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XIV Annual Business Rating Winner - SOCAR & Mahir Mammedov



Georgia named its best business company of 2012 on May 30. State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic, SOCAR became this year's winner of the XIV annual National Business Award contest, organized by media holding The Georgian Times and social and marketing research company GORBI. A title-holder of the best image and the best respondent became the company Smart Retail. In total the award ceremony revealed 25 best companies operating in Georgia.



A Futile Mission – Georgia Attempts to Bleed its Way into NATO

By IAN F. CARVER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, GT

Georgia is filling a growing security gap in Afghanistan that is being left by full-fledged and fatigued NATO member states. The strategic purpose of the country's mission is not worth the lives being lost.

As the United States and its NATO allies have been withdrawing their forces from Afghanistan since 2011, albeit slowly, Georgia has been doing just the opposite - increasing

its troop presence in the South Asian country to the point where it is now the largest per-capita troop contributor.

Meanwhile, Georgia's new government appears to be following in the previous government's footsteps in placating the U.S. by expressing its commitment to a post 2014 role in Afghanistan when nearly all combat troops are slated to be pulled out and local Afghan security forces are expected to begin fending for themselves.



The timing is uncanny, and for the Georgian government to

be committing itself to a post 2014 role without knowing what the future situation will be in Afghanistan is politically reckless and dangerous for its young men in uniform, as it impacts the integrity of the Georgian armed forces and its moral. Even talk of Georgian troops only serving in a training capacity should be met with caution given the steady rise of "green-on-blue" (insider) attacks by local Afghan forces against their foreign mentors.

Tbilisi has long stated that its contribution to what is now

a 12-year long foreign occupation of Afghanistan is tied to its future - potential membership with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and thus putting at stake the country's sovereignty and national security. However, as the war winds down (at least in terms of foreign involvement) and official Tbilisi and regular citizens alike come to terms with Russia's position in their country following the 2008 Russian-Georgian war (in which the country's two breakaway regions were recognized by Russia and a handful of other nations as independent states, thereby further crippling Georgia's territorial integrity and chance of joining the alliance as a united state), the more Georgia's increasingly bloody mission in distant war-torn Afghanistan appears ill-conceived and futile.

Georgia cannot help bring an end to the occupation by Russian Federation of what Tbilisi considers its own territory by continuing to occupy

another country. Moreover, officials in Tbilisi should think less about the perceived benefits that its contribution to the mission is bringing to Georgia, and more about the impact it is having for the future of Afghanistan and the Afghan people. The longer the Georgian flag, with its five-fold Crusaders cross waves over Afghan soil, the more the fighting capability, brutality and resolve of the Taliban resistance will increase.

It is increasingly clear that the motivation behind the Georgian troop deployments to Afghanistan is nothing short of an attempt to bleed Georgia into NATO. This appears to have been an intentional move by Tbilisi (and those hell-bent on expanding this Cold War leftover into geo-strategically important areas of the former Soviet Union) in light of the fact that Georgia cannot do so by following the same set of rules as other countries, such as the Baltic states, which have been successfully integrated into the alliance.

Russia Cuts Off Georgia from Tskhinvali

By LISA TONAKANYAN, GT

Russia has started moving deeper into Georgian territory by installing a barbed-wire fence on the administrative boundary between Georgia and its breakaway South Ossetia region, commonly referred to as Tskhinvali region. Russian border troops' progress, however, didn't become a subject for sharp criticism by Georgia's government. Nevertheless, the country's youth responded to the news in a more aggressive way, organizing a small-scale rally near the former building of Russian Embassy in Tbilisi with a slogan "No to crawling occupation".

On May 27, Russian soldiers started erecting a new fence close to the Georgian village of Ditsi, moving the de facto border 300 meters into Georgian-controlled territory. This is not the first time Georgian territory has been snatched by Russian frontier guards - it occurred on numerous occasions after the Russian-Georgian war in 2008. In 2009 the then de facto President of South Ossetia Eduard Kokoiti demanded to "return" Truso Gorge, which

lies on the Georgian side; later the same year Russian troops moved a few hundred meters into Georgia's territory near the village of Kveshi, though the Kremlin denied this. Similar incidents happened in 2010 in five villages of Gori region.

"There is nothing surprising here. Historically all its agreements. We didn't have great expectations about how the treaty would be implemented when it was signed after the war," Gigi Nasaridze, Founder of the NGO "Georgia Is Not for Sale" and one of the participants of the rally held outside the Russian Embassy told the Georgian Times.

Nasaridze has been protesting against Russia's "annexationist policy" towards Georgia since 2004, but this time "it exceeded all the limits". "This is not the fault of the new government, it is no one's fault except Russia's - this is how Russian policy works. The only thing we can accuse our government of doing is not expressing a proper protest against the recent events. Some of the representatives of the authorities assure we shall not protest it at all, others - the presidential candidate of the Georgian Dream coalition, in

particular - do not comment on such important issues. This is a huge problem," Nasaridze added.

Zviad Khorguashvili, the executive director of NGO Club of Liberty that organized the rally on May 28, emphasized their goal is not only protesting against the fence installation but also showing to the international community that Georgia will never accept Russian occupation. "We want to tell our government that we are with them and we demand this issue to be solved once and for all," he told GT.

Some rally participants' speeches were exceptionally emotional. Giorgi Rukhaya was outraged with the small number of protestors and inertness of the Georgian government and society. "Where are those priests with stools who we saw on the demonstration against sexual minorities now?! Isn't Georgia's territorial integrity more important than that?! Or what does the government do regarding this issue? It's a shame!" he cried despite his associates' calls to bar him from making political statements.

The only steps taken by the Georgian government so far were filing a note of protest to the Kremlin and calling on the international community to react appropriately. Inactivity of

the country's authorities, unclear position and playing footsie with the Kremlin was seen as the main reason for illegal actions of Moscow by Russian journalist Oleg Panfilov, who moved to Georgia in the end of 2009 after being threatened in Russia.

"I'm afraid that the change of Saakashvili's stiff policy towards the Kremlin with Ivanishvili's obscure position will result in more provocations by Russia. The government should be as strict as possible with the occupant and aggressor; otherwise the Kremlin considers the authority weak and does whatever it wants. It's impossible to make friendship with a country that captures your territories," he told GT, adding that filing a note of protest is not enough to solve the problem as "it's similar to sending a note to Stalin or Hitler".

Nikolay Silaev, senior researcher at the Center for Caucasian Studies of Moscow State University of International Relations, considers Moscow's decision on moving the border now apolitical. As he said, this is the result of unstopped "bureaucratic inertia". "I think this is a part of South Ossetia's border delimitation programme, which was launched sometime ago.

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NEWS

Nino Burjanadze to Run for President

Nino Burjanadze, leader of Democratic Movement-United Georgia opposition party, will participate in the Presidential Election. The opposition leader, who is also a former Parliamentary Speaker made the announcement at special briefing on May 30 and explained the reasons why she has decided to participate in the elections. "Today the country is going through a very important phase in its development, a phase, when making balanced decisions is crucial for the country. Moreover, the government, which has inherited serious problems from the period of the UNM's rule, needs regular public control," said Burdjanadze. As she said, society will not be able to control the government if political power is monopolized.

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Jean-Claude Mignon Expresses Concern About Detention of Former Senior Officials

Jean-Claude Mignon, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) expressed concern regarding the detention of the former senior officials on behalf of the Council of Europe and voiced hope that the cases will be dealt with in fair and objective environment. The statement was made after the Jean-Claude Mignon met with Davit Usupashvili, the Parliament Chairman on May 29. "We are concerned about the series of detentions carried out in Georgia. Of course, we can't interfere in Georgia's interior political processes, but if there are accusations against these people, we want these processes to be held in a democratic and fair environment," Mignon said. As Mignon stated, there is the presumption of innocence for every person. "Accordingly, we are worried about the detentions of the former senior officials in Georgia; the EU will observe with great attention how the upcoming presidential election will be held," he added. Jean-Claude Mignon has already met with the PM, Parliament Speaker David Usupashvili, Tbilisi Mayor Gigi Ugulava and the member of Parliamentary minority, Chiora Taktakishvili. A meeting between Mignon and President Mikheil Saakashvili is also planned.

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SOCAR AND UNICARD BECAME PARTNERS

The Companies SOCAR and Unicard are partners since today SOCAR network consumers are able to accumulate scores by Unicard. The Memorandum of Partnership was concluded in the office of SOCAR Energy Georgia.

The memorandum was signed by the general Director of SOCAR Energy Georgia MahirMamedov and the Director of Unicard, BesoAbuladze, and discussed the future plans.

I am glad that this partnership was established. It supported to expansion of our partners spectrum. We had the collation cards "SOCAR Energy Card", but the number of our consumers has been significantly increased with support of Unicard -mentioned Mahir Mamedov.

The director of Unicard, BesoAbuladze highlighted the high quality and service of the company and mentioned that the memorandum supported to increase the partner network significantly.

The SOCAR was joined to current partners with its petro and gas stations. More than millions of consumer has an opportunity to use SOCAR service, collect scores and select gifts from our catalogue with increasing in the assortment -mentioned Beso Abuladze.

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Levent Murat Burhan: Georgian-Turkish Relationship an Example for Other Countries

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

The Georgian Times recently interviewed Turkish Ambassador Levent Murat Burhan, who discussed Turkey's current relationship with Georgia and future economic projects which will be implemented in the region for mutual benefit.

Mr. Ambassador, please tell us how easy was it for you to adapt to Georgia. What did you know about this country before; what were your expectations and how has your experience been?

I first came to Georgia four years ago. Soon I observed that Georgians have similar attitudes towards national traditions, family values and living. They have the same way of thinking and the same cultural peculiarities as Turkish people. I am from the Black Sea city Trabzon and I can see that Georgian traditions are very similar to the traditions of that region (Karadeniz). By the way, most of the Turkish businessmen who work in Georgia are from Karadeniz and most of them know the Georgian language. It is easy for them to adapt to Georgia. I like Georgian traditions and culture and these are very specific and similar to Turkish. Georgian cuisine is also very similar to Turkish. We have dishes that are similar to Georgian favorites like Khinkali and Khachapuri. The only difference is that we eat lots of fish, and this may be because I am from the Black Sea region where everybody likes fish. But in general, Georgia and Turkey are similar countries, and this is why it was very easy for me to adjust. I can say I feel at home.

Describe relations between Turkey and Georgia, and specifically trade relations?

Turkey has very good relations with Georgia. We have signed a number of very important agreements over the last five years, which includes one agreement allowing Georgian citizens to pass through the Sarpi Border crossing point only with their ID cards; there is no need for a foreign passport. Such an agreement gave an opportunity to more Georgian citizens to easily visit Turkey. In the last year, five million Georgia visitors traveled to Turkey through the Sarpi checkpoint. Moreover, one million cars have passed to Turkey. Consequently relations between the two countries' people are becoming closer and more intensive.

As for trade relations, Turkey is Georgia's number one

trade partner. Last year Turkey had 1.5 billion GEL worth of trade with Georgia. Turkey also has made huge investments in Georgia. One of the largest investments of the last year is TAV which operates the airports in Tbilisi and Batumi. By the way, those citizens of Turkey which want to travel to Hopa, first came to Batumi and from Batumi go to Hopa by bus and by other means of transport. Batumi is fast becoming a common airport for the region, similar to the role that Geneva's airport plays, which is used by both France and Switzerland. This is a very rare example in international practice and it is being replicated here. Turkey has also made big investments in Georgia's tourism sector. For example, Batumi Sheraton Palace was built by a Turkish company and it is controlled by a Turkish company.



The Radisson Blue and Kempinsky hotels were also built by Turkish companies and they are operated by Turkish staff. However, by far the most intensive investments are implemented in the construction industry.

Can you talk about projects Turkey is planning to implement together with Georgia?

New projects include the construction of hydropower stations, including a project in Paravani which includes a low dam on the Paravani River, a diversion tunnel to carry water from the dam to an 85 megawatt hydropower plant near the Mtkvari River, and a transmission line to carry power to a substation near Akhaltsikhe. This project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2015.

Eighty percent of electric energy produced in this station will be sent to Turkey. But for the transmission of this energy, a new electric power transmission line is needed because the existing capacity is inadequate. To address this need, a new high voltage electric line of 500 megawatt voltage is now being constructed near Akhaltsikhe. We think that this project will be completed this summer. But we are not talking only about Paravani; there are 15 other hydroelectric projects and power stations in Adjara region, and located on the Enguri and Rioni rivers which are also being implemented by Turkish companies. Georgia is rich in water supply and has ample conditions for excess hydroelectric capacity. Initially, hydroelectric energy produced in Georgia will be sold to Turkey, but afterwards Georgia can start expanding its export capacities and even sell energy to Europe.

In addition, we have a natural gas recirculation project, which is implemented by one of the largest Turkish companies, as well as thermal reactor projects. These are projects, which are going to start in the nearest future.

In addition, the project of the century, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad, will develop with full force. I consider that this is the most important project of the region. We have signed a new agreement with Azerbaijan – Tanap project (The **Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline (TANAP)** is a proposed natural gas pipeline from Azerbaijan through Turkey to Europe. If constructed, it would transport gas from the second stage of the Shah Deniz gas field, which in the future will

involve Georgia as well, as this project is going to be implemented along the Georgian-Turkish border. Such projects which include Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan represent a good example for other countries to follow in terms of close cooperation.

Can you tell us about new developments besides economic and trade relations?

We are going to open additional border crossing points because of the high border crossing rate in Sarpi. For instance, we are going to open two new border crossing points – the Childirak-Kartsakhi checkpoint and the Muratlik-Kirnaki checkpoint. Consequently these border-crossing lines will serve to make the passing of both transport means and people to Turkey easier, and to alleviate the bottleneck at Sarpi border crossing point. In the nearest future the control on customs will become



5 days but it is possible for it to be extended because there will be an exhibition of the Turkish painter and it will stay open till the end of month.

Mr. Ambassador, you know that during the previous gov-

ernment in Georgia many Turkish businessmen had financial problems with the Georgian government. Some Turkish businessmen even were imprisoned. Bidzina Ivanishvili, Georgia's Prime Minister stated during his last visit to Turkey that the business environment in Georgia will improve. What can you say about Turkish businessmen working here? Do you feel a change in the business environment in Georgia?

is important. We will continue working with every government, which the Georgian people choose. As you know in February Mr. Ivanishvili met with our Prime Minister Erdogan during his visit to Turkey, where they discussed all existing problems. I think that the relationship between Georgia and Turkey are an example for other countries and that these relations will continue to improve. For example, do you know any other neighboring countries whose citizens can visit each other's countries without foreign passports, and instead with just an ID card? This is a sign of mutual trust. We are going to continue to strengthen these already good relations both economically and politically. The Georgian side thinks in the same manner and I am sure that political, economic and cultural, relations between our two countries will develop and improve.

There has been an increased interest among Georgians in the Turkish language. Can you explain this?

Yes there is. Seven universities of Georgia are teaching Turkish studies and the Turkish language. We see that there is a growing demand to learn Turkish as a foreign language and we will try to bring Turkish language teachers here as well. I can say that the current demand is so high that we cannot meet it immediately. Great interest in Turkey can be observed by checking the sheer number of people who passed the border last year: 1.5 million. Part of them travelled to Turkey as tourists, some as students and others to work and so on and so forth. I believe that all the prejudices of the past in relations with Turkey will soon be changed. We as diplomats have to facilitate the process of developing better relations between these two neighboring countries.

What can you say about Turkish businessmen working here? Do you feel a change in the business environment in Georgia?

First of all, we are supporting the territorial integrity of Georgia on a political level and also support Georgia as a neighboring country. But of course, sometimes we can have minor problems even with such a close and friendly country. For us the will of Georgian people

more operative. Hence customs control will be carried out only in one place. The first control point will send data to the second control point, so that there will be no need to spend time checking travelers twice. Of course such changes will have an impact on the growth of trade relations and reduce the backed up lines at the border.

Turkish cultural days will soon be held in Georgia. Can you tell us what we can expect?

We plan to arrange a classic music concert during the Days of Culture; there will be an event showing Turkish national costumes that existed during the Ottoman period. In addition, we will have a firework show and there will be various exhibitions. All this will last for five

SOCAR'S MULTI-FUNCTIONAL BUILDING OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR



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AMAZING SOCAR-MCDONALDS ON THE BLACK SEA COAST IN BATUMI

Georgia Considers Decriminalizing Marijuana

By LIKA MOSHIAVILI, GT

The Georgian government is considering the possibility of decriminalizing marijuana. The majority of Georgians believes that the decriminalization of marijuana will increase its consumption and increase the number of other crimes committed by people under the influence of drugs. Numerous pages calling for the legalization or decriminalization of marijuana have recently sprung up on Facebook, with supporters now planning to hold a rally outside the Georgian parliament building to demand decriminalization of cannabis on June 2.

Marijuana users in Georgia face a year in prison and stiff fines if they are caught with more than two grams of the drug. They also could be sentenced to up to three months of community service.

Such strict measures were first put into force in 2006 after President Mikheil Saakashvili came to power and amendments were made to Georgian law. But

Georgia's new ruling Georgian Dream coalition, led by Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, is considering taking a softer stance on what is often referred to as the "gateway" drug. Draft amendments to the Criminal Code on this issue have already been initiated by the parliament.

According to MP Eka Beselia, the chairperson of the human rights committee at the Georgian Parliament, a discussion on weakening punitive measures and decriminalizing marijuana use is underway which will be joined by relevant experts and lawmakers. "However, it does not mean that the government is encouraging marijuana use," Beselia commented.

"As far as drugs are concerned, ban-related mechanisms very often produce a ricochet effect, which means strengthening, development in other directions. It is a topic that requires a well-thought out strategy, an element of which could be the legalization of marijuana," stated David Sergeenko, Georgia's Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs.

Many countries are current-



ly considering the possibility of decriminalizing marijuana, the minister said. Some of them have already passed appropriate laws, Sergeenko continued.

According to international organizations, currently 4% of the world population smoke marijuana, and there are more opponents of legalization and decriminalization. Their arguments are as follows: marijuana use, especially when prolonged,

harms humans' respiratory and nervous systems. Also, prolonged marijuana use can be addictive. It often leads those who are addicted to explore harder drugs. There is also the fear that if legalized, drug dealers will start to "launder" their profits.

"Just because we are discussing this issue today does not mean that we will wake up one day and see marijuana being sold at supermarkets. Certainly, it

will not happen this way. Discussions should continue," Sergeenko explained.

Likewise, lawmaker Koba Davitashvili, a member of the parliamentary majority, has proposed that prison sentences for marijuana users be replaced with stiff fines.

"If a Georgian citizen tries marijuana, believe me, they will not catastrophically harm him/herself and society, but the po-

lice will make the family pay such a big fine that they will have to pay one-month's salary," commented Olga Belyaeva, an international expert and activists in the field of reducing harm caused by the non-medical use of drugs. "In addition, this person will be black listed and they will never find a job in a public office. Their future will be de-

stroyed," she continued.

"For many years the policy in Georgia has been straightforward and unwavering; it has been aimed at repression against people who are involved in the illicit drug trade – buyers and dealers, but also users," noted Davit Otiashvili, a doctor who specializes in the treatment of drug addicts.

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Russia Cuts Off Georgia from Tskhinvali

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The most important thing here is that the decision on boundary delimitation was not taken by Moscow, Tskhinvali did it," Silaev told GT.

He mentioned that on the one hand South Ossetia tries to dilinate its borders as it is part of establishing an independent state; on the other hand holding negotiations with Georgia is impossible as official Tbilisi doesn't recognize the independence of its former breakaway territories; and finally Tskhinvali wants to show that "in spite of Georgian-Russian relations, negotiations over South Ossetia's independence is out of discussion" and "no one cares what they think in Tbilisi". MGIMO's researcher emphasized that Georgia's indignation is understandable, and the process of "state boundary delimitation" at the same place where the administrative border used to be is a painful and difficult process even when it happens on the basis of bilateral agreements. Nevertheless, Silaev considers Georgia has not yet exhausted all of it diplomat-



ic resources that it could use to influence the situation.

Meanwhile, Paata Zakareishvili, Georgia's State Minister for Reintegration Issues declared on May 29 that Russia has captured kilometers of Georgian land since August 2008 and now "we are speaking about 200-300 meters". "Do you want us to declare war with Russia over 200-300 meters? They are crossing the

line which they consider territory that they have conquered. They want to involve the Georgian government in negotiations on where the border lies. It is totally unacceptable to us, as there is no border on South Ossetian territory. There are only separating lines, we won't be involved in this game, from which Russia benefits," Zakareishvili said, emphasizing that Georgia will raise this issue on

all international forums, though it has clearly appeared that the world is helpless against Russia's violent forces. "We have no right to wait for Russia's free-will to leave the Caucasus. If we are a state, we have to take care of our citizens," he stressed.

As it turned out the most difficult was ensuring the safety of local dwellers. During the last week three Georgians were

arrested for illegal border crossing. Moreover, one of them was detained on Georgian-controlled territory.

On Friday the 34th meeting under the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) took place in Ergneti, co-facilitated by EUMM Ambassador Andrzej Tyszkiewicz and OSCE Ambassador Andrii Deshchytisia. The Georgian side expressed concern about increasing fencing activities and the high number of detentions in areas adjacent to Tskhinvali region and, in particular, in the village of Ditsi. In response, South Ossetia's representative Khokh Gagoity said they are running delimitation process and earlier they offered Georgians to cooperate in "borderisation", though Georgians didn't respond, so they started the process on their own and they will not stop it.

However, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili believes that it was Russia's provocation and it was oriented at probing the ground – authority's steadfastness and inner unity of the country. At the same time he said, he doesn't

blame new government for the progress of Russian soldiers into Georgian territory and hailed its position being prudent and not succumbing to the provocations of the "big northern neighbour". He offered the Cabinet to work as a team in order to solve the problem facing Georgia.

The situation in Ditsi remains the same: Russians continue erecting fences and drawing the lines of separation. "Some of our dwellers remain on the occupants' territory, refusing to leave their homes which now are at the other side of the so-called border," Zakaria Vatitidze, Ditsi's Governor told GT. As he said, part of the pastures and cemetery are also on the Ossetian-controlled territory.

From June 1, representatives of the Center of Public Initiatives' Union launched rallies in all large Georgian cities against the occupation. Young people plan to gather signatures and send the petition to Georgia's Prime Minister and the international community with a demand to solve the problem.

XIV Annual Business Rating Winner - SOCAR & Mahir Mammedov

THE GEORGIAN TIMES

Georgia named its best business company of 2012 on May 30. State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic, SOCAR became this year's winner of the XIV annual National Business Award contest, organized by media holding The Georgian Times and social and marketing research company GORBI. A title-holder of the best image and the best respondent became the company Smart Retail. In total the award ceremony revealed 25 best companies operating in Georgia.

Traditional business award ceremony held on May 30 in the Marriott Courtyard Hotel was hosted by well-known Georgian journalist Inga Grigolia. She compared Georgia's business environment before and after the change of the government in Georgia, saying that previously entrepreneurs were greeting each other by asking "How's your business going?" and getting in response "I have no business, I have only problems".

"Today there's a new form of greeting: were you released or did you return? Perhaps, many of you experienced this pressure yourself. Despite this you showed that you were stronger than that; and I want to wish you the best of luck," Grigolia said.

For the last three years The Georgian Times and GORBI's business rating was not conducted, as Malkhaz Gulashvili, President of the media holding The Georgian Times, was imprisoned by the previous Georgian government.

"When I was in Gldani [prison] I used to meet so many businessmen there that I started thinking of revealing the best businesses among them. But luckily the October 1, 2012 parliamentary elections turned out the way they did and everything has changed since then. Today our business is free and I am grateful to Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili who exempted Georgia from this great pressure. Business always needs praises and boosts," he stated, expressing hope that Georgian business will become the engine of the country's economy, raising its GDP and will return not only Georgia's market but also developing new markets with its products.

Merab Pachulia, Founder of Georgian Opinion Research Business International "GORBI", explained to the guests the rules of hidden voting in choosing the best company of 2012.



According to Pachulia, Georgia's Finance Minister Nodar Khaduri helped GORBI find out upwards of 150 companies that contributed over 1 million GEL to the state budget. A board of 60 professional experts selected 25 best companies, which were listed in the bulletins distributed among the representatives of those companies. Each firm should sign the bulletins and return it to the award organizers – this would make each document unique and exclude any possibility for cheating. Later the ballots would be returned to the participants of the business competition who would number the best companies from 1 to 25.

"While choosing the companies and filling in the documents experts and participants of today's event were complaining that Georgian business was not developing in a competitive environment during the last years, however, we decided to restore the tradition of holding this award. This was the most transparent election ever held in Georgia and I hope the future presidential election will be just as transparent," Pachulia said, adding that his life-long wish is to live in the country where the five first businessmen would be wealthier than the five first politicians.

The head of GORBI is sure Georgia is on the path of economic recovery. As he told GT, for business development four major factors are needed and Georgia slowly moves towards them. "First of all, despite the aggravated situation around Tskhinvali Region [South Ossetia] today there is no talk about war like there used to be for all this time since Georgia

gained independence. Second, during the last 20 years there was much talk about the embezzlement of state funds by high-ranking officials; today this issue is not on the agenda. Third, the last nine years were marked with repressions of employees who were noticed at opposition's rally; now nothing like this happens. Finally, the fourth factor is freedom of speech, which we enjoy today. No surveys are needed to prove these changes as they are apparent," he emphasized.

Organizers' appearances followed by declaring of the first awardees. There were four winners in the banking sector. CEO of TBC Bank Vakhtang Butskhrikidze was granted with a certificate and praise for investment attractiveness, international recognition, effective PR campaign, team-working tradition and international standards. VTB Bank, represented by CEO Archil Kontselidze, was marked for its dynamics and stability, high credit rating, assistance to small and medium enterprises. Constanta Bank and Tamar Lebanidze were awarded for their support in reviving the agricultural sector, stability of effective management and constant progress. Finally Bank of Georgia was also awarded for its cooperate management, transparency, good quality of service and international recognition.

Seven praise-winners were revealed in consumer sector. Geocell and its Director General Pasi Koistinen were awarded for high social responsibility, non-stop service, creative marketing, public image and charity. Nino Shevardnadze's Goodwill was praised for its 24-

hour service, public image and consumer choice. Popularity, immense budget contributions, quality guarantees, high technologies, new working places, charity in education and healthcare – these are the reasons that helped SOCAR Energy Georgia's and its Director General Mahir Mammedov to be awarded. For its reputation and providing pure water was praised Georgian Water and Power company and Besik Vashakashvili. The experts also emphasized FlyGeorgia's reasonable rates, comfortable and safe flights and effective public image management awarding to Bijan Mougouee, Chief Executive Officer. Gas Energy and its Director Giorgi Koiava got the price for business reputation, social responsibility and investment attraction. Wissol Group and Smart Retail widen the list of the best companies of the consumer sector.

Among the leaders of Georgian beverages were producers of mineral water, beer and wine. Nabeghlavi met experts' approval for its high economic strategy, standards and public recognition for the revival of the field it works in. Natakhtari, headed by Mehmet Kochak was named the best company for effective advertisement, management, new technologies and for being Georgian customers' choice. Brewery "Zedazeni" (Georgian Beer Company) was recognized as the largest employer company, which was also marked for its significant contribution to Georgia's economy. Sarajishvili company was awarded for its popularity abroad, having old tradition and new technologies, popularizing national brand and

for being the best alcohol producer.

GeoPlant's Gurieli Tea and Agara Sugar won the nominations of "Best National Products" - the first - for being successful exporter, for meeting high ecological standards and rebirth of the sector; and the second – for being the largest taxpayer and providing an ecologically pure product.

Pharmaceutical sector also was presented by two companies: Paata Kurtanidze's "Averisi" and Gocha Gogilashvili's "PSP Group". According to experts choosing the best companies, both enjoy public confidence. The heads of the firms were also awarded by Founder of Georgian Times media holding Malkhaz Gulashvili for Permanent Support. "These people have never left the holding throughout our difficult times. I am grateful for that," he said.

Georgian Industrial Group, Rustavi Metallurgical Plant, Rustavi Azot, Georgian Carriage Building Holding and Georgian American Alloys were among the leaders in Georgia's industrial sector.

Seven more companies were awarded, including communications network operator "Akhali Kselebi" - Akhteli, building company "Orbi Group", "Integrated Georgian Systems", Georgian Service Group_2007, wine-producing company "Qimerioni", "Petra" and "Caucasus University".

On the Kamara's initiative, a special posthumous praise for the contribution made in setting Georgian business free was handed to Badri Patarkacishvili's mother Natela Patarkacishvili. "My son was raised from death. He was such a per-

son who deserved this praise. I would like to thank Mr. Malkhaz Gulashvili and Nana Gagau for that," Natela Patarkacishvili mentioned.

During the awarding ceremony journalists were asked to choose the best respondent among the firms listed in their blanks. The company Smart Retail, a subsidiary of the Wissol Group, gained the victory in the hidden voting. The praise was handed to Levan Pkhakadze, Vice President of "Wissol Group".

After announcing all the awardees of the XIV business rating the long awaited process started: representatives of the 25 companies had to choose the best among themselves. While they were filling in the bulletins the guests' attention was drawn to the stage again but this time for musical performances.

GORBI's specialists didn't take much time to count the voices. The winner was declared but nobody was surprised with the result: the majority agreed with the choice of the businessmen – SOCAR Energy Georgia and its Director General Mahir Mammedov.

"To tell you the truth, while sitting here I had this thought in my head, I waited for the victory. It's very pleasant to us to win this award after six years of operating in Georgia. During this time we were the largest taxpayers in Georgia, but now it is our triumph. This is the mother of all nominations. We are glad to be the best company in Georgia and what is more pleasant is Malkhaz Gulashvili's return," Mammedov told GT.

Founder of Georgian Times media holding in his turn expressed confidence that the entrepreneurs' decision was impartial. "The most important is that the all the businesses unanimously supported SOCAR. I'm glad that Azerbaijan's business took such deep roots in Georgia as this means that country has a healthy investment environment. As for Georgian business, it has fallen into decay and there were definite reasons for that but I hope it will start developing rapidly and soon it will become apparent for all of us," he told GT.

SOCAR was the Gold Sponsor of the event, while "FlyGeorgia" was its General Sponsor and "Gas Energy" and "Orbi Group" – Silver Sponsors. The awarding ceremony was held in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign of Georgia, International Chamber of Commerce, Business Association of Georgia, US Chamber of Commerce and The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Georgia.

XIV Annual Business Rating Winner - SOCAR & Mahir Mammedov



DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SOCAR ENERGY GEORGIA, MAHIR MAMMEDOV,
MALKHAZ GULASHVILI - PRESIDENT OF THE GEORGIAN TIMES MEDIA HOLDING



NANA GAGUA - PUBLISHER OF THE GEORGIAN TIMES AND INGA GRIGOLIA -
GPB JOURNALIST



MERAB PACHULIA - PRSIDENT OF GORBI, MALKHAZ GULASHVILI - PRESIDENT OF THE GEORGIAN TIMES MEDIA HOLDING AND INGA GRIGOLIA - GPB JOURNALIST



VAKHTANG BUTSKHRIKIDZE - TBC, GEORGE BARKALAIYA - VTB
BANK GEORGIA, TAMAR LEBANIDZE - BANK CONSTANTA,
IRAKLI KOVZANADZE - CEO OF THE PARTNERSHIP FUND



BESIK VASHAKASHVILI - GWP, VASIL KHORAVA - SMART, LEVAN
PKHAKADZE - WISSOL GROUP, NINO SHEVARDNADZE -
GOODWILL, MAHIR MAMMEDOV - SOCAR



GEORGE SHERVASHIDZE - SARAJISHVILI, VASIL
SULKHANISHVILI - ZEDAZENI, TORNIKE NIKOLAISH-
VILI - NATAKHTARI, KAKHI KAVSADZE - ARTIST, INGA
GRIGOLIA - GPB JOURNALIST



NANA GAGUA - PUBLISHER OF THE GEORGIAN TIMES AND INGA GRIGOLIA - GPB JOURNALIST, NATELA PATARKATSISHVILI, NODAR MAKHATADZE - REPRESENTATIVE OF INA GUDAVADZE



DAVID ZUBITASHVILI, MAHIR MAMMEDOV, ANAR MAMMEDOV - SOCAR GEORGIAN GAS DIRECTOR



GOCHA GOGILASHVILI - PSP GROUP, PAATA KURTANIDZE - AVERSI, INGA GRIGOLIA - GPB JOURNALIST, GIA KHUKHASHVILI - PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISOR



LAHSA KHUTSISHVILI - HEAD OF REVENUE SERVICE, KHATIA MOISTSRAFISHVILI - HEAD OF PR DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE SERVICE



VAKHTANG BUTSKHRIKIDZE - TBC BANK, GEORGE BARKALAIA - VTB, TAMAR LEBANIDZE - BANK CONSTANTA, IRAKLI KOVZANADZE - PARTNERSHIP FUND



ABESALOM KEVKHISHVILI - RUSTAVI AZOT, NINO TSILOSANI - GEORGIA CARRIAGE BUILDING COMPANY, INGA GRIGOLIA - GPB, VAKHO SANAIA - IMEDI TV



MICHAEL CHKUASELI - GEOPLANT GURIELI, ALKHAN ALIZADA - AGARA SUGAR, GOGA KHANDRAVA - FILM DIRECTOR, INGA GRIGOLIA - GPB



ABESALOM KEVKHISHVILI - RUSTAVI AZOT, MAKI KVARATSKHELIA - GEORGIAN AMERICAN ALLOYS, NINO TSILOSANI - GCBC, INGA GRIGOLIA - GPB, VAKHO SANAIA - IMEDI TV



TAMAZ NIJARADZE - PETRA TEA COMPANY, GEORGE BARATASHVILI - GPB GENERAL DIRECTOR



IRAKLI KVERGELIDZE - ORBI GROUP, GIGI KOIAVA - GASENERGY & QIMERIONY



AVTANDIL IASHVILI - AKHALI KSELEBI - AKHTELI, VAKHTANG BARDAVELIDZE - GEORGIAN SERVICE GROUP, IRAKLI KVERGELIDZE - ORBI GROUP, GEORGE BARATASHVILI - GPB GENERAL DIRECTOR, KHATIA GOGILADZE - CAUCASUS UNIVERSITY



NATIA TURNAVA - GIG, FAROOQ SIDDIQUI - RUSTAVI METALURGICAL PLANT



LEVAN PKHAKADZE - WISSOL GROUP, NINO SHEVARDNADZE - GOODWILL, MAKHIR MAMMEDOV - SOCAR, BIJAN MOUGOUEE - FLYGEORGIA



DAVIT TKEMALADZE - MOF, SHALVA PIPIA - MINISTER OF MOF, DAVID NARMANAIA - MINISTER OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, GEORGE KVIRIKASHVILI - MINISTRY OF ECONOMY



MAHIR MAMMEDOV - SOCAR, GIA KHUKHASHVILI - PM'S ADVISOR, NODAR MAKHATADZE - REPRESENTATIVE OF INA GUDAVADZE



BAIBA TSNAVA - IMEDI TV, VAKHO SANAIA - IMEDI TV, ZAAL TSINADZE - MAGAZINE T'BILISELEBI



KAKHA ITASHVILI - IMPERIAL, IRAKLI BATIASHVILI - PHILOSOPY DR, GOGA KHAINDRAVA - FILM DIRECTOR, NODAR JAVAKHISHVILI - QARTU BANK



REZO CHKHEIDZE - FILM DIRECTOR, INEZA AVALIANI - PRODUCER, VAKHTANG BARDAVELIDZE - GEORGIAN SERVICE GROUP, DAVID BARDAVELIDZE - GTG



VAKHTANG BUTSKHRIKIDZE & MAIA DZIRKVELISHVILI - TBC BANK



BIJAN MOUGOUEE - FLYGEORGIA



TATO LASKHISHVILI - "SVOBODNAIA GRUZIA" NEWSPAPER, IRMA INASHVILI - "OBIEKTIVI TV"



MALKHAZ GULASHVILI - PRESIDENT OF THE GEORGIAN TIMES MEDIA HOLDING, GIA KHUKHASHVILI - PM'S ADVISOR



NIKOLAZ KOBAKHIDZE - GEORGIAN INTEGRATED SYSTEM, DAVID CHANTURIA & MAKAKVARATSKHELIA - GEORGIAN AMERICAN ALLOYS



PRIZE OF THE XIV TOP 25 BUISNESS RATING



DAVID NARMANIAI - MINISTER OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, SHALVA PIPIA - MINISTER OF MOF, GOGA KHAIDRAVA - FILM DIRECTOR, GEORGE KVIRIKASHVILI - MINISTRY OF ECONOMY



AMY DENMAN - US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, MICHAEL COWGILL - PRESIDENT OF GAU



KHATUNA MIKATSADZE - ZEDAZENI, ALHAN ALIZADA - AGARA SUGAR, IRAKLI KVERGELIDZE - ORBI GROUP



EKREM DINDAROL & ADAM ONAL - INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA UNIVERSITY

THE GEORGIAN TIMES NATIONAL BUSINESS AWARD-SOCAR AWARDED BOLNURI CROSS

On May 30, the best company of 2012 was revealed. SOCAR became the winner of the traditional XIV business award contest organized by media holding the Georgian Times and social and marketing research company GORBI. SOCAR was nominated as the best company based on hidden voting by 25 top businesses participating in the official award ceremony, which was held in the Marriot Courtyard hotel. The Bolnuri Cross was awarded to Mahir Mammedov, the General Director of SOCAR Energy Georgia, by Malkhaz Gulashvili President of the Media Holding and Merab Pachulia, President of GORBI.

"I would like to thank to the organizers of the Event. SOCAR has entered the Georgian market on 2006 its participation in the contest is an additional stimulus for us. I am glad that the tradition has been restored. I feel the greatest pride for the award," declared Mahir Mammedov. In addition, 25 best companies were revealed which were selected by invited experts. The prizes and certificates were awarded to the winners. The representatives of Georgian businesses community were awarded in various nominations during the ceremony. The special prize for special contribution to making Georgian business free was awarded to Natela Patarkatsishvili, who is the mother of late Georgian business tycoon Badri Patarkat-



sishvili. "Today my son has been raised from death. He was such a person that he deserves it. The organizers of the event arranged everything very nicely. I would like to thank to Mr. Malkhaz Gulashvili and Nana Gagua. I would like to show my sorrow that my son is not alive, but win the dead is called in a good what, it is the best thing," Natela Patarkatsishvili explained.

- The 25 best companies of 2012 were:**
- TBC Bank
 - Georgian Beer Company
 - Company Aversi
 - Smart Retail
 - Wissol Group
 - Georgian Industrial Group
 - Company Natakhtari
 - Rustavi Metalurgical Plant
 - Geoplant
 - Agara Sugar
 - Rustavi Azot
 - Bank of Georgia
 - PSP Group
 - Goodwill
 - Sarajishvili
 - Georgian Carriage Building Holding
 - FlyGeorgia
 - Gas-Energy
 - SOCAR Energy Georgia
 - Bank Constanta
 - Georgian American Alloys
 - VTB Bank Georgia
 - Geocell
 - Georgian Water and Power
 - Healthy Water

The special nomination prizes being out of competition were awarded to:

- Georgian Integrated Systems
- Akhali Kselebi - Akhteli
- Caucasian University
- Petra
- Qimerioni
- Orbi Group
- Georgian Service Group_2007

The Golden Sponsor of the ceremony was SOCAR, General Sponsor "FlyGeorgia", Silver Sponsors "Gas energy" and "Orbi Group".

Partners: The Ministry of Finance of Georgia, International Chamber of Commerce, Business Association of Georgian, The American Chamber of Commerce, Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The organizer of survey: Georgian Public Opinion and Marketing Research Company "Gorbi".

- Media Supporters**
- GPB
 - TV Maestro
 - Radio Fortuna
 - Fortuna +
 - Tbiliselebi
 - Prime Time
 - Geotimes.ge
 - Commersant.ge
 - The Leader Today
 - Caucasian Business Week

Business Rating Special Prize Awarded to Badri Patarkatsishvili after Death

A special Prize was awarded to Badri Patarkatsishvili family on the Business Awarding Ceremony initiated by Media Holding The Georgian Times and Georgian public opinion and marketing research company GORBI.

At the traditional XIV business award ceremony, Patarkatsishvili was awarded for the contribution made for making Georgian Business free.

"To Badri Patarkatsishvili ...after death and to Ina Gudavdze," was the name of the special prize given to Natela



Patarkatsishvili, the mother of Badri Patarkatsishvili, with initiative of the company Kamara.

"My son was raised from the dead; he was such a person that deserved to receive such a prize. The organizers of the event arranged everything very well. I would like to thank to Mr. Malkhaz Gulashvili and Nana Gagua and I would like to show my sorrow that my son is not alive now. Though he is a winner, as he was recalled here well, it is the best thing," mentioned Natela Patarkatsishvili.

Media holding The Georgian Times and GORBI held the traditional XVI Business Award Ceremony on May 30 in the hotel Marriot Courtyard.

SOCAR became the winner of the Business Award. The 25 best companies were identified and granted with special prizes.



On May 30, after a 2 year forced pause due to political circumstances, the media holding The Georgian Times' annual National Business Award contest was back on the stage with its usual grandiose performance at the Marriot Courtyard hotel.

This year's event brought together over 180 business leaders, government officials, economic leaders and members of the diplomatic corps including Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Minister of Economy, Davit Narmania, Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Shalva Pipia, Minister of Agriculture, and Gia Khukhashvili, the Prime Minister's economic advisor, among others.

The annual business award ceremony, the 14th such event since being launched by The Georgian Times in 1995, was opened by well-known journalist Inga Grigolia, with her truly vivacious voice. She congratulated the business sector representatives for freeing Malkhaz Gulashvili, the President of Media Holding The Georgian Times, from political pressure. Gulashvili in turn thanked the gathered representatives of the business community for contributing to the Georgian economy and for their support in making the event a success.

Gulashvili also talked about the special role that Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili is playing in the development of the country's business environment. He underlined that after the change of government following last year's Parliamentary Elections, improvements in Georgia's business climate are now self-evident. In his opening speech, Gulashvili, who is the author of the business rating, even joked that if Saakashvili's government would have been re-elected, he would have resorted to awarding businessmen sitting in Tbilisi's infamous Gldani prison. Gulashvili's words were met with levity and great emotions from those in attendance.

Merab Pachulia, President of Georgian Opinion Research Business International (GORBI), which is the first social and market research company in Georgia, introduced those in attendance with research results and congratulated the companies for their victory in being nominated.

Pachulia explained in his speech the traditional rule of the secret ballot in which each company selects a company from a list of 25 companies in order to reveal the winning company of a year. However, prior to nominating a favorite company, representatives from the 25 se-



lect companies were invited on stage one after another to obtain their own individual award for having been nominated.

The event was charged with emotions. Especially emotional were words Mrs. Nana Gagua, publisher of The Georgian Times, who talked about the deceased businessman Badri Patarkatsishvili. Following her speech, the family of Patarkatsishvili was awarded with the special prize for their contribution into the freeing of Georgian business. Mrs. Natela, the mother of the late business tycoon Badri Patarkatsishvili, thanked the organizers of the event for such a great honor.

No less emotional were the charity declarations made by businessmen at the ceremony. Acts of corporate social responsibility which are especially important and characteristic businessmen were taken by several companies on their own accord.

The public was especially embarrassed with the history of Gela Turmanidze's family, which is living in extreme poverty in Tbilisi's suburb of Didi Dighomi on bare concrete floor under the open sky. The family is now expecting their eighth child, and has a meager monthly income of only 250 GEL.

Pharmaceutical company "Aversi" donated a 200 GEL voucher to the family and another company "PSP Group" donated a 500 GEL voucher to buy necessary medicines.

"GeoPlant", which produces "Gurieli Tea" decided to donate a year's supply of tea to those children with leukemia who are undergoing medical treatment at the M. Iashvili clinic.

Perhaps the highest degree of social responsibility and compassion was demonstrated by "FlyGeorgia". Under the

initiative of Bijan Mougouee, Chief Executive Officer of the company, the air company will provide three sick children their family members with free flights.

Prior to the culmination of the event, companies "Smart Retail" which is a part of a "Wissol" were also nominated.

Under the musical encouragement of Music group "Forte", the 25 businesses made their choice through the secret balloting this year's winning company. In the end, it was SOCAR that won the 2012 Grand Prix – the Bolnisi Cross. The name of the winner was announced by Grigolia and Gulashvili passed the Cross to Mahir Mammedov, General Director of the SOCAR Energy Georgia.

Mahir Mammedov thanked all companies for their support. He told that he really expected this victory, as the company is very active in Georgia. He promised many more innovations for the company's customers.

"I am very glad that I am the winner of the Grand Prix; however this award was not so unexpected for me. I was hoping that SOCAR would win. I consider that SOCAR has done a great job in Georgia, as it invested a lot into this country in recent years. I can say that this is a prize well earned. I would like to thank the Georgian Times. The award will be a great motivation for us, and it will stimulate all of us to be even more effective and make ever greater investments in Georgia in the future."

As Mammedov jokingly said, he will not take of this Cross from his chest and that he will take great care of it, as this is a result of the merit of the work of his company.

Giorgi Kvirikashvili: The Georgian Times and GORBI's Event is an Incentive for Business

Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Georgia's Minister of Economy said that the event organized by the Georgian Times and GORBI is an incentive for businesses. The minister made the statement during the annual Business Award ceremony organized by the Georgian Times Media Holding and the social and marketing research company GORBI in the Courtyard Marriot hotel.

"It is very nice that such a ceremony is held by the initiative of the Media Holding Georgian Times and GORBI. Such events always encourage businesses. Those companies, which participate in the events, are the key players of Georgian economy and I think that their encouragement by the some nominations, awarding is always a positive thing for their further development. From our side, we are involved in the processes and we have very close and positive relationships with each of them. The positive influence will be felt in the country's economic development," Kvirikashvili said.

The minister told that according to preliminary data for the month of April, Georgia's GDP increased and awarding businesses is an integral part of it. "According to the fourth month data, GDP has been increased from 1.7% to 4.1%. This is very positive trend and I think this event will be reflected positively," mentioned Kvirikashvili.

David Narmania: "Awarding Businesses is a Great Incentive for Companies"

"Awarding Businesses is a great incentive for companies," David Narmania, Georgia's Minister of Infrastructure and Regional Development told geotimes.ge during the annual National Business Award ceremony, which was organized by The Georgian Times Media Holding social and market research company GORBI.

"Such events are interesting for business, especially, for those entrepreneurs who are distinguished from others and in the condition of the competition; they are awarded as the best. On one hand, this is an incentive, on other hand, the information is spread about the company having achieved success, public awareness about the company is raised, the public attitude changes; trust increases and finally, it is reflected in the sales. Therefore it is very important," Narmania explained to geotimes.ge.

FlyGeorgia wins Comfort and Safe Flight nomination in Annual Business Rating

FlyGeorgia was nominated among 25 best companies by the media holding The Georgian Times and social and market research company GORBI.

The company won in the nominations for comfort and safe flight among more than 20 countries, accessible prices, public image, and efficient management and investment attractiveness.

Bijan Mougouee, Chief Executive Officer of FlyGeorgia was granted the special prize by Iasha Khutsishvili, the head of State Revenue Service at the business rating ceremony.

"We are glad that FlyGeorgia was presented on the ceremony and the nomination is an incentive for us. Georgian market is very interesting for our company and consequently, we have quite serious plans related to Georgia," said Mougouee.

In addition, the company granted free ticket to three children who require surgery abroad along with their parents.

SMART nominated as the Journalists' favorite Company at Annual Business Rating

SMART was the favorite company for journalists at the Business Award Ceremony organized by the media holding the Georgian Times at the Marriot Courtyard on May 30.

The favorite company of journalists was identified based on secret voting during the official dinner.

The prize was given to Levan Pkhakadze, the vice president of Wissol Group. He said that SMART winning this nomination is joyful and doubles its responsibility to the Wissol group.

"I am very glad for such success of SMART, along with being among 25 best companies, we became the favorite company for journalists as well and it doubles our responsibility. Thanks a lot to the Georgian Times and all the people who gave Georgian businesses such a nice event. Such an award is an incentive for us. We promise our consumers to offer more innovations," said Pkhakadze.

Charity Companies were Revealed during Annual Business Rating Event

Several companies participating in the official XIV annual National Business Award ceremony donated gifts to socially vulnerable individuals in Georgia during the event on May 30.

The event was organized by the Media Holding the Georgian Times and social and marketing research company GORBI and held at the Marriot Courtyard hotel on May 30. In an effort to demonstrate social responsibility, gifts were provided to the Turmanidze family, which lives in extreme poverty and is homeless. The family, which receives only 250 GEL per month, is expecting her eighth child. Pharmaceutical company Aversi gave a 200 GEL gift card for family medicine and hygiene products, and PSP Group handed over a 500 GEL voucher for medicines and hygiene means as well.

In addition, FlyGeorgia awarded three children who require treatment abroad and their parents with free flights to relevant destinations.

Geoplant producing tea Gurieli presented its production to the children with leukemia and currently being treated at the Oncohematological Department of the Iashvili Central Children's Hospital.

The above mentioned gifts will be delivered to the owners in near future.

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Georgia Considers Decriminalizing Marijuana

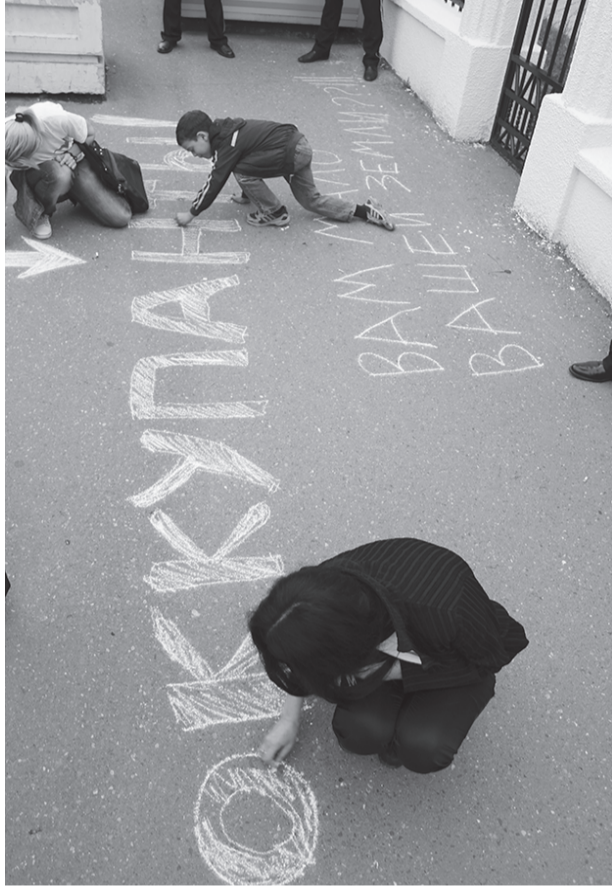
Continued from p. 6

“As a result, drug users have disappeared from the streets. Part of our society has calmed down because of this and they approve of the current situation. On the other hand, the root of the problem hasn’t disappeared or even been reduced,” declared Otiashvili. “Thousands of people have been locked up in prisons.

They’ve been isolated and those who have not been caught have gone underground,” he added.

Meanwhile Bacho Tsomalia, one of the organizers of the June 2 rally asserts that the main goal of the demonstration is to protect individual rights and freedom of choice. “We do not want to promote cannabis, but criminal penalties for marijuana use should be abolished” he explained.

Supporters of this approach also have their arguments. According to them, marijuana is not addictive, as



are other drugs and alcohol too. It doesn’t cause death, as alcohol consumption often does. For example, in the U.S. alcoholism results in of 20,000 deaths annually, but not a single death has been attributed to marijuana use. It is largely thought that legalization of marijuana will increase the number of consumers, but this will occur only initially. Moreover, while Marijuana decreases efficiency, this can happen due to many other reasons as well.

“I think that at some point this process will become the international norm,” Otiashvili said, adding that “sooner or later, Georgia will have to comply with this trend.”

This isn’t the first time that there has been talk of decriminalizing and legalizing marijuana in Georgia. In 2005, the head of the Georgian Council for Drug Policy, Tamara Sirbiladze, called for marijuana legalization, saying it could “reduce the number of drug-related crimes.”

NEWS

Draft Changes Prepared in the Constitution Regarding Dual Citizenship

Draft changes have been prepared in the Constitution regarding dual citizenship. According to Zviad Dzidziguri, Vice-speaker of Parliament, initiatives regarding the changes will be presented in the nearest future. “There are many problematic issues that were left in the constitution by the former government. One of them is the issue of dual citizenship. I think those are issues requiring attention and timely correction. Initiatives referring to those topics will be presented soon,” mentioned Dzidziguri. Based on the current Constitution, the state is liable for setting the limitation on the political activities of foreign citizens or citizens having no citizenship. A citizen obtaining citizenship of another country may not hold the positions of President of Georgia, Prime Minister and Parliamentary Speaker. In addition, last year, after current Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili entered politics in 2012, an unprecedented norm was included in the Constitution of Georgia by the initiative of the Christian Democrats party, which was endorsed by the ruling UNM party at the time. Specifically, supreme law specified that prior to January 1, 2014, Georgian citizens of the required age, who are born and live in Georgia for the last 5 years, and have citizenship of an EU member state, have the right to participate in the parliamentary and presidential elections and the right to vote. In this case the Constitution does not refer to those citizens holding dual citizenship and it limits the right of being a President, Prime Minister and Parliamentary Speaker.

geotimes.ge

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

‘Drunk Cherry’ Fought For Their Right to Party

By TAKO AGARASHVILI, GT

In early 90-ies Beastie Boys sang that we all have to fight for our right to party. Looks like Miranda Esakia – the founder of ‘Mtvrali Alubali’ (in translation ‘Drunk Cherry’) - took it as a dare and went for it. It all started in 2007 with single events at different clubs. Their thing was a quality electronic music. Names like John Acquaviva visited Tbilisi back in the days when hardly anywhere anyone could hear decent club music in Tbilisi. Miranda was determined. She was careful and strategic at this.

As time went by she picked the right people like Tato Kharchilava, Gigi Gvalia, Tamuna Milorava and a few others to unite under the company and finally grew to the point of renting a club Music Hall in Batumi. Mtvrali Alubali offered a lineup that looked like a dream at the time – Format B, Oliver Koletzki, Zemfira and others. The year of 2008 was very unfortunate for Georgia. The entire season of Music Hall failed.

Mtvrali Alubali didn’t stop

but started moving. There were events in Tbilisi as well as in Gudauri (seasonal). Folks were offered great music, great parties and just lots of fun. Since 2009 it became official: Mtvrali Alubali was the top companies offering the most unreal lineups, big names were coming to the capital. I must note, when you are in a mainstream like this it’s not only about surprising people with great music. This is how Georgian DJs get promoted. All these big names that spin at the clubs, they need a warm up. And that

is, they started having fans. As for the stars The Maneken, Aril Brikha, Unai, Dapayk, Jazzanova and many legendary names thanks to Mtvrali Alubali. It simply doesn’t get better than this. The company never gave up on their main goal – bring quality electronic music.

Mtvrali Alubali is getting ready for a hot, busy and fun summer. Tato Kharchilava answered a few questions about it.

How do these events happen? I bet it’s expensive.

After years of hard work Mtvrali Alubali found partner companies that make them happen.



is the time of fame for local DJs. They were becoming more and more famous country wide and therefore in demand. People became aware of their mu-

You brought Cassius last year and entrance was free. How did that happen?

It was a marketing project for a certain company, we managed

ter without an invitation or being on the list. I think it’s just about time Georgians learn that they need an invitation, or they need to buy a ticket to go to the event. People shouldn’t go to the party at 1am; there is certain time when people should go to the party. Georgians must learn this.

“Batumi Summer Set” brings the entire electronic world together and takes a Georgian DJ to a higher level. It was not just the foreign DJs, but the producers and people who work in the industry that can bring some music, opinion, contacts and fair evaluation with them. Batumi Summer Set presented James Zabiela, Matador, Silicone Soul and other big names. In 2012 it was not for new-comer Georgian DJs, but for popular and quality ones. It was an open air event. We built a little city with tents, flags, huge stage it was beautiful. Despite the bad weather, the festival was a great success. I would outline that in the article for the British newspaper James Zabiela named Gio Shengelia and Greenbeam and Leon as the DJs that the world must see. That makes us very proud. In 2013 we shall present new Georgian names to promote them as well.

I am sure you have a bomb to drop on Georgians. What’s the top name of this year?

It’s Faithless. Maxi Jazz and Sister Bliss will take part in Batumi Summer Set this year. We are very excited. There are more big names; they will be announced very soon.

As I understand there will be a shorter list for the Batumi Summer Set.

Yes, the list will be very limited. People must know that parties can’t always be free. They must start paying some money for fun.

You have been promoting Georgian DJs like angels from heaven.

Well, we do know that we did and are doing a great job in promoting them. They had a chance to spin next to really legendary names. The festival



the project. Cassius was in demand. We gave away the invites, but a lot of people didn’t bother to pick them up. So at the door there was a big problem. People with the invites came across the people on the list and people who figured they would just en-



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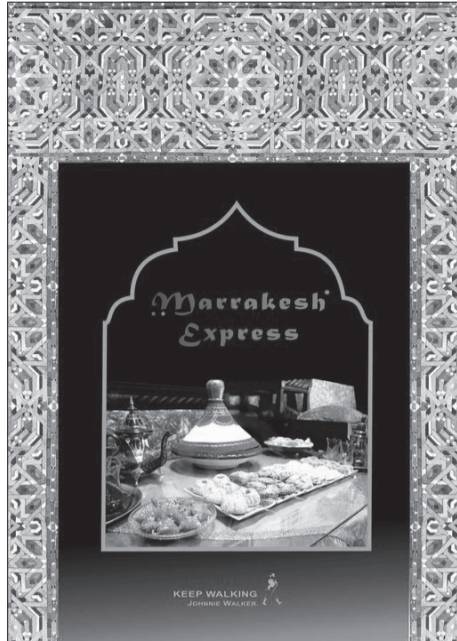
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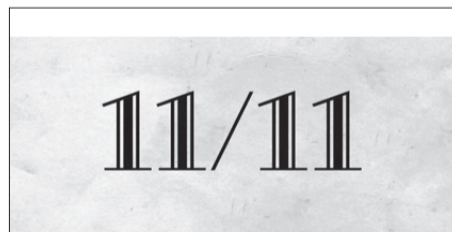
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