



In this week's issue...

Achondroplasia Treatment Medicine Now Available In Georgia

NEWS PAGE 3

Boris Johnson's Former Advisor Refused Entry to Georgia on His Way to Meet UNM

POLITICS PAGE 4

Israel-Hamas War: Crisis at Gaza Strip Hospitals Worsens; EU's Top Diplomat Calls for 'Immediate Pauses'

POLITICS PAGE 4

Terabank Introduces FMO's NASIRA Guarantee Program to Support Small and Medium-Sized Businesses

BUSINESS PAGE 6

Civil Society and Local Government Representatives Pay a Study Visit to the Czech Republic to Explore Social Services

SOCIETY PAGE 9

Georgian Poets: Ana Kalandadze - On The Way To Betania

CULTURE PAGE 11

International Tourism and Business Forum Unveils Georgia's Rich Offerings and Investment Opportunities

The International Tourism and Business Forum, held on the 13th and 14th of November, in Sheraton Grand Tbilisi Metechi Palace provided a platform for global leaders and experts to discuss the dynamics of tourism, safety, sustainability, and investment opportunities in Georgia. The event commenced with a captivating video introduction showcasing the beauty and cultural richness of Georgia, setting the stage for an insightful and productive two-day forum.

The opening session featured a warm welcome from Bassam Jaafar, the Founder of Provision Company. His opening speech set a positive tone for the event, emphasizing the importance of international collaboration in promoting tourism and business in Georgia.

Continued on page 8



Prepared for Georgia Today Business by **GALT & TAGGART** CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

As of 15-Nov-2023

BONDS				COMMODITIES			
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m
GRAIL 07/28	85.71 (YTM 7.76%)	+0.0%	-0.9%	Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	81.18	+2.1%	-10.7%
SILNET 01/27	98.71 (YTM 8.84%)	+0.1%	+0.2%	Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)	1,959.85	+0.5%	+1.4%
TBC 06/24	99.22 (YTM 7.11%)	+0.2%	+0.2%				

STOCKS				CURRENCIES			
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m
Bank of Georgia (BGEQ LN)	GBP 34.50	-2.5%	+0.6%	GEL / USD	2.6964	-0.0%	+0.2%
Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 10.10	-0.6%	+6.3%	GEL / EUR	2.9248	+1.2%	+3.5%
TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 26.60	-2.9%	-3.3%	GEL / GBP	3.3480	+0.9%	+2.6%
				GEL / CHF	3.0349	+1.2%	+1.8%
				GEL / RUB	0.0301	+2.4%	+9.5%
				GEL / TRY	0.0939	-0.8%	-2.9%

INDICES			
	Price	w/w	m/m
FTSE 100	7,486.91	+1.2%	-1.5%
FTSE 250	18,676.48	+4.7%	+7.0%
DAX	15,748.17	+3.4%	+3.7%
DOW JONES	34,991.21	+2.6%	+3.9%
NASDAQ	14,103.84	+3.3%	+5.2%
MSCI EM EE	41.52	+5.6%	+16.5%
MSCI EM	983.51	+2.7%	+3.4%
SP 500	4,502.88	+2.7%	+4.0%
MSCI FM	2,118.94	+1.5%	+1.1%

Ukraine Updates: Russia Says 'hell' Awaits Ukrainians after Confirming They've Crossed the Dnieper River into Occupied Territory

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

Russian forces are pummeling Ukrainian units that have crossed over the Dnieper River to the Russian-occupied left (eastern) bank of the river in Kherson, an official said Wednesday.

The Kherson area, in southern Ukraine, is partially occupied by Russian forces after an offensive to take the city of Kherson last year prompted Russian forces to withdraw to the eastern bank of the river.

Ukraine reported Tuesday that its forces had established a foothold on the eastern bank of the river. The announcement could herald the start of an advance toward Russian-occupied Crimea, with Ukraine saying on Wednesday that it was starting to push back against Russian forces on the eastern bank.

A Russian-installed official, Vladimir Saldo, said in comments on Telegram that Ukrainian units had been able to cross the river — confirming for the first time that this had taken place — and said that initially Ukraine had sent “more manpower than our means of destruction were able to destroy.”

“Additional forces have now been brought in,” he said, claiming that Ukrainian forces were blocked in the village of Krynyki, where “a fiery hell” awaited them. “Bombs, missiles, ammunition from heavy flame-thrower systems, artillery shells, and drones are flying at them [Ukrainian forces] ... Over the last two or three days alone, the enemy’s total losses amounted to about a hundred militants.”



A group of Ukrainian marines push off from the bank of the Dnieper River at the frontline near Kherson, Ukraine. Photo by Alex Babenko | AP

Ukraine requested an “informational silence,” amid the fierce fighting.

“The Russians understand that the advance of the defense forces is inevitable, but they cannot calculate from which direction they can expect such a danger,” Natalia Humeniuk, press officer for Operational Command South, said Wednesday in televised comments.

Russian forces were, she said, “trying to actively defend themselves, using heavy artillery, rocket launchers, and aviation as much as possible.”

“The pushback from our side is taking place on a line from 3 to 8km [up to 5 miles] along the entire coast from the water’s edge [of the Dnieper River]. The front line is quite fluid today,” she said.

“I cannot reveal all the measures we are currently taking, but it is obvious that the enemy is being pressed [by our measures]. For now, we are asking for

informational silence so that our plans can be put into motion: it will allow us to report on great successes later.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s chief of staff Andriy Yermak confirmed Monday that Ukraine’s forces had gained a foothold on the left side of the river and were looking to advance.

“Against all odds, Ukraine’s defense forces have gained a foothold on the left bank of the Dnieper. Step-by-step, we are demilitarizing Crimea. We have covered 70% of the distance,” he told the Hudson Institute.

Recapturing the whole of the Kherson region is one of the main goals of the Ukrainian counteroffensive that was launched in June. The region has been partially occupied by Russian forces after they withdrew from Kherson city on the west bank last year following an earlier counteroffensive. Since then, the river

had effectively separated Russian and Ukrainian forces, until now.

The US-based Institute for the Study of War said Tuesday that it “continues to assess that Ukrainian forces have been conducting larger-than-usual ground operations on the east bank of Kherson Oblast [region] since mid-October 2023 and that Ukrainian forces appear to be able to maintain and supply their current positions on the Russian-controlled side of Kherson Oblast.”

RESCUERS SEARCH FOR SURVIVORS AFTER LETHAL RUSSIAN MISSILE STRIKE IN EAST UKRAINE

A Russian missile smashed into an apartment block in the sleepy eastern Ukrainian town of Selydove on Wednesday, killing one person and wounding at least three others, the national police said.

Rescuers at the site raced to clear rubble to find anyone buried beneath after the attack, which police said saw four S-300 missiles strike the town shortly after midnight, damaging six apartment buildings and 20 homes.

Local officials in one channel on Telegram messenger said that four people were believed to be trapped under the rubble.

About half of the apartment block was destroyed by the missile, which tore out a gaping triangular hole that spanned at least ten meters at its top.

Russia has carried out regular missile and drone strikes on population centers behind the front line of its 21-month-old invasion of Ukraine. Moscow denies targeting civilians. Ukraine regularly reports that Russian missile and drone strikes have killed and hurt civilians and

damaged civilian infrastructure during the full-scale war launched by Russia in February 2022.

RUSSIA TAKING BIGGER LOSSES IN AVDIIVKA THAN IN BAKHMUT, UKRAINE SAYS

Fighting between Ukrainian and Russian forces remains intense around the town of Avdiivka in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donetsk, with Ukraine’s president saying Russia was experiencing more losses there than it did in Bakhmut, another war hotspot.

Like Bakhmut, the town is seen as a strategic target for Russian forces looking to encircle the town, which has been heavily fortified by Ukrainian troops, and to strengthen their foothold in Donetsk. Fighting has been intense in the area for months and little remains of the town that was once home to around 32,000 inhabitants.

President Zelenskyy said Tuesday evening that he had spoken to defense and security officials on the situation around Avdiivka and the surrounding area and that “Russian assaults are very intense, especially in the Donetsk region.”

“Russia is already losing soldiers and equipment near Avdiivka faster and on a larger scale than, for example, near Bakhmut. It is extremely difficult to withstand this onslaught. And each of our warriors holding the positions, each of our warriors performing combat missions there deserves our utmost gratitude,” Zelenskyy said.

“The more Russian forces are destroyed near Avdiivka now, the worse the overall situation and the overall course of this war will be for the enemy,” Zelenskyy said.



Bassiani Listed Among the Best Nightclubs in the World

BY LÉA MONTAGNE

The Travel Bible - a world-leading media and marketing brand featuring destinations from all over the world - recently shared a list of the 15 best nightclubs in the world, putting last but not least Tbilisi’s own Bassiani.

This list was made by the Night Life Party Guide, seeking to highlight the best bars, clubs and events in the world.

Bassiani is a night club well-known in Tbilisi and beyond. Night Life Party Guide described Bassiani as a “testament to the resilience and spirit of the city’s clubbing scene”. They added: “Bassiani has a raw, industrial aesthetic that sets it apart. It’s renowned for its techno scene and has played a crucial role in progressing Georgia’s youth and LGBTQ+ movements.”

Imposing itself among the best known clubs in the world, along with clubs in Ibiza, Berlin, London and more, Georgia can be proud of this achievement showing night-clubbers from all over the world that Tbilisi is the place-to-be.



The British Embassy in Batumi Runs an Information Campaign About NATO



BY LÉA MONTAGNE

On November 13, the mobile British Embassy was in Batumi to meet whoever was interested in learning about NATO. Along with the Embassy of Romania, the British Embassy is an interfacing Embassy for NATO and offers public information campaigns, as it did in Batumi.

The British Ambassador Mark Clayton held meetings in parallel with the public information-giving. He expressed his happiness afterwards, saying it was: “Great to meet Tornike Rijvadze, Chairman of Ajara Government & Mayor of Batumi Archil Chikovani for a great oversight of the situation here. The UK’s relationship

with the Autonomous Republic of Ajara is going from strength to strength”

He also met with representatives of civil society organizations, and asserted that it was always great to get perspective from outside of Tbilisi.

The British Embassy affirmed that it was a crucial year for Georgia, and noted

that talking about opportunities and challenges was therefore really important, especially for the young generation.

The Ambassador opened a dialogue with students in the context of training courses organized by the Georgian Center for Strategy and Development. The theme was NATO-Georgia relations and the aspirations of the people of Georgia to become members of the Euro-Atlantic family.

On November 13-14, a training course was offered by the GCSD about “NATO’s role in the global security system and Georgia” at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University. During this course, students learned about the history of NATO, regional and national security issues, as well as the achievements and prospects of NATO-Georgia cooperation. This course was part of the “NATO-Georgia Youth Academy” project, supported by the British embassy.

This event was a success according to the British Embassy’s reports, generating both interest and discussion.

The next stop for the mobile embassies is Kutaisi, where they will certainly continue their accomplishments.



Achondroplasia Treatment Medicine Now Available In Georgia



Achondroplasia treatment medicine is now available in Georgia. The information about this was initially spread by the parents of one of the children with achondroplasia, and then the information was confirmed by Ivane Chkhaidze, the head of the Iashvili clinic, saying the medicine for achondroplasia has already been received in the Iashvili clinic and its use will begin.

Chkhaidze claimed that children with achondroplasia will be treated with this medicine only in the Iashvili clinic, adding that the medical institution

provided information individually to the parents of children with achondroplasia.

The Ministry of Health states that at present, the country has imported the daily dose for four children with achondroplasia syndrome.

Achondroplasia is the most common form of skeletal dysplasia, occurring in about one in every 40,000 births. Achondroplasia impairs the growth of bone in the limbs and causes abnormal growth in the spine and skull.

Parents of children with Achondroplasia have been demanding for months to bring expensive medicine into the coun-

try with state funding.

They eventually reached an agreement with the authorities that they would take concrete steps to introduce the only medicine for the treatment of achondroplasia, "Vosoritide."

The diagnosis of Achondroplasia was added to the list of treatable rare diseases within the framework of the state program. The corresponding change was made in the government decree "On the approval of state health protection programs for 2023".

"We will continue to fight to get that medicine for our children as soon as possible," the parents said back then.



New Buses to Be Introduced in Tbilisi

BY LÉA MONTAGNE

Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze was on a working visit to Munich on November 7, along with Deputy Irakli Bendeliani and the executives of "Tegeta Holding" company. The team met with representatives of MAN company in Munich and inspected the 18-meter buses intended for Tbilisi in the MAN exhibition hall.

During the meeting, 160 buses were bought by Tbilisi city. According to Mayor Kaladze, the introduction of buses will start from December.

"It is very important to develop and promote public transport," he said. "The capital's government is doing everything to make public transport accessible to everyone and for people to be able move freely. We see the challenges, we see the overcrowded buses. 18-meter buses will allow us to unload and transport more

passengers. Over the past three years, we have completely renewed our public transport – the city has new buses and minibuses. The last stage was the introduction of 18-meter buses, which will be completed by the end of next year.

"This year, 50 units will arrive in Georgia in December and will serve the population of Tbilisi from the end of January. These buses will visually suit the city and will be an important component from the point of view of transporting passengers."

MAN provides ongoing bus service with high-quality original auto parts and repair services. Those new buses are fully adapted for people with disabilities and equipped with modern technologies, including a voice system, and internal and external video monitoring systems.

It is planned to introduce 160 buses running on natural gas to Tbilisi, purchased by Tbilisi Municipality. By the end of 2024, Tbilisi will have 400 buses produced by MAN, which will be about 40% of the total bus fleet.



THE BILTMORE
TBILISI

The Biltmore Tbilisi Hotel Honored with UN Global Compact Corporate Sustainability Award for Decent Work and Economic Growth

A comprehensive initiative the 'Empower Workforce, Drive Growth' project has been undertaken by the organization. By emphasizing the principles of fair employment, job creation, and sustainable economic practices, a contribution is being made toward the realization of SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth.

The team at The Biltmore Tbilisi Hotel aspires to create a positive impact on their employees, the community, and the overall economic landscape. They aim to foster an environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the sustainable development of our society.

29 Rustaveli Avenue, 0108, Tbilisi, Georgia
T: +995 322 72 72 / info.bhtg@biltmorecollection.com

IRI Survey: 86% of Respondents Support Joining the European Union, 79% – Joining NATO

The survey of the International Republican Institute (IRI) shows that 86% of respondents support joining the European Union, 79% – joining NATO.

Based on the survey, 86% of respondents support joining the European Union (of which 73% fully support, and 13% somewhat support), and 79% support NATO membership (of which 65% fully support, and 14% somewhat support).

At the same time, among those who support joining the European Union, 17% would be against joining the European Union if it meant cutting trade relations with Russia, 74% would still support it, and 9% did not know or refused to answer.

Among the main benefits of joining the European Union, 45% named the strength-



ening of the economy, 14% – security, 14% – development of the country, 8%

– better future. Among the main obstacles in the way

of Georgia joining the EU, 27% of respondents named political instability in Georgia, 17% – internal opposition in Georgia, 13% – Georgia has not met its obligations under the EU Association Agreement, 11% – opposition by EU countries, 6% – Russia.

As for NATO, among the main benefits of joining the North Atlantic Alliance, 47% of respondents name security, 17% – defense, 13% – strengthening the economy, 6% – development of the country, 5% – stability/peace.

Among the main obstacles in the way of Georgia joining NATO, 27% of respondents name Russia, 20% – the status of occupied regions, 14% – political instability in Georgia, 11% – internal opposition in Georgia, 7% – opposition by NATO countries.

The survey fieldwork was carried out

by the Institute of Polling and Marketing. The survey was coordinated by Dr. Rasa Alisauskienė of the public and market research company Baltic Surveys/The Gallup Organization on behalf of the Center for Insights in Survey Research. Data was collected throughout Georgia between September 14 and October 14, 2023, through CAPI administered face-to-face interviews in respondents' homes. The sample consisted of n=1,200 permanent residents of Georgia aged 18 and older and eligible to vote. It is representative of the general population by the age, gender, region and settlement size. The response rate was 73 percent. The margin of error for the mid-range full sample does not exceed ±2.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The survey was funded by the US Agency for International Development.

Boris Johnson's Former Advisor Refused Entry to Georgia on His Way to Meet UNM



BY LÉA MONTAGNE

Ben Mallet, a veteran political campaigner for former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was handed an OBE (Order of the British Empire) for 'political and public service' in the former PM's resignation honors list, was today refused entry to Georgia at its border.

He was to visit Tbilisi in order to meet the country's leading opposition party, the United National Movement (UNM).

Mallet is currently working as director of international campaigns for US strategic consultancy The Messina Group,

a full-service strategic consulting firm, serving clients around the world.

He was to visit the UNM, a liberal and pro-Western political party, in Tbilisi this week, but was turned away at the border.

Levan Khabeishvili, MP member of the UNM declared "Can you imagine that a British citizen was not allowed, but they lay a red carpet for Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Russian generals?"

He went on to accuse the government of double standards and of sparking a "diplomatic scandal".

Ben Mallet was questioned by border guards and his formal entry rejection was then issued by the authorities on 'ambiguous grounds'.

Moscow Demands Tbilisi Mark the Borders With "Abkhazia and South Ossetia"

Before the next round of international negotiations in Geneva, during the meeting with the co-chairs of the discussions, the Russian side, as one of the participants, spoke about "the process of delimitation of Georgia's border with Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the importance of further demarcation".

In addition, as the Russian media writes, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mikhail Galuzin, during the meeting with the co-chairmen of the international discussions in Geneva, emphasized "the need for more active work with Tbilisi after the incident at the border of South Ossetia".

On November 6, near the village of Kirbali, in the territory occupied by Russia, a representative of the occupying force killed Tamaz Ginturi while trying to arrest him illegally. His fellow villager Levan Dotiashvili, who was with him, was illegally detained by the Russian occupation forces, but was handed over to the Georgian side on November 9.

The next round of Geneva discussions should be held in early December.

Geneva discussions have been going on since 2008, after the August war. The negotiations are held under the co-chair-



Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mikhail Galuzin

manship of the European Union, the United Nations and the OSCE. Georgia, Russia and the US, as well as representatives of the de facto governments of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, participate in the process. Before the next round of discussions, the co-chairs usually hold preparatory meetings in Tbilisi, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali.

Non-use of force is one of the main

issues of the Geneva talks. Georgia has already made a unilateral condition of non-use of force and demands the same from the Russian Federation. Russia, which states that it does not consider itself a party to the conflict, wants Georgia to officially sign similar agreements with Abkhazia and the de facto Republic of South Ossetia. Such an initiative is unacceptable for the Georgian side.

Israel-Hamas War: Crisis at Gaza Strip Hospitals Worsens; EU's Top Diplomat Calls for 'Immediate Pauses'



Fadel Senna | AFP | Getty Images

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the World Health Organization, said that the situation at the Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City has grown increasingly dire and that a cease-fire is necessary to preserve civilian lives.

"The hospital is not functioning as a hospital anymore," he said Sunday. It comes amid reports of multiple attacks on and near hospitals in Gaza as fighting in the city intensifies.

The Israeli Defense Forces late Saturday denied that Al-Shifa was under siege and said it would help evacuate babies from the hospital.

On Monday, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell called for "immediate pauses" in the conflict between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas to assist Palestinian civilians stranded in the besieged and resource-deprived Gaza enclave.

"I'm saying that in plural: Not a single one, but several pauses," he highlighted Monday, while speaking to reporters in Brussels. "Imme-

mediate pauses and humanitarian corridors to be established in order to face the dire situation of the people in Gaza."

Borrell also called on Israel "to exercise maximum restraint to ensure the protection of civilians."

Fire exchanges have intensified between Israel and Lebanese militant group Hezbollah over the past day.

The Israel Defense Forces on Sunday reported they had identified 15 launches from Lebanon in the course of an hour, with seven of its soldiers wounded during the engagement.

Two further mortar launches were recorded crossing into Israel from Lebanese territory as early as Monday morning, this time producing no casualties, IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari said on social media.

The Hezbollah-affiliated Al Manar news outlet said Israeli artillery and other "enemy" forces shot at several sites in Lebanon, including the Aita al-Shaab town, Chihine municipality and the city of Naqoura.



MTATSMINDA PANORAMA

LUXURY LIVING IN THE HEART OF TBILISI



**IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE BREATHTAKING 360°
SCENERY OF TBILISI AND MTATSMINDA MOUNTAIN.**



+995 598 020 022



KITWDEVELOPMENT.GE



Terabank Introduces FMO's NASIRA Guarantee Program to Support Small and Medium-Sized Businesses

Terabank and FMO mid-November announced the first NASIRA risk-sharing program in Georgia. The program aims to increase access to financial resources for micro-enterprises and SMEs operating in the country and is funded by the European Commission and the Dutch Government.

FMO's NASIRA risk sharing program takes the form of a loan portfolio guarantee and supports financial institutions in increasing their lending activities for MSMEs with a focus on underserved business segments, such as smallholder farmers, women-owned and youth-owned businesses, who often have difficulty in access to finance due to higher associated credit risk, lack of collateral and/or historical track record. FMO's NASIRA risk-sharing facility enables financial institutions to more confidently lend to these client segments by sharing the possible credit losses with the financial institutions thereby reducing the risks involved and expanding opportunities to a fresh segment of entrepreneurs.

The official signing of the agreement on participation in the program took place on November 9 in Tbilisi. The document was signed by the General Director of Terabank, Thea Lortkipanidze, and the Manager of the Nasira program of the Dutch entrepreneurial development bank, Anneloes Mullink-Bos. The event was attended by Meline Arakelian, Dutch Ambassador in Georgia; Nicholas Cendrowicz, Head of EU Cooperation; Natia Turnava, acting Governor of the National Bank of Georgia, and other guests.

"We have a longstanding partnership with FMO. We are pleased that this collaboration is growing as we engage in the NASIRA guarantee program," Lort-



TERABANK INTRODUCES FMO'S NASIRA GUARANTEE PROGRAM

FMO
Funded by the European Union

kipanidze noted. "The innovative risk distribution principle of this program will enable us to broaden our lending reach to segments currently facing resource constraints. As a result, we will enhance our contribution to the national economy with a specific emphasis on the small and medium-sized business sector which serves as a fundamental pillar for our bank."

"We are very pleased with this next step in our partnership with Terabank and the opportunity to support them in broadening their lending reach to groups that were previously perceived as too

risky," Mullink-Bos said. "Financial inclusion is key to providing the same opportunities to everyone, and reducing inequality in society and among different countries. We look forward to a successful Nasira program and a continuance of our longstanding relationship."

The Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Meline Arakelian, welcomed the signing of the NASIRA facility agreement as "another step in FMO's already substantial contribution towards the Georgian economy. NASIRA will bring new opportunities for young and female entrepreneurs in micro, small,

and medium businesses who would otherwise find it challenging to access finance. The agreement signals the Netherlands' strong commitment to support Georgia's inclusive economic growth and is an example of our long-standing engagement in Georgia's financial sector."

"Under its Economic and Investment Plan, the European Union expects to leverage up to EUR 17 billion in public and private investments. The EU is delighted to see these guarantees delivering on the ground, accelerating one of our core flagships to support 80,000

SMEs in Georgia. This guarantee will support efforts towards sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Access to finance that also reaches under-represented economic actors elevates more people into economic activity and lends itself to more inclusive economic growth for Georgia," said Nicholas Cendrowicz, Head of Cooperation for the EU Delegation in Georgia.

ABOUT FMO

FMO is the Dutch entrepreneurial development bank. As a leading impact investor, FMO supports sustainable private sector growth in developing countries and emerging markets by investing in ambitious projects and entrepreneurs. FMO believes that a strong private sector leads to economic and social development and has a 50+ year proven track record in empowering entrepreneurs to make local economies more inclusive, productive, resilient, and sustainable. FMO focuses on three sectors that have a high development impact: Agribusiness, Food & Water, Energy, and Financial Institutions. With a total committed portfolio of EUR 13 billion spanning over 85 countries, FMO is one of the larger bilateral private sector development banks globally.

ABOUT TERABANK

Since 1999, Terabank has occupied an important position in the Georgian financial sector.

Currently, Terabank is a financial institution that offers high-standard, fast, flexible, universal, and personalized products and services to customers enabling them to achieve financial freedom. Terabank's strategic segment is small and medium-sized businesses and as a reliable financial partner, it constantly provides additional motivation and new opportunities for them.

With EU Support, 12th Social Entrepreneurship Forum Successfully Conducted by the Social Enterprise Alliance



The Social Entrepreneurship Forum's primary objective is to promote the idea of social entrepreneurship and disseminate information about the sector. This platform serves as an avenue to establish and reinforce partnerships between social entrepreneurs and representatives from diverse sectors.

The Social Entrepreneurship Forum has been a significant annual event since 2012, and since 2017, it has been the platform for revealing the Social Enterprise of the Year.

The forum's highlight was the announcement of the Social Enterprise of the Year 2023. After consideration by a seven-

member jury, the finalists were named as Free Space, Edena and Ikorta.

Social enterprise Ikorta earned the prestigious title of Social Enterprise of the Year 2023, determined through a confidential voting process during the event. As part of this recognition, they received financial support to further develop the enterprise.

The social entrepreneurship forum was held within the framework of the ongoing project "Advancing Social Entrepreneurship for Sustainable and Inclusive Society", with the support of the European Union.

ABOUT IKORTA

The social enterprise Ikorta was founded

in 2012 by "For Better Future", an NGO in the Tserovani IDP Settlement.

Ikorta offers its beneficiaries not only the possibility of professional development but also employment opportunities. There are 10 people working at the jewelry making enterprise, including 9 women.

There are hundreds of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Georgia because of the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, and most of them are settled in Tserovani. The social enamel jewelry enterprise brings possibilities for civil and economic development by reinvesting the profits from the sale of the jewelry into programming for youth and women in the settlement.

The purpose of this social enterprise is to encourage youth and women's employment, professional empowerment and an increase in incomes.

The enterprise offers its customers enamel silver jewelry and other handicrafts that are made by using traditional Georgian techniques.



The social enterprise Ikorta is a sustainable business which funds small activities for supporting women and youth's development.

Ikorta has been a member of Social Enterprise Organizations Network since 2014, a member of the Georgia's Traditional Craft Association since 2016, and was cofounder of the Social Enterprise Alliance in 2016.

Georgia's Business Landscape Illuminated: Insights from a Successful Forum



In a recent business forum held in Georgia, key figures in the business and investment sectors gathered to share insights and discuss the flourishing opportunities within the state. Organized by the Founder of Provision Company, Mr. Bassam Jaafar, the event brought together industry leaders, including Mr. Shahin Bahadorani, the Managing Director of Sisno Group, and esteemed real estate and investment entrepreneur Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil.

MR. BASSAM JAAFAR'S VISION AND FORUM TRIUMPHS

Mr. Jaafar, the driving force behind the forum, expressed immense satisfaction with the positive feedback received. "The acknowledgment that the event was well-organized and provided a valuable experience affirms our commitment to delivering a platform that goes beyond expectations," he stated. The forum aimed to create a dynamic space for individuals to connect, exchange ideas, and explore promising business opportunities.

Reflecting on the success of the forum, Mr. Jaafar highlighted the comprehensive overview it provided of Georgia's multifaceted business landscape, including investments, real estate, and innovative projects. "This forum was designed not just to disseminate information but to act as a catalyst, sparking genuine interest and forging connections that have the potential to shape the future of businesses in the region," he explained.

Looking ahead, Mr. Jaafar expressed confidence in the event's ripple effect, foreseeing significant contributions to Georgia's economic landscape. "The prospect of facilitating and witnessing the growth of businesses in the region is not just a measure of our success but a testament to the collective efforts of everyone involved."

FORUM ATTENDEES: BUSINESSMAN HAIDER AL AMEEN AND BUSINESSMAN RAFAT JAAFAR SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES

Mr. Haider, an attentive participant at the forum, praised the event's organization and the valuable insights gained. "The exchange of ideas was dynamic and enlightening, offering a comprehensive overview of the potential this region holds for business ventures," he remarked. Mr. Haider expressed eagerness to make a substantial investment in Georgia,

fuelled by the discussions surrounding investments, real estate, and other projects.

Mr. Rafat, another forum attendee, shared his reflections on Georgia's impressive growth and the forum's role in solidifying his enthusiasm for potential business ventures. "The recent forum we attended only solidified our enthusiasm for this prospect," Mr. Rafat stated. He commended the forum's thoroughness and expressed confidence that the groundwork laid during the event would contribute significantly to the state's

economic prosperity.

In both interviews, attendees Mr. Haider and Mr. Rafat underscored the forum's success in providing valuable information and inspiring active engagement in Georgia's promising business landscape.

DR. FAWAD QASIM WASIL'S AMBITIOUS VISION

Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil, a prominent real estate and investment entrepreneur, outlined the ambitious vision of 'Mr. Property' and 'Investology.' "Our journey

reflects a commitment to simplifying the path for foreign investors in Georgia," he explained. The two entities aim to be the go-to brand for off-plan projects and a specialized firm for high-level investors, respectively.

Dr. Fawad emphasized the commitment to exclusive collaborations with safe companies and highlighted the strategic partnerships with international and Georgian business chambers. "By organizing and co-partnering in such events, we aim to boost foreign direct investment, contribute to economic development, and elevate Georgia's global standing," he highlighted.

In essence, 'Mister Property' and 'Investology' symbolize Dr. Fawad's commitment to unlocking Georgia's investment potential and contributing to its economic prosperity.

Mr. Shahin Bahadorani, a prominent figure in real estate investment and property management, delved into the mission and unique approach of Sisno Group. The company aims to offer comprehensive services that make foreigners feel at home in a new country. Mr. Shahin emphasized the importance of understanding the mentality of foreigners, highlighting the company's commitment to providing a holistic experience beyond real estate services.

Sisno Group's approach, according to Mr. Shahin, goes beyond language proficiency, encompassing cultural understanding and addressing diverse needs. In Mr. Shahin's view, this comprehensive approach positions Sisno Group as a companion in the journey of clients in an unfamiliar land.

In summary, the insights shared by Mr. Bassam Jaafar, forum attendees Mr. Haider and Mr. Rafat, Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil, and Mr. Shahin Bahadorani collectively illuminate the success of the recent business forum in Georgia and the promising landscape it unveils for investors and businesses alike.



International Tourism and Business Forum Unveils Georgia's Rich Offerings and Investment Opportunities

Continued from page 1

Dr. Amar Mustafa Alsaid, Assistant Chief of Security for Community Affairs at the Ministry of Interior in the Kingdom of Bahrain, shared valuable insights on the crucial role of safety in fostering tourism and business. His perspective laid the groundwork for understanding the significance of creating a secure environment for travelers and investors alike.

The forum also delved into sustainability and ethical business practices, with Mr. Abdullah Alenezi, Chairman of the Board of the Center for Sustainable Development at the Kuwait Lawyers Association, offering a comprehensive overview. His insights underscored the growing importance of responsible and ethical business practices in the global market.

Otar Margoshvili, Business Development Manager of the Georgian National Tourism Administration, took the stage to present the tourism side of Georgia. His presentation included basic information about the country, highlighting its unique attractions and inviting landscapes.

Ms. Tea Sajaia from Samegrelo Destination Management Organization (DMO) provided an in-depth exploration of the Samegrelo region, emphasizing its diverse offerings such as thermal waters, mineral waters, and phagotherapy. This showcased the potential for a wide range of tourism experiences within Georgia.

The forum also covered educational

tourism, with Ms. Natalie Kvachantiradze, Chairperson of the Georgian Tourism Association, sharing insights into the country's offerings in this field.

Medical tourism was a significant focus, with Mr. David Sturua, Executive Director of the Georgian Medical Tourism Alliance, discussing Georgia's potential in the field. He highlighted the country's professionalism, affordable prices, and specialized procedures that make it an attractive destination for medical tourists.

The Mayor of Poti, Mr. Beka Vachradze, provided a detailed presentation on the city, offering a glimpse into its history, current state, and future development plans.

The forum also featured segments on real estate and investment opportunities in Georgia. Ms. Ketevan Kanashvili, Senior Investor Relations Manager of Enterprise Georgia, presented investment opportunities, while Ms. Viktoria Sakurova, Executive Board Member of the Georgian National Association of Real Estate, discussed investments and real estate in the country.

The second day of the forum was marked by dynamic workshops covering various aspects of the economy, tourism, and investment potential of Georgia. Workshops on wellness and medical tourism, as well as education for international students, provided participants with actionable insights and strategies for collaboration.

The event reached its pinnacle with Mr. Bassam Jaafar of Provision Company



signing agreements with partnering companies, symbolizing the commitment to fostering international cooperation and business growth in Georgia.

The second day witnessed an even more active stage of work, with engaging workshops on the economy, tourism, and investment potential of Georgia. These workshops facilitated in-depth

discussions and exchange of ideas, further solidifying Georgia's position as an attractive destination for business and tourism.

The International Tourism and Business Forum served as a bridge connecting global leaders, experts, and investors to explore the vast potential that Georgia offers. The event not only showcased

the country's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage but also highlighted its commitment to safety, sustainability, and ethical business practices. As agreements were signed and discussions flourished, the forum undoubtedly played a pivotal role in shaping the future of international tourism and business in Georgia.





Public Health and Well-being

www.cenn.org

Civil Society and Local Government Representatives Pay a Study Visit to the Czech Republic to Explore Social Services

BY MANON BOKUCHAVA

Within the framework of the EU-supported project "Strengthening Civil Society for an Inclusive and Green Post-Covid Recovery", a study visit was held in the Czech Republic, the purpose of which was to study how social services operate in the Czech Republic. The study visit was organized for local government representatives and members of Georgian civil society from Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions.

The study visit was organized by CENN, the leading organization of the consortium, whose large-scale project is being implemented in partnership with the Center for Consultation and Training (CTC), Kvemo Kartli Media (KKM), and First European (FE). In the Czech Republic, CENN was partnered with Caritas Czech Republic.

Giorgi Orkodashvili, CENN project manager, spoke to us about the goals of the study visit.

"We organized this study tour to allow the Georgian side to visit representatives of civil organizations and local authorities in the Czech Republic to learn about the provision of social services in their country. In addition to service providers, our study participants met with organizations working on a policy level," he said.

"Meetings were held with local authorities and the Ministry, which are directly responsible for this direction, with the goal that, after returning to Georgia, the municipalities will use this experience in the subsequent introduction of social services.

"We hope that local authorities and the civil sector will cooperate to set up new services and offer new types of services to Georgian citizens," Orkodashvili noted.

Together with the civil society organizations of Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti, the local authorities of Dmanisi, Gardabani, Tetrtskaro, and Akhaltsikhe participated in the study visit.

Moving forward, the project will support civil society organizations and local authorities to jointly create social services. A grant competition has already been announced and is awaiting initiatives from the target municipalities.

Megi Ediberidze, Head of Health, Social Protection, Child Care and Support Service of Dmanisi City Hall, spoke to us about the importance of the study tour to the Czech Republic.

"This study tour was very rewarding. We had the opportunity to meet and personally get acquainted with social services that do not exist in Georgia," she said.

"Heads of services should analyze together with people on the ground how much we can transfer services directly, or to implement modified versions in Georgia.

"We certainly see a need to introduce new services here. The differences between the social programs of Georgia and the Czech Republic were huge. We saw how advanced they are, and we know we must take the first steps to create



new services for our vulnerable groups," Ediberidze affirmed, highlighting that Georgia's current social services tend to be aimed at the socially vulnerable population, and there is a clear need to expand the scope, particularly in terms of capacity development programs.

Nugzar Kapanadze, Head of the Public Health and Social Services of the Akhaltsikhe Municipality City Hall, also spoke to us about the study visit.

"I am grateful to CENN for bringing the non-governmental and governmental sectors together for such an extraordinary event," he said. "I was interested in home care services, in particular in the direction of children. All the meetings were very interesting, but I would highlight the organization working with former prisoners - their experience was very interesting and left a big impression on me.

"Now we move to a stage of preparing a project and submitting it to the CENN grant competition. In the meantime, I plan to make a presentation in our local City Hall, giving a short overview of the services that we discovered in the Czech Republic," Kapanadze concludes, noting that his City Hall is very interested in developing a service aimed at the economic empowerment of families with children.

"The study tour was very diverse and important," said Irma Zurabashvili, Director of the Bolnisi Adult Education Center. "We saw that perfect services have already been created that do not need to be created from scratch. We can share this experience - and create similar services in our municipalities. It was truly a unique experience for me to participate in this study tour."

Let's take a look now at the working services the Georgian side discovered in the Czech Republic.

THE BRNO SHELTER ST. MARGARET'S HOUSE

The Brno shelter helps pregnant women and women with children who are in difficult living conditions as a result of losing their housing. Oftentimes, their health or even lives are in danger, or the upbringing and development of their children are at risk.

Currently, St. Margaret's House has 28 residential apartments with 1, 1+1, or 2+1

beds, a kitchen and bathroom, totaling 100 beds. These are well-furnished independent residential apartments with properly equipped kitchen and sanitary facilities. Larger apartments can accommodate large families with no more than eight children. It is also possible to use a wheelchair in the house with the help of an elevator. Mothers and children can also use such common spaces as a yard, a garden with playground equipment, a laundry room equipped with washing machines, a room for drying clothes, a guest room, a recreation room with a TV, and a multipurpose room (gym). They can also use the family corner and computer room.

DIOCESE CARITAS BRNO

The asylum service in Brno was established in 2004. Until 2006, this activity was carried out within the framework of the project "Homeless day center and short-term shelter". From January 1, 2007, the service became independent, and a Men's Shelter was created. Together with the Social-Medical Assistance Day Center for Homeless People (1993), it forms a complex of social prevention services which help users to solve complex situations together in all directions.

CENTER CELSUS

Celsus offers a range of services to people in need, among them social and legal counseling, help for people in social crisis, help for people with mental illnesses, provision of services to foreigners, debt counseling, and psychological counseling.

SLAVKOV U BRNA DAY CENTER

The mission of the Slavkov u Brna Day Center is to help the elderly and disabled who, due to old age or disabilities, cannot live fully independently in their natural environment and who are dependent on other persons or institutions. The center provides them with as much as possible in their natural environment.

The service is intended for people over the age of 18 who live in their own homes, persons with disabilities or chronic disabilities who have limited basic household skills and are unable to care for themselves or their families.

The goal of the daycare center is to provide services to help them meet their

own needs and in this way to maintain their current quality of life within their home environment for as long as possible.

HOME FOR MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN HODONIN

Shelter for mothers of children under 18, and pregnant women, who are in a difficult situation due to lack of housing or other social reasons. The shelter provides housing and assistance in food preparation, personal hygiene, in family affairs, and counseling. It helps residents there to not only protect their rights, but also to solve personal issues; they are helped to develop self and family care, leadership, and other skills that will help them integrate into society.

CARITAS OF RNO DIOCESE - REGIONAL CARITAS HODONIN SOCIAL MEDICAL CENTER HODONIN

The Social-Medical Day Center is a social service registered by Chapter 61 of the Law on Social Services No. 108/2006 Coll. It is a social-medical assistance center that provides outpatient services to homeless people. Serving 16 people at a time, the purpose of the day center is to provide basic social assistance and services to those in difficult social conditions; men and women who find themselves homeless and in difficulty after losing their housing, being released from prison, leaving institutional care, or being discharged from the hospital, and who are unable to solve these problems on their own. The center facilitates and helps them to make decision that will correct their difficult situation and allow them to live as other people in society live.

HODONIN NIGHT SHELTER

The mission of the Hodonin Night Shelter for Homeless People is to help those men and women who have fallen into a difficult situation as a result of the loss of their housing and, who at this stage, cannot solve the issue on their own. The shelter provides them with personal hygiene products and overnight accommodation. Through the information and contacts provided within the framework of social consultations, the shelter helps them to solve their life problems.

CONTACT CENTER VÁŽKA

Contact Center Vážka serves users of illegal drugs and alcohol, people at risk of drug addiction, people addicted to gambling, and their relatives. Assistance includes professional counseling, drug substitution programs, provision of hygiene products and food, testing for infectious diseases, testing for narcotic substances, etc. The service is free and anonymous. It is carried out both on an outpatient basis and at home. The service is provided to meet the individual needs of the service user, to correct their difficult social situation and to prevent further problems related to drug use.

LOW-THRESHOLD CLUB POHODA HODONIN

LOW-THRESHOLD CLUB POHODA HODONIN is the Law on Social Services

No. 108/2006 Coll. A social service registered under Chapter 62 that provides outpatient and on-site services to children and young people.

The mission of the Hodonin socio-medical club Pohoda is to help and support children and young people in difficult life situations, identifying such children and reducing the risks associated with their lifestyles.

The target group is children, adolescents, and young people who are in a difficult social situation (problems with family, friends, school, institutions, who have experienced the death of a loved one, whose family is in a difficult financial situation, etc.), are at risk of negative social events (dropping out of school, drug testing, criminal activity, gambling, etc.), are 11-21 years old, and who live in the Hodonin district.

CENTER RUBIKON

Center Rubikon is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that has been helping people overcome their criminal past since 1994, seeking to remove the obstacles that prevent them from doing so. The center works:

At the individual level, where they are involved in complex consultation and direct work with service users and their environment;

At the systemic level, where they test innovative solutions, share good practices with the state, run advocacy, and cooperate with relevant organizations;

At the community level, where they seek to raise awareness, run campaigns and events, and on a daily basis run the public center in Kotlaska Garden.

Rubicon has 7 branches in Prague and in the regions of Karlovy Vary, Moravian Silesia, and Central Bohemia. 32% of men and women employed in the organization have a criminal record.

Rubicon is the Czech office of RESCALED - Network for the Development of Penitentiary Community Institutions. It is also a member of the Association of Correctional Organizations (AOOV), a member of the PLATZ Platform for Employment Training, and the International Network of Penitentiary Reform.

HOME OF HOLY FAMILY

At HOME OF HOLY FAMILY, they care for people with mental and combined disabilities. The house has two buildings at two addresses. Life there is like living in a normal family. The house consists of apartments, and sees residents participate in family affairs to the best of their ability. When their situation allows it, they go to work in therapeutic workshops or in the kitchen.

The House looks after more than 70 people. Some are relatively independent; most need constant assistance, but all of them need warm, kind, and patient care. Such care is the life mission of the employees there, a quarter of whom have been working there for more than 10 years (some even remember the establishment of the house in 1991!).

The home provides people with developmental disabilities the opportunity to work, maintain their physical and mental abilities, and have normal human relationships that are as important to them as they are to healthy people.

Horse Sense

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

Following a recent trip out of Tbilisi to some mountain villages, I returned with a horse skull. Or at least with the top of one. The lower jaw was missing. In ruminants, it tends to split at the chin, its weakest point; and no doubt dogs had had a field day with the pieces and taken them off somewhere. The part I found would need minimal cleaning to make it presentable.

Why on earth, though, would I want to acquire such an object? I already have a nice ram's skull, including the carefully reglued lower jaw. (I was present when our house renovators in Svaneti, nearly a decade ago, wanted some mutton, and I asked them to choose a specimen with good horns, envisioning the skull on the wall. If friends were over and wanted to drink from a horn, as Georgians at least are wont to do, I could simply pull the horns off this skull and present them for use).

I like seeing what has formed the heads

of certain animals; something of the sculptor in me appreciates the curves and joins, eye sockets, teeth and the rest. A skull can be quite a sculptural object, I think. The horse skull I simply soaked in salted water, scrubbed all over with an old toothbrush, and soaked again in bleach and water before letting it dry. So far, my wife, getting used to my strange ways after 15 years, has raised no protest.

(Interlude for a joke. A horse walks into a bar. "Why the long face?")

To me, horses are noble animals, more present than cows, who seem zoned out on re-chewed grass so much of the time and hardly aware of the world around them. Although I am still a meat eater (and becoming less committed to this as time goes on), I could hardly bear the thought of consuming horseflesh on purpose (it might be found in some sausage in parts of the former USSR, coming, apparently, from Central Asia).

I have not ridden horses much. One notable period was a few months when I was about 17, in western Canada, and my girlfriend at the time had some of the beasts. I will never forget the flying



feeling, smooth and reckless, that galloping gave.

The second time was crossing Etseri's southern "mountain wall" on horseback with a local friend as guide, in summer 2005. The steep downhill return from that was slippery from fallen leaves and a bit of night rain. The horses were mincing along at less than walking speed. In the end, to complete the journey in daylight, we had to dismount and run, each pulling his horse by its bridle, with the reluctant animals breathing down our necks: more than a bit crazy, I remember thinking at the time.

The other main time was a walk that a friend and I made from Etseri to Ushguli in 2007, with our camping gear on a neighbor's horse. Halfway through the

return leg, my friend got a couple of bad blisters on his feet. I had to put him on the luggage on the horse; get us to Meshtia at a faster pace; put him and the stuff in a car back to Etseri; and ride the horse the remaining 28 km back. I arrived with bleeding thighs, not at all used to that much time in the saddle.

We do make horses and a guide available for our Svaneti guests who want this experience, as long as they let us know far enough in advance to ask neighbors for help. Whether it's for a few hours or some days, this can be arranged. I once sent a German tourist off across the mountain wall with two of my friends on horses; he wanted to go to an abandoned village and camp there alone for two weeks, and then be picked up again.

It went uneventfully, though they said the way was quite hard, mostly hacking a path with machetes.

I'm no Texas rancher having grown up in the saddle, but I do have an appreciation for the equine world, and the skull I now own will always evoke these memories.

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



The Tamada-Lead Feast vs. Déjeuner à la Fourchette

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

After arriving in Georgia, one of the first words a foreigner tends to learn is "Tamada" - referring to the toastmaster at a traditional Georgian supra (feast). Incidentally, Wikipedia kindly gives us an exhaustive definition of the term. This agreeable fact should mean that, finally, the world is amply and adequately informed about one of the most treasured details of our culture. The widely internationalized French word 'Fourchette' is also abundantly interpreted in the Internet reference facilities. Putting these two notions together, and drawing certain curious parallels between them, is the aim of this particular piece: Tamada, symbolizing tradition, and Fourchette, denoting the modernity of our everyday life, each have their own numerous adherents in Sakartvelo.

The older generation is poised to adamantly stick to the traditional ways of our everyday life, keeping up all cultural and spiritual values that have long been the bedrock of their upbringing, including the Tamada institution. Most Georgian families and groups would hardly imagine a feast or any other traditional get-together, accompanied by some kind of repast, without a Tamada. Even if there are only two men sitting at the table, one of them should necessarily function as a master of ceremonies - the Tamada.

There is nothing wrong with traditionalism, if it is contained within the framework of human normalcy and ethics, not



oppressing or depressing others in extensively using the power of tradition. Yet, the younger generation today does not very tolerantly accept the Tamada phenomenon, thinking it unreasonable to be coerced into listening for hours on end to long speeches made by some perhaps trivially thinking and behaving man who, by some accidental circumstance, was promoted to the position of toastmaster to pronounce those tradi-

tional, million times reiterated toasts, and most regrettably, for all the rest of the folks at the table expected to feel obligated to second the Tamada, even if they disagree with what he has proposed.

While there is some logic to that opinion, this could also be an exaggeration on the part of our youth, although any opinion has the right to exist and be heeded. The younger they are, the more they like the Fourchette-style quickies,

within which there are no obligations to be observed except being nice to each other, eating and drinking your lot, using as many smiles as you can, putting a word or two into somebody's conversation, and then making a French exit from the venue. No doubt there is a lot of rationale in this style of public behavior, but a traditional way of doing a tuck-out is not bad either. How to reconcile the generations to both have fun and not

offend each other?

As a matter of fact, the world has already started loud and audible talk about reinstating traditionalism after several decades of liberal interpretations of human public behavior. For instance, it was recently said that the EU and US's vested rival BRICS is aiming to create its own alternative global internet services against the US-dominated sphere, in hopes to persuade the world that theirs will be a safe space to uphold traditional values, and not to let the worldwide tendency of Westernization be the only ideological process influencing hearts and minds around the planet.

This typically oriental intention might well be reckoned as a signal that it is time to find the golden median between the Tamada-led Feast and the Déjeuner à la Fourchette; in other words between what traditionalism means to Mankind and what modernism has in store for our current civilization. There is a very clearly felt public attitude in Sakartvelo that the traditional way of life is valuable and has to be preserved to a certain reasonable extent, but that modernism in public life has to be embraced too, because it is a rationally participable model of interaction between the folks engaged in business and for the youth who don't have enough patience to keep to the inherited-from-ancestor norms, rules and precepts. This kind of golden median might not only be the best solution to regulate cooperation and coexistence between the generations, but also to keep up the so-called contractual structure in morals, so that the wolves are fed and the sheep are kept safe, as the great Leo Tolstoy would put it.

A Holiday Guide to Georgia



The Liberty Square "Christmas Tree" 2022. Source: georgiantravelguide

BY SHELBI R. ANKIEWICZ

The holiday season is quickly approaching, and everyone will soon know it as Tbilisi's main streets light up in their traditional sparkling splendor.

For those who are new to Georgia, due to the Orthodox religion and following the Julian Calendar, Christmas is not celebrated on December 25 like the rest of the world, but rather 13 days later on January 7. However, even though Christmas is still highly celebrated, the bigger celebration is New Year's Eve on December 31. Each year Tbilisi chooses a theme to decorate the central Rustaveli Avenue with. Previous years have been the solar system, angels and famous world monuments - and we eagerly look forward to finding out what this year's theme will be.

This year's celebrations will take place on the following dates:

December 9: Tbilisi's Christmas tree and street lighting ceremony.

December 31: New Year's Eve celebrations across the city.

January 1: New Year's Day (Mekvleoba) (Public holiday).

January 2: New Year's Day 2 (Bedoba) (Public holiday).

January 7: Christmas Day for the Orthodox (Public holiday).

January 14: New Year's Day for the Orthodox.

January 19: Orthodox Epiphany (Public holiday).

The first commemoration of the holiday season will be December 9 at 8pm, when the light displays around the city are turned on and the annual tree lighting ceremony takes place in front of the

parliament building on Rustaveli Avenue. The lights for this season have already started to go up in main streets in various districts citywide, giving a sneak preview to the upcoming festive spirit. The biggest light displays will be on the Freedom and Orbeliani squares, Rustaveli Avenue, Atoneli and Kostava streets, and along Chavchavadze Avenue in Vake and Saburtalo's main avenues.

The Christmas markets will begin around mid-December and last through mid-January. The Christmas Village in Orbeliani Square will present an exciting array of vendors and food stands from December 22 through January 14, from 10am until late evening daily. There will also be live music and performances, as well as a mini ice-skating rink for children to enjoy.

The Agrarian Christmas market will be held at Dedaena Park on the weekend of December 16 and 17 from 1pm to 7pm, and a month-long Christmas market set up near Parliament. Each of these three Christmas markets is organized by the Tbilisi City Hall and will offer food, mulled wine, souvenirs, hand-made gifts by local craftspeople, and bright, flashing toys for children.

Wait - there's more! Privately organized Christmas markets include The Fabrika Christmas Fair which will be hosted from December 23-24 in the Fabrika courtyard, and the Winter Fair 2023 which will be a traditional one-day event on December 9 from 10am to 6pm at the Sheraton Grand Tbilisi Metechi Palace. The Winter Fair costs 1 GEL to enter, and this and a part of all proceeds go towards charity projects to help Georgian people in need. Stock up on Christmas gifts for loved ones - there will be artists selling their wares, a variety of local products, and an exclusive chance to buy country-

specific goods from representatives of the many embassies present in Georgia - get a hat with the British flag on, a Swiss knife, Turkish Delight, a Japanese teapot and many other treats thoughtfully selected by the embassy staff to sell for charity. As you shop, there will be Christmas carols to boost the festive vibes, and plenty of activities to keep the little ones busy.

Far from home and fancy treating yourself to a Christmas dinner? There will be a variety of Christmas dinners held around the city, but be sure to reserve beforehand to guarantee your spot at the table!

For New Year's, Tbilisi doesn't have a standard fireworks show for everyone in the city to watch (or any safety laws in this regard whatsoever!). Instead, people buy and set off their own fireworks from their balconies, so it's best to find a high place in the city to stake out and enjoy the views.

A big New Year's Eve celebration will take place at First Republic Square in front of Rustaveli Metro, where people can enjoy vendors and live music. Various restaurants and hotels will also be hosting events such as Ambassadors Tbilisi Hotel, Radisson Blu Iveria, and Hualing. Of course bars and clubs like Fabrika and Bassiani will also be open to ring in the new year.

The next observed holiday is New Year's Day, or Mekvleoba. On this day, Georgians believe the first person to enter the home in the new year will determine the fate of the family for the year to come. So, on January 1, Georgians spend the day visiting or welcoming loved ones into their homes and exchanging candy to represent happiness and prosperity.

January 2 is known as Bedoba, and this day is dedicated to doing something that will lay out how the rest of the year looks. Many people take this holiday as a self-care day and spend it with family and friends either eating good food and drinking wine, or simply enjoying the moment.

On January 6, the night leading up to Orthodox Christmas Day, there will be a midnight mass at the Holy Trinity Cathedral led by the Georgian Patriarch. Other masses will be held in almost every church in the country. These masses go on throughout the night until early morning on January 7 when people go home to literally "break the fast" with their families.

The last holiday with an event is on January 7 when the religious Alilo Parade happens in cities around Georgia for people to participate in or watch - seeing boys and men decked out in white, red and gold and marching through town with crosses and icons. In Tbilisi, it will start at the First Square Republic around 1pm and continue through the Old City before ending at the Sameba Cathedral in Avlabari.

The Orthodox New Year and Orthodox Epiphany will also take place, but celebrations will be minimal - you'll get more balcony fireworks to see from up-high and another chance to hang out with friends, eat and drink. The eve of Epiphany on January 18 is traditionally the day some Georgians add an old pagan tradition to their Christianity and burn their wooden (chichilaki) Christmas trees to let go of the bad spirits of the past year and cleanse ahead of the new.

All-in-all, the holidays in Georgia are a month-long celebration involving lots of wine, lots of food, plenty of chance to shop and hear Christmas music, and as much fun with friends and family as you can take! Enjoy!



Ana Kalandadze. Source: Wikipedia

Georgian Poets: Ana Kalandadze - On The Way To Betania

TRANSLATED FROM
GEORGIAN INTO ENGLISH,
BY KETEVA TUKHARELI

Sweetbrier, currant-shrub,
Bilberry...
We meet hawthorn on the
Way too...
It is not raining and more...

Splendid mountains have
Spread their splendid
Shoulders...

We are going, going,
Cold September winds
Are blowing...
The leaves of chestnut,
Ash-trees and that of an
Oak, are fallen on
The road...

We have come to
Samadlo Valley...
It is absorbed in the mists
Too...

I want... to be
Always with you,
As these mountains
And the mist!

Sweetbrier, currant-shrub,
Bilberry...
We meet hawthorn
On the way too...

Splendid mountains have
Spread their splendid
Shoulders...

I had a nice friend,
With twinkling eyes and
Chestnut-colored

Hair...
Once the pigeon brought
My friend wings,
Left me and followed
The clouds in the sky...
Followed the clouds...
What am I looking for, what?
I had a nice friend
With twinkling eyes and
Chestnut-colored hair...

Ana Kalandadze was born in December 1924 in the village of Khidistavi, Ozurgeti region, to the family of Pavle Kalandadze, a farmer. She graduated high school in Kutaisi in 1941, having started writing poems at the age of 11. She continued her studies at the Faculty of Philology of Tbilisi State University, graduating in 1946 with a specialty in Caucasian Languages. That same year, she published her first poems in the newspaper "Literature and Art" and the magazine "Mnotobi".

Kalandadze worked as a member of the Permanent Commission of the State Language of Georgia, as a member of the Presidium of the Board of Writers' Union and as a member of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Linguistics.

In 2006, she received the "Saba" literary prize for her special contribution to literature. Ana Kalandadze died in March 2008, from a stroke. She is buried in Mtatsminda Pantheon.



Bilberry. Photo by Anneli Selo.



Light-up day on Rustaveli Avenue. Photo by Katie Ruth Davies/GT



PUBLISHER & GM
George Sharashidze

COMMERCIAL DEPARTMENT
Commercial Director:
Iva Merabishvili
Marketing Manager:
Natalia Chikvaidze

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT:
Editor-In-Chief:
Katie Ruth Davies

Journalists:
Ana Dumbadze,
Vazha Tavberidze,
Tony Hanmer,
Nugzar B. Ruhadze,
Mariam Gorkhelashvili,
Mariam Mtvilishvili,
Erekle Poladishvili,
Shelbi R. Ankiewicz,
Lea Montagne

Photographer:
Aleksi Serov

Website Editor:
Katie Ruth Davies

Layout:
Misha Mchedlishvili

Webmaster:
Sergey Gevenov

Circulation Managers:
David Kerdikashvili,
David Djandigava

ADDRESS
1 Melikishvili Str.
Tbilisi, 0179, Georgia

Tel.: +995 32 229 59 19
E: info@georgiatoday.ge
F: GeorgiaToday

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION
+995 555 00 14 46
E-mail:
marketing@georgiatoday.ge

Reproducing material, photos and advertisements without prior editorial permission is strictly forbidden. The author is responsible for all material. Rights of authors are preserved. The newspaper is registered in Mtatsminda district court.

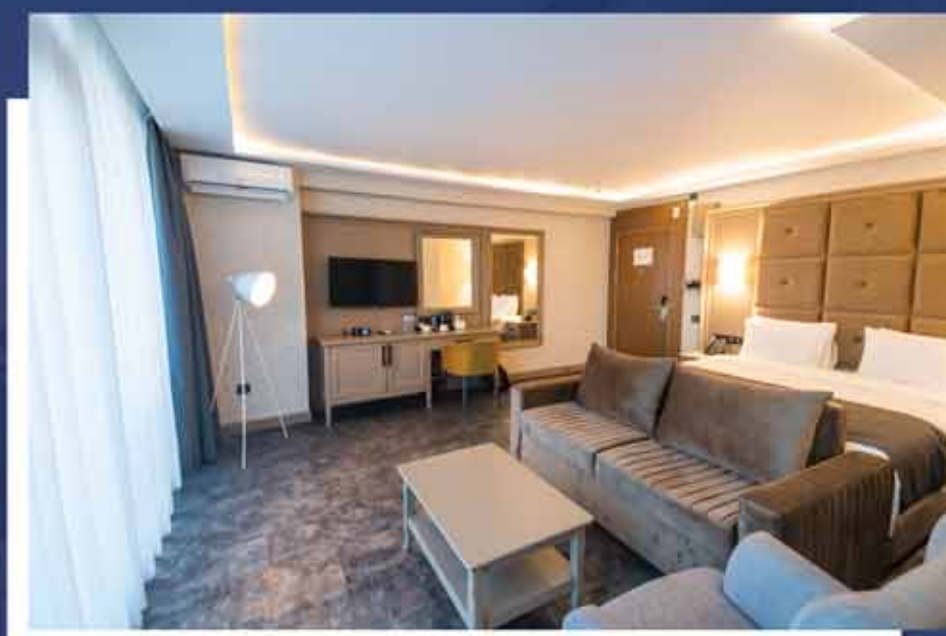
Reg. # 06/4-309



34
კვმ-დან
SQ.M

აპარტამენტები ზღვის ხედით
APARTMENTS WITH THE SEA VIEW
ВСЕ АПАРТАМЕНТЫ С ВИДОМ НА МОРЕ

شقق فندقية فاخرة للبيع



+995 555 097 097

+995 555 098 098

BATUMI CITY, LEKH AND MARIA
KACHINSKY STREET № 8

WWW.BATUMIVIEW.COM

   batumi view apartments