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INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

I have on my phone horrible pictures, pictures that I'm not posting. I posted difficult material on social media, but I didn't really show them, and I'm not planning to show the really horrible ones. These I'm showing to people at personal meetings, people I think should know... But we have testimonies of doctors who are in the pathological field and they're describing what they've seen, and it's devastating. The body of a young boy who was tied to his mother and both were burned alive. I mean, how sadistic do you have to be to do that? Cutting the fingers off a young boy before killing him in front of his parents. A pregnant lady- they cut open her belly and then shot the unborn baby. Rape. We know that there was a lot of sexual violence, including with minors, and with the hostages that were taken. This is the level of pure, sadistic evil. We think the world should know that this is Hamas, because people seem to be either confused or ignorant, or choose to be confused or ignorant. And they think this is to do with the Israel-Palestinian conflict which



the Palestinians blame on us. It's not. Hamas is not working for the benefit of the people of Palestine, of the Palestinian people, because Hamas is not about a two state solution. Hamas is about

eliminating Israel. - Israeli Ambassador to Georgia, Hadas Ester Meitzad, told Radio Free Europe/RF's Georgian Service.

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BONDS		Price	w/w	m/m	COMMODITIES		Price	w/w	m/m
GRAIL 07/28	85.46 (YTM 7.80%)	-0.2%	-1.7%		Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	87.41	-0.7%	-8.3%	
SILNET 01/27	98.35 (YTM 8.96%)	+0.1%	-0.2%		Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)	1,983.88	+0.7%	+7.3%	
TBC 06/24	99.13 (YTM 7.17%)	+0.0%	+0.1%						
STOCKS		Price	w/w	m/m	CURRENCIES		Price	w/w	m/m
Bank of Georgia (BGE LN)	GBP 33.30	+2.5%	-9.8%		GEL / USD	2.7005	+0.1%	+0.8%	
Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 9.22	+1.5%	-6.3%		GEL / EUR	2.8559	-0.0%	+0.8%	
TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 26.85	+1.3%	-10.1%		GEL / GBP	3.2834	+0.0%	+0.5%	
					GEL / CHF	2.9655	-1.8%	+1.3%	
					GEL / RUB	0.0289	-	+5.1%	
					GEL / TRY	0.0953	-0.6%	-2.3%	
					GEL / AZN	1.5890	+0.0%	+0.8%	
					GEL / AMD	0.0067	-0.3%	-0.6%	
					GEL / UAH	0.0743	+1.0%	+2.5%	
					EUR / USD	0.9456	+0.1%	-0.0%	
					GBP / USD	0.8228	+0.0%	+0.4%	
					CHF / USD	0.9104	+1.9%	-0.5%	
					RUB / USD	93.9938	-0.2%	-4.3%	
					TRY / USD	28.3021	+0.7%	+3.2%	
					AZN / USD	1.6885	+0.1%	+0.0%	
					AMD / USD	401.7100	+0.5%	+1.5%	
INDICES		Price	w/w	m/m					
FTSE 100	7,321.72	-0.9%	-3.8%						
FTSE 250	17,083.05	-0.5%	-6.5%						
DAX	14,810.34	-0.5%	-3.7%						
DOW JONES	33,052.87	-0.3%	-1.4%						
NASDAQ	12,851.24	-2.2%	-2.8%						
MSCI EM EE	38.63	+3.0%	+11.2%						
MSCI EM	915.20	-0.6%	-3.9%						
SP 500	4,193.80	-1.3%	-2.2%						
MSCI FM	2,005.28	-2.1%	-5.4%						

Ukraine Latest: Russia Intensifies Bombing in Worst Attack of the Year



Ukrainian President Zelensky in the US in September. Photo by Tom Williams | CQ-Roll Call, Inc. | Getty Images

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

Ukkraine announced Wednesday that Russia had bombed more than 100 locations in the past 24 hours, the largest number in a single attack since the start of the year.

Since launching their offensive in February 2022, Russian forces have fired millions of artillery shells at Ukrainian towns and villages near the front lines, reducing many to rubble across the country.

"During the last 24 hours, the enemy shelled 118 localities in ten regions," Ukrainian Interior Minister Igor Klimentenko said in a message posted on social networks.

"This is the largest number of towns and villages to suffer an attack since the start of the year," he added.

Ukraine and its Western allies fear that Russia will intensify its attacks on the country's energy infrastructure before the coming winter, as it did last year.

The overnight bombings killed one person in the Kharkiv region and another in the Kherson region, local officials reported.

A Russian drone attack also killed one person and injured four others in Nikopol, in the south of the country.

The Ukrainian Air Force announced on Wednesday that it had shot down 18 of the 20 Russian drones launched during the night.

The Russian Ministry of Defense also announced that it had shot down two Ukrainian drones over the regions of Bryansk and Kursk, which border Ukraine.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky tried to rally his troops and support for Ukraine Tuesday, saying there will be no easy victories in the counteroffensive to retake Russian-occupied territory.

"The modern world is designed in such a way that it gets used to success too quickly," he said in his nightly address, adding that "when the full-scale aggression began, many in the world expected that Ukraine would not survive."

"Now the colossal things that our people, all our warriors, are doing, are being taken for granted," he added.

Defense experts tend to agree that Ukraine's counteroffensive that was launched in June has not been as successful as hoped, with the front line having shifted little and fighting remaining highly attritional.

There are concerns over the slow progress Ukraine has made in its counteroffensive, with growing impatience and reluctance, in some Western quarters, to continue giving large amounts of military aid to Ukraine.

ANY F-16S GIVEN TO UKRAINE WILL ONLY LAST 'AROUND 20 DAYS,' RUSSIA CLAIMS

Russia's defense minister claimed Wednesday that any F-16 fighter jets that the West supplies to Ukraine will be only last around 20 days if Russian air defense systems are operating effectively.

In a conference call with military officials, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu claimed that Russian air defense systems had shot down 37 aircraft in the past month and that this was almost twice the number of F-16 aircraft that was expected to be given to Ukraine by its Western allies.

Several of Ukraine's allies in Europe, including the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Norway, have promised to supply Kyiv with F-16 jets, although the timeframe for training and supply, as well as the number of aircraft that will be donated, differs between the nations and is not yet fully confirmed.

Denmark is expected to supply Kyiv with 19 jets but the deliveries will be made in tranches, with the first six to be delivered in March or April 2024.

UKRAINE CLAIMS RUSSIAN WARPLANES ARE DROPPING EXPLOSIVES ON BLACK SEA SHIPPING LANES

Ukraine said on Wednesday that Russian warplanes had dropped "explosive objects" into the likely paths of civilian vessels in the Black Sea three times in the last 24 hours, but that its fledgling shipping corridor was still operating.

Ukraine is trying to build up a new shipping lane without Russian approval to revive its vital seaborne exports. Russia said it would consider any vessel a potential military target after it quit a UN-brokered deal in July that allowed some food exports to flow despite the war.

"The occupiers are continuing to terrorize the paths of civilian shipping in the Black Sea with tactical aviation, dropping explosive objects into the likely paths of civilian vessel traffic," the southern military command said.

"There were three such drops registered in the last 24 hours. However, the

navigation corridor continues to function under the watch of the defense forces," it said.

Russia's defense ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

The spokeswoman for Ukraine's southern command said on Tuesday that Russia was regularly dropping guided aerial bombs, sea mines or other as-yet unknown explosive devices into the corridor, the Suspilne public broadcaster reported.

UKRAINE IS BEING DEFEATED DESPITE NATO HELP, RUSSIA'S DEFENSE MINISTER CLAIMS

Russia's defense minister claimed Wednesday that Ukraine is facing defeat, despite massive amounts of military support from the Western military alliance NATO.

"Despite the supply of new types of NATO weapons, the Kyiv regime is suffering defeat. The Russian troops continue to conduct an active defense, inflicting effective fire damage on the enemy," Sergei Shoigu said in a conference call Wednesday, reported by news agency RIA Novosti.

Shoigu then claimed that Ukraine's forces were "desperately and unsuccessfully" trying to attack in the Zaporozhzhia, Donetsk and Kherson directions, but that this was leading to large losses.

"The forces of Ukraine are being depleted, and the demoralization of personnel is growing," Shoigu claimed, without presenting evidence. In the meantime, he said, Russian units were advancing.

Analysts at the Institute for the Study of War said Tuesday that Ukrainian forces continued offensive operations near Bakhmut and in the western Zaporizhzhia region while "Russian forces" continued offensive operations along the Kupiansk-Svatove-Kremenna line, near Bakhmut, near Avdiivka, west and southwest of Donetsk City, in the Donetsk-Zaporizhzhia Oblast border area, and in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast [region] and advanced near Avdiivka."



Justice Minister Says Ex-President Saakashvili To Be Moved To Prison When Doctors Recommend

Imprisoned ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili will be moved back to prison when doctors issue such a recommendation, said Georgian Justice Minister Rati Bregadze.

In response to the statement of Levan Khabeishvili, the opposition United National Movement (UNM) party Chairman, saying the elections would not be fair without Mikheil Saakashvili's participation, Rati Bregadze urged the UNM Chair to get better familiarized with the Georgian legislation, taking into account that Mikheil Saakashvili is a Ukrainian citizen and thus has no right to engage in political activities in Georgia.

"How a prisoner should engage in political activities is laughable. This person does not have the right to political activity and political membership in Georgia. This person was a Chief Commander, and Chief Commanders do

not go into the service of another country; they do not leave their own country and citizenship because they get a job in another country," he said.

Speaking about the prisoner's rights and conditions, the Minister said he could hardly imagine another prisoner enjoying such freedoms and rights as Mikheil Saakashvili, adding that the ex-president has had over 2700 visitors, and highlighting that Georgia was acquitted in the legal dispute Saakashvili vs Georgia.

According to Bregadze, violations of Saakashvili's human rights were "never confirmed."

"These are subjective perceptions, and the law in this case speaks of something completely different, that Saakashvili's rights are protected. It is hard to find a prisoner in any country whose rights are so thoroughly protected," he said.

Starlink Satellite Internet Now Available In Georgia

SpaceX's Starlink satellite internet has launched in Georgia, SpaceX founder Elon Musk wrote on his page on the social network X (formerly Twitter), APA reports.

Starlink Georgia was registered at the end of June 2022. Mid-July, the Georgian Communications Commission granted the company authorization to begin operating in the country.

Starlink is a global satellite communications system project. It was developed by SpaceX, and founded by Musk in 2002.

The Starlink system is designed to provide internet access to users around the world by deploying a large number of small devices weighing up to 500 kg in low-Earth orbit.

According to the Starlink availability map, Starlink Internet is available throughout Georgia, except for its occupied territories.

Consumers connect to satellites with a small satellite receiver installed at home. These satellite terminals can be installed anywhere there is an open view of the sky. For better service, the best

choice would be to install it on the antenna or on the roof. The best location for the equipment will be suggested by the Starlink application itself, which is available on Android and iOS.

The current beta service is priced at \$99 per month. In addition, users will have to pay a one-time cost - the equipment, which costs \$499. The equipment includes a satellite dish mount, a dish, and an integrated Wi-Fi router.

You can check whether the service is available in your area and order it on the program's website.



Israeli Ambassador to Georgia – “What we're seeing in the Middle East is the axis of evil”

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HOW DO YOU THINK ISRAEL'S HISTORY WILL REMEMBER THE OCTOBER 7 ATTACK?

It's a day we will never forget, the scale of the attack and the nature of the attack. When the German Chancellor visited Israel, and he met the survivors of the Hamas attack, he referred to Hamas as new Nazis. Because it wasn't just murder and killing; it was butchering, it was slaughtering. It was sadistic, and people took joy in this sadistic massacre. Since the Holocaust, there hasn't been a day in our history that so many Jewish people died on the same day.

AND ISRAEL IS RESPONDING TO THAT DAY. WHAT IS ISRAEL'S GOAL IN ITS RESPONSE? WHAT DOES IT WANT TO ACHIEVE?

We had no plans to be in this war against Hamas, but the purpose is first and foremost to remove the threat. It's understood that we cannot go back to living next door to this brutal ISIS-like organization, and the reality has to change. We need to ensure that Hamas will no longer have the ability to govern Gaza, or to hold this military terrorist threat over the people of Israel. That's in addition to bringing home each and every one of our hostages safely. These are the two main goals of this war.

LET'S ASSUME THE FIRST GOAL IS ACHIEVED AND HAMAS IS REMOVED FROM GAZA. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? WHO COMES IN?

Good question. It's a question that shouldn't only be put at the Israeli doorstep, but one which involves other coun-

tries in the region, as well as the Palestinian Authority. Israel disengaged from the Gaza Strip in 2005. There has been not one Israeli soldier inside the Gaza Strip since, aside from specific limited military operations, like the one we had in 2014.

When we left the Gaza Strip, it was a chance for the Palestinian Authority to start the process of state building, because this was our aspiration. And what happened is Hamas first won the “election” and later on took force in a very brutal way, by killing 165 members of the Palestinian Authority. And since 2007, Hamas has become everything in the Gaza Strip. It's the only authority, it's the one in charge of all the civilian life, to the extent that they are stealing and abusing and diverting resources coming into the strip to their own killing machine.

So this is not solely an Israeli problem. And I think that, for example, when we saw President Macron in Israel talking about forming a coalition, it shows the world also understand that this is not just Israel and Hamas, but is something much bigger and wider.

YOU SAY ISRAEL LEFT GAZA COMPLETELY, BUT THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITIES REPEATEDLY CLAIMED IT WAS UNDER OCCUPATION BY ISRAEL.

First, we need to differentiate between the West Bank and Gaza. We are still very present in the West Bank, but not at all in Gaza. Second, I will refer you to international law. We are fighting this war against Hamas in accordance with international law. This is not a situation of occupation, because we are not present there. So the Palestinians can claim as much as they like,

but this is just not the case. I think Abu Mazen, the Palestinian president, head of the Palestinian Authority, has been avoiding any responsibility, doing his utmost not to have to go back into Gaza. And Israel is being blamed for everything. In the Middle East, since the days of our establishment 75 years ago, we've been the scapegoat of everything that anybody else doesn't like there. But, including in these days of war, everything that we're doing and saying is verified, checked. And there has been no Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip since 2005. This is a fact.

ONTO THE FRENCH PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL TO FORM AN ANTI ISIS-LIKE COALITION. WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF THAT HAPPENING?

This is a question for the international community. We're seeing a very impressive team of world leaders coming one after the other to Israel. President Biden, of course, and State Secretary Blinken, who has been hopping all over the region and came twice to Israel, even three times. The German Chancellor, British Prime Minister, President Macron. If I'm not mistaken, the Canadian Prime Minister is also planning on coming to Israel, and a lot of our European friends have also visited. We wouldn't have seen that if they didn't support us. And there's even more: Egypt tried to hold an international conference. It ended without any agreement, because the western countries refused to sign a paper that doesn't hold Hamas accountable for this terror attack, and talks about Hamas being a terror organization. This says a lot about the extent to which the world is united behind Israel and also the

understanding that this is not a local, domestic issue.

ANY IDEA WHETHER THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT IS GOING TO VISIT ISRAEL?

I'm not aware of his coming. I know it took him a full 10 days to express his condolences, but I'm not aware of any plans to visit.

LET'S GO BACK TO ISRAEL'S RESPONSE AND THE GROUND INCURSION. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE COST OF THAT WILL BE FOR EACH SIDE?

The cost will of course be that more people lose their lives. I don't see how one can fight a war ensuring that nobody will get hurt, because war is a very, very ugly affair. But I think that the question should be looked at from another direction: What is the threat that Hamas is posing to Israel and to western societies while it continues to exist? The world united to defeat ISIS, and although the idea was not fully defeated, and we still have pockets, ISIS no longer exists as a massive organization instilling terror and fear in the minds of so many people outside of the Middle East. Back then, the understanding was that people will lose their lives, soldiers and civilians, at the cost of agreeing that we could not afford to live in a world where ISIS exists. The same goes here: the world cannot afford to continue living with Hamas after we saw how little children were executed, brutalized, raped; how families were burned alive. We cannot allow this to continue existing. So this is what you need to ask yourself: what will the cost be if Hamas continues to exist; if we don't take action?



Over 20 years, Gaza, instead of flourishing as an independent state, turned into a place where terrorism is celebrated

THE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN A MAJOR CONCERN AMONG THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. ANY IDEA WHAT THE DEATH TOLL IS?

No, I don't know. And I will tell you why I don't know: The source of information that everybody is quoting is the Ministry of Health of Gaza, and the Ministry of Health in Gaza is Hamas. I'm not saying that there aren't casualties over there, there are, despite the fact that we're doing everything we can to prevent harm falling on the uninvolved population. Of course, there are casualties. “A” because war is, as I said, an ugly affair. And “B” because Hamas is doing exactly the opposite: as much as we try to spare the lives of the uninvolved, Hamas has an interest in doing exactly the opposite.

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Israeli Ambassador to Georgia – “What we're seeing in the Middle East is the axis of evil”

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I will say also on those numbers coming from Hamas: how can one take it as a reliable source of information when it comes from the same people that just weeks ago stopped at nothing to kill?

Let's talk about the hospital incident. Hamas came out and accused Israel of deliberately targeting a hospital and that hundreds of people were in a critical condition or dead. We say nothing for three hours, a lifetime to the media, because we want to verify the details first. We know we didn't attack the hospital, this we can say immediately, but we want to be sure exactly what happened, and to be sure it wasn't as a result of our war on military targets in the Gaza Strip. After three hours, the IDF comes out and says not only was it not us, but also proves it: here we have footage of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad firing rockets at Israel, and one of them falls on the hospital because they're hiding in the vicinity, using the hospital as a human shield.

IS THERE A TENTATIVE NUMBER OF CIVILIAN DEATHS IN GAZA AT WHICH POINT ISRAEL MIGHT RECONSIDER ITS WAR GOALS? OR IS IT “TO THE END,” NO MATTER THE COST?

I don't think it works like that. Numbers are not the only aspect you need to take into account when you're analyzing a military target. You have to consider what threat this target possesses. This is where you start the discussion from. I'm not saying the numbers aren't high, but we need to ask how many of them are being sacrificed deliberately by Hamas, because we have repeatedly told the civilians to evacuate south to the humanitarian zone. This is where humanitarian aid is going, also from the Egyptian side. We're not obliged to provide humanitarian aid to Gaza, but we are obliged to allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza. I say check your sources, check information and the facts on the ground.

LET'S LOOK AT THE PALESTINIAN COUNTER-ARGUMENTS, NOT NECESSARILY HAMAS, THAT AT LEAST PART OF THE BLAME SHOULD BE PUT ON ISRAEL FOR THE CURRENT SITUATION, NOT FOR THE HAMAS ATTACK ITSELF, BUT THE SITUATION IN GAZA TODAY.

What was President Mahmoud Abbas' response to the brutal attack by Hamas? Did you hear him condemning it? No. He kept silent. The elected leader, the one the Palestinian population chose to represent them, and he was unable to condemn the killing of babies, just because they are Israelis and Jews.

I think people are missing the point of what took place here, because there is a political debate between us and the Palestinians, and there is a discussion about occupation. You have many people supporting the Palestinian aspiration to have an independent state, and that's okay. This is a debate that will continue to exist. But to justify the murdering of 1400 people? In the Hamas charter, they

We need to ask ourselves: what will the cost be if Hamas continues to exist; if we don't take action?



I'm not saying the death toll isn't high, but we need to ask how many are being deliberately sacrificed by Hamas

are not aspiring to the two state solution. The Hamas charter is about eliminating the State of Israel. Hamas is supported by Iran. Iran is a country openly saying "this Zionist regime needs to be eliminated."

Hamas is about murdering as many Israelis and Jewish people as they can, and the fact that we don't hear anything from the Palestinian leadership is beyond disappointing. I remember seeing the body of a young girl, half naked, being paraded in the street of Gaza and brutalized. I think that we need to look into how a barbaric and murderous act can be celebrated and cheered on in such an institutionalized manner.

THEY CLAIM IT'S A REACTION TO THE WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS ISRAELI OCCUPATION, AND REFER TO THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH THAT THE OPPRESSED WILL AT SOME POINT INEVITABLY LASH OUT.

We are not occupying Gaza. We used to say that Gaza City could have evolved into Singapore. We haven't been in Gaza for 20 years. And Gaza, instead of flourishing, taking its first steps as an independent state, turned into a place where terrorism is celebrated and dominating.

IS THE TWO STATE SOLUTION DEAD? HOW DO YOU PLAN TO CO-EXIST WITH PALESTINIANS IF SO?

It's an excellent question, because at the moment, we have a trust deficit. How can I trust when they come into our house and murder us in the most brutal way? When the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people are silent and are unable to even condemn it?

But while it's very difficult for us at the moment, we never know. I mean, in 1973,

we fought a very difficult war against Egypt and Syria, and six years later, we signed a peace agreement with Egypt, which is still holding, and it's a very important one.

It's hard to look beyond the present right now, but I haven't given up hope of living in a better world.

WHO WILL THE FAMILIES OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION PERISHING IN ISRAEL'S RESPONSE BLAME?

I understand that they will blame Israel, but we're obliged to remove the threat that Hamas is posing. I think there are a few brave people there, ones who also aspire for Gaza to be freed from Hamas, who think of Gaza as being occupied by Hamas, not by Israel. I hope that those voices will become bolder. But I think that at the end of the day, this is where leadership is needed, a brave leadership that says, "We have a chance to end this bloody conflict, but it means we have to denounce terrorism, we have to come out and say, 'No more.'"

Yes, it's a circle of hatred, but I don't know if it's our responsibility. There is a lot of Palestinian responsibility here. If you're used to blaming Israel for everything, that is bad, as is being comfortable with the world supporting you financially - there is something very corruptive about this way of living and this way of behaving.

When Israel was established in 1948, our starting point was extremely weak. And, really, against all odds, and in 75 years, we built a very impressive country, leading in technology and information, one that is sharing knowledge, here in Georgia too. We took this path, because you need to decide that you take responsibility for what is yours, and you're building yourself and you're moving forward. Every five to seven years, we had to face a war that was always started by the other side, by those who try to eliminate us, to bring an end to our existence in the Middle East. And despite that, we managed to become strong enough to win these wars and to build our economy and our society in a way that our country could become a proud member among other nations. You need to decide if you are choosing to build statehood, if you are doing that, or if you're always looking to blame the other side.

ON THAT FAMOUS QUOTE FROM GOLDA MEYR, THAT PEACE WILL COME TO ARABS WHEN THEY LOVE THEIR CHILDREN MORE THAN KILLING JEWS - HOW FAR DO YOU THINK WE ARE REMOVED FROM THAT DAY?

I'm sorry to say that after the bloody October 7, I don't know what to tell you. If you're firing rockets from behind your own hospitals, if you're putting trucks in the road to prevent your people from moving south, if you're sitting on storage of half a million liters of fuel and you're not giving it to those who need generators...you know, Hamas built a web of tunnels underneath Gaza, not dirt-and-soil tunnels but cement war tunnels. This is where they're running their operation from, where the killing machinery is being activated from. For these tunnels to exist, they need electricity, because it's all deep, deep underground. So this is what they need fuel for, they need fuel to maintain their ability to continue killing Israelis and to do so at the expense of their own people. So all this crying out that "we need fuel for the hospitals," well, Hamas has the fuel, though its people need the fuel. This is what we are facing here.

LET'S TALK A BIT ABOUT EXTERNAL ACTORS. WHOSE INVOLVEMENT DO YOU SEE IN THIS, AND WHAT KIND OF IMPACT WILL IT HAVE INTERNATIONALLY?

All the dots lead to one place, which is Iran. And if you're looking for the one who has been sponsoring terrorism, not just against Israel, but everywhere in the Middle East, where you see militias, unaccountable groups with sophisticated weapons, Iran is behind it, whether it's Iraq, whether it's Yemen, of course, the Houthis. Lebanon goes without saying - we all know that Hezbollah is not just an Iranian proxy, it's the right hand of Iran. Syria, President Assad is still with us after he used chemical weapons to murder his own people. The only reason that he is still with us is Iran, because they were the ones to back him, to assist him in murdering and butchering his own people.

THERE IS ANOTHER COUNTRY THAT ASSISTED ASSAD.

Yes, but I think the Iranians, the extent of the military guidance, support ammunition and manufacturing on a whole different scale. Assad owes his existence to the Iranians. What we're seeing in the Middle East is the axis of evil. I'm seeing Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Hamas is a Sunnah organization, Iran is Shia. It doesn't matter. For many, many years, Iran has been supporting Hamas financially by transferring arms, through know-how training. This collaboration is not something new. It's something that has been happening for many years.

They are not aspiring to the two state solution. The Hamas charter is about eliminating the State of Israel

I WOULD ARGUE THAT WHILE ASSAD RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM IRAN, IS IT UNFAIR TO SAY THAT HE OWES HIS SURVIVAL ONLY TO IRAN, WHEN RUSSIA'S INTERVENTION IS WHAT MADE IT POSSIBLE.

Russia, of course, also supported Assad. Russia supported Assad politically, in the UN, in other places, and Russia is present in Syria. But still, when I'm looking at all the foreign fighters that came from various countries to fight in Syria, who was training them? Iranian commanders. I'm not disagreeing with you, but I'm saying that Iran has been the one passing Assad and his terrorist militias the know-how and the ammunition for so many years.

RUSSIA CASTS A LONG SHADOW IN GEORGIA. WHAT IS RUSSIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HAMAS?

Russia recognized Hamas as a political entity. For many, many years, we have this disagreement with Russia, and we keep on telling them that Hamas is a terrorist organization. Anybody who is, after the October 7 attack, unable to denounce Hamas as a terror organization... I will just say that this is a very disappointing reaction.

WHAT IMPACT DO YOU THINK IT WILL HAVE ON TEL AVIV AND MOSCOW'S RELATIONSHIP?

The Israeli public is very much interested in how the world sees the events that took place. Because of the scale of the tragedy, and because of what happened to us, to my people. When President Biden delivered his firm, emotional address, I think that in most living rooms in Israel, people were on the verge of tears. On the opposite side, I think the Israeli public is also seeing who are the ones not standing with us. As in every country, public opinion matters.



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TRANSLATED BY MARIAM
MTIVLISHVILI

BIM Solutions Group, in cooperation with Construction Management Company CMC, hosted the first digital construction forum in Tbilisi. The event gave the interested parties (property owners, contractors, construction industry representatives) an opportunity to get acquainted with world practices and learn more about digitalization of construction.

BIM Solutions is an international brand promoting the introduction of the building information modeling (BIM) method all over the world, a method which offers companies more effective and productive ways to manage their projects.

Some 300 representatives of more than 80 companies attended the Digital Construction Forum 2023. The event was attended by people from the private sector, government structures and diplomatic missions accredited in Georgia. Representatives of the governmental institutions of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia also

participated in the event - sharing their experience with the participants of the forum. In the Baltic States, digital innovations have been actively used in the construction industry for years, and have had a positive impact on companies.

"The information provided by our guests from the Baltic states is very important," noted Teimuraz Bolotashvili, Head of the Tbilisi City Hall Architecture Service. "They have walked the same path that we must walk regarding BIM technologies, which significantly increase the quality of design and construction. BIM will help us, the permit-issuing body, when checking projects, saving us significant time and resources and, in the end, we will have quality projects to be proud of."

The participants of the forum had the opportunity to hear various expert opinions about the BIM method and to see examples at the international level. They also got acquainted with the numerical data on the financial benefits of implementing the BIM method.

- Speakers at the event were:
- Dmitrijs Kots, Head of Building information modeling and management division, "State Real Estate" Latvia
 - Jaan Saar, Head of the Digital Con-

struction, Construction and Housing Department, Ministry of Climate; EU BIM Task Group Chairman

- Teimuraz Bolotashvili, Head of the Architecture Service of the Tbilisi City Hall
- Ernestas Beržanskis, Manager & Co Founder BIM Solution group
- Håvard Bell, Founder, CSO, Catenda
- Edmee Schultz, Business Development Manager at Catenda
- Arimantas Glebauskas, YIT Lietuva, Administration Director and Member of the Board
- Eriks Vitols, Co-founder, Latvian business branch Manager, JSC Baltic BIM Management
- Moderator of Forum Guga Kobakhidze, Prospect Founder and CEO

The forum was opened with the speech of the Ambassador of Lithuania to Georgia, Andrius Kalindra. After that, Davit Songhulashvili, the head of the sectoral economy committee of the Parliament, John Brekeveldt, the president of the European Business Association, and Tamaz Tavadze, the founder of Construction Management Company CMC, addressed the audience.

"I believe that this is one of the most decisive and important moments in the construction industry, because BIM makes the construction sector and construction works much more efficient, and most importantly, ensures the exclusion of mistakes at the design stage," Tavadze noted. "For the first time, as a result of the coordination of many disciplines at the design stage, as a result of eliminating many errors, we are getting a more complete, healthy and processed end product."

The BIM method is not completely foreign to the Georgian market, and has been used, it has yet to be employed on a large scale.

Temur Bolotashvili, Head of the Architecture Service of the Tbilisi City Hall, highlighted that Georgia is ready to participate in this initiative and to start digital development in structures as well.

Vytautas Puodzunus, the CEO of BIM Solutions Georgia (www.bimsolutions.ge), emphasized that he and his dedicated team stand prepared to offer expert guidance and support to anyone looking to commence the journey of implementing BIM methodologies.

"It was a fascinating conference, giving



us a chance to share our decade-long experience with our Georgian colleagues and government representatives," said Ernestas Beržanskis, co-founder of BIM Solutions Group. "We see that the cost of construction is increasing every year. BIM technology increases the efficiency of the construction cycle, helping to effectively manage human resources and equipment."

The organizer of the forum was BIM Solutions Group, which has been helping companies in different countries to implement innovative methods over numerous years. The sponsor and co-organizer of the forum is the construction management company CMC. The sponsors of the Digital Construction Forum 2023 were also the construction company Anagi and the architectural company Artstudio Project. In addition, the following companies were partners of the forum: Property Georgia, FIABCI Georgia, BMG, EU BIM Task Group, European Business Association Georgia, Baltic BIM Management, BIA and Prospect.

BIM Solutions operates in six European countries - Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus and Georgia. The company cooperates with both construction, design and real estate development com-

panies, as well as government structures, and offers them advice to improve their process management.

BIM Solutions has its own representative office in the Georgian market. The company provides assistance to local construction sectors and helps in the introduction of BIM technologies. The company believes that the implementation of these modern processes provides additional value to all persons involved in the implementation of a project - customers, designers, builders, manufacturers, managers and others. BIM Solutions Georgia is always open for communication - the company says that they are always ready to support the development of the Georgian construction industry.

In addition, BIM Solutions Georgia offers interested companies the chance to raise the qualifications of their personnel through training and certification. BIM Solutions Georgia is ready to advise any company interested in technology and will provide a development plan on how to implement BIM technologies in their activities. BIM Solutions Georgia offers companies the opportunity to reduce errors and material waste, to save money, and to improve their time management.

World Bank Suggests Policy Package of Reforms to Support

GEORGIA'S GREEN TRANSITION

The World Bank has launched a new report "Greening Firms in Georgia", which serves as a call to action for policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders to prioritize and invest in improving energy efficiency in the country. The report suggests that the agenda of greening businesses and promoting growth can go hand in hand.

The report notes that emissions in Georgia have significantly increased over the last 15 years, particularly from businesses engaged in industry, transport services, construction, and commerce. The report cautions that without urgent action, industry emissions in Georgia could be 90% higher in 2030 than the levels recorded in 2015.

Despite recent progress, the institutional and regulatory framework in Georgia still requires significant strengthening to align with EU legislation and standards. Georgia currently lags in translating the legal framework into concrete incentives and opportunities for business investments, as shown by its low ranking among regional peers in the Regulatory Indicators for Sustain-

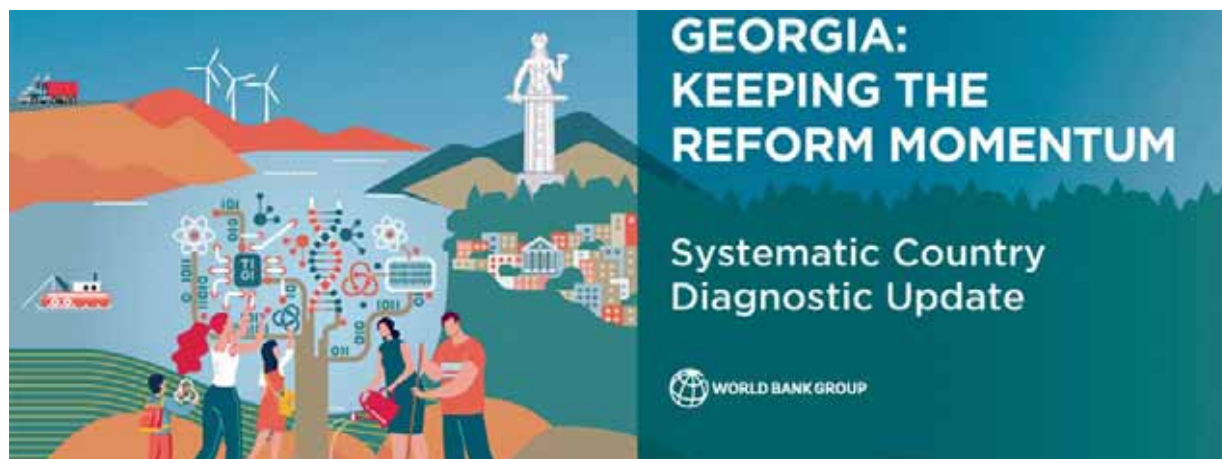


Image source: World Bank

able Energy (RISE).

The report stresses several key elements important to Georgia's green transition:

- The need for improved incentives and opportunities for business investments in energy efficiency and renewables. For 80% of firms, improving efficiency will likely require new investments. However, the other 20% of firms do not need new capital to improve efficiency, and these firms alone have the potential to contribute to a one-third reduction in total emissions.

- The importance of productivity as a driver of energy efficiency at the firm-level.

- The importance of information and knowledge spillovers from more efficient firms to less efficient ones when these are in close-by locations and in similar sectors.

- Energy prices play a key role in determining the incentives to improve efficiency among firms in Georgia. The results show that when electricity prices increase, firms tend to reduce energy consumption. Remarkably, lower elec-

tricity demand is not associated with lower output, and is driven by energy efficiency gains. Businesses do not appear to reduce sales nor employment in the shorter term, but become more efficient and pass part of their increase costs down to their consumers.

- Technology adoption and quality green and general management practices are key ingredients for a successful green transition and both are lacking in Georgian firms. Georgia ranks among the bottom three countries in terms of green management practices among nine

benchmark countries (Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia and Slovenia). Green technology adoption is very limited, with many firms maintaining generators due to frequent power outages, which leads to significant inefficiencies.

To support green transition, the report recommends a comprehensive policy package of reforms and programs, including:

- Horizontal economy-wide policies centered around price signals and regulations, improvements to the grid infrastructure, and reliability of electricity services.

- Information: raising firms' awareness about the potential benefits of becoming more energy efficient and about the available energy saving.

- Capabilities: helping firms identify opportunities for improvement of management, organization, technology, and skills.

- Finance: easing access to financial resources required for upgrading firms' technology.

- Benchmarking and diagnostics: the report emphasizes the importance of targeting by using appropriate diagnostic and benchmarking tools to assess specific needs and readiness of businesses to upgrade and invest in energy efficiency.

Sisno Group's Remarkable Journey and Impact on Georgia's Business Landscape



Mr. Shahin Bahadorani

An insightful exploration into the world of business, investment and economic development unfolds as **GEORGIA TODAY** sits down with Mr. Shahin Bahadorani, Managing Director of Sisno Group, and famous real estate and investment entrepreneur Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil. Delve into their remarkable journey within the Georgian business landscape and gain key insights into their visionary strategies for advancing the nation's economic prosperity.

THE JOURNEY AND KEY MILESTONES

Sisno Group's journey began in 2018 with a mission to simplify the path for foreign investors in Georgia. Over the years, the company has achieved several pivotal milestones. These include the creation of specialized departments for investment consultation, property sales, rentals, and legal services. These milestones have contributed to the company's comprehensive approach, ensuring foreign investors receive holistic support.

CORE SERVICES AND SPECIALIZATIONS

Sisno Group specializes in a wide range of services. They offer investment consultation to guide investors in making informed decisions, and excel in property sales and rentals, assisting clients in finding the right real estate opportunities. Legal services, including company registration, ensure investors' compliance with Georgian regulations.

MAIN GOALS AND

FUTURE PLANS

In line with their commitment to providing specialized services, the company is deeply engaged in niche marketing. Their focus is on tailoring services to the unique needs of their clients, offering specialized support through various departments to meet specific requirements.

Furthermore, a pivotal objective for the company is to expand and transform their existing departments into distinct specialized companies. This strategic transformation will allow each entity to excel in its specific area of expertise, enhancing their ability to address the particular needs of different clients effectively.

Looking forward, the company is set to launch "Investology," a specialized firm exclusively dedicated to investment services. This new venture will cater specifically to high-level investors, offering expert guidance, fast-track services, and an extensive array of investment options.

Another significant endeavor is the introduction of "Mr. Property," a brand that specializes in off-plan projects. This brand will provide a comprehensive directory of properties in Georgia, enabling potential investors to access all pertinent information and make well-informed decisions. Mr. Property is poised to become the first company to offer comprehensive property management services for all types of properties.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic partnerships are fundamental

to Sisno Group's success. They have collaborated with international business chambers, Georgian business chambers, and notable embassies, including the Indian Embassy. These partnerships play a crucial role in attracting potential investors to Georgia and promoting the country as an investment-friendly destination. The extensive network of strategic alliances fosters economic growth and enhances mutual cooperation.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO EXPANDING BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Over the past six years, Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil has made substantial contributions to expanding business opportunities in Georgia. Notably, he has been involved in high-value projects, including a hydro-power plant, a luxurious five-star hotel, and strategic land investments. These ventures have not only had a considerable economic impact, generating millions in revenue, but have also left a lasting mark on the Georgian investment landscape. Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil is undoubtedly one of the most influential business leaders in Georgia's real estate sector. Over the past six years, he has had a profound impact on foreign direct investment, personally contributing a staggering \$300 million to FDI during this period.

THE UPCOMING GEORGIAN TOURISM AND BUSINESS FORUM

The Georgian Tourism and Business Forum (GTB Forum) is scheduled to take place on November 13-14. It represents a highly anticipated and pivotal event on Georgia's economic calendar. With its comprehensive scope and far-reaching potential, the forum is poised to fortify Georgia's ties with influential figures from the Middle East, India, and Europe. Beyond being an event of mere significance, the GTB Forum carries the weight of substantial promise, particularly with regard to enhancing investment prospects and engendering new job opportunities, thus serving as a catalyst for the country's continued economic development.

At its core, the GTB Forum is conceived as a platform for the exchange of ideas, strategies, and opportunities across various industries and sectors. It aims to facilitate dialogue and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, transcending geographical boundaries to forge powerful partnerships. This cross-pollination of insights and perspectives fosters a climate of innovation and economic progress, positioning Georgia as a thriving hub for investment, business, and tourism.

SISNO GROUP'S ROLE IN THE GTB FORUM

Sisno Group emerges as a pivotal player in the orchestration and execution of the GTB Forum, bearing the mantle of organizers and co-partners. Drawing upon their extensive experience and profound expertise, Sisno Group holds a central role in shaping the forum's success and impact. Shahin Bahadorani is a recognized expert in real estate investment and property management, distinguished as a prominent real estate developer. He currently oversees three significant ongoing development projects in Tbilisi. Additionally, in collaboration with Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil, he is actively engaged in two ambitious 5-star resort projects in Kazbegi and Kutaisi, which



Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil

are expected to make substantial contributions to Georgia's economy.

As a company that places a premium on facilitating meaningful discussions and connections, Sisno Group acts as a linchpin in showcasing the wealth of investment opportunities that Georgia has to offer. Their involvement extends beyond logistical support, as they serve as catalysts for fruitful collaborations and synergies among forum participants. Through their participation, Sisno Group endeavors to ensure that the GTB Forum fulfills its potential as a dynamic platform for engagement, one that not only propels Georgia's economic growth but also solidifies its position on the global stage as a destination of choice for investors, businesses, and tourists alike.

PROMOTING BUSINESS AND TOURISM

Forums like the GTB Forum are pivotal in promoting both business and tourism in Georgia. They provide a platform for dialogue, information sharing, and networking that can lead to increased investment, job creation, and economic growth. Sisno Group's presence at the forum aligns with their commitment to making Georgia an attractive investment destination, catalyzing the country's economic development.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE GTB FORUM

Attendees at the GTB Forum can expect a wealth of insights and knowledge related to investment opportunities, market trends, and prospective collaborations. The forum aims to showcase

Georgia's potential as an investment hub and facilitate discussions on fostering economic growth and sustainability. Key takeaways will include valuable connections, potential partnerships, and a deeper understanding of the opportunities within Georgia.

ALIGNMENT WITH GTB FORUM GOALS

Sisno Group's core objectives align seamlessly with the goals of the GTB Forum. The company's commitment to boosting foreign direct investment, exemplified through "Investology," directly corresponds to the forum's objectives. The aim is to promote Georgia as an investment-friendly destination, contribute to its economic development, and turn tourism into a catalyst for sustainable growth. Through participation and contributions, the company is dedicated to making the GTB Forum a pivotal event in Georgia's journey towards a more prosperous and sustainable future.



Shangri La's Unforgettable Birthday Celebration: A Night to Remember



with its optical illusions. The fire show, featuring five talented artists, lit up the street near the entrance, leaving spectators in awe of their daring feats.

As the headliner of the night the one and only STEPHANE took the audience on a musical journey, blending modern jazz, blues, and pop in a way that only he can, ensuring that the crowd was on their feet, dancing and singing along.

Of course, no birthday celebration is complete without a cake, and Shangri La's birthday cake was big and tasty, just as promised. It was the perfect centerpiece to a night filled with delectable treats and drinks.

VIP guests at the Shangri La XO club were treated to a special lottery with a staggering 260,000 GEL prize fund. Lucky



Shangri La, the luxurious oasis of entertainment in Tbilisi, once again outdid itself as it celebrated its birthday on September 28th, 2023. This spectacular evening was filled with an array of entertainment that left everyone in awe, making it a night to remember.

As guests entered the entertainment center, they were welcomed by stilt-walkers and mimes who added an air of whimsy to the celebration. It wasn't just confined to the indoors; meeting guests on the street and on the stairs, these

performers set the tone for an evening that promised to be nothing short of magical.

One of the highlights of the night was the "Mad Mozart" performance. This quirky rendition of classical music brought Mozart's genius to life with a playful twist. Air acrobatics left the audience breathless as performers defied gravity in a show of strength and grace. Meanwhile, marionette dances added an enchanting touch to the evening. As the night continued, a dance show featuring mirror costumes dazzled the audience



winners walked away with substantial rewards, making the night even more unforgettable.

In summary, Shangri La's birthday celebration on September 28th was a night to remember. From the enchanting performances on the street to the captivating shows within the venue, it was a whirlwind of entertainment and excitement. With the perfect blend of music, art, and surprises, Shangri La truly outdid itself, living up to its reputation as the ultimate entertainment destination in Tbilisi.

SOCIETY

Education As-Is, or Should We Make It Better?

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

The content, quality and level of human enlightenment has always depended on epochal changes in the civilized world, changes marked mostly by the industrial revolutions that made history of modern education. It all started in the ancient world of both occidental and oriental philosophers, who determined the initial parameters of human knowledge, which then meant progress. The Sakartvelo of ancient times was clearly in the vanguard of the then ongoing general process of accumulating overall human lore. This progress as such was certainly on-and-off, as history took its due course, but it happened anyway - in some cases very vigorously and sometimes at a snail's pace.

The utility and goodness of knowledge totally depended on how big and how meaningful those changes were. The first industrial revolution took place between the mid-18th and the mid-19th

centuries, and was based on the usage of steam and water power, which was a huge techno-scientific novelty of the time, all of a sudden seeing manual labor substituted by a machine. Just imagine the shock among society!

The second industrial (or technological) revolution, starting in the early 1870s and lasting until the beginning of the First World War, was the time of railroads and telegraph, when people and news began travelling faster.

The third industrial transformation, known to the world as the digital revolution, was the epoch of television and computers, belonging to the period of time after World War II came to an end.

The fourth industrial revolution is the child of our modern times of automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies, when our virtual existence online has unrecognizably altered everything around.

Without a doubt, the contemporary education system in this country is faced with a number of serious challenges instigated by the fourth industrial revolution. In first place, education has become such a must, that an unusual surfeit of

students has materialized compared to the available number of teachers to educate them. As a matter of fact, if Mankind produces enough teachers to build classes according to the most optimal educational standards, then most of us will have to be teachers by profession! It may sound funny, but it's true.

On top of that, most of the educational programs are not very much oriented to the future, one of the corroborations of which is the ubiquitous lack of use of technology in the process. In a word, most of the modern world is using an outdated educational model and antiquated methodology of teaching, our own Sakartvelo included. If a student does not have access to the advantages and benefits of modern technological progress, their skills and talent will never make it to the point when knowledge becomes a commodity, easily exchangeable into money.

Generally speaking, education has a proclivity to lag behind real life, especially when the industrial progress is revolutionary and the means of acquiring relevant knowledge is obsolete. The solution here might be free access to



Modernizing teaching. Source: swivl

self-education, on the one hand, and the presence of a highly qualified pedagogue on the other, one who has enough knowledge and experience to prompt a young-

ster not to wait for upcoming possible changes in text-books and to catch up with the progress independently from the available school programs.

It is said that learning at school is a boring activity. The answer here might be interaction, which means watching rather than reading and writing down. A student's own motivation is just as important as the one prompted by a teacher, but it could be more fruitful when a good and well-prepared instructor knows how to motivate a child to look at the modern world through the eyes of those brilliant minds who shape progress. It is a huge challenge to give enough quality to education so that the time spent on enlightenment is not wasted.

The relevant modern education is another valuable product of our time, one which needs to be made flexible enough for our youth to easily imbibe all the new technological advancements, not letting the system be weakened or even paralyzed by outdated educational content and means of its proliferation. We cannot afford any longer to accept the system as it is. It has to be better!



School in the 1800s. Source: mentalfloss

Teachers, Pupils and Sadagi Unite to Clean-Up Georgia, Stage 1



each! Wind and rain also failed to hold them back from cheerfully cleaning several streets around the school. It was all we could do to convince them to go back to the school, where we had a small picnic together!

We visited the museum of occupation while there, an impressive project. We believe that in a school where there is a museum of occupation and pupils share gloves with each other, the children will undoubtedly grow up with a special love for their homeland.

31 students, three teachers and two parents participated in the clean-up of Akhkerpi village in Marneuli municipality. Children started cleaning their village with great determination and enthusiasm. The main roads, footpaths, trees, bushes and the surrounding area of the school were cleared of litter. Although this was their first clean-up, the Akhkerpians quickly grasped the importance of cleaning up their environment. A painful fact for the teachers and the pupils is that the village does not have a regular garbage collection service. There is hope, however, that following the reparation of the road leading to Akhkerpi, the village will be included in the local waste management chain.

Akhkerpi public school teacher Nariman Melikidze, who led the clean-up, said: "I keep reminding the children that there is no such thing as cleanliness at home if there is litter outside." We talked a lot with him. Although he says he prefers a person to perform one task thoroughly rather than many less thoroughly, Nariman himself manages to teach four subjects at the school and is one of its leaders in extracurricular activities.

Pupils of the public school of the Khidistavi village of Gori municipality, members of the local Eco Club "Little Environmental Defenders" and teachers Lia Giuashvili and Tina Pkhaladze, enthusiastically participated in the cleaning of their village. 55 students engaged in the action, cleaning the area around the school as well as the village sports field.

We were very happy that the children recognized Dato and Tazo, members of the Sadagi team, and sincerely assured us that tidying up the environment is no less important to them than to us. The little ones saw that it is difficult to clean areas polluted by litter, and they quickly realized that if we do not litter in the first place, there will be no need to overcome the challenge of cleaning up. The children collected a large amount of garbage and placed it in a specially designated place, then we had a picnic in the school yard. The pupils of Khudistavi school have big plans for the future, foreseeing tidying up becoming an integral part of their lives.

The next round of simultaneous clean-up events will take place in November. We have three more tours planned for 2024. At the final stage of cleaning-up, we expect the participation of over 100 schools in all municipalities of Georgia.

BLOG BY THE SADAGI TEAM

The first stage of environmental clean-ups, initiated by the environmental charity organization Sadagi, the team of the National Teachers' Award, and the finalist award-nominee teachers, kicked off on October 18. Clean-up activities were held in 11 municipalities throughout Georgia: in Senaki, Chkhorotsku, Martvili, Kutaisi, Gori, Kaspi, Tbilisi, Marneuli, Telavi, Akhmeta and Ninotsminda. A total of 1027 pupils from 24 participating schools contributed to the successful completion of the first stage of the series. Each event selected and conducted by the teachers and students is worthy of celebration and coverage. Due to their abundance, however, we can tell you about only a few schools at this stage.

The village of Khojorni in Marneuli municipality was a pleasant discovery

for the Sadagi team. We were convinced, once again, that many of us do not know enough about the beauty and grace of Kvemo Kartli. The village is at an altitude of 800 meters, surrounded by forested hills, arable fields and pastures. Along with fruit trees, there are many beautiful walnut, hackberry and pine trees in the village.

Khojorni seemed cleaner than many villages in Georgia. Despite the relative orderliness of the area, though, there was quite a lot of work for pupils there, and so, under the leadership of teacher Lali Margiani, 32 pupils, seven teachers and two Sadagi members got involved in the clean-up. Pleasant, hardworking and humble children and adults live in Khojorni, all of whom showed heartwarming zeal in cleaning up their village. The pupils collected hundreds of kilos of litter, and committed to continuing the clean-up in the future. We ended our visit with a small picnic at the village stadium and a backgammon game with Anar, an enthusiastic and enterprising

local teacher.

The Givi Zaldastanishvili American Academy in Tbilisi is one of the most prominent schools in Georgia. Some 150 students got involved in the clean-up event in the extensive parking lot near Lisi Lake and in the adjacent forest park. Before cleaning up, we had a small talk about the importance of leadership using the current Rugby World Cup as an example.

We found Lisi, one of the most popular recreational areas of Tbilisi, sadly quite polluted. The multitude of cans of paint scattered around the cable tower were particularly disappointing. Volunteer street artists have created a lot of graffiti on the walls there, and while the beauty of their works is controversial, the paint cans they left there are not to anybody's liking. But the enthusiasm of the students of the American Academy took away the gloom of the sight as we set to clearing it up. The school team - the pupils, teachers and administrators, took the task to heart and made a great contribution to

making Tbilisi a cleaner city.

In the city of Kaspi, we visited teacher Nino Niparishvili, the finalist of this year's National Teachers' Award. We had first met her at the recent award-ceremony, where she shared her story of having, jointly with the school children, transformed a former soviet militia building into an Occupation Museum.

Kaspi is a small town surrounded by villages near the occupation line, yet it seems that Kaspi pupils' enthusiasm has only been increased by any feelings of uneasiness coming from their proximity to the occupants: by the time of our arrival, 92 students had already started the cleaning-up process, and we found some trash cans already filled to the brim!

The zeal of the children exceeded our expectations. The working gloves we had sent them were not enough for the bigger-than-planned number of volunteers. But the lack of resources was no hindrance to the Kaspi pupils: They shared out the gloves so they all had one



Last Call - Tusheti, 3 of 3



BLOG BY TONY HANMER

Morning of departure day... slipping out only 48 hours before the Tusheti snow clearers' contract expired and they were freed of obligation to keep the road open. The most unwelcome noise, to campers, made itself known just before

whose stone towers were closest to our campsite, visible from just a short walk away. I was impressed to see that some of the towers had been remade with EU grants, a good sign that Tusheti is getting some attention and support. We filled our water bottles and continued. A local guest house or two greatly impressed us with their handmade wood furniture and veranda overlooking the old town, and we complimented them on their craftsmanship and wished them every success in the future, which they certainly deserve.

Our timing was about perfect: another day might have seen Dato more challenged with snow, although he does drive in Svaneti in winter, so it could hardly be his undoing. The pass at about 2900m did give some snow on the road, and several more herds of sheep being taken down for the winter, guarded by horsemen and by dogs of generally fierce reputation. We avoided approaching these, and I saw that the iconic "large flock of sheep on a Tusheti road" image I have in my head was not yet to appear. But it will wait.

The snow gave way to wonderfully atmospheric mist and clouds on the other side of the pass, hiding and then revealing the massive landscapes which will always characterize Tusheti for me. The autumn colors were still magnificent, with little wind having come since two days ago to bring down most of the leaves. Reds and yellows, the green of the conifers in contrast, perfectly clear water in blues and turquoises, black and grays from the slate cliffs. Time after time we requested photo stops, and gasped at these visions. Another sentinel's face in rock appeared to me, this one much higher in altitude than the one of a couple of days ago, though less clear, chiefly his eye standing out. But there he was, nonetheless, watching over the land we were fleeing. Descend, descend. Winding, winding. We were in good hands.

The road was still mostly dry, which meant not slippery. Dato has been on it more than 10 times just this last summer,



so he is thoroughly experienced, just the kind of driver you want on such a road. I would not have the nerves to drive my own car on it, so I was glad to pay him to do this for us. His addition of tents, mattresses, sleeping bags and a gas stove meant that we were well equipped, and more than happy to arrange the food and cooking for us all so that he would not have any need in this department. An ideal partnership, we think.

Out through Telavi, and back to Tbilisi by early evening, to my waiting car in the center of town. Home, our own beds,

fond memories and lots of photos of those gorgeous three days. Tusheti cannot disappoint.

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 over 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.svaneti2



CULTURE

"Silent Cities" is Brought to the Bustling City of Tbilisi

BY SHELBI R. ANKIEWICZ

A small but captivating art exhibit called Silent Cities is on display in Tbilisi until March 30 - it portrays various styles of cities and architecture through photographs, paintings, and sketches created by Vera Pagava.

Pagava is a Georgian native who grew up in France. She was born in 1907 and her family later moved to Paris when she was a teenager. She started her career as a painter, and Silent Cities showcases pieces of her work from the 1950s until the 1980s, when her work started to become more abstract.

Upon entering TBC Concept on Marjanishvili, you will see that the first part of the exhibition is in a room on the right-hand side. Guests will find historical photographs and documents covering some of Pagava's more important projects.

"These encompass her expansive fresco for the Vatican Pavilion at the World Expo in Brussels (1958) and an abstract triptych designed for the Telecom building in Dijon (1980)," Atinati's website states.

One wall in the gallery is adorned with a series of nine sketches Pagava created with lead pencil. This is the first time the collection, Venice (1960), is being revealed to the public. This work shows Pagava's pointillist technique, showcasing why this is her preferred method when creating art with a pencil.

"I can draw lines, but that doesn't



express what I have to say. A line is not plastic enough. I type, point by point," said Pagava written on the Galerie Chauvy webpage. "The shapes of these pieces appear gradually, each point resting on the one before it. This style, like the typed symbols style, injects a poetic opening into the urban fabric."

The glass cases in the exhibit enclose a selection of books that show Pagava's work in correlation with the poet Pierre Lequire. She created pieces that were in sync with Lequire's current work. Aside from that, there are pieces on display that are pulled from AC/VP (Association Culturelle Vera Pagava) archives and a Georgian rendition of an essay by Canadian author Lisa Robertson who also had a focus on architecture and cities.

A book that was designed by Timur Akhmetov and released by Kona Books is also on display at the exhibition, highlighting an essay called "Point by Point" that was written by Nina Akhvediani, a co-curator of the gallery. The book also includes a poem dedicated to Pagava that was written by Lequire.

After browsing the room, guests can walk upstairs and enter the gallery that displays Pagava's paintings.

"The exhibition introduces to the public a few works on loan from AC/VP and other collections, such as the set of paintings also known as 'silent architecture,'" Atinati writes. "Pagava's distinct abstract painterly style is evident in this body of work, some of which were initially included in exhibitions at Galerie Darial by Tamar Tarassach-

vili-Taly, a close confidant. Silent Cities also features archival records from Pagava's exhibitions at the same gallery."

The gallery, Darial, is named after a pass in the Caucasus Mountains that links Georgia and Russia. Pagava had a series of paintings that launched the gallery in 1972, and she remained as its main artist until it shut its doors in 1996.

The paintings in Silent Cities are beautifully colored using pastels and earthy tones. This exhibition shows Pagava's abstract work with buildings, so some lines are a little slanted and buildings look out of proportion, making it interesting to understand what Pagava was thinking about as she was curating each piece. It's also known that although her paintings shifted to abstract works of art, she still often titled pieces with real locations or environments.

Pagava's work has been displayed in many places around the world. It has been showcased the most in France at

the Jeanne Bucher Gallery, but has also made appearances in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium, and the United States. Her work is currently in the National Museum of Georgia, the Centre Pompidou - National Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Modern Art of Paris, the Museum of Fine Arts of Dijon, and the Unterlinden Museum of Colmar.

Pagava died in March 1988 at the age of 81. Now, just like other wonderfully talented artists, she will be remembered through her artwork at displays such as this one for many years to come.

The exhibition will remain at TBC Concept on Marjanishvili until March 30, 2024.

"Painting reflects us; it is a miraculous mirror in which the outside world sees our inner world; talent is the means of communication between us and life, men, heaven and earth," Vera Pagava wrote in a letter to Roger Hilton, Montrouge, on April 15, 1936.



BI Auction's Meet the Artist: Levan Kharanauli



Photo by Mirian Kiladze

It has been almost eight years since our first Auction in 2016, and during this period, we have been doing our very best to promote Georgian art and artists through our auctions, with our BI Auction Competition 'For Young Artists,' and through our collaborative series of artist interviews shared by GEORGIA TODAY - says BI Auction founder partner Bengu Akcardak Kucuk. "Now, we are working on the 5th competition, and continuing that col-

laboration.

"We started in Autumn 2016, and have since done almost 40 interviews," she notes. "Now, it is BI Auction's pleasure to introduce another very important Georgian artist, Levan Kharanauli, who is very excited about to his new retrospective exhibition at the Georgian National Gallery."

Levan Kharanauli was born in 1963 in Tbilisi. In 1986, he graduated from the Tbilisi State Art Academy. He is the

father of seven children and the grandfather of seven grandchildren.

We sat down with Levan to find out about his artwork and that exhibition.

YOUR EXHIBITION IS ON UNTIL MID NOVEMBER AT THE GEORGIAN NATIONAL GALLERY ON RUSTAVELI. TELL US ABOUT IT.

The fact that my works are displayed in such close proximity to those of Pirosmani is a great feeling, and brings a great sense of responsibility. At the same time, the retrospective of my own works takes me back to different times and different people who have come and gone, which is very interesting and causes me at times both joy and sadness.

HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE CHANGES IN GEORGIAN ART?

In my opinion, the spoken language for an artist is painting, and they should never forget that. In general, everything "new" is a continuation: time makes its own "frames".

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR GEORGIAN ARTISTS AND ART?

I will answer this with the advice of my teacher, outstanding Georgian artist Temo Machavariani: "Don't tell lies."

WHICH SCHOOL OF PAINTING HAS INFLUENCED YOUR WORK MOST?

Of course, the academic school is the foundation that an artist must rely on, regardless of how he develops his art.

YOU HAVE A BIG FAMILY. HOW DOES IT AFFECT AND HOW MUCH DOES IT INSPIRE YOU IN YOUR WORK? ARE ANY OF THEM FOLLOWING IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS?

Of course family is my main source of inspiration. I often want to transfer to the canvas the momentary glances that I catch in my daily interaction with them - this joy, surprise, contemplation and so on. I also often go back and draw those seemingly simple things that evoke special emotions in me. I want to share this mood in my work. Of course, a big family and noise are good, but sometimes solitude is necessary for work.

In our family, both adults and the young



Photo by Mirian Kiladze

ones appreciate art very much. My three children graduated from the Academy, in the faculties of painting and restoration. They paint and work on the restoration of manuscripts and old Georgian frescoes.

As for the grandchildren, they are still small, and I hope they will also fall in love with painting.

NAME AN ARTIST OR A WORK OF ART THAT YOU THINK EVERY ARTIST SHOULD SEE.

Pirosmani is an artist with whom every meeting is a discovery again and again, whose works I think are important to be seen by all creators.



SPORTS

Anastasia Chkhartishvili - The Bright Future of Georgian Table Tennis

From October 25 - 29, Greece hosted the European Youth Table Tennis Championship (EUROPE YOUTH SERIES).

This tournament is a ranking competition for youths in the U13 and U15 age categories, and it features participation from young athletes representing their national teams.

The Georgian youth national team was proudly represented by four athletes: Anastasia Chkhartishvili, Tekla Liparteliani, Nikoloz Chkhartishvili and Mate Gambarashvili. These talented athletes were accompanied by coaches, Giorgi (Zhora) Sarkhaiani and Nino Ninoshvili.

In table tennis tournaments, singles competitions generate the most interest, since they directly impact a player's personal ranking. Anastasia Chkhartishvili, a valuable member of Georgia's national team, displayed an undefeated performance in her category and secured the 1st place in her group. She continued

her impressive run by defeating Denmark's Philippa Mickelborg in the fourth final with a score of 3:0 (11-4, 11-5, 11-4).

In the semi-finals, Anastasia faced a tough and thrilling battle against the representative of the host country, Greece, Angela Noure, ultimately winning with a score of 3:1 (11-5, 11-8, 9-11, 15-13). This victory granted her a place in the final where she competed against Lu Sally, a Chinese-born representative of Denmark. Anastasia displayed a high level of professionalism and a strong character, especially when the score was tied at 1-1 against Lu Sally, effectively countering her opponent's attacks, reclaiming the game, and emerging with a historic victory in the final with a score of 3:1 (11-6, 9-11, 11-2, 11-5).

Anastasia Chkhartishvili's historic victory signifies a monumental achievement, as she became the first Georgian table tennis player to proudly hoist the flag of independent Georgia at an international tournament organized by the European



Table Tennis International Union (ETTU). This is a moment to celebrate, and it symbolizes the bright future of Georgian table tennis on the global stage.

The young athletes of the Georgian Team achieved remarkable success by clinching top positions in every category they competed in:

- In the U15 team competition, the Georgian youth team earned the position of vice-champion.
- The U15 boys pair, consisting of Nikoloz Chkhartishvili and Mate Gambarashvili, achieved an impressive third place.
- The U15 girls pair, formed by Anastasia Chkhartishvili and Tekla Liparteliani, became vice-champions.
- Mate Gambarashvili secured the U13 boys singles (category B) title.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to our talented young table tennis players, and we wish them continued success in their future international endeavors.



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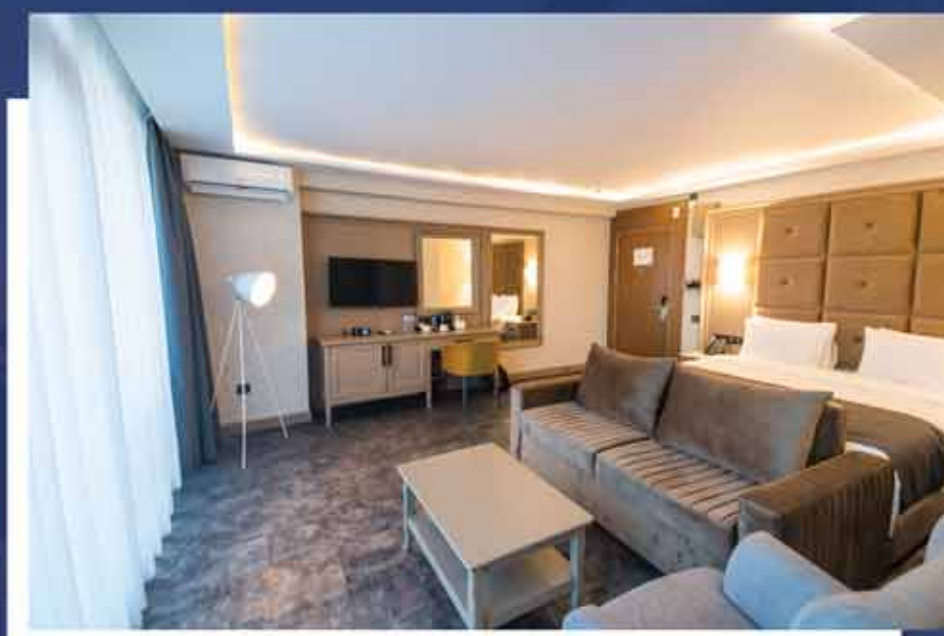
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