



# OBSERVER

## OBSERVE TO LEAD

ყოველკვირეული ორენოვანი  
გაზეთი საქართველოში

WEEKLY BILINGUAL  
NEWSPAPER IN GEORGIA

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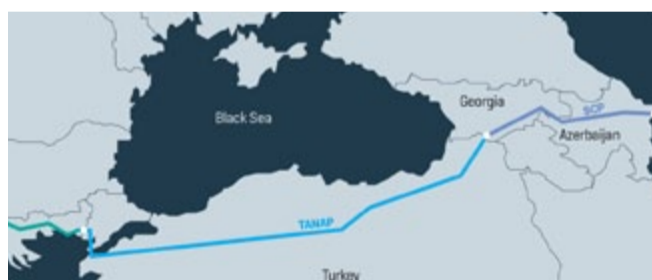


Giorgi Kvirikashvili's current vision might have proved beneficial for the party in 2012 in case of execution of which we might have been facing different challenges now, but as of today, things are not this way, which can also clearly be seen in PM's answers.

### EBRD INTERESTS AND INFLUENCE IN GEORGIAN ENERGY INDUSTRY

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The head of the EBRD believes that geographical location is one of the assets to Georgia making the country more attractive for Chinese "One belt, one road" initiative because Georgia has a wonderful potential for becoming a regional economic hub. He also put an emphasis on EBRD investments in infrastructure services and the assistance for the Georgian council of investors in stimulating reformation process.



### GEORGIA'S ECONOMIC CHALLENGES: A BUMPY ROAD AHEAD

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Within the framework of the survey, the majority of respondents say that their household income is up to 400 (less than \$200) laris per month, 250 laris – in the case of 20 % and up to 800 laris – in the case of 18 %. There are people whose household income is up to 150 laris a month. 65 % gave a negative and 31 % gave a positive answer to the question that NDI has asked for the first time "Suppose, suddenly you needed 300 laris, would you be able to take a zero-interest loan?"



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AS OF APRIL 18, 2016

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATE OF LARI AGAINST FOREIGN CURRENCIES

1 USD	=	2.2519
1 EUR	=	2.5392
1 GBP	=	3.1950
1 CHF	=	2.3261
10 RUB	=	0.3393
10 UAH	=	0.8845

# NDI POLLS REVEAL CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN GEORGIA

GVANTSA SILIKASHVILI

According to the survey conducted in March by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the number of supporters for Georgia's EU Integration has decreased; it amounts to 20 % this year while last year 31% of population supported the idea.

However, the number of supporters of Georgia's EU Integration has increased compared to the results of the previous survey. While last year EU Integration was acceptable for 60 %, this year the number of supporters has increased up to 77 %. According to the survey conducted by NDI, 72 % of the polled are for Visa Liberalization for Georgia and believe that visa-free access to Europe will bring benefit. 18 % disagree. According to the same survey, 84 % support the positive report published by the European Commission on 25th December, based on which Georgian citizens will be able to travel visa-free in the middle of 2016. 8 % do not support the report.

Expert Gia Khukhashvili relates the increased number of EU Integration supporters to particular results with respect to Visa Liberalization: "Recent issues related to Visa Liberalization including taking steps towards Europe and moving a little forward, to some extent re-inspired optimism in the society".

Expert Tornike Sharashenidze thinks that the Russian propaganda has passed its peak. This has objective reasons. Our exports in the EU are growing. Also, every-

one sees that one cannot expect anything good from Russia", - said Sharashenidze.

As for the integration into NATO, 69 % of respondents support the membership of the alliance, but 19 % are against it. Based on the survey, it turned out that NATO ensures Georgia's safety best. Apart from this, Russia has been named as the biggest threat to Georgia. Answers to this question were as follows: Russia – 47 %, Islamic State – 8 %, the USA – 7 %, Turkey – 5 %, NATO – 2 %, Armenia – 1 %, European Union – 1 %, Eurasian Union – 1 %.

However, we should herewith note that 39 % of the polled believe that Georgia is developing in a wrong direction. Only 20 % of respondents think that Georgia is developing in the right way, and 36 % think that Georgia is not changing at all.

The second part of the survey included party rankings. "Our recent surveys showed that nowadays political parties have a big range of opportunities and none of the parties has a notable advantage over others", - said Lora Thornton, NDI Director in Georgia, and added that the population is dissatisfied and disappointed with the political leaders of the country. Thus, it is not surprising that people are hesitant about their political choice. "Parties and politicians will have to work hard to be able to rebrand, regain trust and talk to voters about pressing issues", - she said in the end.

Davit Bakradze, leader of the Parliamentary Minority, followed by the President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili, is in a leading position in the Assessment Indices of Particular Politicians – the part of NDI survey concerning activities of particular persons.

As for the Ministries, the Ministry of Health has the highest index of acceptance and the Ministry of Finance ranks last.

But in general, citizens are dissatisfied with the operation of the country's political institutes. It is said that the Parliament cannot cope with imposed duties properly.

Also, the majority of the polled think that deputies are difficult to approach, they are unable to work on pressing issues, and they do not take citizens' opinions into account or take action to solve their problems.

Within the framework of the survey, the 3 900 polled were also asked a question about the role of the Ex-Prime Minister: Do you consider that Bidzina Ivanishvili remains the one making decisions about the government's activities? 66 % gave a positive answer. This number has increased by 7 % compared to the analogous survey last year.

56 % agree to the idea that Bidzina Ivanishvili must not be involved in taking political decisions. This number has increased by 15 % compared to that of last year's.

The three leading political parties named on the basis of the



question "Who would you vote for if there was a parliamentary election tomorrow?" are the Georgian Dream – 15 %, the National Movement – 13 % and the National Democrats – 6 %. 61 % are still unsure of their choice. In comparison with the previous survey, the number of respondents who have already decided to vote in the parliamentary election has nearly doubled.

As it had been expected, the political part of the survey raised miscellaneous reactions in the addressees.

The ruling party expressed distrust of the survey results once again, nor is the extra-parliamentary opposition satisfied by the results.

"It makes one smile. I will never be able to trust NDI or IRI surveys. We conduct internal surveys and even though we might not be self-satisfied, the rating of our party is quite high, signifi-

cantly exceeding other parties", - claims member of Georgian Dream Irakli Sesiashvili.

Expert Gia Khukhashvili, on the other hand, thinks that the society has a skeptical attitude towards the government which is inversely proportional to the electoral mood.

The survey included a recent pressing problem - potential illegal hearings and surveillance by security forces. 62 % support the campaign "This Concerns You – You are still listened to" organized by nongovernmental organizations, 10 % see the campaign as negative.

Although some of parliament members and experts throw doubt upon NDI surveys, the tendencies shown are out of question.

Mind you that the National Democracy Institute of for International Affairs (NDI) has been operating in Georgia since 1994.

## THE ELECTION COUNTDOWN TO START IN MAY



"At first, the election date is determined - this is October 8 and determination of the election date is good for the predictable campaign.

As for the document that was agreed on the word for word with the government, however, has not been signed today - I would like to tell you that I issued this document as Government of Georgia assured me it would be financially devastating to announce the elections date earlier than 60 days.

But as it appeared this is not so, and it is

possible to announce elections date earlier. Therefore, I will issue an act at the beginning of May that will contain a proposal on setting the elections date.

This will be a positive because we will start the election campaign five months earlier, that will be positive for election environment and whether it is any financial questions I am ready to help the government in part of the financing elections administration, from my fund", - was declared by the President of Georgia.

# PM'S 'SINCERE TALKS' WITH MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES AND MAIN FEATURES OF THE MEETING

NINO SHARASHIDZE

The Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kvirikashvili held the first meeting with the anchors of political shows from national broadcast companies. PM summarized his three months in the office with media representatives and emphasized the renewal of the Georgian Dream Party team which, as he states, is going to be staffed with young professionals.

Meeting with media representatives is not new for the Prime Ministers of the Georgian Dream, however, unlike his precedents, Kvirikashvili did not tell journalists off and answered even the most difficult and sometimes provoking questions with the usual self-possession. This is thanks to his balanced character on the one hand, and on the other hand, to win people's trust and respect. Perhaps the Georgian Dream has realized that attack is not the best form of defense and sometimes it is better to apologize and admit your mistakes.

The Prime Minister shared journalists' viewpoints about the problems in the country; however, he explained the backlogs in certain areas with the unstable political and economic situation in the region. It should also be noted that he did not have specific answers to some questions and admitted that he hadn't had enough time to look through, for example, the details of the Court Reform. This cannot be assessed as positive because he should have expected potential questions and prepared to answer them. Kvirikashvili did not stress properly the economic problems while stating that people cannot afford to buy basic household appliances and their purchasing power is below the limit of everyday essentials.

PM pointed out several times during the meeting that the challenges ruling party and the whole country are facing today are completely different from those four years ago. However, considering the issues uttered by media representatives, whom the Prime Minister agreed to, the challenges have barely changed and they are even more pressing now than in 2012. Giorgi Kvirikashvili's current vision might have proved beneficial for the party in 2012 in case of execution of which we might have been facing different challenges now, but as of today,

things are not this way, which can also clearly be seen in PM's answers.

## *Elections date*

The government and the President have different opinions about the start of the election campaign. This is exactly what the question of a journalist from Channel 1 touched upon. The President thinks that the so-called Election Countdown should start on 8th May, but Kvirikashvili thinks that in order to save funds, parties should start the election campaign on July 8, three months prior the elections. It should also be noted that the President offered the government financial support from his own budget so that the pre-election marathon can start earlier. But Kvirikashvili's government does not have an answer to this. The request of the opposition should also be taken into account – to their mind, given the condition in which the government can afford allocating 29 million laris for concerts, they must somehow assign 5 million laris for such a democratic process as the parliamentary elections and the pre-election campaign.

## *Unfinished self-government reforms*

Self-governmental elections scheduled in 2017 are also approaching. The Prime Minister thinks that the reform of the self-government has not been finished and further inevitable decentralization is planned. This means that the central government should be further delegated in terms of property and budget. However, as he states, there is a problem of human resources and if their development is not reformed then delegation should not take place. Of course, there are actual risks regarding this but in this case it is not right to imagine the worst scenario when self-governments are not given an opportunity to become fully independent. Perhaps it would be best if Kvirikashvili focused on what is done for the human resource to catch up with the process of decentralization and to put an end to the reform of self-government.

## *Relationship with the Ex-Prime Minister*

The Prime Minister pointed out that his candidate was named by Bidzina Ivanishvili, however

he explained that he makes decisions independently of Ivanishvili and does not obey anyone's interference or order. He also remarked that he feels power inside himself to do good deeds for the country, thus he precludes the possibility of having an unofficial ruler and adds that he makes decisions with the team. In addition, Kvirikashvili said that he has several severe arguments with Bidzina Ivanishvili but in the end they shared each others opinions.

## *New Team with Young Professionals*

Diana Trapaidze, journalist from broadcasting company Imedi, emphasized the fact that the Georgian Dream does not reveal concrete ideas around which young professionals are going to unite. The Prime Minister answered that "faces" work better than any election programme or uniting around a mutual idea. He also claimed that the announced members of the team are not going to be graduates but rather successful and realized young adults that will shift the country to a new stage of development; they will have clear visions and we should not be expecting "surprises" from them.

Media representatives also touched upon the presence of the Republican Ministers in the government to which the Prime Minister answered that he is not going to dismiss them; as he stated, there is a one-month period regulated by law and if within this period they decide to be in the election list, they will supposedly make decisions about resignation themselves; until then the government will be working in the "partnership and competition regime".

## *NDI surveys*

The question put by Giorgi Gabunia, journalist from Rustavi 2, about NDI surveys that the government does not trust, sounded interesting. While the Prime Minister of Georgia talked about the effective surveys and various projects this organization conducts in order to develop Democracy in Georgia; However, he did not agree to some of the survey data and said that his attitude especially towards parties and officials does not coincide with the figures in the survey.

## *Health Care Reform*

Magda Anikashvili, journalist from the broadcasting company Maestro focused on the health care reform and pointed out that despite the reform being successful, the number of irresolvable problems remain big since at the moment the government finances only critical care medicine, while after the operation many might not even be able to afford buying medicine, hence be unable to rehabilitate properly. In his answer, the Prime Minister said that there are certain diversifications of medical reimbursement distribution planned which means that a richer packet will be granted to those most in need, and the ones who can afford to self-finance their medical needs, they will get a comparably modest packet. Kvirikashvili focused on the perspective of building new pharmaceutical factories and cutting prices on medicines through public-private partnership.

## *Unfulfilled Promises*

Nino Zhizhilashvili, journalist from TV1 got interested in the areas that the Prime Minister is less satisfied with. However, the Prime Minister was not very precise and explained that the backlogs were related to the economic crisis in the region, caused by the crises in Ukraine and Syria as well as price falling prices on oil; he named the less daring actions and recurring volatility of the ruling party as the other reasons for the problem.

The question put by Tamar Chergoleishvili, journalist from the TV Company Tabula, also concerned the unfulfilled promises. The government promised internally displaced people settled in Tserovani to reimburse their communal costs, but it never happened as a result of which the majority of Tserovani refugees are not provided with gas and electricity. "An important social system reform has to be carried out and this will be one of the corner-stones of the approach through which we will be focusing more on the social group that needs our help more" –said Kvirikashvili.

## *The Issue of Russia*

"Through the dialogue regime we managed to warm the relationship despite the occupation and the result is present - there is stability needed for the dy-

amic development of the country We have not achieved this at the expense of any compromise, ceding our western integration" –said the Prime Minister and added that the biggest priority of his team is the European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. But Kvirikashvili does not intend to speak up about threats coming from Russia as he considers that Russian investors might get scared off and this will affect the country's economic development.

Eventually, they discussed matters such as cutting budget costs which as the Prime Minister pointed out will be possible at the expense of reacting to bonuses as well as purchasing and keeping black Jeeps. They also touched upon the issue of illegal hearings and Kvirikashvili showed a decisive position stating that he will have severe reactions to such occurrences and appealed to the Prosecutor's Office and Legislative Bodies for a timely and effective investigation, eradication of secret facts of ignoring these happenings and severe punishment of providers of such records. Questions were asked about the Court Reform, Legislative Body Reform and Prosecutor's Office Reform; in this case, the Prime Minister did not wish to concretize and pointed out that the reform is still under way. They also discussed the use of soft drugs which Kvirikashvili deems must not be encouraged but on the other hand he does not consider it to be a reason enough for imprisonment. "I will try to make changes", he said in the end.

As for the tradition of delegation of power, PM does not think that this process has caused any shifts in the country. In the case of Ivanishvili it was previously announced, as for Gharibashvili's decision, he approved of it and explained that it is difficult for anyone to hold this position, for example, he does not like it either that he has to limit his personal space and constantly be escorted by the security guard. However, Kvirikashvili thinks that he is a successful manager with enough knowledge and experience to lead the country. Announcement about his resignation are not likely in the immediate future.

# WHAT IS THE MESSAGE BEHIND JOINT ACTIVITIES OF RUSSIA AND SO-CALLED SOUTH OSSETIA?

NATA BITSADZE

Under the decision of Leonid Tibilov, de facto President of separatist South Ossetia, a referendum on joining Russia will be held in so-called South Ossetia. As Tibilov says, this action is a result of NATO approaching the Russian borders as well as continuing anti-Russian and anti-Ossetian rhetoric. The de facto President has spoken about holding a referendum several times but now he even names the estimated date.

“As we do not wish to cause our strategic partner any complications on the international arena, I think that the referendum has to be held before August. We will be considering including a particular norm in our constitution which will enable the President of the Republic of South Ossetia address to the Russian Federation with a proposal on South Ossetia joining Russia as a new subject,” says Leonid Tibilov in his statement.

Georgians have seen this decision as political blackmail and speculation as the Ossetians decided to hold the referendum at the time of the Warsaw Summit and national elections.

The State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Davit Bakradze thinks that holding a referendum in so-called South Ossetia will be an act of ignoring the international law and it will not have any binding force.

The first Deputy State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Ketevan Tsikhelashvili thinks that Russia is using the referendum in so-called South Ossetia as a means of political blackmail against Georgia, and adds that holding a referendum on an empty occupied area is illegitimate.

Georgian experts in political issues analyze the current situation and think that it is in Russia's interest for the referendum to be held, however it does not conform to any juridical norms and it will not be approved by the World Community.

Politologist Soso Tsintsadze considers this action as a sign of Russia inviting the Georgian government to a Roundtable Discussion. However, as he says, our government is categorically against serious negotia-

tions and they, for some reason, carry on the Karasin-Abashidze “outdated format”. The expert reminds the Georgian government of Grigory Karasin's warning and says that the government did not take the Russian diplomat's words seriously.

“Our government and Foreign Minister forgot Karasin's warning about the limits of Russia's patience too soon. This was not a hotheaded reaction but rather it was a really serious message to the Georgian government but at the time the government did not take any measures in regard to this and the so called referendum is an immediate result”, - Tsintsadze remarks.

Expert Soso Tsintsadze advises the Georgian government to avoid clear statements and a strained tone.

“Today the right decision would be to ignore this fact because we cannot do anything good in this respect, in addition, the so-called referendum has no significance, the international society simply won't accept it,” the politologist pointed out when talking to OBSERVER.

The President of the Independent Expert Club Soso Tsiskarishvili says that the subject and date of the referendum are both chosen by the Kremlin. To the politologist's mind, this is above all some kind of reconnaissance to see how Georgia and civilized states will react.

“However, while NATO admits that Russia is a threat to European countries, it will generate even more disturbance and complications if they admit the referendum in so-called South Ossetia. What status Russia grants to so-called Ossetia would not make any difference for us, this will be an illegal decision and civilized countries will see it as illegitimate and unacceptable”, - claims the politologist in the interview given to OBSERVER.

Expert in political issues Ramaz Sakvarelidze thinks the announcement that Vladimir Putin made on 14th April makes the issue of holding the referendum in so-called South Ossetia vague as Putin pointed out that this issue is not discussed in Russia. The politologist does not preclude the chance of this announcement being insincere and Russia prepar-

ing something against Georgia.

“If the referendum is held, it might not be any danger if not approved by Russia, but if Putin announced that this is as a wish of the Ossetians and he accepts to join their territory, this would create a very difficult situation” – Ramaz Sakvarelidze remarked when talking to OBSERVER.

As the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Davit Zalkaliani states the referendum-related announcements above all aim to continue the factual annexation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region, they are of provocative and serve as an attempt to affect the current political processes in Georgia.

The Ministry appeals to the Russian Federation to avoid creating an even tenser safety and humanitarian situation and escalation on the occupied territories of Georgia and fulfill the obligations imposed by the ceasefire agreement signed in 2008 between Russia and Georgia

“We appeal to the World Community to adequately assess the results and challenges that the potential referendum that aims to integrate the occupied region of Tskhinvali into Russia might result in. We appeal to them to take adequate measures to prevent the annexation of the occupied territories of Georgia,” said Davit Zalkaliani.

However, the actions of Official Moscow have gone further and they discussed the issue of ratification of the so-called agreement on the border with South Ossetia at the State Duma on April 15.

“During the negotiation which has been under way since 2010, delimitation works on 74 kilometres long state border were done. As a result of the combined effort we restored the administrative-territorial border that existed between the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic before the collapse of the Soviet Union,” said the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Karasin.

The agreement on the so-called state border between Russia and occupied South Ossetia was signed in Moscow on 18th February, 2015. The agreement was also discussed by the Parliament of South Ossetia



on 4th April.

As Karasin states, it is likely that a corresponding decision will soon be made.

The Georgian government does not comment upon the issue, but threats are quite real and ignoring them will not do the country any good. It is also interesting that the Georgian government always has the same answer to any action from the Russian side, in-

cluding the recent events in the so-called South Ossetia: First they appeal to the Russian Federation to avoid any such actions and then ask the World Community for help, which is not seen as serious by experts; they cite the Ukrainian experience to show that the World Community is either powerless when faced with Russia or less motivated to make Russia change the decision.

## James Appathurai: NATO should be more represented in Georgia

Defence Minister of Georgia Tinatin Khidasheli met with the Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia James Appathurai in Bratislava. The sides discussed the implementation of the NATO-Georgia Substantial Package. It was noted that the active involvement of the alliance is necessary for the successful implementation of the. The meeting focused on the first teachings of the NATO-Georgia joint training center.

“The training center has been operating. We are working on building building defence institution for the school. More trainings are planned in Georgia. Everything is going well. We will have a summit meeting to discuss the mission in Afghanistan on the level of the Heads of States. Of course, Georgia will also be presented there. However, there is still much to do, especially from the side of NATO so that the alliance is more presented in Georgia,” James Appathurai said.



# DEEP CONCERNS RISE AS RUSSIAN HELICOPTERS VIOLATE THE 1972 AGREEMENT

SALOME KHVEDELIDZE



Russian warplanes conducted “simulated attacks” on the U.S. Navy vessel in the Baltic Sea on April 11-12, repeatedly flying within 30 feet of the ship. This was perceived as an aggressive action, followed by statements of officials in the U.S. and Lithuania.

The Donald Cook was in the Baltic Sea when a Russian helicopter, KA-27 Helix, made seven over-flights and appeared to be taking photographs of the U.S. Navy ship. Shortly after the helicopter left the area, two SU-24 jets began making low over-flights with a “simulated attack profile”. The aircraft made a total of 11 passes. It should be noted, that a) the Russian aircraft failed to respond to repeated safety advisories in both English and Russian, b) the nearest Russian territory was about 70 nautical miles away in its enclave of Kaliningrad, which sits between Lithuania and Poland. Although the Russian Ministry of Defense claimed it was less than 45 miles from one of its naval bases.

US Donald Cook’s commanding officer Adm. Mark Ferguson stressed: “On April 11-12, USS Donald Cook was operating in a professional manner in international waters conducting operations and exercises with our allies in the Baltic Sea.” He also expressed his concerns. “In my judgment these maneuvers in close proximity to Donald Cook are unprofessional and unsafe.”

Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė stated that the recent incidents indicate that Russia is a difficult neighbor. “Despite the nice rhetoric and trying to say that others are to blame, the facts show that it is this

neighbor that poses a threat and we are taking all the necessary security measures,” – she said.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry condemned a close encounter between Russian fighter jets and a U.S. Navy destroyer, saying they could have opened fire, which would in accordance to the bilateral agreement.

“It’s unprofessional and under the rules of engagement that could have been a shot down, so people need to understand that this is serious business and the United States is not going to be intimidated in high seas,” - he told CNN en Español.

Top diplomat also called those actions “reckless and provocative” and said they were communicating to the Russians how dangerous this was and expressed their hope that that would not ever be repeated.

In the 60s there were several incidents between the U.S. and the Soviet Navy forces. These included planes of the two countries passing near one another, ships bumping one another, and both ships and aircraft making threatening movements against those of the other side. In the aftermath of this, two sides decided to prevent such actions by signing the agreement. Protocol to the Agreement between the Government of The United States of America and the Government of The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the prevention of incidents on and over the high seas was signed on May 25, 1972 during the Moscow summit meeting and entered into force on May 22, 1973.

Observer spoke with Senior Fellow at Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International

Studies (GFSIS), a career diplomat and the Director at the Directorate for the Americas (2004-2006) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Giorgi Badridze.

“In recent years, the main driving force of the foreign policy of Russia is not so much to ensure the security of economic interests, but rather to restore Russia to great power status. This cannot be achieved by soft power, because neither Russian economy nor Russian cultural influence is in particularly good shape. So Putin chose aggressive foreign policy and uses every opportunity to create the illusion of strength,” – he said.

Over the past year Canada, Great Britain, Turkey, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and even Georgia were no strangers to Russia’s successful attempts to violate airspace. Also, close encounters between Russian military aircraft and U.S. warships have been increasingly common. In October, U.S. Navy jets intercepted two Russian aircraft flying near the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan in the Pacific Ocean. In June a Russian jet flew within 500 meters of a U.S. guided-missile destroyer sailing in the Black Sea near Crimea. So a career diplomat Giorgi Badridze spoke about long history of Russia violating airspace as well and said, that it “was not the first time Russian jets flew over American ships.

“I should also remind you that Russian strategic bombers have been flying in the immediate proximity to European and American borders, and this fact serves to demonstrate the power, which is absolutely inappropriate”, - he added. “In fact, instead of demonstrating power, such actions expose real weaknesses of Russia: they do not have any other options to regain their status in international system. Hopefully, the U.S. and the West will not award Russian hooliganism with another Reset Policy”, - he added.

According to Russian Ministry of Defense spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, Kremlin does not understand “such a painful reaction from our American colleagues”. Even though he said that all Russian military flights

are “conducted in strict compliance to the international rules of airspace management over neutral waters”, it is clear to international community that it was not a casual mistake, but rather very well calculated move. The Russian fighter jets were not armed, so despite their aggressive be-

havior, they were no real danger to American ships. Instead, they most certainly were trying to send a very clear message to the U.S. – as long as The Baltic Sea is Russia’s neighborhood, they can and they will to disrupt U.S. naval activities, marking their territory.

## Defence Minister held high level meetings in the framework of Global Security Forum



Minister of Defence of Georgia paid official visit to the Republic of Slovakia. Tinatin Khidasheli took part in the 10th Bratislava Global Security Forum (GLOBSEC).

The heads of European countries, ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs, the representatives from NATO and EU nations, experts in global security affairs are discussing the issues concerning security in Central and East European countries and in EU and transatlantic area. The attendees focused on a number of topics including NATO Warsaw Summit, upcoming U.S. presidential elections and its impact on global politics, the role of the West in crisis resolution in the Middles East, Russian activities in Syria and the Western strategy to deal with the challenges posed from Russia to the international security arrangement

Georgian Minister of Defence also attended the Defence Industry Forum, where regional defence cooperation and modernization issues are being discussed among the Visegrad Group countries during chairmanship of the Czech Republic.

Khidasheli held high level meetings with Deputy Secretary General of NATO Alexander Vershbow, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs of NATO James Appathurai, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy Amb. Tacan Ildem, President of the Republic of Bulgaria H.E. Rosen Plevneliev, Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic Lt. Gen. Peter Gajda and ministers of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia and Latvia as well as with Director General for Enlargement of European Commission Christian Danielsson and the business sector representatives.

“Security Conference in Bratislava is beginning and it is one of significant events taking place prior to the Warsaw Summit. I held bilateral meetings during the conference and met with ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs from a lot of European countries. We also held meetings with NATO and EU representatives. I hope that we all, through these formats, will be able to reach our ultimate goal before the Summit” stated Tinatin Khidasheli.

GLOBSEC was being held under the organization of Slovak Atlantic Commission and Central European Strategy Group.

# EBRD INTERESTS AND INFLUENCE IN GEORGIAN ENERGY INDUSTRY

GIORGI CHAPIDZE

Last week Georgian Ministry of Finance held a meeting with the representatives of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). During the meeting sides discussed priority directions of cooperation and the bank's new four-year strategy toward Georgia. The final document will include promotion of private sector, establishing energy security, finding new ways for exporting energy produced in Georgia and deepening the country's integration in regional and global initiatives.

EBRD managing director for Caucasus, Moldova and Belarus Bruno Balvanera, who also attended the meeting expressed willingness to widen and improve partnership with Georgia and allocate additional funds to develop infrastructure, energy sector, agriculture and tourism.

Apart from this, the president of EBRD during his interview with the Voice of America's Ukrainian branch stated that Georgia is an interesting country for investment due to the following three conditions. First of all, hydro resources are of crucial importance – "There is no oil in Georgia but water can be useful resource for the region". President Suma Chakrabarti pointed out that Georgian hydroelectric-energy can be exported in neighboring states, for instance in Turkey, and investing in this sphere seems to be winning. He went on to declare that Georgia succeeded in reformation process, strengthened state institutions and fought against corruption ef-

fectively.

The head of the EBRD believes that geographical location is one of the assets to Georgia making the country more attractive for Chinese "One belt, one road" initiative because Georgia has a wonderful potential for becoming a regional economic hub. He also put an emphasis on EBRD investments in infrastructure services and the assistance for the Georgian council of investors in stimulating reformation process.

Besides, last week EBRD representatives held a meeting with Nodarjavakhishvili - Georgian Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure and discussed the possibilities for deepening cooperation in concrete sectors in Georgia. EBRD is a major investor in developing regional infrastructure. Furthermore, EBRD staff met with the PM of Georgia and outlined that the bank is a partner not only in investing and financial field but in the country's integration course in the European institutions.

Abovementioned meeting are very essential and significant as far as EBRD is investing in Georgia's critical sector – regional infrastructure. Also EBRD's new strategy for Georgia is being negotiated that is expected to increase the country's possibilities to develop regional infrastructure by targeted spending of the money that is directly connected with tourism sphere.

Nowadays EBRD has following priorities in relation with Georgia. First of all, fostering

private investment is noteworthy. EBRD work with the private sector clients via private bank operations in Georgia to finalize unfinished reform agenda and assist government's policies. The Second objective is completing modernization of the energy sector by increasing energy production and opening access to export markets. Also, EBRD supports Georgia's regional and global economic integration by helping Georgian companies to take advantage of trade opportunities in terms of cooperation with regional and global economic organizations.

In line with EBRD's latest strategy for Georgia adopted on September 4, 2013, the bank has executed projects with a total value of 5 billion Euros in Georgia since initiating its operations in the country in 1991. 66 % of the money was allocated to financial institutions, 19 % in the energy sector, 11 % into the corporate sector and 4 % in the infrastructure sector. Furthermore, up to 2013, 82% of the bank's portfolio in Georgia was dedicat-

ed to private sector. One of the significant project was Georgian Agricultural Finance Facility (GAFF) targeted to the development of micro, small and medium sized agricultural projects and encouraging the implementation of best practices of farming methods in primary agriculture. Also according to the strategy, peaceful transfer of power after parliamentary election of 2012 was key occurrence that usually does not take place within the region. This political context turned out to be instrumental in investing in Georgia.

In 2016 EBRD presented the projects tailored to the development of Georgian small and medium sized businesses. The main purpose of the initiative is to realize the benefits of the DCFTA ("DCFTA adaptation program") and implement it with the help of institutional and legislative reforms. Also the EU allocated 4, 5 million to the DCFTA Adaptation Program for the EBRD that will manage this money to be spent in certain directions. Also, one of the fields of cooperation is

the renewal of the bus park of the Tbilisi and cooperation in reprocessing of solid waste.

EBRD is one of the important financial partners for Georgia on which the development of Georgian regional infrastructure in heavily dependent. This is financing mechanism deliberating the country's political climate that is one of the premise for allocating financial resources. Arguably the level of democracy and execution of reforms are the groundings that are taken into consideration by the EBRD when granting the money. This is a central matter for the EBRD because it should control how these finances are managed. Cooperation with the reconstruction and development bank is not a one-way traffic, the bank is also interested in Georgia's strategic geographical location and their officials vision Georgia as a hub for regional economic projects. Considering these realities, EBRD will deepen partnership with Georgia bearing in mind and in accordance with the quality of Georgian democracy.



## US-GEORGIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP COMMISSION OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND ENERGY HELD WORKING MEETING



On April 12, the US-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission of Economy, Trade and Energy Working Group met in Tbilisi to discuss the progress of the Euro-Atlantic integration-related reforms and bilateral economic cooperation as well as future priorities. The parties agreed to the need to implement reforms that will attract foreign investment, promote innovation and entrepre-

neurship, strengthen the private sector's confidence in the justice system and strengthen the country's energy security. The Working Group emphasized the importance of strong US bilateral relations, as well as the US Government's strong support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The US side of the working group was co-chaired by Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economic and Busi-

ness Affairs Kurt Tong, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia Thomas Melia. The meeting was attended by Advisor to the Secretary of State for Science and Technology of the Vaughan Turekian, the first Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs David Zalkaliani and the Deputy Minister of Economy Gennady Arveladze.

# GEORGIA'S ECONOMIC CHALLENGES: A BUMPY ROAD AHEAD

GVANTSA SILIKASHVILI

The US National Democracy Institute published the results of the new pre-electoral survey in Georgia which took place from February 23 through March 14 and reflects respondents' attitude towards a wide range of issues, economics and foreign policy among them.

The survey was conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center and financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Within the framework of the survey, on the basis of representative selection, 3 900 Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijan language speaking respondents were polled. The error limit of this survey order by NDI amount to  $\pm 1.6\%$ .

According to the survey, society considers jobs (57 %), inflation (35 %), poverty (30 %) and pensions (26 %) as the most pressing issues. The five ends with territorial integrity.

Over a half of the population (66 %) assesses the current economic situation in the country as negative; in particular, their answers to the question "What is the current economic situation in Georgia like?" were "very good" (1 %), "good" (2 %), "average" (29 %), "bad" (40 %) and "very bad" (26 %); 2 % did not have an answer to the question.

People dissatisfied with the country's economic situation were also asked what they think the reasons for the economic problems are. The absolute majority (81 %) agreed to the idea that it is the fault of the current government, ruling coalition

"Georgian Dream". The idea was not shared by 71 % of the people surveyed, and 6 % denied answering.

Over a half of the respondents surveyed (53 %) agreed to the idea that the Georgian economy was affected by global economic problems. 28 % of the respondents disagreed to the idea, and 9 % did not wish to speculate.

59 % shares the idea that the country's economic problems are a result of the mistakes by the former government ruling party "United National Movement". 23 % disagree to this idea and 11 % denied answering.

The answers to the question "in what situation have you and your family been since October 2012?" were "better" (10 %), "in the same situation" (47 %). The number of people whose situation has worsened has increased up to 42 % while in April last year it was 34 %.

As a result, 48 % think that the economic situation of their families "will stay the same" during the following one year, 20 % hope their situation to improve, 17 % show a pessimistic attitude and 16 % have a difficulty speculating.

Within the framework of the survey, the majority of respondents say that their household income is up to 400 laris per month, 250 laris – in the case of 20 % and up to 800 laris – in the case of 18 %. There are people whose household income is up to 150 laris a month.

65 % gave a negative and 31 % gave a positive answer to the



question that NDI has asked for the first time "Suppose, suddenly you needed 300 laris, would you be able to take a zero-interest loan?"

A big part of the surveyed people (56 %) state that lari devaluation against dollar affected their families and they have to spend more on essentials, 40 % say that they rarely buy essentials and 4 % believe that lari exchange rate has not affected their families at all.

"Accessible Medical Service" is the only area which the majority (51 %) thinks has improved since 2012.

As studies show, the country is in a difficult economic state, which directly affects the population. Gia Volski does not deny this and as he pointed out, the social problems named in the studies by NDI are obvious even without any survey.

"We are aware that the fluctuation of Lari exchange rates has had negative effects. Although it did not hit prices as severely as in

other countries, there are actual negative tendencies characteristic of the economy" – said Volski when talking to journalists.

In the Parliamentary Minority they claim that these are the results of the policy the government has been carrying out for the last few years.

"This survey serves as additional proof that Bidzina Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream do not care for the country or citizens' welfare but rather for themselves and their interests", - says Akaki Minashili, member of the National Movement.

The Free Democrats think that the same people are making money in the country, there are fewer investments and the economy has not improved.

However, as expert Gia Khukhashvili states, the government is not the only one at fault for the bad economic situation Georgia is in.

"Unfortunately, we are a consuming country, thus lari devaluation directly affects the con-

sumer basket. The government is guilty for failing to have ensured the country's economic safety. We are too dependent on imports", - said Khukhashvili.

It is worth remarking that the population is less interested in find out details, they put all responsibility for their poverty on the government's shoulders and wait for a plan to overcome the crisis which is not yet working. That's why, the society is pessimistic and doesn't believe that their economic situation will change for the better in the immediate future. Pre-electoral promises according to which the third year should have been better and the fourth year – the best should also be taken into account; particular reforms have been carried out, intensive negotiations with investors are under way, but the society has not felt the change which once again questions the professionalism and capability of the ruling party to deal with internal and external economic shocks.

## THE PARLIAMENT DISCUSSED THE BILL ON "CHANGES TO THE TAX CODE OF GEORGIA"

The Parliament of Georgia discussed the bill on "Changes to the Tax Code of Georgia" on April 13 at the first hearing, initiated by the Deputy Minister of Finance Lasha Khutsishvili.

Principal changes are related to the Income Tax Reform which is based on the so-called Estonian Model. According to this model, in case of reinvestment, companies will not have to pay income tax. The income will be taxed only if it is granted as a distributed dividend. Apart from the Income Tax Reform, important

changes are being carried out to simplify tax administration. In particular, during a tax dispute, one's bank account can be arrested only based on a warrant obtained from court; tax control will be carried out only by a tax agency; the company that uses basic tools in the transactions subject to VAT, will be exempted from VAT when importing the basic tools; Taxpayers whose activities are not registered, will be remitted the debts generated and unpaid before 1st January 2011 and sanctions imposed on debts

generated before 1st January 2013 on condition that they pay the principal.

The purposes of this reform are to accelerate economic growth in the country, create convenient environment for starting a business and production and perfect tax administration, as well as support imports of the basic tools to be used in transactions subject to VAT, perfect tax control and use of controversial debt provision measures in the dispute period and another purpose is debt remission.



## A TECHNICAL REGULATION ON HAZELNUTS HAS BEEN APPROVED

Under the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia, a technical regulation, which regulates the issues of hazelnut exports, imports, quality and labeling has been developed and approved at the government meeting. As the Minister of Agriculture Otar Danelia states, there is a growing demand on the Georgian hazelnut on international markets.

Considering the big export potential of the Georgian hazelnut, production of this product has great perspective. In 2014-2015, the income gained through the realization of the Georgian hazelnut in the EU amounted to 184 million USD which is almost 30 % of the export index of gross agricultural output. Hazel-

nut production has become one of the strategic areas of the agricultural sector. Thus, a technical regulation about hazelnut a state programme have been developed which support the development of hazelnut growing," said Danelia.

As the Minister of Agriculture states, hazelnut regulation is in absolute accordance with the international marketing standards. In line with the regulation, hazelnut quality will be under tight control which implies laboratory testing as well as controlling the rules of keeping, wrapping and transportation. Hazelnut will be tested and inspected by the National Food Agency of Georgia.

It is important to note that the regulation about hazelnut will

contribute to the development of hazelnut growing in Georgia, realization of high quality hazelnut in international markets and building the kind of image of the Georgian product that meets high standards.

The Hazelnut Technical Regulation project was placed on the official webpage of Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia. In addition, meetings between business sectors and representatives of the Hazelnut Growers Association were held. The project was presented at the scientific-practical conference initiated by Georgia Hazelnut Processors and Exporters Association. The ideas expressed during the discussion will be included in the regulation.



## ROTARY CLUB OF BEIJING HOSTS GEORGIAN WINE PRESENTATION

Presentation and Degustation of the Georgian wine as well as a charity event were held at the Rotary Club of Beijing to promote the Georgian wine and generate better publicity. The Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Georgia to China Davit Aphtsauri gave a speech at the meeting and introduced Georgia and Georgian wine-making cul-

ture to guests. Participants had an opportunity to taste 12 wine varieties produced by different wine companies. The event at the Rotary Club of Beijing finished with a Georgian wine charity auction. The earnings – 6100 RMB (around 1000 US dollars) will openly be granted to the children's organization "Chunmiao Little Flower" on 21st April.

The Rotary Club is an international charity organization which connects businessmen and professional leaders around the world. There are 33 000 Rotary Clubs founded in 200 countries across the globe connecting 1.2 million Rotarians. The Rotary Club of Beijing was founded in 1924 and it consists of 47 members.



## Government discusses opportunities to create better environment for sustainable enterprises



The Employers' Association of Georgia and the International Labor Organization (ILO) organized the conference on improving business environment for sustainable enterprises. The event was held at the newly opened technological center on April 15.

The conference discussed the ILO study, which was aimed at local businesses. The survey covered 300 small, medium and large companies, and the results revealed three main factors: legal framework and fair competition; Financial resources, accessibility and relations between the education system and the labor market. Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Dimitry Kumsishvili delivered his speech in front of the wider audience. The Prime Minister initiated the 4-point government plan and the reforms that have been carried out in this direction,

including the promotion of business and labor market-oriented vocational education system.

Kumsishvili spoke about the entrepreneurship program "Produce in Georgia" and its sub-components. According to him, the project allowed local entrepreneurs to take loans from commercial banks for 1 to 3 percent. In addition, as noted Kumsishvili, the state became co-sponsor of commercial banks loans.

The Deputy Prime Minister also touched education reforms. "We are talking about a public-private partnership in vocational education," - said Kumsishvili and expressed hope that the four-point plan will lead to significant improvements in the near future.

The conference was attended by more than 100 business company, 10 sectoral unions, as well as representatives of the diplomatic corps and international organizations operating in the country.

## Georgian Wine Degustation Took Place in Japan

The International fair "Wine and Gourmet Japan 2016" took place in Tokyo, capital of Japan where eight wine companies were presented with the support of the National Wine Agency.

The Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Georgia to Japan Levan Tsintsadze and representatives of the National Wine Agency attended the opening of the fair.

On the first day of the event, a wine degustation/seminar took place which was led by the Advisor of the Chairman of the National Wine Agency Giorgi Tevzadze. Wine professionals and the local media showed a great interest in the seminar.

Japan was determined as a potentially growing market for the exports of Georgian wine in 2014. In order to diversify export markets, for the last two years, with the support of the National Wine Agency, the Georgian wine has been presented at important

international fairs for the fifth time in Japan.

The participation of Georgian wine companies in this fair in Japan is the best way to promote Georgian products, enter into new markets and establish ourselves, as well as search for the local distribution companies. Presenting the Georgian wine at "Wine and Gourmet Japan 2016" will further contribute to increasing Georgian wine awareness not only in Japan but also in neighboring Asian countries.

Last year over 75 000 guests visited "Wine and Gourmet Japan". The interest in the fair remains keen.

It is considered as one of the most interesting and perspective fairs around Asia and it is our priority to participate in it to promote the Georgian wine. This year was not an exception either – leading wine specialists and importers around Asia once again gathered at the fair.



# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF CHANGES IN THE ELECTION CODE?

 IRAKLI PAVLENISHVILI **EXCLUSIVE**

Electoral excitement in the country; is rising and a big part of the political and juridical activities are specifically related to the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled in October.

According to paragraph “b” of the first part of Article 112 of the Election Code of Georgia, persons holding the following offices must resign and be dismissed no later than on the 2nd day after submitting an application to the appropriate election commission for the registration as a candidate for the membership of the Parliament of Georgia: Ministers of Georgia and autonomous republics, Heads and Deputy Heads of government and state subordinate agencies; correspondingly this list includes the Prime Minister of the country.

Based on this juridical norm, including Giorgi Kvirikashvili in the list automatically equaled him stepping down. The leader with the best reputation among the Georgian Dream party is Georgia’s current Prime Minister. Recent lari strengthening and positive economic changes are owing to his name.

Kvirikashvili has been seen as a beacon of hope and perspective by both business sectors and civil society after the unpredictable and politically incorrect Gharibashvili (Prime-Minister’s politically incorrect addresses to the media were also emphasized in the US State Department report).

This is confirmed through the study done by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), according to which 42% of those polled assess Giorgi Kvirikashvili’s activity as average, 27% assess his

activity as positive and 26% did not answer. PM has better image than other leaders of the Georgian Dream party.

In general, residents’ attitude toward the rule of the Georgian Dream has worsened and their rating has dropped significantly, which is also shown in the study. In this situation, it is vitally important for the Georgian Dream to include their almost only politician with a positive image in the parliamentary candidates list. The Georgian legislative base did not allow them to do this but on the grounds of the bill on changes to be carried out in the Election Code which was initiated by Gia Volski, Zviad Dzidziguri and Vakhtan Khmaladze, the Prime Minister of Georgia is no longer required to resign if he is presented as an MP candidate.

The Legal Issues Committee has already started considering planned changes in the Election Code that allow the Prime Minister to retain his office along with being in the electoral list. Members of the ruling party explain that the change will prevent the country from governance problems. As for the minority’s opinion, they think that the government is trying to adjust the Election Code to themselves. Regarding the changes, Ani Mirotadze, former coalition member, declared the following when speaking to the information agency Newposts: “I have a lot of respect for Giorgi Kvirikashvili as a person and I think he should be present in Georgian political processes in general, but now we are not talking about persons. We are talking about an



institute which can be exploited in the elections and can produce an unequal environment”.

Levan Berdzenishvili, one of the leaders of the Republican Party, thinks differently: “Considering the fact that the limitation will not apply to the Prime Minister and his presence in the electoral list will not mean his dismissal which would otherwise lead us to government dismissal and crisis, we will support the initiative. This idea is also approved by our European partners; they even made a remark at the beginning about why one should cause a crisis artificially. Prime Minister leading the electoral list is a tried practice in many other countries around the world”, - Berdzenishvili said to journalists. According to him, there were problems in the law. For instance, parties were called “Saakashvili – National Move-

ment” or Bidzina Ivanishvili and other surnames were added so that a citizen would know who the party belonged to, as the abovementioned persons did not have to right to take part in the elections. In this case, the law will allow the Prime Minister to be the first in the list and the Georgian Dream party will not be called “Kvirikashvili – Georgian Dream”, Berdzenishvili explained to journalists.

In the interview with *OBSERVER*, economist Zviad Khorguashvili said, that the motivator of the bill initiated by Volski, Khmaladze and Dzidziguri is not the western model of electoral legislation, but rather Giorgi Kvirikashvili’s personality and reputation.

The ruling coalition’s statement about the tried practice of Prime Ministers leading the electoral lists of their own parties in

Europe, is true. Those countries include, for example, France, Germany, etc. However, the planned changes in the Election Code could very well be a specific political strategy rather than an attempt to harmonize the Georgian electoral system with the European electoral legislation. This strategy would be based on the importance of the leader of the list for the pre-election image of the political party. The leader of the list should desirably be the most popular and acceptable member of the political party. At this point, Giorgi Kvirikashvili is the only one to meet these criteria, thus, it is difficult to determine motives behind the changes to be carried out in the Election Code – whether it is willingness to harmonize with the European electoral legislation standards or an attempt to adjust the Election Code to oneself.

## Victory of the Campaign “This Concerns You” and Civic Society

The Constitutional Court of Georgia made a decision and announced that the existing system of secret surveillance is against the Constitution of Georgia.

In particular, this includes the direct access of the Security Service to phone calls through the so-called “double-key system”; direct access of the State Security Service of Georgia to internet correspondence of citizens; the ability to collect metadata without a warrant obtained from the court which includes obtaining data about the identity of the

subscriber, their location and the appliances used for the communication and keeping them for two years.

The court made a decision that the body conducting an investigation or being professionally interested in getting particular information will not be entitled to direct access to private information and collecting metadata. This concerns not only the State Security Service, but also any state body.

The Constitutional Court deemed fundamental legislative

changes and reforms necessary for the execution of this decision. Accordingly, the court decision will come into effect starting from 31st March 2017.

On April 15, 2015, organizations involved in the campaign “This Concerns You” appealed to the Constitutional Court to acclaim the system of secret surveillance as extra constitutional.

The claimants believed that the direct access of the Security Service to telephone conversations and internet communication comes in contradiction with

the right to private life guaranteed by Articles 16 and 20 of the constitution. The Constitutional Court agreed with them through the decision of 14th April 2016.

“The decision made by the

court today sets an important precedent and guarantee for the activities of security forces to meet democratic standards,” says the statement made by the campaign “This Concerns You”.



# A LARGE-SCALE PROJECT BUILDS THE EUROPEAN LOOK OF OLD RUSTAVI

NINI MACHAVARIANI **EXCLUSIVE**

Last week, Rustavi Town Hall uploaded a video in which Old Rustavi reminds us of central districts of European cities. The video features decorated streets, restored buildings, modern lamps, Europeans style cafés and restaurants, terraces, outdoor benches and shopping centers. The idea of restoring buildings of architectural value in Kostava Avenue and Pirosmeni Street was initiated by the town Mayor Davit Jikia, who, in the exclusive interview with *OBSERVER*, pointed out that the historic streets and rare building complexes are going to get back their initial look in about a year, and that restoration works will start this week.

The project includes decorating facades and lightings in the abovementioned streets. The damaged buildings will be reinforced with armor grids and have the surfaces smoothed, damaged architectural ornaments will be replaced, blocks of flats will get back their initial look and will be painted with water and dust resistant high quality paint, modern lamps will be installed on top of buildings, all old doors will be replaced, wooden windows will be painted, hoodmolds will be constructed, as for colors, light tones that don't fade or get damaged by rain will be used.

"After a two-year negotiation will the government, this project has been approved; now the tender is also over and the construction company Dagi, which was the one to have restored Agh-mashenebeli Avenue in Tbilisi,

will start restoring these unique buildings. The amount of money allocated is 5.5 million laris", - said Rustavi Mayor.

Within the framework of the restoration, it is planned to change the drainage system in which gophered pipes with sumps will be put. The road surface will be 18 centimeters thick made of armored concrete, basalt curbs will be curbed. The surface of the road will be faced with natural slate rock; a decorative wall faced with basalt rock will be built between the curb and the lawn; lawns will be enclosed with a metal decorative fence and an irrigation system will be installed which will be provided with filtered water from the river Mtkari; a curb faced with 4 centimeter thick stone tiles will be built where benches, rubbish bins and drinking water fountains will be arranged; modern outdoor lighting systems will be installed along roadways and on curbs.

Rustavi Mayor considers the fact that he managed to regain the alienated drainage and sewage systems in the property of the town as the biggest victory in his three years in office. This contributed to solving the problems that citizens had been suffering from for a long time.

The town of Rustavi would get flooded in rain. But through this project frequent precedents of floods have been eradicated. Over a million laris were spent to settle a section. It is planned to reconstruct the town in the future. The town is divided

into various segments based on which drainage and sewage systems will gradually be restored.

Central streets of the town have been cleaned, new stadiums have been built for children, comfortable and beautiful yards have been arranged for residents, rubbish bins have been purchased for the town, a street sweeping service has been implemented and now every yard is cleaned twice a week.

"Now Rustavi is one of the cleanest towns, and if something gets damaged in town, it is possible to have it repaired within 24 hours" - said Rustavi Mayor.

A poll showed that the situation in public kindergartens needed to be fixed and after this kindergartens were also renovated.

Rustavi City Hall is planning one more interesting project. The "One hundred yards" project initiated in 2016 aims to clean yards from domestic and manufacturing waste which will be followed by facilitating yards by, for example, planting flowers and making yards beautiful.

The Mayor states that this project is now going through a tender, the budget has been allocated and the execution of the project will begin in June. Also, it is planned to build combined basketball and football stadiums. In 2015, 60 similar stadiums with the area of 150 square meters were arranged and 1.5 million laris were used.

"There is lot of things to be done in the town, but since the previous rulers had made plenty of managerial mistakes we have

to detect and fix those mistakes step by step. When I took over, the budget of the town amounted to 45 million and now it is 52 million. This is the biggest budget Rustavi has ever had. I am sure that through the right management it will continue growing" - said Rustavi Mayor. It should also be remarked that the former Mayor of Rustavi also had an idea of restoring Old Rustavi. As it turns out some restoration works were done in Kostava Avenue 5 years ago, in particular exterior facades of the buildings were restored, but a large-scale project similar to the one to start in Rustavi this week has never taken place.

Apart from infrastructural projects, Rustavi City Hall is actively involved in the cultural and educational life of the town; they support young adults to realize their potential and try to help persons with disabilities fully integrate into society.

Last Thursday, Rustavi City Hall granted wheelchairs to six persons with disabilities from Rustavi. Three of them were visited by Rustavi Mayor Davit Jikia together with the head of the Social Service Agency and representatives of the Mayor in administrative units. The mayor presented them wheelchairs himself. Persons with disabilities in Rustavi were given wheelchairs a few months ago too. At the time, Rustavi City Hall helped 30 residents of Rustavi.

As Davit Jikia states, similar activities will go on and Rustavi City Hall will keep providing persons with disabilities in the future.

Rustavi City Hall is trying to bring a different look to the industrial town and make life more interesting and diverse in the seemingly dull and boring town, which is an important initiative not only for Rustavi residents but also for the whole region.



## 18<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL TOURISM FAIR AND CONFERENCE "TBILISI – MEETING POINT"

Tbilisi Mayor Davit Narmania opened the International Tourism Conference "Tbilisi – Meeting Point" on April 14. The conference was arranged at the Exhibition Center Expo Georgia by Tbilisi City Hall - Economic Policy Agency. Along with local government members, the head of Georgian National Tourism Administration Giorgi Chogovadze and representatives of the diplomatic sector as well as representatives of fraternized and partner cities of Tbilisi – Lviv, Minsk, Kharkov, Lublin, Erevan and Astana participated in the

conference.

As Davit Narmania states, Tbilisi City Hall carries out various interesting projects to promote the tourism potential of the capital on the international arena.

"Tbilisi is the tourist center of our region; though it has exceeded the regional borders. There are lots of activities planned by the National Tourism Administration of the Ministry of Economy and Tbilisi City Hall, that is why today's event is being held which implies further promotion of our capabilities in front of the representatives of other

countries so that we can attract even more tourists. On the other hand, participants of the conference are making presentations and we also get familiarized with their potential and in this way, our economic development is significantly encouraged," said Narmania.

Participants of the conference shared their own tourism-related experience with one another and discussed the role of tourism in the improvement of social and economic welfare of cities.

Before the opening of the International Conference, Tbilisi



Mayor together with his deputy viewed the exhibition at the exhibition center Expo Georgia where there are stands of different countries and cities presented. Representatives of the

private sector also offered their products to visitors.

The conference "Tbilisi – Meeting Point" was carried out within the framework of the 18th International Tourism Fair.

# WHY DON'T WE GET FINED WHEN LITTERING STREETS?

GURANDA DZAMELASHVILI

It is prohibited to drop, throw and/or leave litter outside of recycling bins and landfills according to Article 8, Chapter II of the Waste Management Code of Georgia. Article 31 of the same law, the minimum fine for littering the environment is 800 laris, however, it is a completely different issue whether citizens actually get punished for littering the environment or not. As Gigla Agulashvili, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection states, sanctions against littering the environment may get tightened. The Ministry of Environment Protection has already presented a bill about changes to be carried out in the Waste Management Code. The purpose of the bill is to hold the obligations defined in the Waste Management Code in abeyance, add administrative delicts, eradicate the errors detected in the process of the application of the code and improve certain norms.

Regarding these issues, the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference will be held in Batumi between 8-10 June. The conference will be attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps, international organizations and governmental bodies and issues such as Greening the Economy and Improving Air Quality will be discussed.

“The legislation that we are working on is changing bit by bit and it will be initiated by us in no time. I doubt the Parliament will manage to discuss these legislative initiatives as the elections are approaching; there might be problems related to discussing the Forest Governance code, Strategic Environmental Protection code report, etc. We deem that the projects we are working on enable the Georgian government to make more daring decisions and they will have a great opportunity to do this at the Ministerial,” said the Minister at the meeting “Green Tea with the Minister” at the Environmental Information and Education Center, on April 8. The meeting continued in an interactive regime and it was attended by students as well as representatives of nongovernmental and private sectors.

As for the facts of littering the

environment, the Minister emphasized above all the low level of awareness of the society: “The society lacks the corresponding habits and culture, that’s why they drop litter. We pride ourselves in being a highly civilized nation, however, littering shows that it is not completely so,” said the Minister and named a few reasons why persons littering the environment are not fined. As he stated, the main reason is the lack of resources: In Georgia there are 2300 patrol crews and 35 supervision office crews that have to work on these fines as well as on depicting other violations such as illegal fishing, hunting, tree felling, exhaust-fume-emission-related violations by factories, mining and other kinds of infractions existing in the environment protection area. These people are responsible for initial detection of violations. It is impossible to resolve all tasks with such a small amount of human resources,” said Gigla Agulashvili who believes that for more efficient law enforcement, littering must also be controlled by the patrol police and municipal bodies, for example, Municipal Supervision Department of Tbilisi City Hall.

The Minister also comes up with an initiative of installing more camera traps “it would be good if Georgia said no to the old technologies and instead chose the green economy model. Since we are lacking human resources, we need to install camera traps. We are considering the idea of purchasing such technologies if businesses are eager to invest some money in green initiatives”. The Minister also thinks that it is wrong to punish people with administrative fines in the regions where there are no recycling bins.

“While the state and local governments have been unable to provide proper infrastructure and there are no landfills, I am not sure how just our activities against people who have gotten rid of waste would be,” noted the Minister.

The “Waste Management Code” came into effect during Irakli Gharibashvili’s leadership, who told the media that it was important to make such decisions so that environment protec-



tion habits can finally be established to avoid littering.

“It is important for each citizen to acknowledge once again that it is the responsibility of each of us to protect the environment and it will not be difficult if all of us follow basic rules and now the new law, said Gharibashvili.

According to him, it will be the responsibility of the Environment Protection Department of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, as well as Patrol Department and corresponding municipal departments in every city and village of Georgia to be working on the execution of the code. However, as we learn from the Minister’s talk, the Patrol Department and corresponding municipal departments are not yet involved in the prevention of littering the environment.

Under the Ex-Prime Minister’s rule, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection carried out a large-scale campaign “Don’t litter, care for the environment” to raise public awareness. The campaign started in September 2014 and is still in effect through various moves in different regions of Georgia and Tbilisi. It is noteworthy that

the reason for the approval and development of the bill is that Georgia is obliged to clearly fulfill the obligations imposed by the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (getting the national legislation closer to that of Europe and adjusting it to the European legislation).

As for the approach of EU countries to waste, different kinds of waste (glass, paper, biological and other kinds of waste) are separated from one another, thus they are recycled separately.

Under the Ministry’s initiative, they have started to separate municipal waste in Telavi Municipality. Special rubbish bins for separating waste have been put in 5 villages – Tsinandali, Kvemo-Khodasheni, Busheti, Vanta and Akura. Plastic and paper waste will be separated from municipal waste; the separated waste will be put in a special warehouse and then it will be transported and recycled by the private sector.

The project aims to help central and local governments, local businesses, communities and municipalities to develop a Waste Management Integrated system in two target regions - Kakheti Municipality and Adjara.

**Georgia will be hosting the International Chemistry Olympiad**



The International Chemistry Olympiad (IChO) for high school students will be held in Georgia for the first time. Tbilisi will be hosting the Olympiad from 23th July through 1st August 2016. The Chemistry Olympiad is the biggest of its kind; it is a world-famous event with an outstanding reputation which gives the best high school students from up to 100 countries an exceptional experience.

By now, 84 countries have registered to participate in the Olympiad 2016. Apart from our high school students having an opportunity to compete in their own country, in a more comfortable environment, foreign students, mentors, chief mentors, scientific supervisors, a total of 700-800 people will be visiting Georgia. This is a great opportunity to show Georgia, its culture and rich historical heritage to the world.

Georgia hosting an even of such high rank is an unprecedented occasion in the Olympiad history. Such an opportunity is given to not only Georgia but also each country once in dozens of years, as the list of hosting countries is already arranged until the year of 2021.

The Deputy Chairman of the Olympiad Organizing Committee Elizbar Elizbarashvili, on behalf of the Chairman of the Chemistry Olympiad Organizing Committee Professor Gabor Magyarfalvi, granted the International Chemistry Olympiad flag to the Ministry of Education and Sciences.



## GEORGIAN-UKRAINIAN FRIENDSHIP LANE TO BE OPENED IN KYIV

Trees were planted at Vidradniy, a square in Kyiv to pay tribute to the victims of tragedy that occurred in Tbilisi on April 9, 1989. In the same square it is planned to open the Georgian-Ukrainian Friendship Lane. The participants of the event included

the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Georgia to Ukraine Mikheil Ukleba, the chairman of the State Administration of Solomianski District of Kyiv Maxim Shkuro and representatives of the Georgian diaspora. The Georgian ambas-

sador Mikheil Ukleba addressed to the audience and spoke about the events and victims of April 9. The participants of the activity also included pupils from Solomianski District of Kyiv who lit candles and decorated the newly planted trees with flowers.

## GEORGIAN LANGUAGE PILOT PROGRAMME TO BE INTRODUCED AT GREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs of Greece made a decision to introduce a Georgian Language Pilot Programme at Greek public schools. According to the decision made by the Greek side, the Georgian language pilot program will initially be put in place in Athens, at one of the schools with a considerable number of Georgian children. In addition, Georgia will provide financial

and logistical support for the implementation of the project, whereas the Georgian language curriculum will be developed and carried out in compliance with the Greek national laws and relevant regulations of the Greek educational system.

It is noteworthy that the Georgian Ambassador to Greece had been conducting negotiations with the Greek side regarding this matter for years.



## THE NEW PLATFORM – “YOUTH COUNCIL ON EUROPEAN AND EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION”

The First Deputy Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Archil Karaulashili hosted the first sitting of the new platform of the Office of the State Minister “Youth Council on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration” on April 15.

The council is a new means of communication connecting nongovernmental organizations (organizations specializing in Euro-Atlantic Integration issues) and the office of the State Minister of

Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.

One of the aims of the council is to engage young adults in the process of communication strategy execution and cooperate with them as well as study and analyze the problems and challenges.

The meeting was attended by nongovernmental organizations – “European Youth Center”, “Future Diplomats’ Club”, “Young Diplomats’ Club of Georgia”, “EuroClub”, “European-Geor-

gian Institute”, “Young Experts Association”, “YATA Georgia” and representatives of the “Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs”.

Parties discussed the perspectives of the cooperation development and prospective plans. Also, they summed up the informational campaign carried out in regions within the framework of NATO Week 2016.

In the immediate future other youth organizations will also join the activities of the Youth Council.



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# IMAMS WILL NO LONGER ENDORSE EARLY MARRIAGE IN THE PANKISI GORGE

Religious leaders in the Pankisi Gorge will no longer endorse marriage for those under the age of 18. Pankisi is located in the eastern part of Georgia (Kakheti region) and is mostly populated by ethnic Kists. The decision was made by imams from traditional Islamic mosques, together with the Council of Elders in the Gorge.

In Pankisi, early marriages are most common among girls aged 16-17. Although the trend is no longer growing compared with previous years, here, girls are deemed ready for marriage after they finish school. Religious leaders enjoy a high level of authority in Pankisi, which is why their choice to make a public

statement about their decision on discouraging early marriages is of paramount importance. It is noteworthy that the Council of Women Elders has contributed a lot to making this decision.

The initiative emerged in November 2015, when Pankisi's Council of Women Elders and the Kakheti Regional Development Foundation (KRDF) organized a rally against early marriage, as part of the 16-days of Activism against Gender Violence. Iza Bekauri, Director of KRDF and one of the founders of the Council of Women Elders, says that the Council of Elders were also invited to the event: "We met with the youths and called on them to say NO to early

marriage. We have worked with the Council of Elders too in this respect. They liked the initiative and decided to make this topic public."

Pankisi's Council of Women Elders was established in the Gorge in 2011, with the support of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Since 2014, the Council has also been cooperating intensively with UN Women. It consists of 18 women and its main activities are focused on women's rights, as well as advocating for women's issues with the male Council of Elders. The Council of Women Elders has a role mediating between local women and elderly men, while trying to raise the issue of women's rights in an appropriate manner and advocating for fair decisions in favor of women.

Another significant accomplishment of the Council of Women Elders is related to women's legal ownership of property in the Pankisi Gorge. To date, according to tradition, a brother-less woman would not be entitled to inherit the property of her parents. However, after the Council of Women Elders started to advocate on this topic, the Council of Elders resolved several cases in favor of women and they were granted title to the



property.

According to the Civil Code of Georgia, marriage is permitted in the country upon reaching the age of 18. A regulation allowing the marriage of youths who had reached the age of 16, if they had the consent of their parents was abolished from January 1, 2016. This amendment to the legislation was made pursuant to a recommendation of the CEDAW Committee. Currently, in exceptional cases, a person who has reached the age of 16 can get married, if s/he so wishes, with a court's consent (in extraordinary circumstances such as pregnancy). However, even these exceptions will be abolished from January 2017, and the law will completely ban marriage for people under the age of 18.

Iza Bekauri thinks that together with legislative amendments,

traditional opinions and rules in the Pankisi Gorge need to be reformed and modernized. The Council of Women Elders still has much work to do with local women and men, especially with the youth. A shift in public perceptions should support the successful integration of these new laws in other parts of the community.

UN Women has been cooperating with the Kakheti Regional Development Foundation since 2014, within the UN joint program Enhancing Gender Equality (funded by the Swedish Government and implemented by UNDP / UN Women / UNFPA). This cooperation aims to involve men and boys in combating violence against women and girls, as well as combating domestic violence, whilst raising their awareness of these issues.



## 25 YEARS OF US-GEORGIAN ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL COOPERATION

US-Georgia academic and cultural cooperation dates back to 25 years. The Prime-Minister of Georgia attended the anniversary event organized by the US-financed Association of Educational and Vocational Exchange Programme Alumni in Georgia.

Giorgi Kvirikashvili met with

the exchange programme alumni and shared his ideas with them. In his speech the Prime Minister talked about the importance of the support of the US government. As he said, the US government has financed several exchange programmes.

"Today we have an opportunity

to celebrate the 25-year cooperation between the USA and Georgia. We can tell our citizens how important the support provided by the US is in different respects. Our cooperation within the educational framework is particularly noteworthy. This is a network of intellectual wealth that has been created with the help of the USA. In the 1990s, when it was unimaginable to get a chance to study in the best US educational institutions, I was lucky enough to become a participant of the Maskie Programme. This was supposedly the most important experience that changed my life", -said the Prime-Minister.

As Giorgi Kvirikashvili states, exchange programme alumni are not only cultural ambassadors of Georgia to the US but

also US cultural ambassadors to Georgia with great duties. As he pointed out, it is important that exchange programmes are still in effect and hundreds of Georgian citizens receive a contemporary education.

"Today we are building the modern Georgia and naturally the education system reform becomes more pressing. Today we have an opportunity to grant a student a San Diego University diploma in Georgia which we deem to be the greatest success in the US-Georgian cooperation. One of the main priorities of our four-article reform is to develop the educational system oriented on modern labor market demands. Hence, it brings more importance to the development of this cooperation. I would like

to once again use the chance and thank the USA for reinforcing their support; I think many more Georgian youngsters will be given a chance to he get education at leading universities" – said the Prime Minister.

He wished good luck to exchange programme alumni and expressed hope that they will play a big role in building Georgia. EPAG includes 17 US financed learning and vocational exchange programmes. EPAG was founded in 2014 on the basis of the Masakie Programme Participants Association which, after reorganization, opened its doors to participants of every exchange programmes financed by the US government. By now the association includes up to 550 members.



# “MOIRA” TO SHOW AT GEORGIAN CINEMAS

NINI MACHAVARIANI

**EXCLUSIVE**

Georgian film lovers are looking forward to the premiere of the new movie “Moira” by Levan Tutberidze, which will be released in Georgian cinemas from April 21. The plot features the life of a young boy called Mamuka (Paata Inauri) who, having escaped from jail, is trying to save his family from poverty. His mother is working in Greece and his father is confined to a wheelchair. His younger brother is unemployed and soon becomes the center of criminals’ attention. Mamuka takes a loan which he uses to buy a small fishing boat and names it after the goddess

of fate Moira; the fisher brothers are going to earn their daily bread through Moira, but sometimes fate tends to be blind and ruthless.

The director and screenwriter of the movie Levan Tutberidze was born in Tbilisi, 1959. In 1980 he started an acting career but soon he decided to pursue a career as a film director. Today he is one of the most successful Georgian directors. He is credited as directing movies like “A Trip to Karabakh”, “I’ll Die Without You”, “Shadow Man”, “The Last Prayer of Nazare”, “Beyond Nine Mountains” and

one of the stories from the movie “Tbilisi, I love You”.

It is noteworthy that the director can change particular details in the shooting process including the personality of the character, though he never changes the overall plot.

“The French director Clair said: I finish the movie when the plot is over. Then I start shooting”. Of course, not everyone can work this way. It’s individual. For example, Charlie Chaplin could entirely change the plot right at the filming location,” Levan Tutberidze remarked when talking to *OBSERVER*.

Most of his movies are social dramas. Social issues and problems that people suffer from are very close to him. This is the life that he enjoys talking about and working with. The director thinks that there are very few good movies – “it comes in different forms but it does exist”. He himself prefers Italian movies. In the working process, he considers it unimaginable to think of how well his work is going to be sold. “The main attribute for a good movie is a simple and ingenious ending,” Tutberidze remarks.

In 2015 Georgia presented “Moira” by Levan Tutberidze in the category of the best foreign movie at the Academy Awards. Georgia had to decide on either Tutberidze’s “Moria” or “The President” by Mohsen Makhmalbaf.

A crew of young actors and Basque operators were work-

ing on the movie by Levan Tutberidze. The young actors include the ones from the Poti Drama Theatre. This decision was made by a special jury. The commission consisted of the Deputy Minister of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia Kakha Kandelaki, the former director of the Georgian National Film Center Nana Janelidze, directors Nana Jorjadze, Zaza Urushadze, George Ovashvili, actress Nato Murvanidze, screenwriter Vazha Gigashvili, film critic Lela Ochauri and Producer Noshre Chkhaidze.

The premiere of “Moira” took place at the 63rd San Sebastian International Film Festival from 18th through 26th September. The movie gained the special “SIGNIS” (World Catholic Association for Communication) prize. “Moira” was presented to members of the Film Academy in December 2015. And the premiere in Georgia took place in spring 2015 in the village of Ditsi – it was shown to local pupils within the framework of the “Summer School” project.

As the director points out the film will be presented at many festivals, thus the movie will not appear on film sites for a long time. He advises everyone to see the movie at the cinemas and assess it themselves. Since the plot of the movie is based on many problems Georgians face, spectators will definitely be moved.

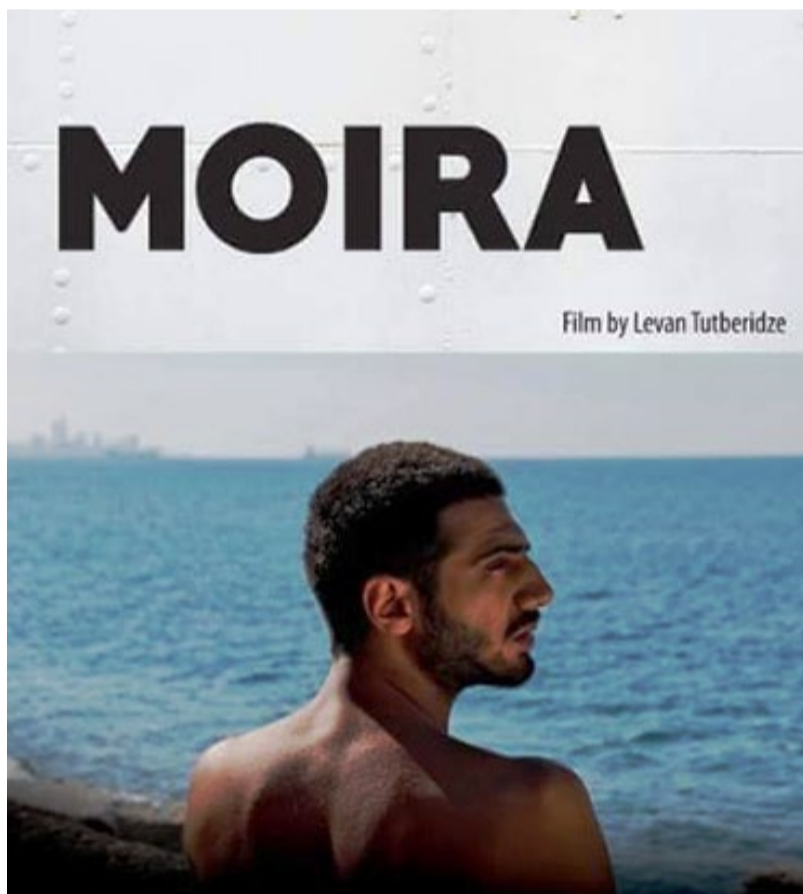
The shooting processes lasted for 24 days, 10 days of which

were in stormy weather conditions. The budget just about exceeds half a million dollars.

“Moira” has been discussed by international film critics. Yoko Narahash, one of the juries at Asian World Film Festival gives “Moira” the following assessment in the English Programme “The Wrap”:

“This is the movie that enables us to realize once again what a movie can do. “Moira” does not retell directly and harshly, but rather gradually takes us into the story through the amazing cinematographic art and its scale, power and beauty. This is a story about brotherhood and family relationship which develops in the severe conditions of a Georgian port. The film touches upon universal topics that remind us of Arthur Miller’s works”.

The movie Levan Tutberidze is also discussed by the influential publication, *Film New Europe*: “Moira” is a perfectly retold story – a Georgian movie with a creative atmosphere which remains in one’s memory for a long time and raises lots of questions in the spectator’s mind. The creative atmosphere is achieved through very few means. Questions such as “Are we free in choosing our destiny” or “Does the Greek goddess Moira or any other goddess have to do anything with our fate as we are born?” could have been directly conveyed in the movie but the movie does not ask such questions – the philosophy stays beyond the screen”.



## The Minister of Culture to appoint the Director of the Georgian National Film

On April 14 the interim results of the competition held to select the director of the Georgian National Film Center were announced. Under the order N03/109 of the Minister of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, 29th March 2016, a consultation board was established under the Ministry to select the candidate for the position of the director of LE Georgian National Film Center based on a competition. The board consisted of Lana Ghogoberidze, Merab Kokochashvili, Levan Koghuashvili, Baadur Tsuladze, Zura Inshvili, Konstantine Esadze, Nato Murvanidze, Tina Kajrishvili, Paata Iakhashvili,

Nana Dolidze and Nino (Nana) Jorjadze.

Within one week after the announcement of the competition, the Ministry received 13 applications, namely from Gaga Chkheidze, Geno Tsaava, Dinara Maghlakelidze, Zviad Dolidze, Tinatin Tsertsvadze, Levan Kitia, Marina Khokhlenko Kaltreider, Marina Kereselidze, Zurab Maghalashvili, Natia Kalandarishvili, Nikoloz Makharashvili, Shorena Tsitsagi and Zakaria (Zaza) Kolelishvili. Under the decision of the board, all applicants were interviewed on April 11-12. The consultation board held 4 sessions. And on April 14 a ballot took place. As a result of

the ballot, votes were distributed as follows: Marina Khokhlenko Kaltreider – 5 votes, Zurab Maghalashvili – 4 votes, Nikoloz Makharashvili – 1 vote and Gaga Chkheidze – 1 vote. After the first ballot two candidates were named which necessitated another round of the ballot between Nikoloz Makharashvili and Gaga Chkheidze. As a result of the second round of the ballot, the votes were distributed as follows: Gaga Chkheidze – 8 votes, Nikoloz Makharashvili – 3 votes. As a result of the two-round ballot, three potential candidates for the office of the director of the Georgian National Film Center were named, in

particular, Marina Khokhlenko Kaltreider (project manager of TEDx Tbilisi 2016), Zurab Maghalashvili (director of the film company Cinetech-Georgia) and Gaga Chkheidze (Head of Tbilisi International Film Festival).

All the three candidates have different kinds of education and professional experience. It is noteworthy that in their viewpoints they all emphasize the importance of a more effective management and acquisition of additional funds, but Zurab Maghalashvili has a different idea and thinks that the film industry should not only be dependent on the funds of the Film Center; it is necessary to search for other

sponsors, for instance, televisions, private investors, regional funds and other donors. The other two candidates deem allocating more finances for the Film Center and opening more cinemas to be the right things to do.

All the three candidates were presented to the Minister of Culture and Monument Protection and the Minister will take the final decision about who will take over the position of the director of the Film Center.

The Film Center had been run by film director Nana Janelidze for three years, however she did not wish to apply once more and went back to her career as a film director.

# TBILISI HOSTS THE EXHIBITION OF THE CZECH PHOTOGRAPHER

Georgian National Museum and the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Tbilisi present the photo exhibition “Withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia” by the Czech photographer Karel Cudlín. The event will take place from 20th of April at the Simon Janashia Museum of Georgia.

The exhibition will showcase photos which depict the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia. On June 21, 1991 last railway transport with Soviet troops on board left the territory of Czechoslovakia. By June 30 the Soviet army finally ended its’ 23-year stay in the

country.

Karel Cudlín (born in 1960) is the freelance artist who focuses on documentary photographs. The photographer cooperates with publishing houses in Czech Republic and abroad as well. He is the lecturer at the Film Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Karel Cudlín is also known with his several monographs. In 1997-2002, he was one of the official photographers of Czech President Václav Havel.

The artist had solo exhibitions in Prague, France, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Moldova, Croatia, Romania, Azerbaijan, Israel, Netherlands, Slovenia,

Spain, Italy, Cyprus and USA. He also participated in more than forty group exhibitions.

Karel Cudlín’s works are preserved in public collections: UMRUM, Prague, Moravian gallery (Brno), Ludwig Museum (Koln am Rhein), Berlin Wall Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum (London) and Musée de l’Elysée (Lausanne).

The photographer won prizes of Czech Press Photo (several individual categories, a Kodak prize), Revolver Revue Prize and twice grant of Lord Mayor of Prague.

The photo exhibition will last until May 1, 2016.



# ZURAB ARABIDZE TO HOLD EXHIBITION OF HIS ART WITH “SIMPLE PHRASES”



National Gallery invites you to the exhibition “F63.9” by contemporary artist Zurab Arabidze. The opening event will take place on April 21 at 7 pm.

Contemporary artist Zurab Arabidze fills his works with the most simple phrases, with the words, which we say to express our desire, love and warmth - “every person wants to love and to be loved with strong, true and sincere love. Find your part of love at the exhibition where you can collect feelings”.

Works are untitled. On canvas one and the same phrase is being repeated with mantras principle. The visitor must read each word of every work from the beginning till the end.

Energy charge, which mantra creates, penetrates into different

layers of person unconsciousness and fills each cell with information. “I love you”, “come to me”, “I miss you”, “I want to be with you” - repeated 100 or more, is some kind of meditation for visitors.

The exhibition is interactive. Energies which will be collect via reading the phrases, emotions which will be gathered in your sub-consciousness, can be expressed and fascinated on the special wall. With this, every visitor can participate in the exposition. “Exhibition is for everyone, who loves to hug, who considers that love is and always will be, for whom love breathes, for those who believe that love will come, if not today than tomorrow” admits the artist.

Books about love are located

in the book-case. The initial idea about the installation came from the author’s observations about attitudes towards love - “in the majority of cases we hide love, and as time passes we don’t open up, we don’t talk about love anymore. In order to deepen the feeling of love, in order to highlight the memories, Zurab Arabidze presents the book “I love you”. On the 404 page, on 202 paper, love is explained 63 468 times - “Book is for everyone who can love. Give this to the beloved person and ask them to read. Give it to your parents, children, friends and of course to your beloved. The first page of this book is empty for you to express how much you love that person”.

The exhibition will run until May 10, 2016.

# ISRAELI ART STUDIO ALMA DENURA VISITS TBILISI

Georgian National Museum and Embassy of Israel to Georgia invite you to the exhibition “Tree of Life” - illustrations of canonical texts. The opening event will take place at Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts on April 20, 2016 at 6 pm.

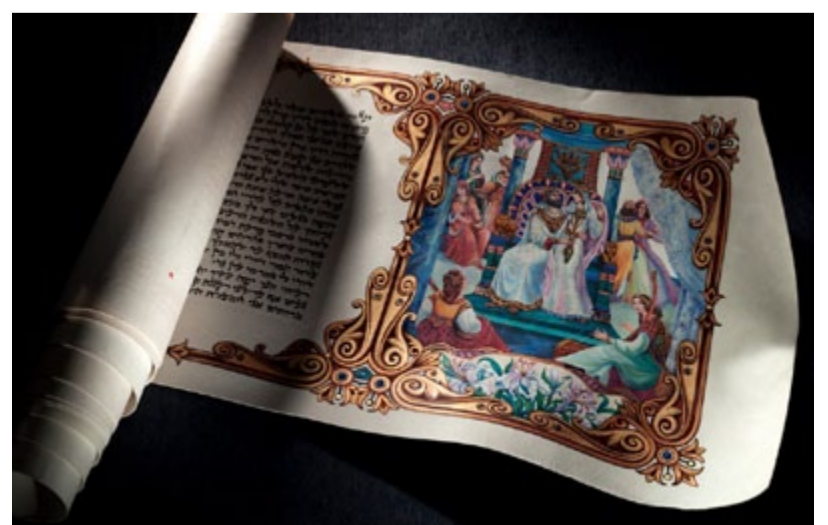
The exposition will showcase about 60 canonical illustrations and art calligraphy works created by the artists of Israeli art studio “Alma Denura” - David Chananashvili, Elena Nemtsova, Natalia Kulikova, Alexander

Enenko and animators Roman Butman and Vadim Mensk.

The concept of the exhibition is based on the Jewish interpretation - “Tree of Life” symbolizes the Torah, as it is described in the Proverbs of Solomon. The main approach of the artists is to collectively study and illustrate canonical texts. Each piece of art is created by century-old tradition materials such as parchment, golden plate, ink and gouache.

In the framework of the exhibition will be showcased the

animation “Chai”. David Chananashvili and Roman Butman created eighteen canonical variations of Hebrew calligraphy from the Babylon writings to the most modern Israeli fonts. The number 18 is not a coincidence. It is Gematria (words, based on the values of their constituent letters) of the biblical word חַי, meaning life. The authors symbolically linked the exhibition to one of the most important Jewish holiday, Passover. The exhibition will last until May 10, 2016.



# 2016 NBA PLAYOFFS BEGIN

VAKO KIPIANI

The regular NBA season is over and it is now high time for playoffs. Kobe Bryant retired from basketball after he scored 60 points against Utah Jazz in the final game. Kobe's retirement put an end to a milestone in basketball.

The Golden State broke Chicago Bulls' wins record. In the final match of the regular championship the Golden State hosted and surpassed the Memphis by 125:104. This was the 73rd win earned by the Californian team in this year's regular competition. Correspondingly, the Warriors surpassed the legendary Chicago Bulls' 1995-1996 season record – 72 wins.

Zaza Pachulia's Dallas hosted the San Antonio in a regular championship and got defeated; however this match had almost no significance in terms of the tournament. Even in the case of losing in the Western Conference, the Dallas would still be in the 6th place.

In the final match of the regu-

lar championship, Zaza Pachulia earned 8 points, 12 rebounds and two assists. The Georgian center was in the starting lineup and scored three from 4 2-point and all two free throws. Zaza lacked 2 points to reach a double double in the 26th season.

The Dallas lost in the last minute. Legendary coach Greg Popovich of the San Antonio did not let the following leading players play: Kawai Leonard, Tim Duncan, LaMarcus Aldridge, Tony Parker, David West, among others. The scoreboard showed the final score 91:96 in which Serbian basketball player Boban Marjanovic of the Spurs had played a big role – he earned 22 points and 12 rebounds. Raymond Felton who earned 22 points is also noteworthy. Dirk Nowitzki earned 19 points and Deron Williams – 13 points.

The Dallas finished the season with 42 wins and 30 losses. In the playoff Pachulia' team is going to play against the Oklahoma City Sanders that finished



the regular championship with 55 wins and 27 losses in the third round of the Western Conference. This proved to be a successful regular championship for Zaza - he managed to score 25

double doubles. Zaza just barely missed the qualification for the NBA All-Star game, but Georgia stands behind him. Many are speculating that Zaza is going to leave the Dallas in the follow-

ing season and move to another team. We wish Zaza good luck in the playoffs. Hopefully, he will have more time to play and will bring lots of benefit to the Texans.

## SPORTS NEWS

### WRESTLING

Georgia's Greek-Roman team earned the first Olympic license. Georgian champion Shmagi Bolkvadze qualified for the final of the licensing tour for Euro-

pean Olympics and earned the Olympics license.

### FOOTBALL

Georgia's U16 team held the third match at UEFA Develop-

ment Cup and lost 2:3 to Croatia. The match was held at Sport Center Albena in Bulgaria. From the Georgian team, Teimuraz Gabunia and Giorgi Guliashvili scored goals; team captain Giorgi Ivaniadze missed penalty.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tbilisi hosted representatives of youth football academy Hertha, Berlin. Within the framework of the three-day visit, the German guests viewed the Youth Academy of the Football Federation.

They also held meetings with the Federation representatives of different rank. The German guests met with the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs Tariel Khechikashvili. The German

football specialists shared their experience with the Georgian side. Intensive prospective cooperation is planned with Hertha, Berlin.

### JUDO

The first Judo Club Championship among adults has begun. The seven participating clubs include the Shevardeni 2005, Leader, Fighter (all of them from Tbilisi), VIP-Judo, Lomchabuki (both from Gori), Gladiator (Gurjaani) and Durmishkhani (Kareli). Meetings of the first and second tournament were held; each club held two meetings which in total amounted to 7 matches. The final with the participation of 4 clubs will take place in autumn and the prize award will amount to

160 000 laris. The winning club will be awarded 70 000 laris, the second-ranking club will be awarded 50 000 laris, the third-ranking club – 50 000 laris and the fourth-ranking one – 10 000 laris. In total, the championship prize money amounts to 307 000 laris.

### BASKETBALL

The Darussafaka won a significant match. Manuchar Markoishvili's team hosted the neighboring Karsiyaka and beat them by 11 points – 78:67. Markoishvili spent 14:15 minutes at the basketball court and earned 6 points, 1 rebound and 1 assist. Manuchar scored two from 3 three-point, had 1 turnover and got two personal fouls.

