkey’s growing role might also be seen as benefitting the West (it is, after all, a NATO member), which adds another element to Iran’s discomfort. Some now see the prospect of an arc of powerful alliance Turkic states emerging along its northern borders.

The problem is further exacerbated by Azerbaijan’s increasingly coercive behavior toward Armenia. The latter, badly defeated in the 2020 war, is simply unable to resist Azerbaijan’s military power, as seen again in September. Talks on the imminent peace treaty between the two countries are underway and this poses a real risk for Iran; Armenia may be forced to agree to an east-west Azeri corridor through its southernmost province of Syunik, which could block Iran’s free movement northward. This explains Iran’s stark statements that the country would not allow any changes to the borders of the South Caucasus states. In just one recent example, Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in an interview that, “Iran will not permit the blockage of its connection route with Armenia, and in order to secure that objective the Islamic Republic of Iran launched a wargame in that region.”

In another move, which amounted to a veiled message, Amir-Abdollahian on October 21 opened a new consulate in Kopan, the center of Armenia’s Syunik region. The geography says it all – Iran is serious about maintaining the territorial status quo in the region. Moreover, the visit pointedly coincided with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s trip to Azerbaijan’s Zangilan region.



Members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) attend an IRGC ground forces military drill in the Aras area, East Azerbaijan province, Iran, October 17, 2022. Credit: IRGC/WANA (West Asia News Agency)/Handout via REUTERS

The Syunik strip is effectively Iran’s only route into the South Caucasus free of Turkic influence, and thus the geopolitical stakes are high. The loss of this connection would make Iran increasingly reliant on the goodwill of the Turk-Azerbaijani alliance, putting the two countries in a very powerful position. Such a development would probably also put paid to Iran’s hopes of building a corridor to Georgia.

Iran would also lose its current leverage over Azerbaijan, which has to use Iranian transit routes to reach its Nakhchivan exclave. In July, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei voiced

his displeasure with a potential Azeri transport corridor through Armenian territory, cutting out his country.

Iran’s recent moves thus have to be seen within this wider geo-economic prism. The competition with Turkey is silent but nevertheless serves as a driving force in shaping Iran’s posture. Russia can be relied on to offer some support, since it too worries about Turkish assertiveness, as it has since Czarist times. But the Kremlin is itself constrained because it needs Turkey, in particular, its neutrality in the disastrous war against Ukraine. This goes a long way to explaining Russia’s tolerance of Turkey’s bold

moves through its rapprochement with Armenia, military aid to Azerbaijan and Georgia, and other initiatives deep inside Central Asia.

That by no means makes Vladimir Putin happy about the rising Turkish influence. But it means that competition is now rather sotto voce even as the stakes increase. Iran’s wargames are not mere posturing; it’s establishing that it has key interests at stake in the future of the region.

Emil Avdaliani is a professor at European University and the Director of Middle East Studies at the Georgian think-tank, Geocase.

Parliament Starts Consideration of Draft Law on Deoligarchization

The draft law initiated by the ruling team was discussed in the Legal Affairs Committee of the Parliament. The hearing was held in the first reading.

The bill was developed on the example of the Ukrainian law, with similar content, and essentially repeats the norms of the Ukrainian law.

Based on the bill, an oligarch is a person with sizable economic and political significance in public life, who is a natural person and meets at least three of the following criteria at the same time:

- a) participates in political life;
- b) has a significant influence on mass media;
- c) is the final beneficiary of an entrepreneurial legal entity which has a dominant position in the market and which maintains or improves this position for 1 year;
- d) The confirmed amount of his/her assets and those of entrepreneurial legal entities where s/he is a beneficiary, as of January 1 of the relevant year, exceeds 1,000,000 times the subsistence minimum established for working force persons.

Based on the bill, oligarchs will be included in a special register. The rules related to the register, including the rules for its creation and implementation, will



be approved by the Parliament. The creation and implementation of the register will be ensured by the Parliament’s office.

According to the bill, a person known as an oligarch, whose data will be entered in the relevant register, will be restricted from certain financial activities.

In particular, the oligarch entered in the register is limited to: Making donations from his/her own funds in support of political parties, performing work, providing goods, services or cash; performing work, providing goods or services through related persons and/or

through such legal entities where s/he is the final beneficiary; in accordance with the Election Code, making donations to the candidates’ election fund (except for their own election fund) and financing political parties during the election process; being a buyer (beneficiary of the buyer) in the process of privatization of large-scale facilities; financing any political campaign, holding gatherings or demonstrations with political demands.

According to the project, the law on deoligarchization will become invalid 10 years after its implementation.

European Socialists Meet with ODIHR, Discuss Revisions to Election Code

The representatives of the political group European Socialists met with the representatives of the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

The parties talked about the document elaborated on by the Working Group on Revisions to the Election Code.

As the Chairman of the political group, Fridon Injia, noted, they presented their opinions to the guests regarding the document prepared by the Working Group.

“The process for choosing the CEC Chairman needs to be altered. Based on the current standard, we were given a chairman of the CEC who was only chosen for a six-month term, which is unacceptable and unhelpful. We also discussed the electronic voting system, which will have an impact on at least 70% of voters. Since there will be the highest potential for fraud at the polling places where the final 30% of voters will cast their ballots, we believe that a specific regime should be in place there,” Injia noted.



VIRTU, a New Concept of Investment, Takes the Georgian Market to Globality



Mr. Hani Hebashi, the owner and founder of the Hebashi Holding Group, along with other investors from all over the world, launched new project 'VIRTU,' which will make a leap in the real estate investment world, during a press conference held at the Habtoor Palace Hotel in Dubai. During the conference, the history and importance of the Hebashi Holding Company were reviewed in real estate investment and development, as was its beating the high and required standards and its work attracting global investments. It also introduced its most important partners, in addition to referring to the most important parties that gave the VIRTU project complete reliability and full approval. The VIRTU project is a partial and stable real estate investment, meaning, for the first time, investors all over the world can buy real estate in Georgia, with full, partial or joint ownership backed by the stock exchange.

VIRTU's way of investing in real estate allows investors to browse the project files available on the platform, which they can invest in, in addition to learning about the potential returns that await them once they invest in these properties. Investors can also specify the amount they want to invest in each project and the number of shares they want to buy. Investors also review the terms and sign the contract online, and the stock dues are paid online, by linking the bank account to the platform. Then the earning begins! Investors earn profits and take their share of the net rental income, and the higher the value of the property in the future, the higher the rents.

"In order to make the real estate investment experience faster and easier, a lot of time has been spent on developing an operating model that allows a doubling of returns for our investors," Hebashi notes. "We know all the different factors that help maximize the returns of investors, and we are interested in focusing on them, especially on the two most important factors, namely the acquisition and management of the property."

Mr. Hani Hebashi, owner and founder of the Hebashi Holding Group, spoke more about the advantages of partial ownership in the project, pointing out that partial ownership provides the opportunity for small investors with limited capital to delve into the experience of investing in and owning luxury real estate, and that it is considered a low-risk investment, especially in times of crisis. All information on management and maintenance costs, leasing procedures, and investment value is clarified before purchase, in addition to the fact that partial ownership makes it easier for one to diversify their investment

portfolio, so that they can buy shares in more than one property, instead of owning one property completely.

On the future of investing in real estate, Hebashi explained that within a few minutes, you can create an account and choose the contents of your portfolio with the appropriate strategy for you. You can also pay the price of the shares you want to buy online, by linking your bank account to the platform, and then you can watch your money grow via the platform application available on your mobile phone. You can also find a wide range of investment opportunities tailored to your chosen strategy in VIRTU.

"After you place your first investment, we will continue to work hard to achieve your expected profit, in addition to maximizing the value of these properties in future, meaning that your capital will increase year by year," Hebashi notes. "We have complete confidence that you will love to diversify your investment portfolio with us, because we have dozens of exceptional investment opportunities. As soon as you register your first investment with us, you will want to repeat the experience. Through our downloadable mobile application, you will be able to view all the investment opportunities available, in addition to

viewing your profile, the number of shares purchased, the current profit rate and other accurate things. We at VIRTU care that you are aware of every detail of your investments."

At the conclusion of the conference, the main partners in the project were reviewed, represented by OTI Real Estate Company, one of the HHG Holding Group companies, from which VIRTU will purchase real estate and offer it in the form of shares, so that investors can buy it from anywhere in the world. OTI is one of the largest real estate companies in Georgia, and boasts great experience, as well as great potential. In recent years, OTI has established and developed dozens of real estate projects with huge investment dimensions in the largest cities in Georgia, among them Tbilisi and Batumi.

Event guests also met the FADOX Group, which is the first strategic partner of the VIRTU project. The FADOX Group has strong executive experience, with more than ten years of experience in the field of commercial, investment and retail banking. They also have experience in asset and equity management, in addition to international project financing and investment management.

There will also be cooperation and partnership between VIRTU and the Al Khaleej Real Estate Company meaning Al Khaleej Real Estate Company will become the exclusive and sole agent of the platform in all the Arab Gulf countries. Through it, investors residing in the Gulf countries will be able to purchase the shares offered by the platform with ease. The Al Khaleej Real Estate Company is one of the large companies, with significant weight in the Gulf real estate market, and is headquartered in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Sultanate of Oman.

GAABU (Georgia-Arab African Business Consortium in Georgia) has given the VIRTU project complete reliability, giving investors from all over the world the confidence to invest their money in the platform.



A Circular Economy For Georgia



Dr. Dariusz Edward Prasek. Photo by Forbes Georgia

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

Georgia's economic recovery since the woes of the global pandemic has taken center stage. With tourism, one of the country's largest sources of revenue, rocketing back and investment returning to the region, Georgia has been taking a look at a new economic model. A circular economy conference, hosted by the Georgian Society of Nature Explorers "Orchis," focused on this monumental shift on October 24 in Tbilisi.

The stated goal of the conference was "to facilitate the accelerated transition to the circularity and efficient implementation of this system in Georgia." Supported by the Government of Sweden, the circular economic model is

linked with climate change, and ensures the sustainability of societal and economic ecosystems. As they describe, it is a system of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible.

Ultimately, the lifecycle of products and resources is extended and unnecessary waste is either eliminated or reduced. Additionally, it is built in a way that, when implemented correctly, it benefits local and international businesses, Georgian society, and finally the environment. With Georgia gaining quickly on European and Western social responsibility and economic standards, the nation is next in line for this fundamental shift in balancing production and consumption, especially since the movement away from fossil fuels, Russian oil and gas products, and the need to further inte-

grate with modern conservation techniques. To do this, it requires components of the private and public sectors to take action nearly concurrently. Education centers have to change the way they teach their pupils, shaping them to understand their environment in the circular model. Put briefly, "Orchis" says, "the circular economy is not the responsibility of a chosen few."

Dr. Dariusz Edward Prasek, an International Expert in sustainable finance, environmental, social and governance areas and Circular Economy, and a member of the United Nations Advisory Board on Circular Economy, spoke to the attendees of the conference. In addition to sharing the fundamentals of what the circular economy is and how it works, he offered real-world examples on how this model revolutionizes the way we work, live, and develop as an interconnected global society.

Dr. Prasek asserts that the movement away from the "take-make-waste linear model" must allow for a decoupling from the consumption of finite resources. The regenerative nature of the circular economy, he states, is intimately linked with the world's efforts to address climate change. Renewable energy is only responsible for tackling approximately 30% of emissions, while the remaining 70% come from the way we use and handle those resources.

As a result of this majority, it is a concerted effort by the country at all levels. Local and federal governments, businesses, innovators, academia, investors, and consumers have to make changes to affect the shift needed. This shift has already begun, he stated, noting that the Georgian Government already implemented a regulatory framework that assists with this movement.

Much of this change has taken place

in Georgia's agribusiness industry, one of the largest sectors in the country next to tourism. The country has taken surprisingly large steps towards the circular economy, it seems. When looking at the larger region, Georgia is leaps ahead of its South Caucasian neighbors, particularly with the models in Europe's most advanced nations. Finland, Sweden, and the Netherlands are currently leading the move to the new model, setting a prime example for Tbilisi to follow.

Bringing in smaller and medium size businesses will likely challenge the proponents of this model the most. With deep-rooted connections to Dr. Prasek's aforementioned "take-make-waste" model of consumption, the mission of educating business leaders and affecting the paradigm shift across all industries is not accomplished quickly. Given that even Europe's most advanced economies are twenty to thirty years into the shift, Georgia still has a long way to go. Dr.

Prasek also indicates that while this change is immense, it is also advantageous for these businesses with financial incentives, tax breaks, and advisory and consulting resources increasingly available.

The circular model has the potential to advance Georgia not only into greater harmony with its European partners, but also establish a more sustainable, viable, and secure industrial and economic situation for the country. The Georgian Society of Nature Explorers "Orchis," with the expressed support of the Government of Sweden, and in concert with the Georgian government, has worked exhaustively to raise awareness about circular economy benefits. Staying true to their stated mission, "Orchis" has set out "to protect the environment and involvement in elaboration and implementation of environmental protection measures to create a better and safer environment for society."



Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Solomon Pavliashvili and Dr. Dariusz Edward Prasek. Photo by the Ministry of Environmental Protection And Agriculture Of Georgia

Energy Efficiency for Sustainable Development - UNDP's Accelerator Lab Reveals Contest Winners for Energy-Efficient Inventions



Photo by Nino Zedginidze/UNDP

Over 75 innovators, inventors, businesses, startups and initiative groups joined the contest for energy-efficient inventions announced by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in July. The contest revealed everyday solutions that help reduce dependency on fossil fuels, increase the use of renewables, and explore innovative ways to save energy and monitor its consumption.

Germany and Qatar supported the initiative as part of their broader assistance to UNDP's Accelerator Lab.

Nick Beresford, UNDP Resident Representative in Georgia, Lidija Christmann, Head of Development Cooperation at

the Embassy of Germany in Georgia, and Nasser Saad Al-Nuaimi, Second Secretary of the Embassy of the State of Qatar in Georgia, announced the winners on 1 November at an awards event attended by representatives of civil society, educational institutions, international organizations and the private sector.

Authors of the five best ideas received GEL 20,000 each to prototype and shape their inventions and fast-track their development:

- An electricity generating system equipped with a hydro turbine. Author: Merab Chiragadze
- A smart energy meter to monitor and regulate expenditures on electricity and gas. Author: Lasha Khutsishvili

- Vertical farming with a consolidated soil system. Author: Jacob Bitsadze

- A car equipped with a solar refrigerator for transporting agricultural produce. Authors: Eliso Ghviniashvili, Nikoloz Medulashvili, Sulkhan Saladze

• Energy efficient bricks. Authors: Amiran Grdzlishvili, Merab Baratashvili

"UNDP warmly welcomes the exceptional creativity and motivation shown by the contest participants. Their work points us to a greener, smarter and more sustainable future," Beresford said.

"Germany is one of the world's top countries in promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency. We are pleased to help Georgia unlock its renewable energy potential, raise public awareness about

green energy and support innovation and people-driven solutions," Christmann noted.

More information on the contest winners and participants is available on the website Museum of Georgian Inventions. ###

The UNDP Accelerator Labs work in 116 countries to solve protracted development challenges by applying new

insights and technologies. Georgia joined this fast-growing network of innovators and experimenters in 2020. Georgia's Accelerator Lab is focused on supporting post-pandemic recovery and climate action, transforming public attitudes towards recycling and waste separation, and analyzing gender equality data to offer insights to decision-makers and civil society.



Photo by Nino Zedginidze/UNDP

+1% — Terabank Has Launched a Campaign on Term Deposits

Terabank has launched a new promotion for customers on term deposits. According to the terms of the promotion, any individual who opens a fixed-term deposit before December 31 will receive an additional 1% benefit for the entire period of the deposit. The promotion applies to all fixed-term deposits in GEL, USD and EUR under any terms and conditions as long as the deposit is opened before December 31. "Deposits are a particularly attractive product, so various types of promotions on them have already become a certain

tradition for us at Terabank. This time, with increased benefits, we want to encourage our customers even more and we think that many of them will benefit from the profitable conditions of the new promotion," said Terabank. We remind you that Terabank is currently represented in the market with child, term, convertible, increasing and flex deposits as well as discount and interest deposit certificates. Interested persons can open a term deposit on the bank's website www.terabank.ge, through the Internet or mobile banking and by visiting our branches.



Chateau Mukhrani: Grand Opening of a Georgian National Treasure



Minister Levan Davitashvili (center), designer Juan Pablo Molyneux (left), and investor Frederik Paulsen cutting the ribbon to the chateau. Photo by Mike Godwin

To the right, upon entrance, is a study and small bar, welcoming guests that prefer a more private and reserved space. Decorated with beautiful works of art depicting the former residents, the military accomplishments of the Bagrationi family, and the patriarch Prince Ivane Bagrationi of Mukhrani, it preserves the history of the palace. Intimate meeting spaces allow for a professional yet decorative environment for colleagues and friends.

The second floor of the palace displays the multicultural aspect of the estate. With inspirations from the old Georgian tea houses, the western Black Sea coast, and the warmth of the country's summer atmosphere, the space opens for guests to rest in its arms. Its large windows invite sunlight and warmth for visitors to bask in while still providing a comfortable space for meetings. Once again, the property offers comfort with functionality to its hosts and guests alike.

The palace, keeping in its tradition of luxury, opulence, and extravagant decor, maintains its connection to the history of the estate. Its warmth, intimacy, and repertoire invite those that

seek something exclusive for guests, away from the mechanisms of urban life. With its restoration, the chateau is likely to become a center for cultural, historical, and winemaking work for generations to come.

With its restoration, the chateau is likely to become a center for cultural, historical, and winemaking work for generations to come

Continued from page 1

Known for his classic style, Molyneux is a Chilean-born American interior designer that has worked for many private residences across Europe and North America.

With two books published on his work and earning the Knight in the Order of Arts and Letters from the French government, his expertise is visible in

Intimate meeting spaces allow for a professional yet decorative environment for colleagues and friends

chateau's interior. The history, the legacy, of the estate is captured in its details.

The ribbon-cutting acted as a capstone to the public and private activities that elated the chateau to its former glory. With investor Frederik Paulsen, designer Juan Pablo Molyneux, and Vice Prime Minister Levan Davitashvili, the opening ceremony paved the way for a tour of its renovated rooms. Each room captures a piece of Georgian history and design.

The entrance opens into three sections of the palace. The left takes the visitor into the dining section of the estate, complete with a glass wall that allows an unobstructed view into the masterful chef's work. The essence of palatial living with ornate furniture and decor brings one back to the 19th century during the Belle Époque.

To the front is an immense event space that allows visitors views of the palace gardens. Walls adorned with classical artwork and a ceiling that is complemented with elegant chandeliers greet guests. Its artistic style brings an aesthetic of elevated culture and history of the location only captured in its ornate design.



Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia Levan Davitashvili. Photo by Mike Godwin

Israel at COP 27: Coordinating Global Efforts to Prevent the Climate Crisis

OP-ED BY HADAS MEITZAD,
AMBASSADOR OF ISRAEL
TO GEORGIA

This year, 2022, is the year when it became clear to us all that we are in the midst of a powerful climate crisis that is only getting worse. Widespread floods in Pakistan displaced tens of millions from their homes and flooded about a third of the country. Devastating hurricanes hit the East Coast of the US and the Caribbean, wreaking havoc on a massive scale. Severe droughts dried up great rivers in Europe and China. Also here, in Georgia, in recent years, we have seen several massive floods that took place in the rural area and on the coast of Georgia. This is only a partial list of the major disasters worldwide, which UN experts have told us time and time again, are only likely to increase as we continue to emit greenhouse gases.

World leaders, government representatives, experts, representatives of the private sector and civil society, academics, opinion shapers, and policy formulators will meet for the COP 27 annual climate conference in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt during the month of November to discuss ways to prevent the climate

crisis. Success of the conference is of the utmost importance. So too is the advancement of all the issues it will focus on, such as the continuation of global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adoption of a global goal for adaptation and adjustment to the climate crisis, increasing climate financing and progress on the topic of "loss and damage," as well as advancing cooperation in the exchange of knowledge and experience.

Israel, located in an arid region and facing chronic water shortages, high temperatures, and a difficult environment for agricultural development, has had to invent creative solutions. Through decades of knowledge and experience, it has found practical solutions to climate challenges, which Israel wishes to share and collaborate on in order to bring about their implementation. These solutions involve areas that are essential to handling the climate crisis, such as efficiency of water resources and creation of new water sources, drought-resistant agriculture and precision agriculture, invention of animal protein substitutes and sustainable crops, energy efficiency and energy storage, restoration and preservation of forests in arid areas, circular economy, and the production of new materials that are climate and environment-friendly. Many ideas also come from an active and aware civil society,

which contributes to the climate-environmental discourse and activities, ideas that often are then integrated into government action.

Evidence of Israel's desire to share information is the establishment, for the first time, of an Israeli pavilion at a COP conference. The pavilion will focus on climate innovation and solutions, and dozens of events aimed at creating international and regional cooperation in the Middle East will be held. We understand that regional and international cooperation is critical to dealing with the climate crisis; therefore, our goal is that every event at the Israeli pavilion will create a long-term partnership and process. The participation of an especially large and high-ranking Israeli delegation is also expected. The delegation will include representatives from all the sectors that must be harnessed in order to deal with the climate crisis: government, civil society, the private sector, local government, academia, and more.

In order to overcome the climate crisis, humanity needs practical, applicable solutions to build climate resilience and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that can be implemented on a local as well as a global scale. These solutions should help meet global mitigation goals and reinforce resilience among countries and communities that are already affected, as well as assist in the implementation



of the UN's sustainable development goals – the SDGs.

International cooperation in the field of climate innovation also provides an excellent opportunity to strengthen the economy for the benefit of all, create new jobs, and advance human prosperity, while preserving nature, the climate and ecological diversity.

Mashav, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, has been working here for many years, sharing Israeli knowledge and expertise from

agro-technology and food security methodologies, to educational programs and climate-related solutions. Israel will continue to work together with all its global partners, including Georgia, as part of the global effort.

We all have an important part to play in preventing the climate crisis. Israel hopes that the Sharm el-Sheikh conference will be a great success and mark a positive turning point in the future of humanity. You are invited to come and see us at the Israeli pavilion at COP 27!

Kaladze: Works on Gotsiridze Station Completed, Commissioning Procedures Underway

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze says the rehabilitation works of Gotsiridze metro station have been completed. His comment was preceded by the statement of the 'Anti-Corruption Movement', which spoke about the "irresponsibility" of the City Hall and the "indifference" of the trans-

port company.

"Such statements are not really interesting. Regarding the Gotsiridze metro station, the works have been completed and the commissioning procedures are underway. As soon as the commissioning procedures are completed, it will be possible [to open the station] that very day," added Kaladze.

He claimed that the metro station is a fifth category building and the Ministry of Economy is responsible for its commissioning.

'Gotsiridze' metro station couldn't serve passengers for more than 2 years. Rehabilitation works started there in July 2020 and several companies were replaced. Finally, the deadline was moved to October 2022.

"The result of the irresponsibility of the Tbilisi City Hall and the indifference of the Tbilisi Transport Company is the unfinished Gotsiridze metro station, where the work has been going on for more than 2 years," the Anti-Corruption Movement notes.



Regulations to be Established for Media in the Spaces Belonging to Patriarchate



Regulations will be established for media representatives in the spaces belonging to the Patriarchate, and accreditation will be required on major holidays, said the Head of the Public Relations Service of the Patriarchate of Georgia, Andria Jagmaidze.

He stated at the briefing that the Patriarchate operates within the framework of Georgian legislation, based on which it is informing the public and the media about regulations.

"A decision has been made to use the legal right, like other agencies or organizations and to establish regulations for media representatives in the spaces belonging to the Patriarchate, which in

some cases, especially on major holidays, also involves the use of the accreditation rule. The right to property gives the Patriarchate the opportunity to determine the rules of behavior on its territory. The Patriarchate operates within the framework of the Georgian legislation, on the basis of which it is informing the public and the media in advance about regulations. Each regulation will be aimed at ensuring that church services are conducted in a proper manner. Apart from the fact that according to the bylaws of the temple, it is necessary for a journalist to occupy a place reserved for the media, in some cases the Patriarchate will reserve the right to control the issue of attendance," said Jagmaidze.

World Program of Eco-Schools in the Public Schools of Adjara



The Eco-Schools program is based on a seven-step methodology, within which each school chooses a topic related to sustainable development goals and implements relevant activities. After the suc-

cessful completion of all seven steps, the school is given the opportunity to apply for the "Green Flag," thereby establishing its rightful place on the world map of Georgian Eco-Schools.



The international program of Eco-Schools is being implemented in Georgia for the second year with the support of the Swedish government, through the environmental organization Keep Georgia Tidy. The uniqueness of the program lies in its multifaceted possibilities, which means that, in parallel with the creation of educational materials, it encourages school

students and teachers to become transmitters of environmental knowledge and to plan various useful activities and projects around this topic.

Such a meeting was held at the 3rd public school in Batumi, where the participants of the Eco-Schools program met with the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Georgia, Mr. Ulrik Tideström, and Minister of Education, Culture and Sports of the Autonomous Republic of

Adjara, Maia Khajishvili. The students presented the results they had achieved within the frames of the Eco-Schools project, talked about the environmental challenges and ways to solve them, and shared new ideas with the guests.

The Eco-Schools program unites more than 80 member countries of the Environmental Education Foundation and millions of students and teachers around the world.

Humble Pie: Etseri, Svaneti

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

The simple potato. I am digging up our small crop as we prepare to depart Svaneti for the winter, using a spade. Even with my slight weight, the ground is soft from rain and I don't have to dig deep. They're just below the soil, waiting for my pleasure. Not huge, compared to the glorious first couple of years here; some thumbnail-small. But all worthy of harvest. Beets and carrots will follow. The photo of me is in a style which needs its own name, although I'm aware it's one of likely billions: how do you abbreviate "shadow selfie"? Salfie, shalfie? It was a better angle, so I went with it.

Such easy work, the whole thing from start to finish! Hoeing a shallow line in after the snow-melt; planting "eyes" and covering with the soil and a bit of mature manure; letting spring rain do its job. Late autumn, as above. Let them dry on the floor in a single layer, then bag for the whole winter, or store them in a dark cellar if you have much more than our single sack or two, preferably with rather than without the thin soil layer, which is protective. They keep well; but don't let apples or pears near them, because they give off a gas which will spoil these fruits! The potatoes may go green, and potentially mildly poisonous, in light; but the green can be cut off and the rest



used safely.

Keep the skins on if at all you can: just scrub them well. Right there is all the nutrition they have. This isn't done much in this part of the world, but more's the pity.

Apparently Russia's 18th century Empress, Catherine the Great, liked German-imported potato plants chiefly for their flowers, not for the tubers at all. But the name "kartoffel" was borrowed into Russian, and from there into Georgian and other languages of the Empire or the USSR.

In previous years, my wise wife would accept payment of shop customers' debt with us in either potatoes which we ate all winter, or local sulguni cheese. This latter, having acquired it cheap, she would store in brine and then sell in the more expensive season. Our own potato harvest has gone down in amount year by year as we have seen it becoming too much for the two of us, a distraction from other more important things we are here to accomplish.

I like preparing the potatoes best either baked in the oven and then halved, with butter, cheese, salt and pepper; or, the next day after the baking, sliced and fried. But there are so many things you can do with them: mash, roast, grate for pancakes, mash and stuff into little dough pies. Or something more elaborate, if you have time and patience: scoop out the flesh from the baked halves, and mix this with any of butter, cheese, bacon bits or flaked seafood, fried onion, garlic,

mashed boiled parsnip, corn, herbs; spoon back into the halves, brush with more butter, and reheat to brown. Sensational. A fond childhood Christmas recipe is potatoes and parsnips boiled and mashed together, with gravy on top. They might be a very basic food, but you can do so many different things with them.

Svan potatoes are famous lower down, in Zugdidi, and sought after for their size and flavor. This year, all our neighbors are complaining about small amounts of both harvest total and individual average potato size; which happens sometimes, farming being such a risky business. I hope they get what they need for their own winter staples and to sell. As I have written before, few people around us have the luxury of choice to farm or not that we have. Just as well for us, perhaps, as we have no children to teach the tasks as they grow up and then have to take it all over from us when it becomes entirely too much. We do what the two of us can, and buy the rest. Potato, many thanks to you for your humble exterior and vital role in keeping us going.

Tony Hanmer has lived in Georgia since 1999, in Svaneti since 2007, and been a weekly writer and photographer for GT since early 2011. He runs the "Svaneti Renaissance" Facebook group, now with nearly 2000 members, at www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/. He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri: www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti

UK and UNDP Bring Georgian and Ossetian Scholars Together to Celebrate Caucasian Culture through the Ages

Melancholy verses by Nikoloz Baratashvili, rebellious poems by Kosta Khetagurov, the beauty of folk songs, and the wisdom of medieval epos, this wealth of poetry and folklore is now available in Georgian and Ossetian languages thanks to the joint work of scholars in Tbilisi and Tskhinvali.

An impressive collection of books was presented to the public on 2 November at an artistic event “The Power of Words” organized by the civil society organization “Caucasian Mosaic” with support from the United Kingdom (UK) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The set of publications includes:

- Anthologies of Georgian and Ossetian poetry, with over 380 poems translated into both languages;
- Illustrated Georgian-Ossetian and Ossetian-Georgian dictionaries for children with more than 300 words; and
- A research paper on the role of women in Caucasian folklore.

At the event, H.E. Mark Clayton, British Ambassador to Georgia, and Nick Beresford, UNDP Resident Representative in Georgia, addressed the audience with welcome remarks. “Caucasian Mosaic” representatives Naira Bepievi and Nino Popiashvili presented the joint work of Georgian and Ossetian researchers. Well-known actors Lili Khuriti and Tinatin Kobaladze recited immortal stanzas by Shota Rustaveli and a beautiful poem allegedly written by the 11th-century Georgian Queen Borena who by birth belonged to the Ossetian royal family.

“The UK is proud to support Georgian and Ossetian scholars in their joint effort to study the historic and cultural heritage of the Caucasus and introduce it to young people,” Ambassador Clayton said.

Through our languages, literature and poetry we celebrate the beauty and diversity of our heritage



An impressive collection of books was presented to the public with support from the UK and UNDP. Photo by Leli Blagonravova/UNDP



UK Ambassador Clayton and the UNDP's Nick Beresford talk to Zurab Khrikadze and Naira Bepieva. Photo by Leli Blagonravova/UNDP

“Through our languages, literature and poetry we celebrate the beauty and diversity of our heritage. At UNDP, we are proud to work with the UK Govern-

ment to support scholars and researchers to preserve and popularize the treasures of Georgian and Ossetian literature,” noted Nick Beresford, UNDP Resident

Representative in Georgia.

Along with its historic and cultural value, the joint work of Georgian and Ossetian researchers marks a 10-year-

COBERM works to address key confidence-building areas, such as healthcare, youth education, people-centred diplomacy, cultural cooperation, minority rights, gender equality, and environmental protection

long collaboration focused on the history and culture of the Caucasus. The partnership produced Georgian and Ossetian editions of the ancient “Nart Sagas” mythology collection; Georgian-Ossetian and Ossetian-Georgian dictionaries with over 22,000 words explained, translated and commented on by linguists; an encyclopaedic album summarizing Georgian-Ossetian relations before the 19th century; and theatrical performances in Georgian and Ossetian.

The team of experts on Caucasian languages, history, literature and folklore brought together by “Caucasian Mosaic” was supported by the European Union (EU), the UK and UNDP through their Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM).

Designed to build confidence between conflict-divided communities, COBERM works with civil society organizations on all sides of the conflict to address some key confidence-building areas, such as healthcare, youth education, people-centred diplomacy, cultural cooperation, minority rights, gender equality, and environmental protection. Since its start in 2010, COBERM has supported over 200 initiatives, contributing to developing new approaches to peace and confidence building.



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