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NEWSPAPER IN GEORGIA

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THE PROJECT “NEW TIFLIS” HAS LAUNCHED

The project of “New Tiflis”, which means the reconstruction and rehabilitation of old districts, has launched today with restoration of Agmashenebeli Avenue.

All of the 200 specialists – architects, historians, urban planners, engineers, art historians, restorers, developers will be involved in the rehabilitation process, which will be implemented by new approaches.

“The project is distinguished by the new approach – we will restore not only facades, but also the yards, we will completely renew our communications infrastructure, which will significantly

increase real estate prices in Tbilisi. Tbilisi has always been distinguished by the fact that there were different nations, different cultures of the people living together. We have to keep this wealth and develop further in the future. It is important to complete the project within the time frame- by the end of 2016 “, – said the Prime Minister.

The project will create a new tourist routes, recreational spaces, gardens, parks, which are necessary for citizens relaxing and result in improving the ecological situation. After the completion of the rehabilitation, the area will be adapted for the people with disabilities.



GEORGIAN COMPUTER GAME BECAME A WINNER OF INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Georgian innovative game “Warlock VR” created by “GameLab Iliani” is among the winners of the online prestigious gaming industry competition “Leap Motion 3D Jam 2.0”.

11 best games were revealed out of 200 online games presented from all over the world. Georgian game became the second one, while Thailand got the first place.

“Warlock VR” is the first Georgian VR game, which is not over yet. It is created by the famous team of developers “StormBringer Studio”.

“GAMELAB ILIAUNI” is the only laboratory of computer and mobile games in Georgia, which was established by “Innovation and Technology Agency” to facilitate the process of innovation and technology commercialization.



SAN DIEGO UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES A NEW BACHELOR PROGRAM FOR GEORGIANS

San Diego State University (SDSU) made a presentation of early registration in Georgia. Students who submit documents from February 15 to March 15 at San Diego State University and successfully pass the selection process, will be admitted conditionally at SDSU- and automatically receive partial funding.

A new bachelor’s degree program in computer

science was presented, as well. In 2016, San Diego State University offers students to study computer science, computer engineering, electrical engineering and chemistry/biochemistry in the USA and it also allows them to continue their studies at SDSU’s California campus

Program Partners are Tbilisi State University, Iliia State University and Georgia Tech University.



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PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND THE NEED FOR JUSTICE REFORMS

TAMAR LORTKIPANIDZE

President of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili delivered his third annual report at Parliament on February 3, 2016. His speech lasted 55 minutes and covered the majority of current important issues. Prime Minister and Minister Cabinet members were attending the session.

The president began his speech by asking the other members of Parliament to observe a minute's silence to honour former prime minister of Georgia and the main architect of Georgia's European Integration, Zurab Zhvania, who died 11 years ago on February 3.

Margvelashvili assessed Georgia's achievements, the challenges it faces and his vision for the future of the country. During his speech, Head of the State emphasised the political situation in Georgia and EU integration. He evaluated Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, the economic situation, agricultural perspectives, recent reforms, regional security, and internal and foreign policy issues.

The president said that 2015 had been tough year for Georgia both politically and economically. Unfortunately, the poverty rate still remains high and while child and maternal mortality has been decreasing, both rates are still high. Margvelashvili expressed his disappointment with

the fact that small and-medium sized businesses only made up 20 percent of country's economy. He underlined several external factors which were behind Georgia's economic difficulties including the strengthening of the US dollar, falling oil prices, the global economic recession, the Russia-Ukraine war and economic difficulties related to political tension between Russia and Turkey.

Margvelashvili also welcomed the government's plan to develop the economy of the state. He expressed his satisfaction with positive reforms; among them, the "Silk Road" project and the free trade negotiations with China. The president also emphasised that Georgia has to make full use of its competitive advantages. He underlined the importance of available opportunities related to the country's functions as a transit point between Europe and Asia. The President mentioned that the building of the European state is not only political, but also a constitutional commitment of all political forces. The rule of law, strong democratic institutions and protection of human right are the main principles of a democratic state.

Margvelashvili also identified several areas that he believes should be reformed. According

to his speech, the country needs to continue judicial reform. He expressed his vision on the reform of the High Council of Justice. The president noted that the procedures for the selection of judges required more attention. He has offered to make it possible to appeal the decisions of the High Council of Justice on appointment of judges to the Supreme Court, whereby nine seats are distributed between representatives of all three levels of courts – city courts, appeals courts and the Supreme Court.

President Margvelashvili underlined the importance of the National Security Council of Georgia, dealing with the matters of national security. At the meetings all three branches of government assess the threats and risks affecting Georgia and Caucasus region. This council provides the elaboration of the concept of national security and seeks to avoid or reduce risks and threats. The president said that, "risks facing our region grew further last year."

Georgia has undertaken special steps in strengthening defense capabilities via the NATO-Georgia substantial package implementation. A joint NATO-Georgia training centre was opened, allowing for joint military exercises with western partners includ-

ing, "Didgori 2015." President Margvelashvili emphasised that the Euro-Atlantic integration remains Georgia's top priority.

The president also underlined that new venture should be created in relations with Georgia's major strategic partner, the United States. He mentioned that free trade negotiations have already begun, but it is still important to strengthen Georgia's cooperation with the US. He also mentioned that he expects that Georgia's relations with the European Union will move forward to the new stage. He believes that the European doors will open for Georgian citizens in 2016.

Margvelashvili said that Georgian-Russian relations are the priority of the European policy and these relations have to be represented in the context of the European policy. According to the President's speech, bilateral relations should be based on equality, because at the expense of occupation of Georgia, Russia cannot achieve purposes and wellbeing. Currently, 20 percent of Georgian territory is still occupied. The Head of the State also indicated that Russia's active Soft Power applied regards to economic relations should be neutralised in cooperation with Georgia's Western partners.

Following the Presidential

Speech, Heads of the Factions spoke in response to the address. The majority of parliament members praised the comprehensive speech, stating that it covered all major issues. The Chair of the Faction Georgian Dream, Giorgi Volski, evaluated the speech of the President as interesting. He noted that there were too many interesting issues surrounding Georgia's current domestic and foreign challenges. The opposition lawmakers, the United National Movement criticised the President's speech for a lack of focus on society's interests. In their opinion, the address was too general and, despite the fact that the President talked a lot, he did not really say anything. Member for the party, Tanel Londaridze, said that the President was elected but that the country is ruled by a single person - Bidzina Ivanishvili, former Prime Minister.

Despite the different opinions about the President's speech, executive and legislative governments have similar outlooks regarding the directions of country's development. They have common views about the geopolitical role and function Georgia has in the region. The president of Georgia mentioned that he believes that, together, the executive and legislative authorities will make the projects a reality.



LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL: INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS DISCUSS NATO-GEORGIA RELATIONS

Experts from the NATO allied countries visited Georgia on February 4th and 5th to hold high level meetings with Public Officials and young leaders of Georgia and participate in the seminar, "Step Forward on Georgia's Euro-Atlantic Integration."

Within the framework of the seminar, the Georgian side, including the representatives of line government agencies, discussed the 2016 Annual National Plan (ANP) with experts of NATO and its Member States, as well as with the representatives of the Embassies of the NATO Member States accredited in Georgia. On February 5, the experts from Brussels met with young Georgian leaders at the NATO Liaison Office, where they had an in-depth discussion on current challenges that the alliance faces together with its partners including the relations with Russia.

The Annual National Plan is one of the key mechanisms for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic membership. However, the document is confidential and the meeting was closed for media. Following the recommendations expressed at the seminar, the document will be further endorsed at the State Commission of Georgia on NATO Integration, after which Georgia will present the 2016 ANP to the alliance.

Tomas Sindelar, a Junior Diplomat and Permanent Delegation of the Czech Republic to NATO, spoke about the current relations between Georgia and the NATO. "Georgia is a unique partner for NATO, which is demonstrated by the fact that Georgia is a top aspirant, top interlocutor, top contributor and top recipient country," said Sindelar. Accord-

ing to him, no other non-member country gets so much attention, resources and support from NATO.

The audience asked about the coming Warsaw Summit and what it might mean for Georgia. Experts shared their hopes that Georgian aspirations will be appreciated by NATO in the shortest possible time.

They praised Georgia for its reforms and military contribution that is much beyond the size of its country, population and economic situation. However, according to the experts present, NATO needs Georgia to be a better prepared and more strongly positioned aspirant to bring them closer to membership.

Despite this, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. At the 2008 Bucharest Summit, allied leaders agreed that Georgia will become a NATO member, provided it meets all necessary requirements. This decision was reconfirmed at NATO Summits in 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2014. At the Wales Summit in September 2014, a package of measures was launched to strengthen Georgia's ability to defend itself and advance its preparations for membership.

Rati Bakhtadze, the executive director of YATA (Youth Atlantic Treaty Alliance) Georgia, claimed that Georgian society lacks proper communication on NATO, as they do not understand that NATO membership is a lengthy process as it is based on the consensus of 28 member states. This notion was further developed by other delegates discussing the need for better communication in ethnic minority regions as their support for NATO membership is declining.

An interesting discussion was raised on NATO-Russia relations. The experts discussed the challenges that NATO faces with Russia especially after the military intervention in Georgia, 2008 and in Ukraine, 2014. In addition, they overviewed the instability in Southern Neighbourhood where Russia is a tough partner and unpredictable player, with particular mention given to Russian military exercises in the Black Sea Area and in the Baltic region.

The audience asked about the Russian occupied territories in Georgia and Ukraine. The experts responded that NATO does not look for solutions regarding conflict zones. "It does not mean that NATO is ignorant, but we do not debate on that [conflict zones]. NATO does not start conflict but tries to prevent it," said Sindelar. On that issue, Dariusz Mereckis a Political adviser at the Delegation of Lithuania to NATO expressed his hope that one day Georgia will seize the moment to regain its territorial integrity through diplomatic means. Hans Christian Kjølsseth - First Secretary / Norway's permanent delegation to NATO added that the alliance made an internal adaptation in response to Russian foreign policy, and the dialogue about how to treat Russia regarding predictability continues in the alliance.

On the question of what happens if a partner like Georgia is attacked or occupied by Russia, Sindelar responded that, although NATO does not have a direct obligation to protect its partner state, it has interests to do so, therefore NATO is not indifferent even to those hypothetical threats from Russia.



UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' APPROACH TO RUSSIAN FEDERATION

GIORGI CHAPIDZE (BULGARIA)

Within the context of the forthcoming American presidential election of 2016, the candidates' foreign policy approaches dominate the agenda. For Georgia, a matter of pivotal importance is the candidates' declared foreign policy strategies towards the Russian Federation. The determining factor is whether the person in charge of the White House is willing to pursue "soft" policies to address the Kremlin, or chooses a deterrence tactic in dealing with the Russian bear.

President Obama's administration is frequently criticized for letting Putin exercise increased influence over post-Soviet space, with particular emphasis on the annexation of Crimea. Some Republican nominees argue that America no longer defends its allies and have alienated them by not following its promises. The most debatable issue is Obama's failure to secure Ukraine's sovereignty, as the USA was a guarantor of the Ukraine's territorial integrity, pursuant to the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances of 1994. Republicans also float the notion that the Democrats' inappropriate foreign policies have empowered Russia to intervene militarily in Syria on behalf of President al-Assad. According to several Republican contenders, imposing financial sanction on Russian authorities and businesses, and suspending bilateral cooperation in several fields, is not the only way the USA should cope with the Russian aggression.

The main difference between the Republicans' and Democrats' foreign policy perspectives is that the latter believe military involvement is the last resort after peaceful methods, while the Republicans don't put too much faith in negotiations with state actors like North Korea, or with radical organizations, and maintain the belief that the USA should not deteriorate its status as a super-power. GOP (Republican) candidates blame former member of Obama administration, Hillary Clinton, for not taking serious measures to eradicate ISIS actions.

As the majority of polls illustrate, Donald J. Trump, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio are most likely to be selected as a Republican candidate, while Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders hold almost

equal chances for being Democrat nominees. It is important to know where they stand when it comes to relations with the Russian Federation.

Ted Cruz is harsh in dealing with the Russian Federation. He believes that USA should deter the Kremlin in Eastern Europe, particularly in Ukraine by providing defense weapons. He also believes that Eastern European NATO member states should not be exposed to Russian threats and calls for installation of anti-ballistic shields in the Czech Republic and Poland. The Texas senator also proposes to provide Ukraine with liquid natural gas resources to reduce its energy dependence on the Russian Federation. Cruz states that, as Putin has increased involvement in Syrian issues, the Kremlin is becoming more capable of defending its interests in the conflict. He argues that Obama's military efforts against ISIS were a total failure and completely symbolic. In order to actually dismantle ISIS, America should not seek to find new friends but cooperate with existing ones, such as Israel, Egypt and Jordan, and tackle Islamic terrorism. This will prevent Putin from setting a preferable agenda in the region that is contrary to the USA's own. He believes that the USA has to install anti-missile defense capabilities, not only in the aforementioned countries, but in other sites too. Moreover, Cruz states that, under his government, the United States will "reclaim its traditional role as a leader of the free world," and Putin will be forced to accept the new reality. Overall, Cruz's strategy is to join with Russia to destroy ISIS, while simultaneously deterring Putin, and supporting Ukraine as, "The USA's foreign policy is known for pursuing more than one objective at the same time."

Trump believes that the USA and Russia should unite to defeat terrorism, namely ISIS, as this aim is in the countries' best interests. He articulated that if the USA will choose to cooperate with Russia within the frames of joint coalition against ISIS, the USA's military and financial expenditures will be lessened. Trump argues that "it would be great" if other states' military facilities will also take initiative in destroying radical Islamic groups



in the Middle East. Trump opposes Obama's policy towards Ukraine stating that, "Obama is not doing what he should be doing in Ukraine." Furthermore, he believes that Russian airstrikes in Syria are a "positive thing" that coincides with the USA's interests as far as it diminishes American military expenses.

Marco Rubio is in favor of increasing military assistance to the Ukraine and conceptualizes the Kremlin as "a government of liars." Rubio believes that the USA's inaction against Putin's aggression will cost highly. He indicated that, together with European allies, the government should widen sanctions imposed on Russian bureaucrats and companies, particularly Gazprom, making them more isolated. Rubio went on to declare that the USA should be ready to replace European demand on Russian energy resources by exporting American oil and natural gas resources to provide them with enough supplement. More importantly for Georgia, Rubio is set to increase cooperation in military fields with Georgia and Moldova. As for Ukraine, Rubio is willing to help Kiev maintain its control over eastern regions occupied by Russian-backed separatists. The Florida senator is also in favor to provide Ukraine with lethal military assistance and training. He believes supporting Ukraine to modernize its economy and build independence from Moscow to be in the USA's interests. In addition, Rubio considers that NATO should be storing additional heavy weapons and de-

ploying its troops in Eastern Europe to ensure the Baltic States' safety. Rubio is not enthusiastic about building a coalition with Russia until it rejects the Bashar al-Assad regime.

Bernie Sanders is a more socialist candidate than any other, from either Democratic or Republican camps. His foreign policy objective, beyond ensuring his country's safety, is quite humble. Despite being a proponent of U.S and the EU sanctions against Russia, considered reasonable by him since Russia has violated Ukraine's sovereignty and annexed Crimea, Sanders is not eager to provide military assistance to Ukraine. Moreover, Sanders opposed the Baltic States enlistment among NATO member states as it would have caused additional military concerns for the USA. He stated that in the case that he is elected as a president, he will work with Russia in terms of struggling with ISIS. He believes that the USA should not take the lead on the effort in Syria, and opposes the American "boots on the ground" concept to destroy Islamic State.

Another Democrat candidate, Hillary Clinton, like Bernie Sanders, does not have a comprehensive strategy for relations with the Kremlin. According to Clinton's website, she will "stand shoulder-to-shoulder with European allies" to deter and confine Russia, increase the countries' energy independence and make Putin think twice about committing an act of aggression. Clinton is going to strengthen alliances predominantly with Israel in order to serve the USA's national

interests. Clinton's posture towards the shared burden of destroying ISIS stems from her unwillingness to engage in another ground war, therefore cooperation with Russia is not excluded.

To review, Democrat presidents' relations with Russia or the Soviet Union have always had less friction than that of the Republicans. Since Obama took over the White House, he pursued softer foreign policy towards Russia, as he chose a "reset" strategy in dealing with the Kremlin in the wake of the August War. His administration aspired to "normalize" relations with Moscow despite its aggressive politics in South Caucasus. Obama's withdrawal from the region aroused security concerns in Georgia and left more room for Russia to take initiative. It is noteworthy that the Democrats' outlook did not transform into more action-based politics during the annexation of Crimea. Instead, they remained confined to the targeted sanctions imposed on Russian authorities and businesses. Being aware of Democrats' traditional stance towards the Russian Federation and their viewpoint on military engagement, to pursue the USA's foreign policy objectives, one may assume that Republican presidency would be more in compliance with Georgian national interests. At least some of the Republican candidates' election campaigns include more assistance, sometimes including cooperation in military fields, to Eastern European states, and supposedly to Georgia, than their Democrat counterparts.



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UKRAINIAN CRISIS: THE DANGER OF “OPEN WAR” STILL EXISTS IN THE COUNTRY

EKA PKHOVELISHVILI (POLAND)

According to the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, the danger of “open war” has increased, compare with 2015. President Poroshenko made this announcement in an interview with German newspaper, “Bild.”

As President Poroshenko mentioned, there are 8’000 Russian soldiers in Ukraine. As well as this, Russia is currently creating new military sites directly along the Ukrainian border and is engaged in military training.

“Russia has not implemented a single point of the Minsk Agreement. It is investing a lot in these war preparations, and we are not getting any explanations for this,” said the Ukrainian President.

As Poroshenko pointed out, Germany will supply weapons to Ukraine, because the Russian military threat is higher in 2016 than it was in 2015.

“We are open to this possibility and we are advocating it, because this concerns the security situation in Europe,” Poroshenko said. “The primary solution is a diplomatic one. Chancellor Merkel and President Hollande play a very important role in the de-escalation of the process.”

In addition, the Ukrainian president accused Russia of violating

the Minsk agreements and increasing military presence in the Ukraine. He supports the idea that the European Union and the US do not remove sanctions against Russia. According to him, one of Russia’s main goals is the destabilization of Europe.

“Everything that is happening in the world is directly or indirectly linked to Russian aggressions, therefore, we cannot support lifting the sanctions against Russia. It is also a matter of our values that we keep up the sanctions. Even from an economic point of view, the Russian market is not the same as it was a few years ago. Europe has become far less dependent on the Russian Market.”

President Poroshenko also commented on the events in Syria during the interview. The Ukrainian president does not agree with lifting the sanctions against Russia, on the ground that the conflict resolution is impossible without Russia.

“For me it is clear that, if you take a look at what is happening in Eastern Ukraine, you cannot support lifting the sanctions against Russia. Europe must not become the victim of Putin’s blackmail because of the assumption that there can be no

solution to the Syrian question without Putin,” the President pointed out.

Russia has never had the strength to fight on several fronts; it always fights towards one direction. The impunity of Russia in 2008 during the war with Georgia caused the escalation of events into a large-scale confrontation with Ukraine. This approach is quite common in today’s Russia, and gives a chance to choose a preferred tactic.

In addition, security interests are also very important. NATO’s and EU’s eastward expansion is a primary threat to Russia. Russia does not allow other strong states and military alliances to appear near its borders. Similarly, crises in Europe are profitable for Russia. Europeans have less time and opportunity to resist Russia in a post-Soviet sphere and, most importantly, due to the internal economic crisis, they also resist the Eastward expansion of NATO and the EU, which is very significant for Russia at this stage.

After becoming the president, Vladimir Putin made active steps against Ukraine’s attempts to be involved in any Western alliance. After “Orange Revolution,” these steps became even

more rigid. “Gas Wars” between Russia and Ukraine have been concomitant events, even during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich, despite the fact that he was deemed to be a pro-Russian leader. However, Yanukovich’s government fulfilled Russia’s desires, and Ukraine’s NATO membership aspirations have been declined.

Before the autumn 2013, Ukraine appeared to be in good stead with Russia, refusing to join NATO and fully cooperating with Putin. However, shortly before the signing Association and Free Trade Agreement with the EU, Putin forbade Yanukovich from making such step.

As one of EU’s direct neighbors, Ukraine first began peaceful protests against pro-Russian government. After the active intervention of Russia, it became a large-scale confrontation and the annexation of Ukrainian territories.

Putin’s fear of the Ukrainian president in regards to continuing aggression is absolutely logical. Apparently, Putin was somewhat scared by sanctions against him, but not so much as to give up all of its militarist plans; does everything it can to deprive Ukraine of the possibility of Eu-

ropean integration.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is considered to be one of the most acute international crises in the last two decades, and the possibility of its continuation, as the president of the Ukraine pointed out, still exists.

Europe’s apparently incorrect and tolerant policy towards Russia also played an important role during the conflict. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the West hoped for Russia’s integration into the world’s economic and political structures and often condoned Putin’s regime shortcomings.

In 2008, the West condemned Russia’s aggression against Georgia, although it has not proved to be consistent, and as such, Russia has not paid for the attack on Georgia. For this reason, the Kremlin has again made an attack, this time on the Ukraine.

The lack of Western reaction will have negative consequences, not only for Post-Soviet countries, but also, in the future, for NATO and the EU. Therefore, during the period of ongoing sanctions, everything should be done to ensure that Russia will change its military aims against neighboring countries.



WHAT IS BOKO HARAM AND WHAT ARE ITS AIMS

GURAM PTSKIALADZE (BULGARIA)

Nigerian Terrorist group Boko Haram carried out one more terroristic act in the northern part of the country. Dallori, a tiny village and its habitants became victims of the act. Boko Haram killed 86 men including children.

They executed an attack in Dallori situating from Maiduguri, where Boko Haram was created, in 5 kilometers. Near the village 2 camps are located for refugees consisting of 25 000. As eye-witnesses stated, shooting, burning and explosions from three suicide bombers continued for nearly four hours

Nigerian Troops arrived at Dallori around 8:40 p.m. Saturday but were unable to overcome the attackers, who were better armed, said soldiers who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press. The Boko Haram fighters only retreated after reinforcements arrived with heavier weapons, they said.

Eighty-six bodies were collected by Sunday afternoon, according to Mohammed Kanar, area coordinator of the National Emergency Management Agency. Another 62 people are being treated for burns, said Abba Musa of the State Specialist Hospital in Maiduguri.

Having carried out such a brutal act, Boko Haram is appeared to be a powerful terroristic organization. So, what is the case, who are they, what they want or what are its goal?

They have been active for several years, killing people, exploding bombs, firing buildings. Boko Haram—which means Western learning is forbidden—is a Nigerian Islamist militant

group made up of dispersed cells and factions in the northeast of the country. It began with a group of young Islamic radicals in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, more than a decade ago, in 2002, and its current incarnation as a violent insurgency dates to 2010.

Boko Haram wants to wage a war against and overthrow the government of Nigeria, which it sees as being run by false Muslims in order to create a “pure” Islamic state ruled by sharia law.

For the sake of accomplishing that goal, the organization takes on not international western targets, but local such as schools, churches, stations and other places where people gather. They are mostly located in Nigeria — and mostly in the northern parts of the nation, which is predominantly Muslim and predominantly impoverished.

Over the last years, the intensity and frequency of attacks has been increased surpassing ISIS as the most brutal and deadliest terror group in the world. The exact number of their victims is tough to be calculated but one report from 2014 from the Cameroon Journal cites a report stating at least 11,000 had been killed in the insurgency. That only covered through June 2014, the deadliest year yet for Boko Haram attacks. According to 2015 Global Terrorism Index, Boko Haram killed 6444 people in 2014, whereas ISIS killed 6073. In the meantime that the group takes actions in the neighborhood of Nigeria, their main attacks are targeted at northern Nigeria where they have headquarters in Maiduguri. The city

has been a victim after having formed Boko Haram. The last occur happened near the city too killing almost 100 people.

As northern part of the country is meagre, bad governance, corruption, persistent economic hardship, and rising inequality have fostered the growth of radical extremist groups. One of the main reasons of creating Boko Haram is the poor conditions in the region, so that many locals join the organization with the aim of feeding themselves.

According to a recent USIP and CLEEN Foundation study, the three major reasons young men join Boko Haram are unemployment and poverty, manipulation by extremist religious leaders, and a lack of awareness of the authentic teachings of Islam.

In 2014, Boko Haram started using the Islamic State flag in its videos, which sent a clear sign of support from one group to the other. ISIS acknowledged the support in an article in one of its propaganda magazines later that year. Boko Haram actually appears to have reached out to the Islamic State group on several occasions for guidance in tactics and media presence, according to a report in the Wall Street Journal.

Although most of Boko Haram’s attacks have been on Nigerian targets and most of their objectives have been national, its leaders do have connections to other African Islamist groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Somalia’s Al Shabaab, and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). The main source of arms is these organizations. Be-

sides, by kidnapping other countries’ civilians, they get money.

At first it attacked institutions of the Nigerian government: police stations, security officers, and military barracks. The first large-scale attacks were in 2010, intended to exact revenge for the state’s killing of leader Mohammed Yusuf and hundreds of his followers in July 2009. Since then, the militants have moved on to civilian targets: churches, schools, bus stations, and mosques. The group doesn’t distinguish between Christians and Muslims in its attacks.

As for Nigerian government and their policy towards Boko Haram, President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency from May 2013 through May 2014. In 2013 he also declared Boko Haram a terrorist organization. The federal government deployed Joint Task Force (JTF) troops made up of police, soldiers, and agents from the State Security Service to combat Boko Haram on the ground and fighter jets to bomb Boko Haram camps from the air. The JTFs largely drove Boko Haram from cities, but rural areas continue to be attacked. JTFs are responsible for at least half the violent deaths in northeastern Nigeria and have been accused of multiple human rights abuses. Despite having some successes, Boko Haram still carries out attacks.

While being so cruel and destructive organization, the media does take to heart their atrocities and barely a few people know about their actions. If we have a closer look at how much time is spent on bringing ISIS’s “deeds” into light and compare

with Boko Haram, there we have a huge gap between them. One theory explaining it is that while ISIS attacks Western targets and publicizes the brutal slayings of American and British citizens, Boko Haram mainly attacks areas in northern Nigeria, and to a lesser extent, portions of West Africa. Essentially, it comes down to a white versus black issue of coverage: one group is covered by the media while one is virtually ignored.

Another theory involves Nigeria wanting to do little to fight (or provoke further) Boko Haram. At one point in the search for the girls who were kidnapped in 2014, Nigeria’s own chief of defense staff said “just leave us alone.” That kind of sentiment tends to push people (and media coverage) away.

Whereas Nigerian government lacks an adequate policy toward destructing the organization, international actors hardly pay any attention. For example, the US deployed its army of 300 soldiers not even in Nigeria but in Cameroon, bordering Nigeria. The US indubitably backs Nigerian government but it is not enough. International Organizations do little also for solving the problem but as we pointed out, first and foremost, it is the Nigerian government we should blame for not bringing their problem on international agenda. As for the west, being not so active stems from the fact that as Boko Haram does not intent on harming the West but Nigerian government, so if the local government does make its best effort, neither do they and just sweep the problem into the carpet.



PUTIN'S IMPERIALISTIC PLANS BREAKS POST-SOVIET BORDERS

TEIMURAZ SHA

“Devil in the Hell is a positive character” wrote greatest Polish writer, aphorist and poet Stanisław Jerzy Lec. This quote brilliantly shows the attitude of Russian population toward their president, Vladimir Putin, who has built the federation after the Soviet Union’s collapse. In spite of, the Russian currency crisis, high level corruption and autocracy, limited liberties, and big challenges in foreign policy (country loses its political and economic partners as Ukraine, Turkey, EU, Egypt, etc.), according to the last confidential e-pool prepared by Public Opinion Foundation, 72% of population support Vladimir Putin, while only 4% evaluates his politics negatively. That level of support can be explained as a result of a productive work of Russian propaganda and introduction of new nationalistic ideology, which is conditioned by internal and foreign challenges Russia faces every day.

Last year the Russian propaganda was still distributing the majesty of Soviet Union and its glorious victory in World War II, while now the situation changed. On January 21, heading the

Council of Education and Science, Vladimir Putin criticized founder of World proletariat Vladimir Lenin.

“Vladimir Lenin’s idea was not successful. Actually, he had a lot of ideas, but finally all that – autonomization and etc., brought the collapse of the Soviet Union, and that has put a bomb under basis of building, which is called Russia” – stated Putin. On January 25, he specified that Russian Empire was Unitarian state, while Lenin divided it into many autonomous subjects, and all that brought collapse of Russia. Putin also touched upon a topic of Donbas and Crimea transfer to Ukraine, execution of Russian Royal family by communists and repressions, which Russian president considers as a big mistake of the Soviet Government.

The interesting fact is that Kremlin started the kind of demonization of Lenin, Stalin and Communist governance of Russia in early 2014, when the Ukrainian crisis was on agenda, the civil war was started in Donbas region between Ukrainian and pro-Russian separatist forces, and Russia itself was annexation Crimea. In 2014 Kremlin

rhetoric basically included cliché - “Correction of Soviet mistakes”. In one of the interview Putin also mentioned, that Soviet Union’s government made a lot of territorial mistakes.

Should be mentioned that new nationalistic ideology of Russian Federation is “Russkiy Mir” (literally – the Russian World) – a theory which was established around 2006, but was actively launched by Kremlin as an ideology in 2010’s. “Russkiy Mir” includes three basic fulcrums – Orthodox Christianity (led by the Moscow Patriarchate of Russian Orthodox Church), Russian language and Culture (popularization of language, culture, active participation of Russian diaspora), and the common historical background not in frames of the Soviet Union, but as Russian Empire. Last two constituents represent direct geo-political interests of Russian Federation, and include not only post-Soviet area, but also Mongolia, part of Turkey and Iran, Bulgaria, and Poland. It doesn’t mean that Russian is planning to intervene these states, but at least it will use its soft-power (Russian language issue, diaspora,

resources and etc) and will try to “stay” in the regions.

Besides all that, last month Russian media increasingly speaks about division plan of the Middle East in 1916 among the Triple Entente members. In 1916 according to the Constantinople and Sykes-Picot agreement Russian Empire might control Istanbul and a part of Turkey. It has not happened, because after 1917 Revolution, Soviet Russia’s government signed the capitulation in Berlin, left Entente, the World War I, and lost all the rights of legitimacy and pretension of the lands mentioned in Middle East agreements. Anti-Leninist and Pro-Imperial rhetoric was mentioned in 2008, after Russo-Georgian War, when the Kremlin recognized independence of Abkhazia and the South Ossetia. Then Kremlin specified that those conflict regions were recognized not only because of the right of self-determination. Abkhazia gained Russian Empire as an independent principality. Of course Kremlin did not mention the genocide of Cherkas people which directly touched Abkhazians and number of victims that brought those massacres.

One of the leading institutions romantizing with Russian imperial past is Moscow’s Patriarchate of Russian Orthodox Church, which claims its full rights on the territories of Russian Empire, excluding Georgia, Armenia and Poland. Russian orthodox Patriarch Kirill always mentions in his interviews or even preaching, that Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Kazakhstan is Holly Russian lands, and those states are tied to Russia with historical, spiritual and cultural background. It is worth to mention that in recent years Russian orthodox Church tries to create Personality cult of Nicholas II and its family, and always condemns the “barbarian execution of the Royal family by communists in Ipatyev House”.

Demonization of Lenin as a supporter of decentralization, and building new nationalistic idea on Russian imperial background is provoked by few main factors: Ukrainian crisis, according to the Putin’s rhetoric Donbas expansion is in far perspective, and lawful presence and participation in Middle East conflicts (including in relations with Turkey.)



IDFI FORUM: PROSPECT OF GEORGIA'S DEMOCRATIC AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) organized an international Forum "The Prospects of Georgia's Democratic and Economic Development" on February 1 and 2. The Forum was held within the framework of the project "Strategic Plan Georgia 2020 – Strengthening Public Involvement". The project is implemented by IDFI in cooperation with University of Bremen and with the financial support of Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

Along with the representatives of the government and diplomatic corps, foreign experts participated in the Forum as speakers: Michael Emerson - Senior Research Fellow at the Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS); Federico Tarantini - External Energy Policy Officer, European Commission, DG Energy; Jochen Zimmermann - Dean at the University of Bremen, Germany; Andrei Illarionov - Senior Fellow in the Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity at Cato Institute; Lincoln Mitchell - Specialist in Political Development, Expert on US-Georgia; Michael Hikari Cecire - Associate Scholar at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

Prime Minister of Georgia – Giorgi Kvirikashvili and Director of IDFI – Giorgi Kldiashvili opened the Forum. In his speech Giorgi Kldiashvili pointed out the goals of the forum and stressed the importance of similar meetings, where members of the government, diplomatic

corps and representatives of the civil society can discuss challenges and perspectives for Georgia's development. In his speech, Giorgi Kvirikashvili elaborated on the challenges facing Georgia, and discussed the country's economic and political achievements. Prime Minister noted that the government is open and transparent in its actions and added that participation of different branches of the government, civil society organizations and experts is necessary during the elaboration of government policies. Giorgi Kvirikashvili highlighted the importance of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic choice and discussed the significance of the Association Agreement signed between the European Union and Georgia.

Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia – Janos Herman and German Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Georgia – Bettina Cadenbach also participated in the opening ceremony of the Forum. Janos Herman talked about the role of economic development in the democratic development of Georgia, discussed the challenges in this regard and expressed hope that the ongoing economic reforms will further contribute to improving competitiveness and better business environment in the country. The ambassador of the European Union highlighted the role of the European Union in the process of democratic and economic development in Georgia and talked about the significance of Deep and Comprehen-



sive Free Trade Agreement in building up closer cooperation between Georgia and the EU.

German Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Georgia – Bettina Cadenbach introduced the project "Strategic Plan Georgia 2020 – Strengthening Public Involvement" to the invited guests of the Forum and discussed the significance of the projects aimed at increasing civil society involvement in Eastern Partnership Countries. Cadenbach talked about the importance of Georgia to the member states of the EU and positively assessed Georgia's achievements in implementing the visa-liberalization action plan. German ambassador noted that the European Union and NATO strongly support the territorial integrity and internationally recognized borders of Georgia. According to Cadenbach, the Union continues to support the EU monitoring mission in Georgia and noted that EU recently extended the mandate of EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and

the Crisis in Georgia - Herbert Salber. Despite existing challenges, Cadenbach expressed hope that Georgia will continue to implement the reforms that will facilitate its Euro-Atlantic integration process.

After the opening ceremony started the first panel discussion "Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic Aspiration". The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia – Mikheil Janelidze, State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Aspirations – David Bakradze, German Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Georgia – Bettina Cadenbach, Senior Research Fellow at the Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS) – Michael Emerson and Director of Georgian Center for Security and Development (GCSO) – Levan Dolidze participated in the panel discussion. The panel discussion that focused on the process and challenges of Georgia's integration in NATO and the European Union, was moderated by the expert on defense and foreign policy issues – Mikheil Darchiashvili. After the speeches, the discussion continued with a Q&A session with the invited guests of the forum.

The second panel discussion of the first day of the forum focused on the main areas of EU-Georgia partnership. Deputy Foreign Minister of Georgia – Gigi Giadze, External Energy Policy Officer of the European Commission (DG Energy) – Federico Tarantini, and EU Integration Program Manager at Open Society – Georgia Foundation participated in the panel discussion. The discussion was moderated by Kakha Gogolashvili – Senior Fellow and Director of EU Studies at Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS). Speakers and the invited guests of the forum discussed the challenges to the

implementation process of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, negotiations on Georgia's accession to the Energy Community and EU-Georgia visa liberalization dialogue.

The second day of the forum focused on the discussion of Georgia's democratic and economic development. Current economic situation of Georgia was discussed by Alexi Alexishvili – Chairman and CEO of Policy and Management Consulting Group (PMCG), Jochen Zimmermann – Dean at the University of Bremen, Yaroslava Babych – Academic director of Policy Institute of International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (ISET) and Andrei Illarionov – Senior Fellow at CATO Institute. The panel discussion was moderated by the rector of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University – Vladimer Papava. The speakers discussed the challenges and prospects of Georgia's economic development and assessed the reforms in this regard. The main theme of the last panel discussion was Georgia's democratic development. UN Resident Coordinator / UNDP Resident Representative in Georgia – Niels Scott; Chairmen of the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD) – Ghia Nodia; Specialist in political developments and expert on US-Georgia relations – Lincoln Mitchell and Associate Scholar at the Foreign Policy Research Institute – Michael Hikari Cecire participated in the panel discussion. The speakers discussed the development of institutions in Georgia, internal and external factors affecting Georgian democracy and the issues of transparent, open and good governance. The panel discussion was moderated by the director of Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) – Giorgi Kldiashvili.



TECHNO PARK: INNOVATORS' DREAMS ARE NOW A REALITY

TAMAR UMFRIANI

The new Techno Park, which was established at the Base of Technology and Innovation of Georgia will include many new projects and innovations during 2016. Observer talked to the chairman of agency Irakli Kashibadze about their future plans.

Mr. Kashibadze, Tech Park is free to access. Will it remain free in the future or is it just because it's newly opened?

Our other offices and "Fab Labs" work the same way too. The reason for it is to figure out who our potential partners might be. We always suggest new programs and different kinds of services to innovators to find out their business level, which helps us to create better working environment and give them professional experience, although it is little different for businesses and companies within the private sector. We have special conditions for them because, while both sides want to encourage business for beginners, private companies have their own interests; profit from each project and things like that. It's important for our agency's stability.

So we give different suggestions for innovators and busi-

ness partners. Everyday we have workshops for volunteers. They have an opportunity to use all the technology in Techno Park and study new 3D designs. Interested groups or individuals who aren't part of our agency also have chance to use our technology to create interesting workshops for our innovators.

What is the average age of people who show interest in Techno Park?

It isn't just one age group. Teenagers and middle-aged people are equally interested and involved in the process. Our main goal is to influence people with engineering, creative and managerial skills, to combine their abilities and create successful, high quality products. A few days ago, the ministry of education held a meeting where renowned scientists and professors of the country were invited to discuss our agency and our goals and plans, of which they highly approved.

What does the agency plan in the other cities aside from Tbilisi?

We aim to present our infrastructure and open a branch in every city and region of country. The World Bank supports us in

this big attempt. Right now we are working to open centers of innovation on the premises of a national library. One is ready in Kharagauli. Others are still being prepared in Choporti, Bagdati and Ozurgeti. Industrial laboratories are working in Batumi and Kutaisi as well. We need to include every part of country to achieve our goal of creating a healthy competitive working environment for innovators.

Samsung represented their tech in TechnoPark where everyone can examine and try to use their technology. Are there other big companies interested in representing their product in the park too?

Right now we are on level of verbal arrangement with many companies. They have an interest in us because it's clear we have the potential to create high class technology with new innovators. They realize that after the success of our products, both sides will be "winners."

Belarus is an example of the success of Techno Parks in post-Soviet society countries. 80% of their IT products are exported to other European countries. What are our chances of reaching same result in

few years?

Our country has huge resources. After increasing the number of professional workers we can reach higher results. We have already begun the training of our group leaders. 120 of them already satisfy requirements to a professional degree. Through this method, Belarus has been promoted a lot. They already have enough experience and professional workers to transform their ideas into real products fast, although in some ways we are already on a higher level than they are, and often they learn from us. It's actually quite a friendly rivalry where we learn from each other to achieve an end result. In Georgia, industrial laboratories and start-ups are more effective while Belarus has big support from the business sector, which we lack. That's why we always try to obtain funds for our projects, which really has the potential to create progressive products on the international bazaar.

Techno Park has only been open for two weeks. Was there a compulsion to create new technology at the new branch?

This branch opened on January 11th, so up until now, no new

technology has been created, but of course we will keep working and it will happen soon. Interest from both companies and innovators is high. Before, we had a contest for volunteers on the basis of "Fab Lab." We shifted this contest to Techno Park and received very high interest from contestants. This time, 51 groups applied for the contest, which is twice more than previous contests. We support all kinds of innovations, however it's crucial for innovators to realize how to transform their ideas into a real, finished product. That's our main mission.

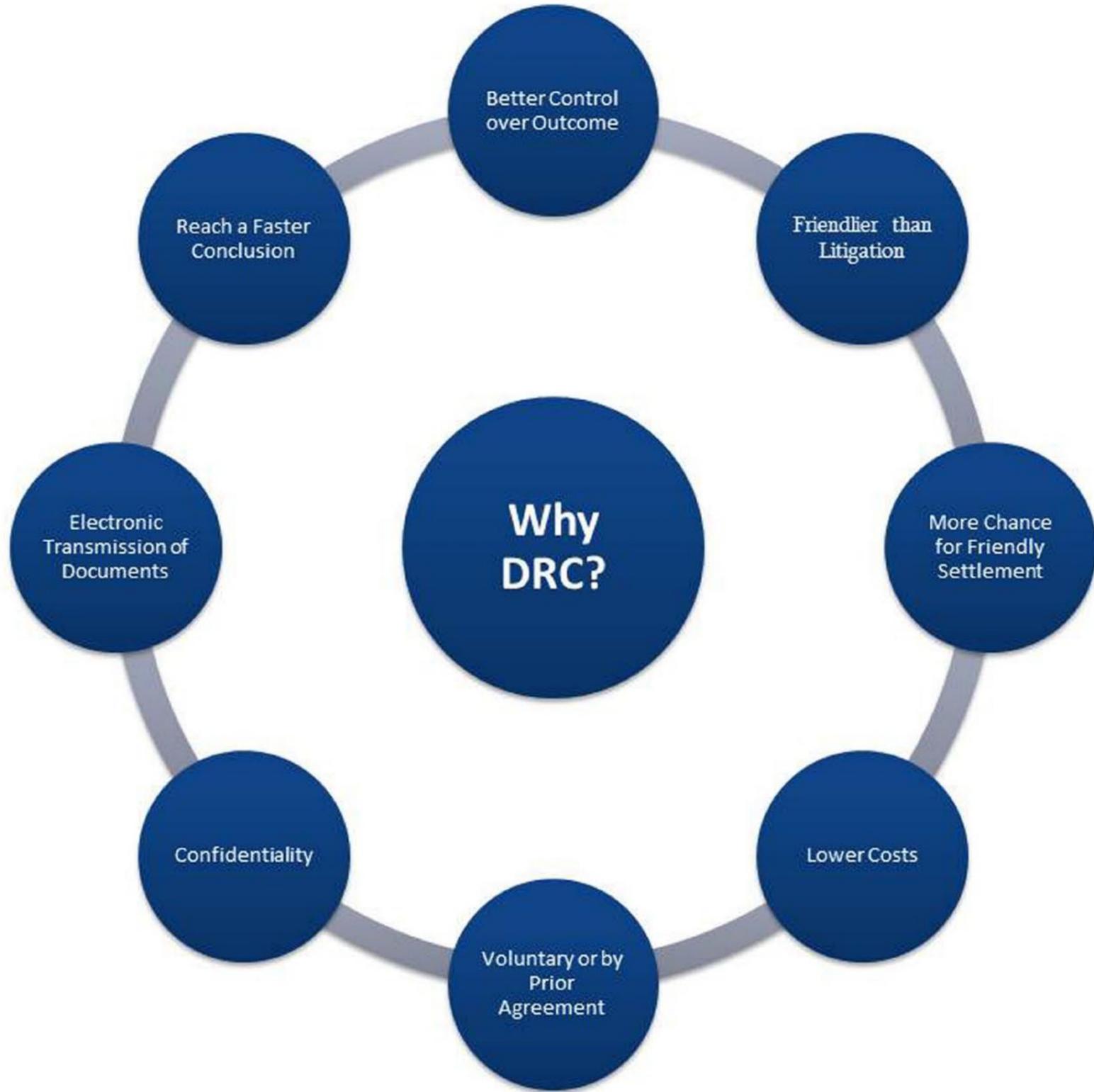
What are the agency's plans for the future?

Our primary goal is to create effective working environments for everyone interested in creating high quality technology with us. We want Techno Park to become a place where innovators can make their ideas a reality. It's very important to improve everyone's knowledge about transforming ideas into real products, and to show results. They need to know how to approach business partners for their ideas. Georgia has viable opportunity to become leader for innovative technology in the whole region.





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GEORGIAN PEACEKEEPERS FACE SCANDALS ON SEX CRIMES

IRAKLI PAVLENISHVILI

United Nations Human Rights High Commissioner Zayid Al Hussein in his report underlined fact that in Central African Republic three underage girls, aged 14 to 16 years, accused the EU peacekeeping mission, particularly Georgian peacekeepers, in sexual harassment. Girls say that they were forced to have sexual contact in exchange for the food. The period of commitment is specified as fall 2014.

UN Human Rights High Commissioner's special representative Rupert Kopevili declared on conference that it is extremely disturbing topic, and in the case of impunity it would be a bad precedent for the region and for peacekeeping missions. He also added that he was pleased by the respective countries operative feedbacks. The Ministry of Defense responded to the Commissioner's report on the same day.

The head of General Staff, General Vakhtang Kapanadze claimed that before setting the truth he temporarily dismissed the 6 military, who were responsible in happening of the appropriate action or were responsible to investigate this crime operatively and did not fulfill their duties. Defense minister and other officials made statements on the need to respond these accuse more quickly to protect the prestige of the Georgian army. Military police launched an investi-

gation process in accordance of United Nations launched investigation process.

Acts of sexual violence in some situations can be charged as a crime against humanity, genocide and war crime. Several articles of the Geneva Convention prohibit various types of sexual violence. The 1949 Geneva Convention and its additional protocols of 1977 determined that women are protected from sexual harassment in two-tiered approach. IHL mandates special protections to women, according to their additional needs because they are more vulnerable. Sexual violence against women is prohibited by United Nations 1979 Convention about discrimination against women and by United Nations 1994 Convention on the prohibition of violence against women, also by Maputo 2003 Act, which protects the rights of women in Africa. This legal issue is also regulated by UN Security Councils 5 Resolutions. UN peacekeepers mandate is defined by United Nations and its Security Councils resolutions. Including 1325 resolution about women, peace and security, which highlights the difficult situation of women in post-conflict society, which is under construction. Resolution underlines the special role of peacekeepers in rehabilitation and protection of women.



If we consider this legal reality, we can conclude that Georgian soldiers are accused of serious crime under international law, which violates international conventions, resolutions shadows the reputation of the Georgian armed forces and its name, which is Confirmed by our fighters highly professional and decent service in the last 17 years in various parts of the world, in various peace missions. Last year similar accusations were heard against Georgian peacekeepers in Mali, but then inves-

tigation found out that perpetrators were French peacekeepers. The scandal was followed by the French peacekeeping missions leaving the country.

Peacekeepers discrimination is actually productive to local and international forces, which want peace missions to finish and armed contingents to leave the territory of the country. While the defamation of Georgian armed forces and the country's international reputation is in only one international players' interest. So do not rule out that this accusa-

tion is deliberate campaign to discredit the Georgian state, and maybe it is not accidental that in one year the Georgian army had two serious charges hearing. The Ministry of Defense by the Temporary staffing decision has raised questions about whether it was relevant decision, taking into account the fact that, even temporarily dismissed soldiers, have contributed a lot to the Georgian Armed Forces. The Investigation will answer the questions or hypothesis, which were presented in this article.



GEORGIAN MINISTER FOR DIASPORA ISSUES ASKS FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO HELP EMIGRANTS

GURANDA DZAMELASHVILI

The State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora issues, Gela Dumbadze, suggests that the government should be putting an additional \$1 million aside for those Georgian emigrants who die abroad.

“We have conducted research that shows approximately 200 Georgian citizens die abroad every year. In some countries, the deceased are kept in fridges. We need around \$1 million to solve this problem. If the government begins taking care of this issue, then we could bury our citizens in our homeland,” Dumbadze said on February 3 at the inter-agency working group meeting, held at the office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues.

Dumbadze also added that the results of this research were sent to Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, and the Minister for Health, Davit Sergeenko.

The meeting, which aimed to discuss the problems of Georgian emigrants, were attended by the representatives of governmental institutions including Deputy Ministers, the international organizations working on Diaspora issues, and the representatives of the Georgian Patriarchate. The State Minister for Diaspora issues has identified a number of the problems that emigrants face,

and proposed to hold such meetings more often, two or three times a year.

“The migration processes from Georgia is unregulated. In 2015, around 1.8 million citizens crossed the borders of Europe. If these processes are to be so neglected, the Schengen zone might face some problems. However, the statistics show that the number of citizens who leave the country is almost equal to the number of citizens who come back to Georgia,” Dumbadze declared. He added that the money the ministry receives annually is just a half million dollars, and is not enough to solve all the problems regarding emigrants.

“We systematically supply emigrants with academic books and try to create special textbooks for language learning. People who have emigrated are working hard to send money back to their families in Georgia. According to National Bank of Georgia, the total amount of money received from abroad is approximately \$1.2 billion per year,” said Dumbadze, who had been meeting representatives of Georgian Diaspora and listening to their problems in previous years.

The problems identified in the meetings included pensions and social security, transportation of deceased citizens, free medi-

cal advice to illegal migrants in their host countries, free customs clearance to the returning compatriots and their personal belongings, acknowledgment of Georgian driver’s license abroad and recognition of work experience by those living abroad.

“The Georgian Community in Austria,” founded in 2015 by emigrants, is a non-governmental organization in Vienna to which Dumbadze has travelled. As organization representatives and their chairman, Tamila Jervalidze, say, the organization and its Sunday school is mostly self-funded; they receive only some books and little support from the Georgian government.

“The main source of income for our organization is a membership fee, which is used to rent the space where we have the Sunday school,” the members told Observer. “In the school, they are taught the culture, geography and history of Georgia. Additionally, we have courses in Georgian dances and folk songs.” The Minister of Diaspora Issues supports the ongoing project, and within the framework of that project, sent books for free from Tbilisi.

The organization wants the Georgian state to allocate more money for citizens living abroad and to supply their Sunday

school with more equipment, such as books, Georgian traditional dance forms, Georgian folk instruments and other materials.

Not many emigrants get the chance to meet with the Minister and share their problems. In some cities, there are no Georgian Diasporas. Emigrants often have to get online support from close friends or relatives, travel to another city to find an Orthodox church in which to pray, and where they may meet other Georgians.

Another important issue raised in meetings with the Diaspora Minister is education, including funding for Georgian students abroad, and increased support from the National Centre For Educational Quality Enhancement in regards to arranging their personal documents.

25-year-old student, Mzia Gogoladze, has been living in Cologne, Germany since 2014. Like many Georgian youngsters, she had made the decision to participate in an Au-Pair program, and after one year working with a German family, she enrolled in the University of Cologne. She hasn’t found any information regarding assistance from the Georgian government, however, she maintains contact with other Georgians.

“I know quite a lot of Georgians and there is a Georgian Orthodox church in Dusseldorf, where I go if I have the chance. There is a Facebook page where many Georgians unite and share their thoughts and help each other. There are student unions in the Cologne University which promote Georgia, trying to get more attention from foreigners,” she said. Unlike many citizens of Georgia, she’s going to return home after completing her master’s degree.

“Having the status of ‘emigrant’ is a bit irritating to me. I keep an eye on discussions on social websites about Georgians living abroad, and I can feel the negative attitude from people. You have been labelled ‘emigrant’ as if it means something bad, like ‘traitor.’ There are people who want to return back, but they can’t for many reasons. I can’t talk about my future plans right now, but I’ve already decided I will come back to Georgia,” Gogoladze said.

The reasons why so many people emigrate are mainly due to economic issues. There are many Diasporas established in Turkey, Greece, Germany, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Armenia and other countries. However, accurate statistics about the number of labor emigrants do not exist.



IS SWINE FLU (H1N1) IN GEORGIA A SEASONAL VIRUS OR THE RESULT OF THE LUGAR LABORATORY ACTIVITIES?

NINI JAPARIDZE

EXCLUSIVE

American Journalist and bureau Chief for Georgia at Veterans Today, Jeffrey Silverman, thinks that the Swine influenza that has spread in region might be connected to the Richard Lugar Laboratory located near Tbilisi airport. According to him, the laboratory, which should work for the prevention of different viruses, isn't operating appropriately, but instead might be conducting research on secret substances, later testing them on local people. Silverman notes that the Caucasus region is an ideal location for the United States to outsource its 'grey zone' research.

Why is your approach towards the Richard Lugar Laboratory so negative? Do you think that it can cause real danger to Georgia and the world?

This has already been demonstrated by the Georgian and Russian media. Georgia was not given the choice by the US Navy; the Ministry of Economic Development was told to sign on the bottom line. It was not necessary to read the details of the collaboration agreement. As it was a political and military decision to locate the lab here, this decision was not one out of concern for public or animal health.

Former US Ambassador Richard Norland said that all the accusations against the laboratory were sheer nonsense. What counterarguments do you have?

The US Ambassador is lying. As I have worked with bio and

chemical weapons, trained in it, have a BS and MS degree, I knew those involved with this project even before it started. As mentioned, the Caucasus region is an ideal location for the United States to practise its 'grey zone' research since many of the most 'attractive' viruses and bacteria for weaponisation live naturally in this region. This is the place to study them more intensely in their natural habitat.

US Ambassador Richard Norland also implied that the laboratory was neither a military center, nor does it have any connection with bio weapons. Do you have any documents to deny that?

I am the Bureau Chief for Georgia at Veterans Today. We at VT have the plans for the lab, and these are safe and secure. I cannot say the same as to the political appointment of Richard Norland, his motives, or the motives of those who came before him.

Why do you think that head of the Intelligence service, Anna Zhvania, was appointed as the head of the laboratory. Do they have anything to hide?

Good question. This was a covert operation and she was a trusted person in the eyes of the United States. She was being paid by the US government. It would have been too risky for a health professional to have been in charge of this project.

You and VT possess the exclusive design plans for the building and labs. Is there anything that people don't know about? Any secret rooms for research-

ers and so on?

All is detailed there- I showed you these documents. I have given many interviews to the Georgian and international media and these plans are no longer secret. I have also shared them with the Russian media and with various human rights organisations. I can't name my source; he was very confidential person regarding the laboratory issue.

You have been interviewed by Russian media. Do you have any idea why the Russian side names Lugar Laboratory as the main source for the spread of deadly viruses? Could it be true?

I first broke the story in the Georgia media, and only afterwards did the Russian media contact me. I assisted them with a detailed documentary about the threat of bio weapons and concerns about the low level of security and safety concerns at labs in Georgia and Ukraine. I have a 21 year old son in Moscow and I am concerned for his safety as well. It is true, turning strain of bio agents into weapons can take place within a matter of matter hours. The Tbilisi anti-plague station's large pathogen collection is still being kept alive and was first moved to the new bio lab. They might work on secret substances and test them on people.

How long is it necessary to create a new virus to spread it and have a result? What area is necessary for a bio attack to be successful?

So to make an analogy, you

need cobra venom before you can manufacture the anti-venom. As is the case with all dual-use technology, there is the potential here, and in developing wider defense strategies, such 'capacity' is taken into account. I - and my network of intelligence staff at Veterans Today- believe that there is little chance that the US would keep such high security information, as would be contained in the archive, in such a precarious location.

In 2018, the Georgian government will become the only responsible party for the laboratory. They will be obliged to keep the laboratory financed as well. Is it necessary for us? Is it worth it?

Georgia does not have the capacity or financial resources to keep and maintain such a lab, and it was never intended to be staffed or operated by Georgia. It does not have trained staff and the operational cost for such a lab is too expensive for the government. My source with the t/45 lab says it costs the US government 12 million dollars per year to operate.

Anna Zhvania has said that the laboratory is very well built and can even withstand an earthquake. She said that even during failure it can work very well. Do you agree? How does this relate to the people who were poisoned? Please tell me about the people who were poisoned. Were the security protocols violated?

I spoke with one British contactor who was first tasked to keep

the building from falling down. There were many problems with not only the quality of the materials, but with the quality of the workmanship. And let us not forget about what happened to the roof of the Tbilisi airport, which was also constructed by a corrupt Turkish company. I have already told that story to other media outlets. In short, the affected people had some breathing problems as a result of a faulty ventilation system. Luckily nobody died. Even the hospital administration was "warned" not to say anything about this case.

Lugar Laboratory is located near the airport. Do you think this is the right location for this kind of laboratory, or can it be dangerous for people living nearby?

It is a perfect location for a bio-warfare facility. The operations conducted in the laboratory are dubious; we do not see a real product, a real benefit, so the Georgian public has reasonable grounds for questions.

Provided that the Swine Flu virus has been spread artificially, should people be ready for a higher threat level of the epidemia?

Keep in mind that nobody knows what kind of research is being done there; breeding new strains, conducting experiments, observing old strains that already exist, or what? I think most of what the Lugar Lab is doing is well documented by Fort Dix in Maryland, and the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta Georgia.



INTERNATIONAL CANCER DAY: “WE CAN... I CAN...”

ETER SHARADZE

Nana Abuselidze, 35, is a cancer survivor. Following a biopsy and a year of unsuccessful treatment, she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in 2013. Her new reality put her in an extremely difficult situation; she became bedridden, she refused treatment, and she limited her contact with relatives and family members. As Nana now says, she just “waited for death.” The reason is that she didn’t believe that cancer was curable. However, at the urging of her spouse, she had an operation. After successful surgery, the next step of treatment, radioactive iodine treatment, was no longer needed. Later, she re-examined herself in Turkey to fully exclude suspicions. There, her full recovery was confirmed once again. However, not everyone is as lucky as Nana.

Every year millions of new cancer patients are diagnosed and millions of people die. According to World Health Organization (WHO), in 2012, 14 million new cancer cases were confirmed worldwide. Of those, 8.2 million deaths occurred. The most common cancers are of the lungs, liver and stomach.

In December 2015, the WHO released a collection of reports entitled, “Health in 2015: From Millennium Development Goals To Sustainable Development Goals,” in which the past 15 years of health trends and the

coming 15 years of health challenges are presented, measured in a global health analysis. A separate chapter is devoted to malignant tumors. The published data shows that from 2000 to 2012, overall mortality rate caused by various types of cancer has declined by a modest 6 percent. The highest improvement occurred in stomach cancer cases, where mortality rates decreased by 20 percent. Cervical cancer was reduced by slightly higher than 10 percent. Reduced mortality rate took place predominantly in high-income countries. Such results are connected with early diagnosis and better treatment methods.

February 4 is International Cancer Day. In this regard, the Ministry of Health and the National Center for Disease Control held a joint conference entitled, “We can ... I can ...”. They were presented with the Population Cancer Registry’s 2015 primary data analysis and mission of assessment of cancer control and needs report, conducted in Georgia within the frame of Cancer Control Action Program.

According to the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health, for the last several years, declining dynamics of registered malignant cancer cases occurred. Death rate dynamics also declined correspondingly. In 2005 there were 28’722 reg-

istered cases, in 2014 the figure was 20’261 and the number in 2015, calculated with a new method, is down to 16’417. Also notable is the fact that there is a significant reduction in first year deaths after diagnosis, which suggests that the diagnoses in the early stages are becoming more common. With early detection and timely treatment, the chances of successful treatment are much higher.

In 2005-2014, information about malignant tumors was gathered in aggregate form, but in 2015, a population-based Cancer Registry was launched, which included different mechanisms of data collection. Accordingly, the registered data is different to the data obtained from the aggregated form. The Population Register has made it possible to obtain more accurate data.

According to the Population Cancer Registry’s preliminary data, the most common tumors in Georgia (of both sexes) are breast, lung and bronchus, and other skin cancers. These are followed by cancers of the thyroid gland, bladder, stomach, prostate, colon, cervix and uterine body.

How does the state care for the patients? There is a Screening Center currently operating, which promotes early diagnosis. In cases of approved diagnosis, treatment costs are partially paid by the state in the frame of a universal health care program. A screening program was launched in 2008, providing breast, cervix, and colon screenings, as well as prostate cancer management for certain age groups. The programme is free, and as a result, the number of diseases revealed at early stages has tripled. This does not mean a direct increase in cancer cases, this just indicates that more and more people apply to the medical facility for tests. As for further treatments, within the framework of universal health care, surgery costs of adult patients is financed for 70%, while further therapy, including chemo, radiation, and hormone therapy is financed for 80%, with an annual limit. According to reports spread on February 4, the government will finance 80% of treatment costs including the drug “Herceptin” for HER2 positive aggressive breast cancer patients, approximately 20-25% of breast cancers, within the programme of referral services.

**WORLD
CANCER
DAY 2016**



**WE CAN.
I CAN.
ON 4 FEBRUARY**

According to the statistics published on the Screening Center website, the test numbers increase every year. This shows that more people are researching and insuring themselves from possible complications. Nevertheless, the target population coverage rates are still low; the main cause of death in cancer patients is late diagnosis, in the third or fourth stages, and late treatment starts.

Nana Abuselidze’s example demonstrates how necessary it is to raise awareness about cancer in order to avoid, as happened in her case, patient despair and limited treatment time. To raise awareness is essential not just for beginning the treatments in time, but also to improve prevention and control, making it possible to diagnose early and maybe even avoid cancer.

The exact cause of cancer is still unknown, however, according to the WHO, about a third of cancer deaths are due to five factors: high body mass index, low fruit and vegetable consumption, lack of physical activity, tobacco use and alcohol consumption. Chronic infections worldwide are associated with 16 percent of cancers.

According to the WHO’s report, the decline of mortality rate, while cancer incidence increases, is indicative of high health care standards. Early detection, diagnosis and treatment are of the greatest importance. According to the WHO, preventive measures are working well, but that should be backed up at the level of legislation. For example, WHO’s sponsored first

international treaty is crucial to the reduction of tobacco use by legislative actions. These acts include the tobacco tax increase, which is one of the most effective ways for reducing consumption of tobacco. Such approaches need be introduced to alcohol consumption, as well as reducing environmental or occupational risks caused by carcinogens.

While new methods of diagnosis and treatment are found, the increase in numbers of new cases is anticipated. This is mainly expected in middle and low-income countries.

The WHO’s strategic goals include the development of a healthy environment with less air, water and soil pollution. WHO and the International Agency for Research on Cancer are cooperating with EU agencies to increase the political commitment to cancer prevention and control. Forces are also directed to researchers of human cancer and the mechanisms of carcinogenesis.

The WHO’s strategic priorities are development of cancer prevention and control strategies, generating new knowledge and disseminating existing knowledge. As well as this, the standards and development of tools for early detection and treatment including fast and efficient transfer of the best treatment practices to developing countries is also a priority. “Finally, countries themselves need to increase efforts to strengthen health systems at national and local levels to ensure early diagnosis and deliver care for cancer patients,” WHO, 2016.



INCREDIBLE PICTURES MADE OF FEATHERS BY 80-YEAR-OLD GEORGIAN ARTIST

NINI MACHAVARIANI

EXCLUSIVE

In a historic house in one of the oldest districts in Tbilisi lives a woman whose work, it is said, does not have an equivalent anywhere in the world. 80-year-old Lia Barnabishvili creates art using just bird feathers and glue.

Her only motivation is her love for her work, which is why she does not stop. She has a severe financial situation; her case is in the court for non-payment of utility bills, but through her work she tries to cope with the hardships.

From childhood, she loved to paint, but she never had art lessons. In eighth grade, she quit school and enrolled at the Nikoladze Academy, where she fell further in love with painting and decided to dedicate her life to it. By the end of her course at the academy, many professors said that the girl had an unparalleled talent, an distinguished artist. Following this, she continued

to study classical watercolor and still continues self-development.

Her feather art began quite by accident.

"Once, my son went to the Jandari Lake with his friends," she said to Observer. "The boys hunted the ducks and I took a feather and put it in a vase. It was quite beautiful. That night something happened; this feather hypnotized me. I painted the bottom of the trees with a brown tone and touched the top of the clouds in blue. The next day my work caused quite a stir. It was very effective. I framed it and then kept it longer."

She has a different approach toward each art piece. As she puts it, for one piece she might need a week, another could be done "in one breath." Sometimes, her creations cure her of her difficulties. When she feels unhappy or down, and then starts work, she forgets her problems immedi-

ately.

Ms. Barnabishvili has worked with feathers for approximately 20 years. She has created over 1000 works in that time, many of which are exported. The artist has had a lot of exposure through exhibitions. Many people want to study this unique art medium. The artist believes that a person's perception of color must come from within, or it will be difficult to understand and interpret her work. Adults often bring their children to see these unique works. "There have been times when the work has stolen from the exhibitions, which causes a lot of spiritual damage in me," she said.

Ms. Barnabishvili dreams of owning her own studio, where she has only a table and chair, a bed, and many feathers. She believes that this is the atmosphere in which she will create something very special.



ANOTHER AWARD FOR "TANGERINES" AND MISHA MESKHI AT THE PEAK OF HIS CAREER

NANA GORGILADZE

EXCLUSIVE

VIPremis
Gaudí
de l'Acadèmia del Cinema Català

More success for director Zaza Urushadze and his film, *Tangerines*, has once again made the fans of the contemporary Georgian movie very happy. Last year's Oscar nominee, the Georgian-Estonian movie has won "Best European Movie" at the 2016 Gaudi Awards in Barcelona, Spain. The prestigious awards ceremony was founded by the Catalan Film Academy and has been held since 2009.

Tangerines' leading actor, Misha Meskhi, said to Observer, "It does not matter which country you were born in or where you are from, you first have to maintain your humanity." Meskhi said that for him and for the other actors, the success of the film, especially the Oscar nomination,

is a career peak. "There is no greater appreciation and award for an actor than this," he said.

This was not the only success for *Tangerines*.

Georgian-Estonian production has received more than thirty awards, including the aforementioned Oscar award, a Golden Globe nomination and the International Movie Project of Warsaw, Iran and Italy. It also won an IPA award, and awards for best producer. It has also been screened in the European Parliament and in the United Nations. *Tangerines'* success across different nominations and venues has given us plenty of evidence of the quality of the movie.

Urushadze mentioned to Observer in regards to its screening in such high profile political locations, that the film did better work for peace than politics. "For me as the director of the movie, the important thing is the theme and the idea of this movie, which caught the attention of the

EU and the UN."

Esteemed Hungarian director Istvan Sabo said, "The best movie I have seen this year was the Georgian-Estonian movie, *Tangerines*." Georgian actor, Kakhi Kavtsadze noted, "I would rate *Tangerines* with the highest score. The movie proves that Georgian filmography is immortal."

"For production of more and more memorable and quality movies in Georgia, we need financial source," Meskhi said. "Nowadays Georgia has very talented actors, including young ones. For the development of the movie industry in Georgia we need money, money and money again. Nominating this movie on Oscar was a kind of stimulus to begin this." In his interview with Observer, Meskhi added that he is working on a new movie to be aired some time in 2016. He avoided talking about new film to leave a surprise for the audience.



LITHUANIAN STUDENTS HOLD EXHIBITION: “ORDINARY STARS”

NINI MACHAVARIANI **EXCLUSIVE**

Lolita Kiričėnka and Dovilė Berlinskaitė are presenting an international social documentary photography project, “Ordinary Stars,” which tells the stories of common people’s lives and daily routines. Through this project, the artists want to reveal the uniqueness of every person, and at the same time show that all of us are similar, despite our social status, nationality and other external criteria.

The main subjects of the photographs are unknown and usually unnoticed in our contemporary society. They are ordinary people who share their very interesting stories, experiences and individual approaches to life in post-Soviet countries.

According to the organizers, the characters of the project are the woman tailor and the truck driver from Belarus, a teacher from Pankisi, a shepherd from Kazbegi and a Georgian supermarket attendant in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Photographer, Dovilė Berlinskaitė, arrived in Georgia to study through an exchange program. She studied creative journalism at the Lithuanian University and continued her studies at Tbilisi State University’s Faculty of Social Sciences, where she spent ten months. The idea of this project came to Ms. Berlinskaitė and her friend, Lolita Kiričėnka, a long time ago.

“We wanted to show how unique each person is. We want-

ed to make it clear for everyone that regardless of nationality and social status, daily life in the post-Soviet countries is similar to each other,” Berlinskaitė told Observer. “Even if the profession is different, we all have something in common. A driver, a shepherd, a teacher - beyond these professions are interesting figures with interesting stories. We all independent, but after seeing the photos you can tell that we have a lot in common.”

The characters were not selected randomly; they had criteria, and a plan to show “ordinary heroes” to the world. The photographers noted that the subjects did not have any problems being the characters. They were quite happy that two students were interested in their daily routine.

Guram Tsibakhashvili, a co-founder of the Gallery, “Container,” and a renowned photographer, attended the exhibition and helped his students arrange the exhibition space.

“The photographs were taken in Georgia, Lithuania, Belarus and Russia,” Tsibakhashvili said. “The photos showed characters in their normal lives and reflected their individual situations. The photographs that show these people are important, not only for them but for the rest of society, as they are seen working in their little worlds for the greater deeds.”

The photographers mentioned that they managed to come clos-

er to the lives of their characters, learning new things from each one. One participant of the project, an agricultural equipment driver, said that he does not like the noise of the city and is happy with his work out in the country, away from so many people.

A woman with 25 years’ of teaching experience in Pankisi enjoys her daily work and communication with young people.

A Georgian character, living in Lithuania, also has an interesting story. He has been working in a supermarket where he gathers shopping baskets. He has also said that he is happy with his job and does not like to complain.

“We have been living in situations like these for 70 years,” Tsibakhashvili said, “Therefore I think it is hard to grow out of them, but it is not impossible. Although Lithuania is a member of the European Union, there is still so much in common with Georgia.”

Ms. Berlinskaitė noted that she likes living in Georgia, claiming that Georgian hospitality is very impressive. “I have lived here for a long time and have visited a lot of interesting places. As soon as I can, I will come back with pleasure,” said the photographer.

Both photographers are planning for future joint projects in Georgia and Lithuania.

Before this, on February 10, the “Ordinary Stars” exhibition will be presented to Lithuanian citizens.



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GEORGIAN RUGBY TEAM STARTS EUROPEAN NATIONS CUP WITH VICTORY

VAKO KIPIANI

The Georgian National Rugby Team, "Borjghalosnebi," defeated Germany in their first match of the new season on February 6, by 59 points to 7. The match was held at Avchala Rugby Stadium.

Mamuka Gorgodze, captain of the team, unfortunately missed the match due to trauma. Some other players from the regular lineup were also missing. Coach, Milton Haig, decided to give the younger players an opportunity to show themselves.

Germany opened the scoring in the 6th minute. No one expected that the game would develop with such drama but the Georgians soon managed to equalize the scores. The first ball was grounded by Levan Gorgadze, while Lasha Malaghuradze

scored a try for the points. The first half of the game ended at 26 to 7 in favor of the Georgian team.

In the second half, Haig let the young players loose. In the 50th minute, George Tkhilaishvili hit the points, and in the 57th and 65th minutes, Lasha Lomidze scored a double. In the 68th minute, Zurab Zhvania took the ball from the center, made a brilliant slalom and passed to Khmaladze, who had no trouble signing a try.

The final score was recorded at 59 to 7. "Borjghalosnebi" has won all six of their matches and are in first place in the competition with 25 points. At a news conference, coaches of both teams summed up the match.

German coach, Kobus Pot-

geiter, had this to say of the winning side: "The Georgian team played a good match and Lasha Khmaladze showed an excellent game. Our team will try to hold on to a higher division."

Haig said, "We have very talented youth in the team, the future of Georgian Rugby is secure! Of course the team leaders were also playing to a high level." Captain, Shalva Sutiashvili, also commented on the game. According to him, it was difficult to focus after a game against New Zealand, "But in the end everything worked out well and we won. We will play better against Portugal."

The Georgian team will play against Portugal in Lisbon on February 13.



WEEKLY SPORT NEWS

Football

On February 4, Dinamo Tbilisi held the second match at the Turkish meeting and defeated Belarus Champion Boris Ovobate by 2: 0. Lasha Parunashvili opened the score, and the second goal came after Chelidze's pass. The Bate defenders allowed the ball to fall into their door. Dinamo held two friendly matches, both won, before the current

game they defeated Croatian Split by 1:0.

Georgian Football Federation President Levan Kobiashvili visited Tbilisi Shatili stadium today. The teams are having trainings here after the dismantling of the "Olympus" stadium. The federation tries to held trainings smoothly.



Football

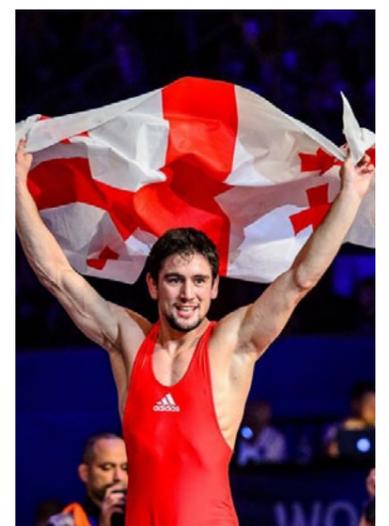
According to the government's decision, Georgia's football de-

velopment program for 2016-2020 was approved and the amount dedicated to that is program 265 700 000 Gel.



Wrestling

Georgian team of the Greco-Roman wrestling had a great success in Istanbul at Vehbi Emre and Hamit Kaplani Memorial, where they won 2 gold, 5 silver and 4 bronze medals. Our team took the second place. It is interesting that both Georgian and Turkish teams collected 70-70 points, but the hosts had 3 gold medals and maintained win.



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შედეგი, თურქეთში

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