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WEEKLY BILINGUAL
NEWSPAPER IN GEORGIA

SCHENGEN ZONE COUNTRIES TO TIGHTEN BORDER CONTROL

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Chancellor of Austria Werner Faymann stated that migration flows within the Schengen zone are a serious threat and the only way to address it is to tighten internal borders. "If the EU does not manage secure the external borders, Schengen as a whole is put into question. Then each country must control its national borders," Faymann told the newspaper *Osterreich*. He added that if the EU's external borders are not secured in the near future, the whole EU will be in question. Austria has already begun implementing stricter checks on its southern border with Slovenia.



A MORE OPEN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT - MESSAGE FROM GEORGIA AT THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

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The PM also met with Suma Chakrabarti, president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), who argued that the EBRD will increase its investment and financial aid to Georgia in 2016. The parties also discussed the prospect of stimulating private sector and developing business environment in Georgia. Kvirikashvili held a meeting with the president of the European Investment Bank (EIB). During the meeting the progress of the infrastructural projects in Georgia financed by the EIB and the next stages of cooperation to promote Georgian small and medium-sized enterprises was discussed.



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SCHENGEN ZONE COUNTRIES TO TIGHTEN BORDER CONTROL

EKA PKHOVELISHVILI (POLAND)

The Schengen agreement has come under serious threat, since the number of migrants has exceeded one million. Residents of conflict zones, such as Syria and Afghanistan, have been migrating to the European countries en masse in an attempt to avoid armed conflict and poverty. It is apparent that European immigration policy cannot stand the test, as we seen another six countries tighten border controls.

Sweden has introduced checkpoints on its border with Denmark for the first time in 50 years in a desperate attempt to stem the flow of migrants. The Swedish state explains that they had anticipated 100 000 migrants, but now find 160 000 migrants seeking asylum in the country. Like Scandinavian countries, Hungary and Slovenia have also tightened border control.

The Schengen agreement was temporary suspended in Austria last week. The decision was preceded by the German state decision to strengthen border control, which had open policy toward migrants.

After the World War II this was the unprecedented wave of migration in Europe that caused many problems for the European Union. Border crossing without

documents control caused differences of opinions and debates among European leaders. Border guards are checking documents. Under the new rule, only those migrants would be allowed to cross the border, which has the document of a refugee.

Chancellor of Austria Werner Faymann stated that migration flows within the Schengen zone are a serious threat and the only way to address it is to tighten internal borders.

“If the EU does not manage secure the external borders, Schengen as a whole is put into question. Then each country must control its national borders,” Faymann told the newspaper. He added that if the EU’s external borders are not secured in the near future, the whole EU will be in question.

Austria has already begun implementing stricter checks on its southern border with Slovenia. Refugees have to present a valid identification card. Those who do not have a right to seek asylum, plan to travel to Scandinavia, or have been rejected by Germany already, will be denied entry.

Speaking on the refugee crisis and this particular policy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that without protecting the

Schengen zone, it is impossible to keep the Euro zone. Merkel made this statement on Deutsche Welle, “The open borders in Europe are a prerequisite for common currency. Freely crossing of borders is directly related to each other,” she said. Merkel added that to preserve the Schengen zone within the EU, it is necessary to make the bloc’s external borders more secure.

On January 4, Germany responded with criticism to neighboring Denmark’s decision to temporarily renew border control. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier sees the danger that threatens free movement within Europe as a direct threat to the principle that many, including Steinmeier, think is the greatest achievement of Europe.

Representatives of Germany, Denmark and Sweden are to hold emergency meeting in Brussels on border issues.

The Visegrad Group (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Hungary) also agreed to tighten the EU’s internal borders after a meeting in Prague on Jan. 19. According to Czech Republic Prime Minister Milan Chovanec, the only way to halt illegal migration is to effectively protect the EU’s internal

borders. “Muslim Brotherhood can prepare a growing migrant wave and gradually gain control of Europe as it has been happening in some West European cities where police are afraid to enter at night,” declared Chovanec in an interview with the Czech newspaper “*Českyrozhlas Plus*” on Jan. 4. Although the Czech Republic does not belong to the European Union, where the majority of migrants want to go nor does it lie in the path of migrants traveling to the northern Europe, it nevertheless, it has an openly negative attitude regarding the influx of migrants. Other eastern European countries – including Slovakia and Poland have expressed similar views.

Poland’s new government looks at migrant issues in a particularly negative light. According to the Polish government, up to 400 refugees will be relocated to the country in 2016 as part of the previous government’s commitments on the issue. “These were bad decisions, but this government is a stable government and understands that there must be some continuity and we will thus honor the commitments of our predecessors, but only to the extent that Poland is capable of at the moment,” said Prime Min-

ister Beata Szydło at a recent press conference.

The crisis in Europe is very complex. It has forced the EU into emergency mode. At this stage it is difficult to predict whether it will affect the free-visa travel regime for Georgia or not. But recently due to the unfolding events in the EU, interest regarding the imposition of visa regime with Georgia has increased.

That being said, it is unlikely the dramatic development in the Schengen zone will be reflected on Eastern Partnership countries. Consequently, neither Georgia nor Ukraine will have problems with future free-visa regimes with the EU.

After receiving a positive assessment for visa liberalization, technical operations are underway to finalize the decision.

The current refugee crisis has once again called into question the unity of the EU member states and highlighted the lack of common policy.

How EU deals with the migrant crisis, in addition to its other financial and economic headaches, depends upon how its member states show their agreement on the matter. Much depends on it for Georgia, too.



ISIS CURTAILS ITS FIGHTERS' INCOMES

GURAM PTSKIALADZE (BULGARIA)

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) in the city of Al-Raqqah was recently informed that the "Islamic State" (IS/ISIS/ISIL) has reduced the salaries of its fighters and members. Activists of SOHR were informed by several sources that a reduction in salary has created resentment among the Syrian members of the terror organization. According to sources, Syrian ISIS fighters fear the salary reduction is a result of its leadership's desire to raise the wages of Arab and foreigner fighters at the expense of local fighters.

SOHR speculated the reduction may have been caused by the overspending of mobile militants "buying food and other stuff". Recent air strikes on oil structures controlled by the terrorists have also impacted the terror organization's finances. The decision came this month amid reports of a US-led coalition airstrike that destroyed an ISIS cash storage facility in the Iraqi city of Mosul where it had stashed "millions" to pay its operatives and to fund ongoing operations.

Bayt al-Mal, the group's treasury ministry, decided to cut the salaries of its fighters in half due to the "exceptional circumstances" ISIS has been witnessing, announced The Jerusalem Post, citing new documents released last month. According to the Israeli publication, ISIS did not explain what those "exceptional circumstances" were.

ISIS combatants earn between US\$400 and US\$1,200 a month, plus a US\$50 stipend for their wives and US\$25 for each child, according to the Congressional Research Service. But wars are expensive. Recent victories for the U.S.-led coalition mean the Islamic State can no longer afford to pay its soldiers as much

as it once could.

In an attempt to prove its legitimacy, ISIS provides some social welfare services and government oversight to the areas it conquers. The terror group reportedly taxes people living under its rule, regulates prices, produces its own currency and offers free health care. The extremists are estimated to have hundreds of millions of dollars at their disposal.

Millions of dollars were burned in the strike. "ISIS' financial situation today is even worse than it was in December when the document came out," the paper said. In order to deal with the financial damage, the ISIS-appointed governor in Mosul issued a fatwa allowing militants to raise funds from the local citizens by taxing them. The group said the move would not affect the collection and distribution of Zakat, a religious obligatory tax, the paper said, citing the documents. To justify its decision, ISIS cited the Quran, claiming that it prioritises "jihad of wealth," or spending in beneficial or charitable ways, over "jihad of soul", the paper added. ISIS has several sources of revenue, but oil is their most important income stream. Several oil fields in northern Iraq are currently under ISIS control. The group also controls smuggling routes out of Iraq and thus are able to sell oil at deeply discounted prices. According to different media reports, the oil buyers are from Syria, Turkey, the Kurdish region of Iraq and Iran, and within Bashar Assad's regime. The total production capacity of the ISIS-controlled oilfields is estimated at more than 150,000 barrels per day, although ISIS is not currently able to fully utilize production capacity.

Another source of ISIS revenue is taxation/extortion. ISIS levies



taxes on the people living within its controlled territory. Some of these taxes are similar to those of many nations, while other taxes border on extortion. Income is garnered by donations too. Donors hail from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates. The reasons for donating to ISIS vary. Many of these donors choose to fund the Islamic State based on fear and animosity for Iran and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, some share its views and beliefs (especially wealthy Sunnis) and some are just playing double games. Although the amount of money provided by wealthy individuals is small relative to the group's other sources, it still remains a problem. The largest donations so far have come from Qatar. Most Arab countries have laws prohibiting such donations, but the Qatari government does not strictly enforce this law.

In addition, after the takeover of Mosul, news leaked that banks in the city had been looted by ISIS. The information was denied by the government and bankers, but this denial was seen as not credible, since their primary ob-

jective was to secure funds and the country's economy. ISIS also kidnaps soldiers from the coalition. USA and U.K. have policies which forbid paying ransoms to ISIS, but many European countries have paid for the release of hostages. Lastly, they sell antiquities: many important museums are under ISIS control and they've raised funds by selling historic artifacts.

Yevgen Sysoyev, deputy head of the Russian Federal Security (FSB), released the latest information regarding the total number of jihadist soldiers currently fighting for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. According to the Russian News Agency TASS, at a news conference in Sochi Sysoyev told reporters, "The number of [ISIS] militants stood at some 80,000 in mid-2015, including 50,000 in Syria and 30,000 in Iraq, which can be compared with armies of some countries." The figures did not include fighters operating in other ISIS-claimed territories, including Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, Libya, and other parts of north and central Africa. An estimated 30,000 are foreign terrorists. Most of

them from the Middle East and North Africa and roughly 7,000 from ex-Soviet countries.

Fighters come from Georgia, too. The number of combatants leaving for ISIS is not clear, but it's estimated to be between 50 and 100. The major sources of recruitment are Pankisi Gorge and the Adjara highlands, where the Muslim population is high. It is vital for Georgia to block them from entering ISIS territory in Syria and Iraq. ISIS recruitment efforts pose threats of radicalization for Georgia. In particular, the return of radicalized ISIS fighters to Georgia may impact the rest of the Muslim population. In addition, some menace Georgia threatening jihad against Georgian population.

ISIS included Georgia as part of the 'Caucasus Wilayat' that was drawn up on June 24, 2015. The new "governate" also encompasses the republics of Russia in North Caucasus region, including Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia consisting of Caucasus Emirate. Therefore, any reinforcement of ISIS now threatens Georgia in an indirect way as well.



THE NORTH KOREA APPEARED IN NORTH CAUCASUS

TEIMURAZ SHA

The North Caucasus was not so much submissive to the Kremlin yet, as it is today, and not as a result of sustainable political or economic systems, but of Kadyrov's personality that has built post-war Chechen society on total fears.

In 1992 Ahmat Kadyrov was one of the Head Muftis in Chechnya, and with his 16-year old son, Ramzan Kadyrov was leading an anti-Russian separatist movement. In 1994 the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic of Ichkeria's Head Mufti announced a jihad against Russia, which ushered in the first Chechen war. In 1999 Ichkeria was weakened, its infrastructure destroyed, its people poor and tired, and all that made the racket almost impossible; it brought huge financial and political problems inside the terrorist group. The Kadyrovs, as a part of the governing elite knew it very well; they left Ichkeria and started cooperating with the Russian troops against their former allies.

After the Russian victory in the second Chechen war in 2003, Kadyrov was appointed President of the Chechen Republic and the Kremlin awarded him their highest title, - Hero of Russian Federation. Kadyrov launched programs of rehabilitation for towns and villages destroyed during the war. The next year, Ahmat Kadyrov was killed in Grozny and Chechnya

was thrown into short-term political crisis and destabilization. In the coming years, Ahmat's son Ramzan Kadyrov became a member of the "Yedinaya Rossiya" party. And then in 2007, Ramzan Kadyrov was appointed to the presidency of Chechnya.

Ramzan Kadyrov's style of government is well-known for its numerous human rights violations— kidnappings, mass killings, collective punishment, public humiliation, destruction and confiscation of property and terrorizing and fear mongering. Kadyrov takes part in all these actions personally.

Kadyrov's name has also been linked with the islamification of Chechnya, which is drowning in rules such as the one requiring women to wear headscarves in secondary schools, universities and work places, the allowance of early marriages, the ignoring of traditional code practices such as vendetta, revenge, etc. In 2012, Open Doors named Chechnya as one of the 20 most intolerant regions for Christians and Christian communities.

Kadyrov personally took part in the proscription of several international and federal human rights organizations that accused him of human rights violations, including torture, the kidnapping of women and girls, building harems, etc.

In spite of his numerous public offences, which occur on a daily

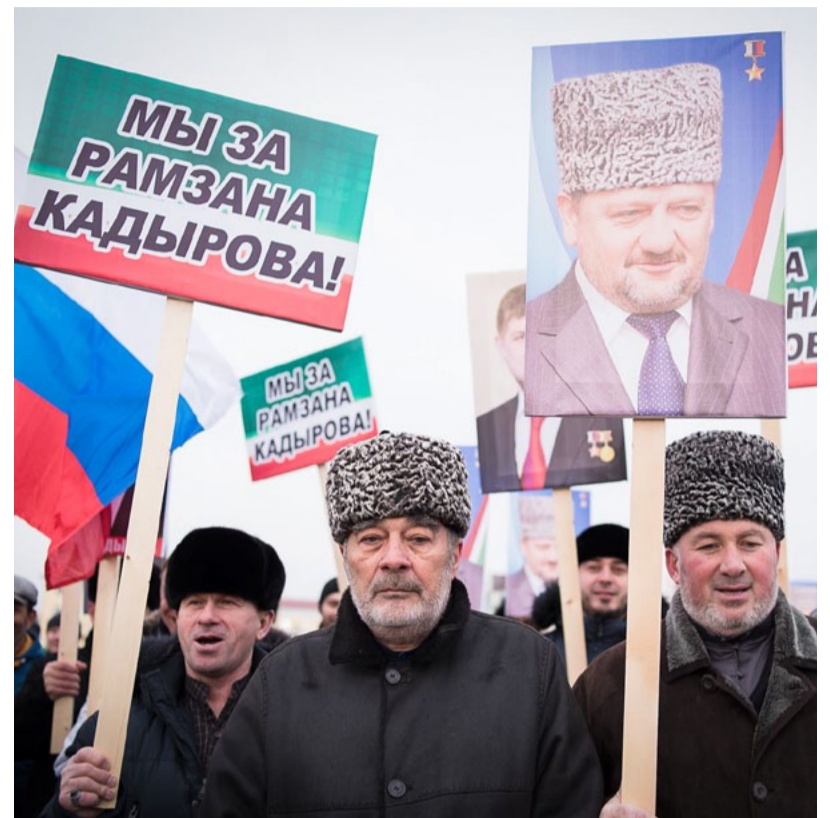
basis, Kadyrov still has strong support from Russian President Vladimir Putin. It could be interpreted as the Kremlin's fear of the Caucasian region of Russia, which could potentially revolt if there wasn't such a populist, brutal, charismatic and sanguinary governor as Kadyrov, a governor who supports the elevation of his personality cult among the society.

Kadyrov supports the Kremlin's politics, Russian's foreign policies and he openly blames "the West", human rights defenders, and of course, the opposition.

On December 30, 2015 the newspaper "Kavkaz Pravda" published an interview with opposition and liberal political activist Iliya Yashin on Instagram. Within the interview the politician speaks of Kadyrov's footprints in Boris Nemtsov killing. Kadyrov commented, "He is a very funny person". A few days later, on his personal Instagram (kadyrov_95), Kadyrov published a video of Yashin apologizing for his prior interview.

The incident provoked protest in Russian society, which blamed Kadyrov of blackmail, violation of human rights, inhumanity and the violation of the Russian constitution.

In Russia activists launched an online virtual flashmob "Kadyrov is an Enemy of Russia", which brought a counter-flash-



mob "Kadyrov is a Patriot of Russia". Last week the Chechen government announced a peaceful demonstration to support the leader's patriotism.

On January 22 the demonstration was held in Grozny. According to different sources more than 800,000 people have taken part.

It should be noted that according to Chechen police, one million citizens took part in the demonstration. The population of the republic is 1.37 million (according to the Russia's Statistics 19.1% out of 1.37 million, or 261,670 citizens are aged under

18). That would mean greater than 85% of politically active citizens supported Ramzan Kadyrov.

It may seem absurd, but if we remember the last peaceful demonstrations where people were forced to take part, one million is a fairly realistic number.

Demonstrators were holding up portraits of Putin and the Kadyrovs as well as the Chechen and Russian flags. According to different oppositional and non-governmental sources, the government of Chechnya spent several million Rubles to organize the demonstration.





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WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM AND GEORGIA

GIORGI CHAPIDZE (BULGARIA)

The 46th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum was held from Jan. 20 to 23 in Davos, Switzerland. The audience was comprised of state leaders, representatives of international economic organizations and big enterprise owners. The official theme of the 2016 meeting was “Mastering the Fourth Industrial Revolution”, which implies the “fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres”. The head of the Georgian delegation, Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, delivered a speech during the session titled, “Eurasia and Modern Silk Road” in which he underlined Georgia’s business investment attractiveness and the country’s increased role in the Europe-Asia transport corridor.

The Prime Minister drew attention to the fact that the Georgian government is working very closely with neighboring states with the purpose of developing a general approach to managing the Southern Caucasus corridor with Kazakhstan and other central Asian countries. He articulated that Europe is in need of dynamism from China and Asian countries and vice versa - Asian countries require new technologies and know-how from Europe. Kvirikashvili emphasized Georgia’s pivotal role in ensuring this exchange, especially in the field of transportation and international freight shipment.

Reconstruction of the economic Silk Road and “One Belt, One Road” initiatives bring new momentum for developing economic ties on the Eurasian continent. Georgia has a clear understanding of the importance of its involvement in new

international initiatives and the push to increase participation on infrastructural projects, such as railway system modernization and highway reconstruction is currently underway. It was also noted that the government will begin the construction process of a deep-water port in Anaklia on the Black Sea in the near future.

Particular stress was put on the fact that direct cargo trains from Xinjiang province to Tbilisi arrived in seven days, which means trains can reach Europe in about 10-11 days. This route is developing very quickly with a particular increase in demand from companies shipping international freight. According to the PM, although, the South Caucasus corridor is much more rapid and efficient than other transport routes, this signifies cooperation and partnership between the states and not competition.

Kvirikashvili declared that Georgia has free trade agreements with all the countries of the region as well as with the European Union. Moreover, free trade negotiations with China were launched recently. These steps make Georgia one of the most open economies in the region, with liberal regulations, a qualified labor force and relatively low energy prices. These will increase the country’s participation in East-West economic partnership.

The PM also met with Suma Chakrabarti, president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), who argued that the EBRD will increase its investment and financial aid to Georgia in 2016. The parties also discussed the prospect of stimulating private sector and developing business



environment in Georgia. Kvirikashvili held a meeting with the president of the European Investment Bank (EIB). During the meeting the progress of the infrastructural projects in Georgia financed by the EIB and the next stages of cooperation to promote Georgian small and medium-sized enterprises was discussed.

The World Economic Forum may result in increased direct foreign investment in Georgia if the Georgian delegation succeeds in assuring big business owners to invest in the country. The delegations purpose at the forum is to promote a Georgian business-climate with healthy investment conditions and low

tax rates. Although, this does not imply that businessmen will decide to invest in Georgia during the forum, the World Economic Forum is, however, a prominent platform to promulgate the Georgian economy and meet with representatives of big enterprises. In previous years, the results of the forum in Davos were quite moderate for Georgia, as shown in the modest rate of foreign direct investment.

Kvirikashvili met with representatives of big enterprises interested in investment in Georgia. One of note is the Indian company, “Tata Sons Ltd”, that will soon pay a visit to get a sense of the investment environment in Georgia. The hotel company has been implementing large-scale projects in Georgia, with a total investment capital of 650 million dollars. During the meeting held within the framework of World Economic forum, Robert Dudley, chief executive director of British Petroleum (BP) announced they will allocate 150 million U.S. Dollars to the modernization of the certain parts of Baku-Supsa Pipeline.

The Georgian delegation also conducted a meeting with the head of the “Majid Al Futtain Group”. The company is interested in the construction of hotels and trade centers in Georgia. Details were discussed during a working meeting with the lead-

ers of Georgian Co-Investment Fund. The Prime Minister also held an introductory character meeting with the Chief Executive Officer of “VimpelCom Ltd.”

One important fact to note was a statement by the president of “The Working Group of the Washington State Investment Board” (WSIB), who declared that the WSIB will visit Georgia in order to examine the investment environment and potentially invest in the energy and real estate sectors.

The head of the WSIB emphasized that Georgia has a strategically significant geographic location and one of the lowest tax rates in Europe.

The Georgian delegation’s main objective at the World Economic Forum was to attract direct foreign investments. For this purpose the Georgian delegation consists of representatives from the Georgian National Investment Agency and Georgian Co-investment Fund.

Another goal was to attract foreign investment while the local business sector is not growing, which is a major criteria for investing in any country. All in all, the World Economic Forum has raised awareness of Georgian business-climate among businessmen from all around the world that offers new hope for future investment in the country.



WTO: GEORGIA REMAINS VULNERABLE TO EXTERNAL SHOCKS

NINO SHARASHIDZE (LUXEMBOURG)

EXCLUSIVE

Georgia presented its report on Trade Policy at the World Trade Organization meeting for the second time since 2009, on 19-21 January this year. Georgian delegation was headed by the Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Genadi Arveladze, who presented to the member states the detailed information regarding the reforms implemented in Georgia in the different fields of trade policy during 2009-2014.

According to the WTO Secretariat report Georgia remains vulnerable to external shocks given its heavy reliance on FDI and remittances, high current account deficit and high dollarization. Growth is expected to slow to 2% in 2015 in line with slowdowns in the EU and neighbouring Azerbaijan and Armenia and a projected recession in the Russian Federation.

“The year 2016 could see some recovery in growth to 2.5% as the external environment improves slightly. Beyond that, economic growth could rise over the medium term based on greater policy certainty, improved market access, and a strong reform agenda. Medium-term growth prospects depend

on a number of factors, including: improved economic ties with the EU; improved relations with Russia (which will benefit trade and tourism); and the robust reform program outlined in Georgia’s development strategy, which will support growth in private investment. Growth prospects further depend on Georgia’s ability to take advantage of the AA/DCFTA with the EU, which should improve market access and encourage FDI,” states the WTO.

The Chairperson noted that the second Trade Policy Review of Georgia gave a better understanding of Georgia’s trade and investment policies since the previous review in 2009, as well as the challenges that it faces. “Our discussion was greatly facilitated by the constructive participation of the Georgian delegation, their timely response to written questions was greatly appreciated by Members,” he added.

After the presentation, the Deputy Minister said to the Observer that 16 delegates from the meeting, including European Union, the USA, Russian Federation, Turkey, China and other countries, commented on the report represented by Georgia. Member

states gave a positive evaluation of the reforms implemented by Georgia in order to achieve trade liberalization and approved the fact that Georgia became the member of WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation.

“Georgia’s trade openness and its commitment to the multilateral system through its responsible contribution to the work of the WTO were highlighted during the review. Members commended Georgia for the ratification of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, which would benefit Georgia’s role as a trade transit corridor in the region, and the related notification to the WTO of Category A, B and C commitments,” said Arveladze.

Members also noted that Georgia was an observer to the Government Procurement Agreement and was currently assessing the prospects for joining the Agreement. “They welcomed the announcement that Georgia was considering joining the expanded Information Technology Agreement, which would constitute a significant step forward for attracting further investment,” added the Deputy Minister.

The EU official stressed the importance of the reforms made

by Georgia in the framework of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and gave a positive assessment of the rules of origin by the pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention to initiate the procedure. Also, the US representative said that his country supports Georgia’s European integration and believes that the DCFTA commitments will further improve trade and investment environment.

Members commended Georgia’s efforts to integrate into the world economy as evidenced by the progressive liberalization of its trade regime and its active participation in numerous multilateral, regional and bilateral trade agreements. It was noted in this regard that reforms to Georgia’s trade and investment regime have been largely driven by the commitment of the Georgian government to align its legislative and regulatory framework to that of the European Union. Some Members expressed the view that WTO-consistent implementation of the commitments in the Association Agreement with the EU, including provisions of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, would improve Georgia’s trade and in-

vestment environment.

While there were many positive trade and economic developments during the review period, it was important to note a number of areas where Members, in their statements and written questions, had concerns and thought improvement was possible. Notably, in the area of food safety, Members were interested in further discussing how Georgia would ensure that its regulatory system would be implemented according to WTO obligations in the SPS Agreement, which calls on WTO Members to base their regulations on international standards and science. Also in the SPS area, Georgia was encouraged to further advance the regulatory framework and infrastructure for animal health control as well as to improve efficiency and hygiene and quality standards in agro-processing. Other areas where Members required further information and discussion included the issue of auctions for spectrum allocation in telecommunications, aspects of the new Tax Code affecting investors in Georgia, and technical issues regarding the launch of an e-visa portal for tourists wishing to visit Georgia.



EU AMBASSADOR JANOS HERMAN AWARDS GEORGIAN JOURNALISTS

NANA GORGILADZE

European Union representatives held an awards ceremony for journalists on Jan. 20 in Georgia. 2016 marks the fourth year the European Union has supported professional, impartial and informational journalism in this way. This year, more than ever, Georgian journalists were named in six different categories. Each category had different participants totally 150 journalists. Three nominees and one winner have been revealed. In the first five categories, winners were awarded a crystal trophy and 1,500 euro to be used toward their career as a working journalist. Winners in the other sixth categories will travel to London for an internship. Within the hall where the ceremony took place, photos were exhibited and for the first time, Factsheet, the Georgian edition, was represented with pictures and articles.

This year's jury consisted of Georgian and foreign representatives. Head of jury Paata Natsvlishvili noted that choosing the winner was a great responsibility and a hard decision, but very interesting as well. Natsvlishvili

also mentioned that those who participated this year will not be eligible next year.

The following nominees were named:

The winner for Best Investigative Article for Print and Online Media was Zurab Vardiashvili for the article "Children in Poverty".

The winner for Best Investigative TV/Radio story was Lia Toklikashvili for the film "City Donated for Gold."

The winner for Best Online or Print Blog was Anuna Bukia for the blog "Patient Diary."

The winner for Best Informative Online Media was www.chai-khana.org.

The winner for Best Documentary Picture Which Reflects the Values of the European Union went to Daro Sulakauri's "Early Marriage."

The winner of Best Work in Print, Audio or Online Media Concerning Conflicts (represented by the European Union Monitoring Mission in cooperation with IWPR) was Nino Chifchiuri for "Doctors in Conflict Region are Building Health Bridges." Chifchiuri will travel to London

for a one-month internship at the War and Peace Reporting University's head office.

"This prize is more a motivation for me, to thoroughly probe in the direction of peace journalism and I, as a journalist, would like to make some contribution to the restoration of relation between Georgians and Ossetians," Chifchiuri told the Observer. As Chifchiuri mentioned, the meetings between Georgians and Ossetians have become more frequent lately. Among those meeting are doctors, who gather in a third country whose main theme is life-saving.

Chifchiuri goes on, "My topic was about people with different health problems who are not able to get the needed medical assistance on the spot, they cross and receive the medical assistance in Georgian hospitals. This fact, of course brings closer Georgian and Ossetian relationship and this contributes to the bridging the gap between them."

Janos Herman, ambassador of the European Union to Georgia awarded the first five winners personally. The prize for peace



journalism was awarded by European Union Monitoring Mission Head Deputy Eric Hoeg. The ceremony was also attended by Nata Dzvelishvili, executive president of the Georgian Jour-

nalism Charter who stated that it's a great reward, which is able to say a lot about journalists and that she hopes that the number of participants and winners will rise in the future.

GEORGIA HOSTED LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

SOPHIO JAVAKHISHVILI

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This year's jury consisted of Georgian and foreign representatives. Head of jury Paata Natsvlishvili noted that choosing the

winner was a great responsibility and a hard decision, but very interesting as well. Natsvlishvili also mentioned that those who participated this year will not be eligible next year.

The following nominees were named: The winner for Best Investigative Article for Print and Online Media was Zurab Vardiashvili for the article "Children in Poverty". The winner for Best Investigative TV/Radio story was Lia Toklikashvili for the film "City Donated for Gold."

The winner for Best Online or Print Blog was Anuna Bukia for the blog "Patient Diary."

The winner for Best Informative Online Media was www.chai-khana.org.

The winner for Best Documentary Picture Which Reflects the Values of the European Union went to Daro Sulakauri's "Early Marriage."

The winner of Best Work in Print, Audio or Online Media Concerning Conflicts (represented by the European Union Monitoring Mission in cooperation with IWPR) was Nino Chifchiuri for "Doctors in Conflict Region are Building Health Bridges." Chifchiuri will travel to London for a one-month internship at the War and Peace Reporting University's head office.

"This prize is more a motivation for me, to thoroughly probe

in the direction of peace journalism and I, as a journalist, would like to make some contribution to the restoration of relation between Georgians and Ossetians," Chifchiuri told the Observer. As Chifchiuri mentioned, the meetings between Georgians and Ossetians have become more frequent lately. Among those meeting are doctors, who gather in a third country whose main theme is life-saving.

Chifchiuri goes on, "My topic was about people with different health problems who are not able to get the needed medical assistance on the spot, they cross and receive the medical assistance in Georgian hospitals. This fact,

of course brings closer Georgian and Ossetian relationship and this contributes to the bridging the gap between them."

Janos Herman, ambassador of the European Union to Georgia awarded the first five winners personally. The prize for peace journalism was awarded by European Union Monitoring Mission Head Deputy Eric Hoeg. The ceremony was also attended by Nata Dzvelishvili, executive president of the Georgian Journalism Charter who stated that it's a great reward, which is able to say a lot about journalists and that she hopes that the number of participants and winners will rise in the future.



LESS KNOWN HISTORY OF THE GEORGIAN GENIUS PRESENTED AT NATIONAL MUSEUM

NINI TSINTSADZE

An exhibit titled “Georgian Genius of American Aviation” is currently showing at the Georgian National Museum. The show is co organized by the Alexandre Kartveli Association and the Georgian National Museum. The exhibition opened on November 17, 2015 and will continue through May 1, 2016.

The exhibition presents one of the world’s greatest aviation innovator’s life and work and includes sketches and drawings, models based on his designs, archival materials, photos and video materials.

Alexandre Kartveli was born on September 9, 1896 in Tbilisi, Georgia. In his early life, Kartveli and his mother were forced to flee the Bolsheviks and eventually emigrated to France. In 1922 he graduated from the High School of Aviation in Paris. During his studies he created an aircraft that broke the world record for speed. In 1927, the American millionaire Charles Levine invited Kartveli to the United States to work for his aviation company. This began his career in American aircraft and he would soon become one of the pioneers in the field. Observer has interviewed Ramaz Bluashvili, one of the founders of the Association

of Alexandre Kartveli. He is the first researcher to fundamentally study the life and work of Alexandre Kartveli.

“I was the first one who researched more deeply his life and creations. I was able to enter in NASA’s archives at the Pentagon and I also had a relationship with the US Air Force to maximize the discovery of the material, which have not been previously known about this great personality and normally doesn’t hit the center of attention. It took about eight years to work, but most of these materials have been exhibited at the National Museum and it is a great blessing.”

The Georgian genius created five legendary aircraft in world aviation history. They include the P-47, F-84, F-105, A-10. Interesting to consider is how much freedom the Georgian genius had and if he was properly appreciated for his contributions since his career coincided with the so-called “Cold War” period. During the time of the Soviet Union, Georgia was less known to the world, and Alexandre Kartveli was considered Russian and not Georgian.

Bluashvili says, “For obvious reasons, his life was a secret because he was from the former

Soviet Union. His career in the US coincided with the so-called “Cold War” period and he had to work on the most secret projects. Therefore it was not so easy to communicate with Alexandre Kartveli like any other of his colleagues. Despite the fact that with he was not related to any suspicious facts, of course it could not possibly have the same freedom as a legendary American aircraft Kelly Johnson.”

Since Kartvelishvili was considered Russian and not Georgian and had access to secret US military aviation cases, he might not have had full freedom. When the “Cold War” ended and the so-called “Iron Curtain” was removed, Kartvelishvili remained unnoticed, despite the fact that he created five aircraft and is still considered a legend in American aviation.

In addition, Alexandre Kartveli had a strong relationship with National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). NASA knew him very well and appreciated his work and he was actively engaged in NASA projects.

“The figure of Kartvelishvili was well known to NASA. I have in the archive a letter written by legendary General Zu Little discussing Kartvelishvili.



In the letter he thanks him for his contributions to the agency activities and hopes for continued cooperation with him.” said Bluashvili. Alexandre Kartveli was one of the first to speak of a moon landing. This, of course, was directly related to his work with NASA and because he was a professional in aerodynamic. He eventually went on to participate in the moon-landing project.

Researchers have presented information refuting Kartvelishvili’s work with NASA but it is inaccurate; he did indeed cooperate very closely with the agency. There is credible information regarding the creation of

the tail on the legendary “Spies Shuttle” that to some extent resembles Kartvelishvili’s native P-47 tail modification that could withstand the intensity of a high-speed landing. The Spies Shuttle’s special feature was that it could not only go out of orbit, but it could also return due to its enhanced structural durability.

The main aim of the exhibition is to share Kartveli’s legacy and to better inform the public about the Georgian genius of American aviation. Bluashvili hopes, that Alexandre Kartvelishvili’s contributions are an example and a source of inspiration for the future generations.





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“SUKHISHVILI” CELEBRATED 70th ANNIVERSARY WITH GALA CONCERT

TEA LEKISHVILI

The concert of Georgian national ballet, “Sukhishvili”, exceeded expectations. Fans of Georgian dance and supporters of this ensemble were looking forward to this performance during the week leading up to the performance.

A few days before the concert, tickets were sold out. Several media reports have been made showing dancers preparing for a performance. In the 70th year of action, the ensemble “Sukhishvili” took to the stage in many states. Especially interesting was the grand concert that was performed during the summer season in Tbilisi, in which foreign dancers participated as well. Since then, after a six month break, the national ballet performed for a Georgian audience.

Performances that were dedicated to the 70th anniversary were held on January 19, but due to the spectator requests, an event continued on the January 22 and 23. The concert featured the best compositions of the last 70 years. Seventeen dances were presented, both traditional and modern. The performances also introduced newcomer dancers to the audience.

“Sukhishvili” has performed many charity concerts and this year’s was dedicated to the veteran dancers of this ensemble who don’t have suitable living conditions. The money from the event went directly to the dancers. Upon completion of the performance, members of ensemble and musicians were donated 17



flats. Nuci Bejhashvili, soloist of the dance “Jeiran”, said in a conversation with the Observer that the concert was a real celebration for each participant.

“I can’t really recall any similar charities in any other countries. I would like to congratulate my friends again, this is the greatest happiness. They really deserved it all!”- said the dancer. Before the award ceremony, Iliko Sukhishvili addressed the audience with the following words: “We

are one big family and we have our traditions, we are together in everything, we understand each other and today we have a feast. Love and standing side by side without these qualities, believe me none of dances will come out. I want to praise my ensemble, never said publicly before, but this people are the heroes, I’m happy to work with you.”

The ceremony of flat giving also continued after the concert on Jan. 22. The ending of the

event was exciting and moving for the audience, as well as the dancers. It was felt that not only each member of ensemble created one big family, but that the audience was a part as well, becoming sociable, sharing happy and proud moments that will remain in their memory for a long time. People with positive emotions stood up and awarded the entire troupe with applause. You could see tears in several spectators’ eyes, a sign of pride, joy

and happiness, created by the celebration of Georgian culture.

“Sukhishvili’s” charity concert, on the one hand, has shown that the Georgian people are proud of their national ballet. On the other hand, it has contributed significantly to the organization of the charity events. Dancers of the national ballet have full schedules with a number of events in Georgia and abroad. Very soon the ensemble will depart for a two-month tour.



PERFORMANCE WITHOUT MASK AND DECORATIONS – MARJANISVHILI THEATRE HOSTS MONO-PLAYS

NINI MACHAVARIANI

EXCLUSIVE

For the first time in Georgia, a project of “living books” will be performed at Marjanishvili Theatre. The “living books” project is in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia and is planned to open on Feb. 1 with Lia Likokeli, a writer and run throughout the entire year on the third Monday of every month, 20:00 at the Basement Theater. Participating writers will introduce themselves and their work to the public through mono-performances.

“I think this project has a lot to appreciate. For example, I love to listen to the authors when they read their books, although it is better to read. There is the charm in the author’s voice. Adaptation is probably a conditional statement. My evening will be just in front of a live audience to stand and tell who I am. Or just read what I write, and I write, who I am. I cannot play in front of the readers or spectators. I will not have a message for the audience, I prefer if everyone takes what they need from my texts, what is interesting and close to their hearts and minds”, - said Lia Likokeli.

According to the organizer, the “living books” project needed development and renewal and then the idea was born to con-

tinue at the theater. Seventy-five writers participated in the previous program and volunteers also accompanied the group. Each artist produced notes from various travels, which then became the book called “Diary” that will be presented to a wider audience soon.

“The project began in April last year and continued until the end of October. We visited almost all of Georgia, went to the villages and read poems, stories. When the project is finished, we decided that we should not stop, so went to present to the soldiers at the military part and the prison. Last year, the project was awarded the prize for the best project by the writers,” said Deputy Minister of Culture and Monument Protection, Katie Dumbadze to the Observer.

Spectators have met artists with great love and warmth in all regions, showing their appreciation for this type of performances. The project participants also came into contact with several young local writers and offered professional advice and continue to maintain the relationships.

Currently, there is a full rotation of writers and last year’s participants will be replaced eventually by newer faces. The organizers plan to intensify the project in more regions and vil-



lages as well.

“There will be a very interesting year, because many of the new writers get to know our audience. Our main goal is to bring new creativity in the society”, said Katie Dumbadze. Each participant will have one hour and twenty minutes to present their work to the public. The performance will be in a question-answer mode. According to the organizers, the main idea is to be in direct contact with the audience.

Nothing is predefined in the performance because everything depends on the imagination of the poets and writers. This is a mono-spectacle without mask and decoration. The organizers believe that this project will be successful because no actor can read the story like the author himself.

“When we were thinking about what form could be given to this project, I was walking in the room where my father was sitting... in our house, my favorite

books were alive, because at that time all the writers and poets were around me at our home. This is where the idea came from”, said the Deputy Minister of Culture. It should be noted that the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection received an award from Public Broadcasting for “The Best Event in Literature”. The updated program promises fun surprises and exciting evenings for all lovers of literature.



GEORGIAN GOVERNMENT INCREASES THE AMOUNT OF FUNDED STUDENTS ABROAD

GURANDA DZAMELASHVILI

The International Education Center of Georgia announces a new contest for students wanting to study in France. According to “The Master’s program in France 2016-2017” close to twenty student will receive scholarships to study in France. Both Georgian and French governments are funding the contest.

For those seeking to apply, the contest deadline is Feb. 11, and electronic applications are available on the International Education Center’s official website. Priority will be given to certain areas of study, such as Agricultural Sciences; Education; Engineering; Science / Natural Sciences; Social Sciences; Humanities; Law; Architecture; Public Administration; and Management. According to website disadvantaged, disabled and displaced persons will be taken into account during the selection process. Contest results will be announced March 11.

“This is the first time when Georgia and France signed a contract about scholarship programs,” said Nino Chelidze, head director of International Education Center of Georgia and adds that cooperation with France is a new addition to the program, and represents progress for the organization.

The program, launched in 2014 under the initiative of former Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, has funded a number of students, either fully or partially; 77 students in 2014 and 115 in 2015. It is still unclear how many students will receive scholarships this year because the program will start registering applicants

for the spring academic season.

As Nino Chelidze mentions, the center is in the process of launching new programs and she predicts 2016 will see the number of funded students increase.

“We are trying to sign the agreement with the United States and Germany and probably will start in September,” Chelidze said.

An integral component of the program is that students will return to Georgia after finishing their studies and work in the public service for three years. If the contract is breached, the student will be obliged to pay back the grant money they received.

“So far we’ve employed 13 graduates. We don’t have any particular cases when a student have breached the agreement,” said Chelidze.

Despite the fact that the government guarantees jobs for students, there are some doubts that with the increasing number of graduate students that the program will fail to provide jobs for everyone.

The idea of returning home and getting a job without much effort sounds great for students, but some of them suspect that there might not be a job available or it might not happen so quickly. Also, there are other graduates from foreign universities who are able to get high paid and appropriate jobs in the public service, so it causes confusion as to why students who get a scholarship from the International Education Center will be provided jobs while others won’t.

Salome Pachuashvili is one of the lucky students who’s received a full scholarship from



the government. Currently, she studies Humanities at Leicester University in the UK. She’s planning to return to Georgia in September. When Observer spoke with her, she still didn’t know where she is going to work, but she likes the idea that she’s going to be provided a job.

“I think that it’s the right initiative from the government, because the state sponsored students naturally have some responsibilities for the country. Students on my faculty from Colombia have the same kind of scholarship from the government, but the difference is that

their government obliges them to return half amount of the grant they have received. To my mind, Georgia have found a better solution for students,” she said.

Salome also mentions that her costs are full covered by the scholarship from the International Education Center.

“The government covers my tuition fee and accommodation (totally 25000€),” she said.

Mariam Canava graduated from the University of Caucasus. She’s willing to participate in the contest and study abroad.

“Nice to know that you’ll come back and get a job,” said Canava. But she’s mostly interested in getting a scholarship for the university she wants to apply.

In general, according to the International Education Center, students willing to be funded by the program must indicate the amount of money they need. The International Education Center covers tuition fees and accommodation as well. Scholarships are defined by a special commission and the student may receive full or partial funding. However, the issue of funding is different in the case of the memorandum concluded with France.

In the framework of the memorandum with the French government, signed on December 1, only one academic year will be funded, instead of covering

basic expenses for two years. It should be noted that if a student isn’t awarded funding, they will receive an explanation as to why their application was rejected.

The main drawback of this program is the requirement of a bachelor’s degree. According to the program, students who are on the last course of their bachelor program can’t apply for the scholarship, even if they’re already enrolled in the university abroad. The requirements are high: Students must have a bachelor’s degree with a minimum 3.0 GPA and one year of working experience and there are many other requirements, which are hard to achieve in Georgia by the age of 22-23.

If we consider how hard is to get a paying job in Georgia, this program makes it impossible for many talented students to study abroad.

Center representatives note that there might be some changes in the new program, which will be announced in March. It is also expected that the academic directions prioritized in the previous year, can be reviewed.

Meanwhile, the International Education Center will continue informational meetings with students both in Tbilisi and various universities in the region until Feb. 10, the day before registration ends.



HOW ERASMUS+ PROGRAM CHANGED THE LIFE OF A STUDENT?

NINI MACHAVARIANI

25-year old journalist and communications officer, Nino Khuskivadze graduated abroad through the funding of the ERASMUS + program. Exchange programs, foreign-earned knowledge, experience and impressions, these are the issues Nino discussed with the Observer.

In which country did you study and what was the program?

I'm always attracted to new acquaintances and foreign relations in general, for this purpose I decided that after I receive my bachelor's degree, I would continue to study abroad.

During my fourth year of undergraduate, I started thinking about where I will go for graduate school. I applied through the agency- that made consultancy and helped me make the right decision. They advised me to go to Vilnius University, one of the largest universities for history and culture of Eastern Europe and that's where I earned my master's degree in a year and a half. During my stay I gained excellent experience and made a lot of friends.

What did you learn from that time?

First of all, I think I became a professional in my field. Besides the fact that there are highly qualified professors and a different environment, the system is tailored to the student. The main thing you need to do is to use the opportunity. Vilnius University gave me a very good theoretical education and practical experience. It was an unfamiliar environment and I was away from home and grew up, not only professionally but personally.

What benefits did you get by studying at Vilnius University?

I hope it will help me in my career.

What is the quality of education at Vilnius and why would



you recommend Georgian students to study there?

The infrastructure is at a high level, even the library works 24 hours a day, as well as access to the latest published books, and all the necessary materials. From the first day I found a very friendly environment and atmosphere and at the same time there's discipline. The essay should be based on your ideas and logic. They require independent work and analytical thinking, which is very important. Even in the coursework you cannot use sources without references because they have a system to check for plagiarism. Of course, it was difficult to get used to a strict regime with the studies; however, it was not impossible.

Why did you decide to study abroad?

I always wanted to test myself outside of my home. Studying abroad gives you the chance to meet people from different countries and cultures.

How would you describe the learning process?

Basically we had hands-on work, which I liked. Knowledge and perform. For example, very often we had "workshops" in the famous Scandinavian banks, were directly involved in the process.

What's the environment like at Vilnius?

I'd heard the stereotype of the cold people that live in Vilnius, but on the contrary it turned out to be a hospitable and friendly society. Even when the temperature falls to -25 degrees, it will not affect their mood.

What kind of adaptation problems have you encountered?

I had no time to adapt, each day I had a lot of things to do. Everything has a schedule, when they say that the material is to be ready on Saturday at 12:00 a.m., it must be submitted by the appointed time, and not a moment too late.

I would like to point out that I did not have culture shock, because everything was well organized. We had our coordinator; we could address him anytime needed.

How has your life changed after returning from Vilnius?

According to my acquaintances, I grew up professionally and personally. In terms of education, I believe this university has given me a lot of things. And most importantly, interest from employers has increased.

What are the criteria for getting into Vilnius University?

First of all, high grades from the bachelor's degree and a high level of English, these are the two important criteria. Those who want to study abroad, must take the first step. Unfortunately, in financial terms, it is not for everyone, but I know that some of the state-funded university students have an opportunity to study for one semester abroad. Therefore, everything depends on the commitment.

Now you are going abroad for work through the ERASMUS + program, how did you get

there?

Now I am going to a two-month program in Turkey through the EVS. They are a non-governmental organization that deals with the problems of disabled people. I will work in the PR department per my profession. I found the information about the program and independently sent a cover letter and resume. I do not know how the selection process went, but perhaps my degree from abroad was one of the advantages. People aged 18 to 30 have the opportunity to get involved in any of the volunteer opportunities. This is a 12-month program, which you can use together or in a few months to go to work and experience different places.

What are your plans for the near future?

Not even a year ago, I arrived in Vilnius, now I am going to Turkey. When I go back to Georgia, I hope to start working through my profession and have a chance to use this knowledge in my home country.

What would you advise young people who want to go abroad to study or work?

I remember one of my lecturers told us that Georgians are neither plentiful nor less than any other nation. We need to remember this everytime. If you want to study abroad, you should not hesitate and should make the necessary steps.



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ZAZAPACHULIA: YOUR SUPPORT MEANS MORE THAN PLAYING AT ALL STARS

VAKO KIPIANI

For more than a month Georgian fans were posting #NBVoteZazaPachulia status on their social media pages. And if public was well informed, Zaza Pachulia would be in the top three of the Western Conference and would be playing in the NBA All Stars. In All Star voting, Zaza lacked 14, 228 votes to make it to the All Star lineup. He took 4th place after Basketball King Kobe Bryant, Oklahoma leader Kevin Durant and Leonard Cavanaugh. Pachulia did, however, come in ahead of well-known

players: Draymond Green, Blake Griffin, Enes Kanter, Tim Duncan and DeMarcus Cousins.

In response to his many fans, captain of the National team and center for the Dallas Mavericks, Zaza Pachulia, published this message on his official web page: "Thank you so much to everyone for such appreciation and support, it will be the most memorable days of my life. Your love and support means more than "All Star" to me."

There still remains a chance that Zaza will play as an All Star,

but it will depend on the NBA coaches and the players they select to be added to the teams and replace injured players. However, coaches do consider the results of the voting and Zaza is the frontrunner.

The lineup was selected by basketball fans and the rest 7-7 (3- front court, 2 Guards, 2 basketball players without position).

The NBA All Star game is scheduled for Feb. 14 in Toronto, Canada. Reserve players will be announced by the TNT Network on Jan. 28.



WEEKLY SPORT NEWS

Rugby

David Kacharava's Enisey-STM won their second Challenge Cup tie of the season yesterday, beating a hapless Newcastle Falcons side 24-7 in their round 5 clash. The match was all the more incredible as the Falcons had won the reverse fixture 55-7 before Christmas. This is the second victory for Kacharava, however Enisey is on the last place.

The national team player Victor Kolelishvili was punished at 5th round of Champions Cup. At the game of Ospreys against Clermont, Kolelishvili has got rid of the referee by hitting him, and then he beat the opponent.



Water Polo

Georgia's men's water polo national team at the European Championship took 14th place. On January 22, in the last match of the water polo tournament, Georgian team was defeated in the Serbian capital Belgrade by the Slovakian team by 9:10.



Basketball

The schedule of basketball matches at Eurobasket 2017 qualifying tournament is known. The first match of Georgian team is scheduled on August 31, 2016 at home against Albania, then the remaining 5 matches will be held in September.

- 31, August Georgia - Albania
- 3, September Slovakia - Georgia
- 7, September Georgia - Montenegro
- 10, September Albania - Georgia
- 14 September Georgia - Slovakia
- 17 September, Montenegro - Georgia



Football

The National Football Championship 2015/16 season will be resumed on February 19 in XVI round.

The voting for David Kipiani Cup semi-finalists is scheduled for February 17. In the current season "Dinamo", "Wit Georgia", "Sioni" and "Chikhura" will continue their struggle. The semi-final matches will be held on April 20 and May 5, the final on May 18.

All matches will be held on February 19 at the national championship XVI round.





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