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The Georgian Court system is the most independent it has ever been



"I cannot remember any case in the last few months in which anybody has interfered in the activities of the Court. Not since February, if we exclude, of course the statements of politicians, which are a type of interference but do not affect anything."

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Presidential Candidates and their Chances

By Tatia Gagua, GT

Four months are left until implementation of the function of mobile bulletin. On October 27, the country is electing the fourth president though with little bit different responsibilities.

The number of presidential candidate is increasing day by day. However, none of candidates has started an active election campaign yet.

In the condition of the pre-election boom, political parties, initiative groups and independent candidates are involved in discussion and revelation of the presidential candidates.

It was unexpected nomination of Giorgi Margvelashvili, the Education Minister as a presidential candidate for society. The favorite of the Prime Minister, 43 years old minister was a GIPA rector in 2000-2006 and later in 2010-2012. After great political changed in Georgian politics, Margvelashvili hold the position of the Education Minister and in February 2013, he got the portfolio of vice-Prime Minister together with Education Minister.

Informally, after coming of Georgian Dream in the legislative and executive governance, Irakli Alasania, current Minister of Defence was considered as a presidential candidate. His dismissal from the vice-Prime Minister position was followed by promotion of Margvelashvili.

The Georgian Times talked about the presidential candidates to Kakhi Kakhishvili, the founder of the Institute of Election and Political Technologies and Georgian European Value Institute. The fact that Giorgi Margvelashvili has a support of Bidzina Ivanishvili is a significant fact during election. Though Mr. Bidzina

tries to indicate population not to elect him due to this fact, the statement of prime minister about leaving the politics, may be the reverence to non-parliamentary opposition. It was the message to the population, "Do not vote for me, I may go from the politics, you determine who you like to have as a president." As Kakhishvili said, such statement more or less ensure equal start-up conditions.

Nomination of the candidate is delayed by the UNM, as it carries Primary for identification of Presidential candidate. Gia Baramidze, David Bakradze, Shota Malashkhia and Zurab Japaridze participate in the primary. UNM will reveal the candidate at the end of the month.

UNM primary is considered as a show by Kakhishvili: They had an opportunity to establish democratic institutes, but they used to do just autocratic institutes and they have just recall about Primary?! This is an ordinary political technics to show off how democratic they are. They nominated so irrelevant candidates, that it was easy to guess that Bakradze will become a winner. It is possible that other candidate will win it in one of the regions, but finally Bakradze will win. Their primary is as facade as it was everything during their governance."

David Bakradze, UNM most real presidential candidate of UNM worked in the Foreign Ministry of Georgia in 1998-2002. He was a head of election office of Mikheil Saakashvili during early election in 2008. In January 2008, he was appointed as Foreign Minister of Georgia. In 2008-2012 he was a Parliament Speaker. He is the leader of UNM and parliamentary minority, MP since October 2013.

Salome Zurabishvili is going to participate as an independent

candidate in presidential election. Vakhtang Khmaladze suspects her legal right to participate in the election as born and brought up in France. The offspring of NikoNikoladze, the great Georgia public and political figure was foreign minister of Georgia in 2004-2005. She became the leader of a political party "Georgian Way" in 2006. She is the head of Iran expert group of UN Security Council sanction committee since 2010.

In accordance to Article 70, the Constitution of Georgia, any Georgian citizen above 35, being resident of Georgia in general for 5 years, but mainly live fully in Georgia for 3 years. "The dual citizens mat use passive election right. There are several factors, the first, Ms. Salome has a dual citizenship, if the constitutional changes will be initiated timely, and the latest provision will be cancelled. In fact only in this case, the issue of citizenship will not prevent her participation in the election. As for her residence in Georgia for the last three years, She works for international organization and it will be interesting approach of CEC, how it will assess this issue and if she will be able to participate in the presidential election. Though I think artificial obstacles should not be made and she has to give the chance of participation in the election. But still CEC approach to the issue is very interesting," says Kakhi Kakhishvili.

It seems that nostalgia towards the presidency of two months in 2003-2004 was awoken to Nino Burjanadze. The representative of weak sex of the great political past, the representative "Citizens' Union" and "UNM: (though she never been the official member). She established the political party "Democratic Movement-United Geor-

gia" since movement to opposition in 2008. According to statement of public assembly executive board, the country needs experience politician, principle and having international authority as a president and they think that Burkjanadze has all those features, Nino Burjanadze does not exclude to have the second tour in the presidential elections, though she is sure in victory.

Shalva Natelashvili, the leader of Labour Party is going to taking of the country out of deadlock. The leader having the famous sense of Humor and political sympathy is not trying him in the election for the first time. He is always in the opposition and in case of victory does not participate in the operation of the Parliament. He is impressive; he gets political scores by the opposing-satiric speeches. It is paradox, but Natelashvili struggling against the riches is not so poor according to 2012.

Giorgi Targamadze, the leader of Christian democratic Movement demonstrated his ambition to become a president. The presidential candidate having political journalist background predicts appointment of the second tour. Giorgi Targamadze was the director TV companyImedi, public-political programs, author and the presenter of analytical program "the Droeba". After leaving journalism, he established the political party "Christian Democrats"

One more independent candidate is Nestan Kirtadze, the former international secretary of Labour Party, she is not going to change European direction. The focus of her activities will be territorial integrity and direct dialogue with Ossetians and Abkhazians.

Kakhi Kakhishvili predicts appointment of the second tour, "let say, there are signs of elec-

tion president by the second tour. It is very important for development of the country, that there are no precedent like that in Georgia that the presidential candidate required the second tour. The good political climate is establishing, when the president will not be elected by 90%. It will give higher sense of responsibility to the candidate being the future president. In addition, in general, the candidate gaining 80-90% associates presidency with himself, as an ultimate instance and it is good to hold the second tour.

"In order to hold the second tour, there are certain preconditions; the first is high activeness of the voters. The voters is divided into several segments, This is voter of the Georgian Dream, does not mind who will be the candidate of Georgian Dream, which simply votes any representative of Georgian Dream, There is a voter, which will vote for UNM candidate regardless it is Bakradze or Malashkhia. The third category is a voter who never vote for UNM, but it will be vote for specific candidate either of Georgian Dream or non-parliamentary opposition, the second factor is what we talked about, that non-parliamentary opposition should select common candidate, select as less candidate from the non-governmental opposition as possible, in order to decrease possibly of split of the votes. The votes of such voters will be split on non-parliamentary opposition, as they are not able to get the votes of the purely UNM and purely Georgian Dream voters. As our election code is based mainly on technologies, the split of the votes will create entirely different situation. It is necessary, that non parliamentary opposition hold consultations, as identify the minimal

number of presidential candidates, it may be not common, but two or three candidates."

As he said, it will be good, if the representatives of non-parliamentary will study rating of each other and agree on the candidate with the highest rating, who will be more competitive.

"Many thing will depended on non-parliamentary position. It is not a time of ambitions; the best thing will be for the population if non-parliamentary opposition will conduct primary and surveys in order to support the candidate with highest rating. This election is important not only for election of future president, but is has a strategic importance of future political development. Conducting of the by-elections depends on the presidential elections as well as when it will be appointed. I think by-election of Parliament will be hold in two or a year and a half. It is depended on Presidential election."

The desire to involve in the presidential election was expressed by the former president Edward Shevardnadze being famous with his sense of humour. "Almost everyone is from my team. I think to participate in the process. Do you know the folk saying-"Even the horn of the old ox plows". Of course, the words of "Babu" are joke.

Despite individual candidates are sure in the victory, actually the final election depends only on the activeness of the voter on October 27.

The time left until the presidential election gives an opportunity to make a right choice. Launching of an active presidential campaign and presentation of the candidate's programs to the society will give us a chance to make a deliberate choice and not the inspired by the Charisma.



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Kote Kublashvili: The Georgian Court system is the most independent it has ever been

By DALI BZHALAVA, GT

"I cannot remember any case in the last few months in which anybody has interfered in the activities of the Court. Not since February, if we exclude, of course the statements of politicians, which are a type of interference but do not affect anything."

Here Kote Kublashvili, Chair of the Supreme Court, talks about planned changes, well known cases of executive interference and the situation in the court system and Prosecutors' Office since the last election with the Georgian Times.

Following the parliamentary election of October 1, the Georgian public expected to see changes in the Court system as well as the executive. In the 9 months since then, what has changed?

Both the Court and I personally would like to establish the standards which apply in all democratic countries. Under these, a change of government should not be followed by changes in the Court. We do not think it right that when a government is changed by means of election, for the first time in Georgia, a change of judges should also be expected.

Did the new government try to replace the old judges?

This was noticeable to everybody in Georgia during the 4-5 months after the election. There was a great desire for this, but we nevertheless tried to set a precedent that the composition of the Courts should not be changed when the executive is. The Court is an independent branch of the government and no political change should influence it or the judges.

In fact, for the last 9 months the Court system has worked well. The judges corps has not been changed, though it is possible to assign new ones next week. Therefore, the system is functioning in accordance with its main principle, that the judicial corps remains the same. The key achievement since the election has been to establish the Court's independence.

During the former government's rule there were frequent accusations by attorneys and people in touch with the system that the Court was being influenced by the Prosecutor's Office; is this still true today?

I would rather say that the Georgian Court system is the most independent it has ever been. I cannot remember any incident during the last few months in which anybody interfered in the activities of the Court openly, not since February unless we include the statements of politicians, but actually these have no effect. Politicians should not abuse the Court,

and it does not achieve the result desired by the politicians who do it. Therefore I insist that the Court is more independent now than ever.

But is this not some kind of acknowledgment that the former government had an influence on the Court?

No, I am not saying that, as since 2005 everything we have done has been designed to create an independent court, but we started from a very difficult position, in which the corruption level was very deep, interference from outside very strong, etc.

Gradually we decreased this interference and finally we have been able to eliminate it. Now the new government has come, the court should take advantage of this and has. I mean, there was a certain conceptual cohesion during the former government, as a key approach was set out at that time, a struggle against crime, corruption and drugs, and everybody was involved in this, including the court. Let us say, that all three branches of the government implemented it. Of course this stimulated certain cohesions, but the coming of the new government has changed the situation.

Does this mean that the new government sought to make the court independent?

The governments of all countries wish to have a certain influence over the Court. But I said that we had to take the chance given us by the government change, as we had no link with them. We were all appointed legitimately, there is no corruption in the system, the judges are very motivated and qualified, and we have to use the new situation to continue with our work in a more appropriate manner. In other parts of Eastern Europe governments have been changed peacefully through elections several times, and I have had conversations with the heads of the supreme courts of such states. Of course, the situation was not easy in all these countries either, but mainly they told me that changes of government strengthen court governance, as such cohesions cease and the judges become more independent as they were not appointed by the new government and are there for life or until they retire. Consequently they can try and achieve independence and now we have achieved that. One of the most important issues is the appointment of the judges for unlimited terms, and my idea is that not only judges appointed in future, in November, but those already serving should be allowed to continue as judges without time limit.

Would this apply to all judges?

Neither the first and second level court judges nor supreme justices are appointed for life. It is prohibited in the Constitution.

I do not know what she would like, but her approach failed and it was not right for the new government to come to power and then criticise and aggressively



Reappointment of the acting judges for life or until they choose to retire is crucial, in order to give the public a perception that there is stability and non-changeability in the court system. We should also increase salaries, as increases have been stopped and what was enough in 2006-2008 is not sufficient now. This will facilitate the solution of many problems, about 90% of problems in fact.

At your meeting with the PM you raised the issue of salary increases, and the public saw this as an ultimatum from your side. Was it?

It was not an ultimatum, and we also talked about other issues. We had a conversation about eliminating interference. I would like to commend the attitude of the Prime Minister, who thinks similarly to us. Not only politicians but the courts too are influenced by PR statements, as are such institutions which officially collaborate with us like the police, Prosecutor's Office, etc. We talked about this first of all, and it is absolutely clear that such interference should not occur and if it does the response should be very strict.

The new Minister of Justice has made various statements about you, saying for example that the greatest number of claims made against Georgia to the Strasbourg Human Rights Court have been made during your term of office. Is this why she does not want you in the Supreme Court?

I do not know what she would like, but her approach failed and it was not right for the new government to come to power and then criticise and aggressively

oppose both the court and the first citizen of the country.

They consider you a member of Saakashvili's team, do they not?

I was appointed during the time of the Saakashvili government and this is a fact. But even in the US the Chair of the Supreme Court is appointed. The term of office of a Supreme Court Chair in Georgia is ten years. But this does not mean that if a new government comes in I will automatically remain a follower of the previous government and express this through my actions and decisions. I abide by our principles to the letter. It may be very hard, but we have been working since 2005 to achieve a high level of independence in the courts.

There is great public interest in the cases of former ministers who have been charged with various offences. The feeling is that the court is not strong. In the case of Ugulava for example there was a view that the Prosecutor's Office had enough evidence to see him imprisoned, but the court released him and many others, whereas Vano Merabishvili is imprisoned. Can you comment on this?

The court demonstrated the ultimate level of independence and said, that in this specific case, it was not necessary to sentence the Tbilisi Mayor to pre-trial imprisonment, but in the case of the former Prime Minister it was.

Our goal is that nobody interferes in the legal process. It is possible that one decision or another may turn out not to be right, but the only thing we can do is to fill the gaps not by interference but by analysis and later

on by training and increasing the professional skills of the judges. This is the only right thing we can do to improve the decision making process, although many people will still be dissatisfied.

Last year, when I asked you why the Prosecutor's Office was so strong and why the defence always lost you told me that Georgia had strong prosecutors. Today the picture is different, so what has happened to those educated and strong prosecutors, some of whom still work there?

Most of them are not the same prosecutors and those who have come in since last year are weak and have no training or not such good training. I know this because my judges were there, when the prosecutors were trained and introduced new practices the new prosecutors have not been exposed to. There has been a huge transformation. For example, in one case a man was detained with several kg of drugs. The entire arraignment and trial process should be conducted in the presence of a lawyer for the accused, but documents were submitted to the court when no lawyer had been appointed. Therefore the case had to be dismissed and all the work done by the prosecutor was rendered null and void. The judge said that this was such a crude and clear violation, that even a poorly educated prosecutor should not commit it. This indicated he had a very low level of qualification. Moreover, this was in a very serious case.

Are the judges united, as during the last meeting where you elected the members of the Justice Council there was opposition to certain candidates from the judges?

This was and is normal. They wanted to put forward their own candidacies, and did so, but 23 of the judges preferred other candidates. Everything was done transparently, and everybody saw that the council members were elected by the judges.

Though there was some dissatisfaction with the process, the majority said that everything was as it had been before.

The names of individual judges were mentioned, were they not dissatisfied?

Those elected were acceptable to the majority. I repeat, the judges must decide for themselves by transparent and open process who will defend their rights in the Justice Council, and the judges said that they would like to elect judges to the council, who oppose the will of the government to dismiss some of them.

Do you agree with court hearings being open?

The attendance of journalists is not a problem now and was not before. Hearings have always been open. The only thing which has been added is cameras. The limitation regarding cameras is the same one applied in the majority of European countries, i.e. they can shoot for two minutes and then stop. But now the cameras are shooting not only for two minutes but throughout the process and personally I am against this, as the court should let the cameras in at the beginning and end but not throughout.

International organisations say that there have been positive changes in the courts since the election, can you comment on this?

Everyone has demonstrated support, they know, and I have heard this from the ambassadors, that the court is playing a crucial role at this stage of the country's development, and finally they can begin to conclude that Georgia is a democratic state. Entrance to any European Association is directly associated with the independence of the court and they are focusing on it. This is the greatest support for us.

Over the last nine years, what has been the rate of acquittal?

Compared to previous years it has not increased, therefore it is understood incorrectly, mainly by journalists, that as the government has changed the acquittal rate must have increased. It is not like that and should not be like that. It is impossible to have 20-30% acquittals, as this would mean that the Prosecutor's Office and police were not working well and everything was being done wrong.

Even in Norway, a very stable country, for more than 50 years the rate of acquittal has been 4-5%, and this rate is lower in other countries.



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Yuval Fuchs: Our businessmen are coming here and continuing to invest

By EMMA BAIRAMOVA, GT

Ambassador Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary of Israel Yuval Fuchs says that economic relations between Israel and Georgia are not very strong right now but both countries are putting new mechanisms together to achieve better results. Here in an interview with The Georgian Times the Ambassador talks about general relations between the two countries and the regional security of the Caucasus and the Middle East.

What did you know about Georgia before coming here and how did you react to being assigned here?

I first learned a bit about Georgia when I served in Moscow from 2005 to 2009, which I would say were very interesting years for Russian-Georgian relations as this was between the periods of war between the two countries. So I first learned about Georgia from that perspective. I then went back to Israel until I returned to this region last summer as Regional Director for the Caucasus and Central Asia. Georgia was part of my remit, and I visited Georgia three times to undertake various consultations. I also accompanied Georgian visitors to Israel, among them the former Speaker of Parliament David Bakradze, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigol Vashadze and the Patriarch of Georgia, who also visited Israel before my coming here. So I knew something of Georgia but cannot say that I knew enough, because since coming here I have learned much more about your country and your needs and priorities, because very important changes have taken place in your country over the last year. After coming here I also learned that I did not know very much about Georgian food, and I have enjoyed it in my first year of being here.

Do think Georgians are European or Asian?

This is a good question for Israel too... both these countries and people are somehow in between. Georgia is in Europe geographically speaking. Israel is not part of Europe geographically, but culturally we see ourselves as Europe oriented, our commerce and trade are Europe oriented, our science is very much Europe oriented, etcetera. I think this is a difficult question, but you must define for yourselves where would you like to be by making a strategic choice, by determining who you think your likeminded countries are. Do you choose to be part of the democratic Western world or do you choose to be somewhere else? We live in the Middle East, which is not part of the Europe. Nevertheless we have made a very clear strategic choice. We are not part of NATO or the EU, and are not seeking to be, but we are likeminded, we are part of the West in this sense. This is our strategic, our mental orientation, and I believe that Georgia has also made its choice. Georgia is very much a Western country. It is a democratic country. It is a country which believes in free choice, diplomatically, politically, culturally, so I think this is where you belong mentally. Of course, there is much work still to be done between Georgia and NATO and the EU, but I be-



lieve that in terms of being likeminded, you are a Western country and this is what we ourselves like to see.

It is known that the previous Georgian government created some problems for Israeli businessmen, so will Georgia be able to persuade Israeli investors to come to Georgia again?

There are no problems now. You have no need to persuade anybody. Our businessmen are coming here and continuing to invest. Just yesterday I had an interesting meeting with the Minister of Economy and this morning I met the Minister of Agriculture. They both participated in the very successful visit of the Prime Minister, Mr. Ivanishvili, to Israel just three weeks ago. As you know, during this visit the Georgian and Israeli Prime Ministers decided to establish a joint economic commission which will be chaired by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both countries. At the same time a very successful business forum was held, the second this year, and Prime Minister Ivanishvili has been kind enough to open such forums both here in Tbilisi and in Tel Aviv. We are already discussing the next joint event.

We plan to participate in Agro-Expo, which will be held here in Tbilisi on 23-22 November, by having a national stand. This morning I also forwarded an invitation for the Minister of Agriculture to participate in the **Waterc** technology exhibition, which will take place in Israel between 22-24 October. As you know, Israel is a world leader in water technologies, not merely irrigation but all kinds of water treatments in agricultural, industrial and civil use. Some of the Israeli companies involved in this field have made a very good beginning here, for example **Metafim** is now very active in Georgia.

So I don't think we have to convince Israeli businessmen to come to Georgia. I would not say that economic relations between Israel and Georgia are very strong at present, we have a lot to do in this regard, but we are putting new mechanisms together, like the joint economic commission. We are discussing renewing the expired agreements in the field of agriculture. But it is most important to bring business to business, company to company. This is why we have had two business forums this year, and I am sure that there will be more than one

next year too.

We have already started thinking about next year. We keep in contact with Israeli businessmen who would like to enter the Georgian market, be it in food processing, agriculture, manufacturing or energy, as we still have to improve the situation. 2012 was much better in terms of our mutual trade turnover than the year before. We have improved it from a total turnover of about 80.2 million dollars in 2011 to almost 130 million in 2012. This is a growth of almost 50 million dollars in one year. This is only catching up, as we now have the same numbers we had in 2008, but it is still progress.

You will remember that in 2008 two main factors, the war with Russia and the world economic crisis, had significant consequences for the Georgian economy. Both these, quite apart from some bilateral developments, affected the development of our economic relations. Now we have regained the trade numbers we had before the crisis and put together new ideas and new mechanisms. Interest in Georgia is enormous, but our aim is to gain a place among the top 10 trade partners of Georgia. Investors have to know that there is a market here for them, so the bigger mutual trade turnover we have the more chance we have of encouraging investors to not only market their imported goods but produce them here.

Some Israeli investors have told me that they want to explore the market in the food processing industries, or traditional manufacturing, and then possibly make an investment and produce things here. We have a lot of to do to be among your top 10 economic partners, as we need to achieve another 90 million dollars in trade turnover, but I believe this is doable. Maybe not in one year, but in two or three years, if we continue working intensively.

What can you tell us about cultural relations between Georgia and Israel?

One more positive result of the Prime Minister's visit to Israel was that we renewed the three yearly cultural exchange programmes between our two countries. However we have never stopped bringing famous Israeli artists here. We are working on bringing more here in the coming months, and a modern music ensemble called Twenty

One, named after the 21st century, will take part in a music festival here in September and October. A very famous Israeli jazzman and his band will also be playing here, and famous Israeli artist Shakhai Marcus will give a video presentation here.

We are also discussing how we can take part in the Batumi Film Festival which will be held in autumn and recently also participated in the student's film festival. So we have very busy cultural programme. We also plan to hold a big event there, which will be called something like Jerusalem Days in Tbilisi or Israel Days in Tbilisi. The only limit is our budget, and we are looking for more partners, working very closely with the Ministry of Culture. We would like to increase our presence at all the festivals and in all kinds of arts and culture activities as we believe this is one of the ways people in one country to get to know about other people, and we don't have enough of this, either here or in Israel.

What about educational programmes? Are there any exchanges taking place between universities?

Instituting exchange programmes between universities and students is a task for the future. This is an area of cooperation we have not yet developed enough. There are some Hebrew language and Israeli History and Culture courses at the State University and other institutions but I believe that there should be more, and we should explore the possibilities of introducing vocational learning exchanges. I am thinking especially here about things like hi-tech innovation and business start ups. Israel is very good at encouraging start ups, sometimes we are called the start up nation, there is even a book about us called Start up Nation. Israel is also very well represented in the technological markets in New York, Frankfurt and elsewhere.

The young people in Israel are very innovative, not only in culture but in business and in science. I think it will be very good to invite lecturers in these subjects from Israel and hold maybe a seminar, round table or conference. I am not sure what the right format would be just yet, but such an event would expose to Georgian young people the innovative spirit Israel is quite famous for, where it comes from and how it is put into practice. Israeli universities and science in general can play a big part here.

What do you think about Georgia's democracy?

I think our democracy is developing very impressively. You held democratic elections last October. There is a cohabitation between opposing political forces here. Sometimes this is not a very easy process, and it is the task of Georgian politics and the Georgian public to get through this period. There is a very important minority in the parliament, and this is important for democracy. I see very positive developments, and I believe that if they continue you will overcome the difficulties or complexities which may arise on the way to democracy, but my assessment is that even at this stage the overall picture is very impressive. If I am not wrong, it is also the general assessment of observers and organisations around the world that Georgia leads the region in democratic

development, although this doesn't mean that you can lie down and relax. There is still much which needs to be done. We are monitoring political developments and talking to our friends and partners from all parties and social groups and seeing if there are ways in which Israel can strengthen your democratic development. We have experience of strong democratic institution building to share and are ready to do this.

President Saakashvili has said several times that Israel should be an example for us, some kind of model for development. Can you say that relations between the two countries are in quite a good condition now?

In my conversations with both the government and opposition, with the Georgian Dream and the UNM and other parties, there is a consensus about relations with Israel. Let me tell you that I am very glad if Israel is seen as an example by Georgia. I think Georgia is also a very important partner for Israel, and not only in economic, cultural or educational terms but in maybe the most important area, the political field. It is true that Georgia is not a very big country; Israel is not very big country either. Israeli is smaller than Georgia in size, and in terms of population only a bit bigger. But some countries should be measured not only by their size, location, population or GDP but by their relevance. I think that because Georgia is where it is it is geographically speaking a very important country, especially for Israel. You are located at one of the most interesting and important geopolitical junctions of the world.

You are very close to the Middle East. I returned from Israel two days ago and it was like a bus ride, it takes only two and half hours. You don't even have time to watch a film on the plane. When I was a student in Jerusalem it would take me longer to travel from there to Haifa where my parents lived. That is how close we are.

The Middle East is a very important and interesting region, there have been some very interesting developments there in recent years. Look at what is happening every day in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, in the border areas with your neighbour Turkey, think about the unrest and revolutions. There have been two revolutions already in Egypt and more than one hundred thousand people were killed in Syria last year. Think about all the destabilising factors in the region such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, terrorist groups who do not hesitate to endanger the whole region's security. And here you are, very close to this region. People do not grasp how close you are. Hezbollah is looking everywhere for what are sometimes called soft spots. Georgia is one of these.

There was a terrorist attack in Burgas in Bulgaria last summer and attempts at similar in Baku, Istanbul and Cyprus. We can prevent this through joint cooperation. God forbid, but if a successful terrorist attack is made here it will not matter whether it was perpetrated by Iran, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad or Al Qaeda. What will matter is that a terrorist act has taken place, here in Tbilisi or in Batumi,

which is just across the sea from Burgas, where six people were killed. Hezbollah was responsible for that one, according to Bulgarian reports. A terrorist act in Georgia would be a violation of Georgian sovereignty, an attack on your national security and regional security. We enjoy very close, very good cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of course the Prime Minister on this. I believe there is a growing understanding of the danger here. We are ready to cooperate as we believe that terrorism is one of the challenges which should be confronted only in concert.

Another challenge, which also comes from not far from here and can also be confronted together, is Iran's nuclear programme. There has been much talk about the newly elected President of Iran; I believe what matters is not perception, not the image of a person, but what he will do. So far, we see no change; on the contrary, there has been a consolidation of uranium enrichment activities. The Iranian leadership is getting nearer and nearer to something which must be defined as a red line by the international community. Georgia has very important role to play here, especially in the context of sanctions. We have very good relations and dialogue with the Georgian Government and I believe that the Georgian Government is committed to upholding the sanctions and respecting its international obligations.

We are keeping the Georgian Government and companies aware of the dangers and risks. Again, I believe this is a job for the whole international community, but as you are so close to Iran, which has access to your seaports of Batumi and Poti, Georgia is more important than many countries which maybe bigger, richer, and so on. We support Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We are ready to enlarge our dialogue on questions interesting to us both. Counterterrorism is important for everybody, not only us. The regional security of the Caucasus and the regional security of the Middle East go hand in hand, you can't separate them.

Can Georgia maintain good relations with both Iran and Israel and not get involved in conflicts?

We do not have anything against the Iranian People or Iran in general. We have an Embassy there and one thousand Israelis live in Iran. There are Israeli schools in Iran. We have had good relations with Iran in the past and hopefully will have them again. We just have problems with Iran developing its nuclear programme, which is not a peaceful one, do not be misled. All the indications are that this is a purely military program. We have a problem with Iran supporting terrorist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas. We have problems with Iran verbally attacking Jews and the State of Israel, which it calls a cancer, not a state. We have a problem with Iran denying the Holocaust. Especially in a tolerant country like Georgia all these are likewise intolerable. This is not about the Iranian people, this is about the policies of their country. A nuclear bomb in the hands of the Ayatollahs is a danger not only for Israel but everybody.

United National Examinations Concluded

By LIKA MOSHIASHVILI, GT

The United National Examinations of 2013 have come to an end. Here The Georgian Times discusses them with the head of the National Examinations Centre Maia Miminoshvili.

How successful were the Unified National Examinations 2013? How many students were registered for the exams this year and how many actually took part?

Approximately 42,000 students were registered in total, quite a large number. 97-98% of these took the examinations, again a good figure. In general I am satisfied with the progress of this year's exams. They started off very well. The percentage of students who were late for their exams was very low at the beginning, but unfortunately it then increased. I am very concerned by the instances of people misunderstanding the dates of their examinations and coming the next day. I find them very strange, as the exact dates of each exam are indicated on their exam cards and students only have to remember them. But the number of such cases is not worrying.

How many examination centres were used this year? Did you experience any complications in any region?

We used 18 examination centres. We added an extra one in Tbilisi due to the increased number of entrants. We had centres in 12 different regions: Telavi, Rustavi, Gori, Akhaltsikhe, Ozurgeti, Zugdidi, Poti, Sighnaghi, Batumi, Khulo, Kutaisi and Tbilisi. Yesterday I visited some of the regional centres and I am very satisfied with how the process was conducted there. Everything is very clear and calm. For one particular exam no more than 800 students were registered. It's easier to control this number than the 3,000 you have in the examination centres in Tbilisi. I think entrants in regions have better conditions.

Was there anything new in the Unified National Examinations 2013?

We did not change anything in the tests, as we did not have much time before the exams began. Students start preparing for these exams from October-November and we thought it would not have been fair to them to make any changes just a few months prior.

We did change a few aspects of the process though. This year students are allowed to choose which university they wish to go to after they register, or even when they have already received their results. This was not possible in previous years, the student could not change anything after registering. Funding has also been increased this year. The government allocated 18 million instead of 10 million for educational support, so more students will now be getting grants from the state.

Unlike in previous years all university faculties will be considered equal for funding purposes and none will be given priority. For instance, last year if a student wanted to study law he/she would only have been able to get a 100% grant or nothing, while a student with the same scores wanting to study engineering or another lower priority subject would have to explore co-financing. This year there is a common rule of financing for all the faculties, and regardless of which one the student enters they will receive a 30%, 50% or 70% grant. In 17 subjects all students will receive state grants.

Which faculties are the most popular among students this year?

We can't tell at the moment. Many students did not express a preference for any particular faculty or university when they registered as they were not obliged to. They knew the new rules, they knew that they had some extra time to think before making a final decision. We can talk about this only when all the students have indicated which university and faculty they will apply to.

Are the rights of the ethnic minorities respected in the United National Examinations?

The general ability tests have already been offered in the Georgian, Azerbaijani, Armenian and Russian languages for several years. So students for the ethnic minorities can pass these exams in their mother tongue. As for the subject specific examinations, these are offered in either Georgian or Russian. A Georgian language programme has been developed for non-Georgian speaking students, which they are enrolled in according to the results they achieve in the general ability tests. If such a student enters a university she/he takes inten-

sive classes in Georgian; if they gain appropriate scores at these they join the other students and continue studying with them in the same classes. We also offer this option to students from Abkhazia. About 300 Abkhazian students have registered for the United National Examinations since they were introduced.

Did any students who were in detention take the exams this year?

Eight students were in detention when they registered, and one Graduate Record Examination applicant was arrested after registration. But thanks to the great efforts of the Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance all eight of these people were able to attend the examinations. They were escorted to the exam centres, but when there went through the same processes as the other students. I wish good luck to them, as if they pass these exams and qualify to enter university this would be good reason for them to apply to the mercy commission.

Did students with disabilities have the chance of participating in the exams? What kind of challenges did you face in enabling them to do so and could all of them take part?

This year we had around 800 students who said they required special conditions to be able to attend the exams. We satisfied over 100 of these requests. A special commission, together with the Ministry of Health, discussed these cases and gave us recommendations. This issue is very difficult to deal with, as all these students need special care: some need to lie down during the exams, we have to allow students with diabetes to bring sweets with them, invigilators need to know what kind of first aid to provide to each of these entrants, etcetera.

What happened in the Graduate Record Examinations?

The number of those wishing to pass Graduate Record Examinations was approximately 10,000, higher than in previous years. The absence rate was quite low in this case too, about 2%. I think we gave a pleasant surprise for future masters students this year when we changed the content of the tests. This year all the students were given tests relevant to their subject area. The people running the Graduate Record Examinations had often



complained that every student had to do a maths test despite the fact they were intending to take physics or history. Now this has changed, and tests are provided in the field the student wishes to obtain a masters degree in.

In my opinion the Graduate Record Examinations process was quiet and calm in general. But we did have one difficult day. As you know our tests are printed in Great Britain and we receive them sealed. These packages are opened and checked only on the day of the examination. So during the analytical writing exams we discovered that the tests had misprints in them which made it impossible to read one sentence. So we quickly decided to write this task on a separate piece of paper and add it to the tests. It was very hard to sort this out in so short a period of time.

How many teachers were registered for the Teacher Certification Examinations and how many did not come? How many certified teachers do we have at present? Why are these exams important for teachers and what will happen to those who refuse to participate in them?

About 26,000 teachers were registered for these examinations. 18% of the registered teachers did not appear for their exams, a much higher rate than amongst students. I do not know what is happening with them.

Many teachers were found with cribs, and I am very embarrassed by this. Teaching is one of the most important professions, as it affects our children. These people are responsible for the education of future generations. I am sure they would be against their students using cribs, and they all know the registration process and exam rules very well. A lot of people, including representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, policemen, registrars, doctors, journalists and others were standing at the registration desk and they saw everything that happened. That is how the information spread. These kinds of things

had happened in previous years too, but we kept it secret from the outside world. But they happen every year, and I do not know what to say. Other teachers are offended by the behavior of some of their colleagues and have asked us to announce the names of those found cheating. But we do not want to do this. We do not have these kinds of problems with students.

In general there are many difficulties relating to teachers. The state should do a lot to ensure that we have qualified staff in the schools. The Ministry of Education should help teachers and make sure that if a teacher enters a class she/he is a real professional. Teachers also have to work on this themselves.

The Teacher Certification Examination is very important, but it has a lot of weak points at the moment. I think it's impossible to assess a teacher only on the basis of these tests, as we do today. Theoretical knowledge is one thing, how the teacher uses it in practice is another.

We have obtained a grant from the World Bank and are currently working on a new Teacher Certification project. We will need some time to prepare a new and perfect model.

I think it's just an illusion to say that in 2014 we will have only certified teachers. The law should be changed; for the next few years we will still have many teachers who will not

have certificates, and they should still be allowed to teach. We should protect our teachers and help their development.

When will the results of the exams be released? What are the gaps in all these examinations you are seeking to plug next year?

A: It's too early to talk about this yet. After the exams my team and I will discuss everything together and decide what to change and improve next year. I think one topic we will discuss will be adding some more exam centres in Tbilisi, because it's not good to put so many students together.

I think by August 10 the first results in all subjects will be released.

You were head of the National Examinations Centre under the United National Movement government too. What has changed since the Georgian Dream came to power?

After the Rose Revolution the ruling UNM wanted to introduce United National Examinations. In 2005 they supported this project very much and it was a great success. But they destroyed everything last year by their actions. NAEC is an independent institution and the state should not intervene in its work. Nowadays our organisation once again has full independence from government. We have got everything back and are working in comfortable conditions. I can't compare these two political parties.

NEWS

Deputy Ministers of Education Dismissed

Deputy Ministers of Education Dismissed Deputy Ministers of Education and Science Davit Zurabishvili and Ketevan Natriashvili and Aluda Goglichidze have been dismissed, according to the order of Prime Minister.

Law on authority of governmental structure and regulation, when the members of government resign or Minister's authority ends, the deputy Ministers are discharged upon the appointment of the new government or Minister.

According to the 24th article of the law, Prime Minister appoints and dismisses deputy Ministers after consultations with the President of Georgia.

Tamar Sanikidze was appointed as Minister of Education and Science by Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili's order on 18 July.

Russia Flexes its Muscles Towards the East: China or Japan???



By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

Russia's current military strategy is being vividly displayed at its southern borders. One example of this was the moving of the internal boundary between Georgia and South Ossetia 300 meters deeper into Georgia proper, thus increasing the de facto Tskhinvali region regime's territory and once again (how many times is it now?) trampling on Georgia's sovereignty over the region. The Georgian side has accepted this quite calmly, even though such an action gives it legal grounds to launch combat operations against the occupiers.

However, it should not appear strange that Russia has

violated the sovereign rights of a foreign country with whom it is in a de facto state of war. What is more difficult to understand is why official Moscow behaves equally aggressively towards its oriental neighbours, notably China and Japan, with which it is in various forms of partnership (although the Russian Federation is in the same condition of de facto war with Japan as it is with Georgia).

On 5 July a session of Russia's National Security Council enacted a decree by President Putin and suddenly launched military drills for the East and Central Military District units. The drills were supposed to help evaluate these units' readiness levels and their ability to respond adequately to swiftly

emerging challenges and risks. The drills were very large in scale, due to the participation of two Army HQ housing 160,000 servicemen, 20 IL-76 heavy transport airlifts, 6 Pacific Fleet special naval groupings, 16 troop transportation units, TY-95MC strategic destination jets capable of delivering nuclear warheads and several IL-38 and TY-142 Naval jets. Moreover the drills were supervised from the Central Command Simulation Centre of the General Staff of the Russian Federation by General Valery Makarov, the Army Chief of Staff, and attended by Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu and President Vladimir Putin himself. The importance of these drills is further exemplified by the fact that, for the first time in Russia's history since its declaration of indepen-

dence from the Soviet Union in 1991, special Chemical and Biological Defence troops were involved in them.

From a Georgian national defence perspective, a disturbing feature of these drills is that the Russian high command used them to probe the operational capabilities of new types of drones (Unpiloted Flight Vehicles) capable of delivering information not only to the local high command HQ but also the Central Command HQ of the General Staff in Moscow. These make it possible to conduct localised warfare in a more efficient manner and strike down enemy forces in a shorter period of time. Hence the Russian Armed Forces demonstrated that they are adopting new tactics, involving the use of modern military technology elements which have cost The

Kremlin more than 20 trillion rubles since 2008. The strategic goal of the drills was thus to assess how the Russian forces would wage a "local war" (the term used in the national military doctrine adopted and renewed in 2012). 'Local war' means a regional level conflict with at least one nation or coalition of nations which takes places on two fronts simultaneously. The drills conducted in the Far East District, on Sakhalin Island and in the Okhotsk Sea were designed to assess Russia's readiness to attack two obvious targets: China and a Japan-USA coalition.

This level of military exercise is unprecedented and demonstrates that Russia's leadership still has a hostile view of NATO and its enlargement policy. The exercise specifically sought to counter an equivalent

of the NATO air operation in Yugoslavia in 1999. The Russian Federation forces defended make-believe strategic chemical and industrial objects such as factories from raids equivalent to those NATO planes made against the same objects during the 'local war' against Yugoslavia over Kosovo. Hence, the Kremlin seriously expects that a scenario will develop in which the Russian Armed Forces will encounter NATO forces during a local war.

In the light of this, The Kremlin's tactics and aggressive policy in the conflict zone in the Tskhinvali region are clear and logical. If The Kremlin is prepared to so openly flex its muscles against more powerful geopolitical actors (NATO, the USA, China, etc.) we should not be surprised that it thinks nothing of abusing Georgia once more.

Eduard Kokoity and Mikheil Saakashvili – Separated at Birth?

By DR. VAKHTANG MAISAIA, GT

On the verge of 21st century the main political entities in the South Caucasus region, including self-proclaimed ones like Abkhazia and South Ossetia, have been creating a new form of autocratic-totalitarian governance, despite the de-Sovietisation they experienced after 1991. The "liberal" colour of these regimes does not camouflage their domination by dangerous low quality politicians. The examples of two Georgian regimes, which may be termed either 'non-democratic' (by a cautious political analyst) or 'bloody dictatorships' (by people living in the real world) convey clearly how terrible Soviet-style purges are still being conducted in the post-modern world. Mikheil Saakashvili and Eduard Kokoity, who are political "twins" in their political forgeries and mass abuses of their own people, are the best case studies of what the true content of authoritarianism and dictatorship is in the supposedly mild, democratic 21st century epoch.

The similarities between these two political "cannibals"



are very evident and disturbingly close.

Eduard Kokoity and Mikheil Saakashvili are both products of the 1960s. Both were infected with a pathological maliciousness and diseased inferiority complex in childhood. Both also served in the Soviet Army (Kokoity in 1983-85 and Saakashvili in 1989-1990) and graduated from universities. Kokoity and Saakashvili began to develop their political careers in the 90s, Eduard Kokoity in 1990-93 as a member of the Parliament of so-called South Ossetia and as its 'Minister of Foreign Trade' in 1997 and Mikheil Saakashvili in 1995-2000 as a member of Parliament and then Minister of Justice until 2001. Both also used to be 'footmen' of more powerful figures – Kokoity for Soviet period Communist boss Anatoly

Chekhoev and Saakashvili for Politburo member Eduard Shevardnadze. With the direct involvement of The Kremlin administration (in the case of Kokoity) and indirect (via the official visit to Tbilisi of senior Kremlin man Igor Ivanov in Saakashvili's case) they seized power, Kokoity in November 2001 and Saakashvili in December 2003. Given this shared history, it was not surprising that the two leaders provoked the August 2008 war to serve their own financial interests, despite the fact this war caused devastating damage to both the Georgian and Ossetian peoples and gave Russia a geopolitical monopoly in the South Caucasus.

Amid the political turbulence and fraudulent elections under which both self-proclaimed Presidents were re-elected the dominant features

of the politics of Georgia and South Ossetia were exactly alike – massive repression, with more than 30,000 non-criminals being incarcerated in Georgia and up to 8,000 in South Ossetia, the dispersal of pro-

test rallies, the physical persecution of political opponents and their flight into exile (the brothers Tedeev and Anatoly Barankevich in South Ossetia and Bidzina Giorgobiani, Badri Bitsadze and Irakli Okruashvili in Georgia), the slayings of political competitors (Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania in Georgia in 2005 and Secretary to the South Ossetian Security Council Oleg Alborov in 2006), the entrenchment of elite corruption, regime-run narcotics transit routes and illegal arms trading, etc. Both in Georgia and so-called South Ossetia there are large numbers of systematically rounded up political prisoners. An interesting case-

study is that of the young person Alexander Tedeev, a South Ossetia resident who is a political prisoner of both Kokoity and Saakashvili and will probably remain in custody until after Mikheil Saakashvili's term ends in October 2013. Alexander Tedeev became the personal foe of Eduard Kokoity due to his principles and civil position and was forced to flee to Georgia proper in order to save his life in December 2007. However in August 2008, just a day before of combat operations began in Tskhinvali, he was arrested by the Counter-Intelligence Department of the MIA, the political police of Mikheil Saakashvili, on false charges and sentenced to 16 years in prison. Hence, Kokoity and Saakashvili are in fact true friends and allies, regardless of their public contradiction.

Based on the so-called Hermann Code of comparative analysis we can create the following "political psychobiography" chart for Mikheil Saakashvili and Eduard Kokoity:

	Mikheil Saakashvili	Eduard Kokoity
Belief in their own ability to control events	high	supreme
Need to exert power and influence	supreme	high
conceptual complexity	low	low
self-confidence	high	low
task/effect orientation (problem focused or relationship focused)	low	high
distrust of others	supreme	supreme
In-group bias (nationalism)	high	high
political leader most resembled	Pol Pot	Benito Mussolini

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Outgoing Education Minister Defends Record

By LELA TSINTSADZE, GT

Georgian Dream coalition Presidential Candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili, who was previously Minister of Education and Science, introduced his successor Tamar Sanikidze on July 16. He outlined her credentials and also the Ministry's work during his own incumbency.

Margvelashvili said that Sanikidze has helped him begin depoliticizing the education system, a very important endeavour.

"We have worked together for a long time. Tamar Sanikidze studied at the university I ran. She has also studied at various universities in the USA. She has worked at GIPA and the Urban Institute and we have been planning and implementing changes together for the last 8 months," said Margvelashvili. He added that the new Minister has very serious achievements in management to her name, and has submitted laws to Parliament and proved able to work very effectively



with representatives of the Parliamentary minority as well as the majority.

Sanikidze said that reforms to the education system have been planned and are about to be put into effect. Consequently she will not adopt a new course, but on the contrary the reform process will be enhanced and the system and what the Ministry is doing will be-

come more accessible to the public.

Summarising his own work as Education Minister, Margvelashvili mentioned that it was very important to remove political elements from the educational system in a democratic state. It is likely that there were some management failures in the system previously, and these were expected during the

transitional period too, but it now works both freely and effectively without the severe hand of management. About 70,000 teachers have seen their salaries increased by between 25 and 60%, depending on the case. Educational administrators have also seen salary increases of between 40 and 45%. An important change affects state higher educational insti-

tutions: before administrators can increase or justify their salaries they must first increase the salaries of their professors.

The school bus programme has been launched, serving about 16,000 schoolchildren. Every student will also receive free basic textbooks from September. Despite the protests of private publishing houses, these free textbooks are already being printed and distributed by the Ministry.

Margvelashvili said that some students were dissatisfied with the abolition of the Summer Job Programme, but said that this merely served the political aims of the former government and that the students on it were not actually employed. The funds previously allocated for the programme will now be given to students in the form of grants.

From the coming academic year, interested students who wish to study one of seventeen different specialties will be able to attend vocational schools free of charge. Grants for Masters programme studies, social insurance and state scholarships have been doubled. Doctorate courses have also been state funded in the higher educational institutions for the first time this year.

Margvelashvili stated that 140 million USD will be invested in the Georgian education and science system from next year. About 600 schools have been refurbished and eight new

ones are being built. "For me, one of the most important steps we had to take, which we are now taking, is to acknowledge Georgia's scientific past by restoring the Dimitri Uznadze Psychological Institute. Now the development of a new scientific education culture is beginning. I can say with a great pride, that the Psychological Institute will be restored in Georgia," said Margvelashvili.

The work of the former Minister has been criticised by Christian Democratic Movement presidential candidate Giorgi Targamadze, who said that Margvelashvili was a weak manager, unfair, a bad team player and unprincipled. He cited the decision over the accreditation of the Agrarian University as an example of his weak management.

"Presidential candidate Margvelashvili then demonstrated his unfairness when he violated the copyrights and intellectual property rights of the publishing houses over the textbooks. This deserves the highest criticism," said Targamadze. His statements about the labour code revealed him to be as bad team player, Targamadze continued, while he changed his decision to appoint stop-gap rectors to higher educational institutions after protests from students and professors, thus showing that he is unprincipled. "He offered no principles or arguments with which to defend his original decision," said Giorgi Targamadze.

Euro MPs Concerned After Meeting with Vano Merabishvili

By EKA GAZDELIANI, GT

A group of MEPs visited former Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili in prison number 9 last week and declared that his pre-trial detention is a political act.

The delegation from the European Parliament's Defence and Security Committee was led by Arnaud Danjean and included Kristof Liseac (EPP), Anna Gomes (Socialist and Democratic Progressive Alliance), Teresa Rierra Madureli (Socialist and Democratic Progressive Alliance) and Pavel Covali (European Conservatives and Reformists). After leaving the prison the MEPs expressed surprised and disappointment at the lack of contact between Merabishvili and his family members. Kristof Liseac said that he could see no reason why Merabishvili was in prison other than a political one.

"I am again surprised that Vano Merabishvili is in pre-trial imprisonment. He has visited the investigative agency several times. He has been abroad five times since the investiga-

tion began and returned each time, so we cannot see any reason for him being in prison except a political one," said Liseac.

Arnaud Danjean, leader of the delegation, said that the MEPs were disappointed that Merabishvili was not being allowed to see his family. "We are disappointed that his family members are not being allowed to visit him, this is very difficult for him. He has no communication with the outside world unless we count visits from MPs. I am not sure that if he sees his family this would be against Georgian law, and this is the reason why we are concerned," he said, adding that pre-trial imprisonment should be an exceptional sanction and in this specific case he is not sure that the detention is justified.

Understandably, the views of the MEPs are not shared by Minister of Correction, Probation and Legal Assistance Sozar Subari. He confirmed during a meeting with journalists at the Georgian Press Club that every inmate must be held in the same conditions and the law does not allow exceptions.

"Vano Merabishvili is being held in very good conditions,



as far the conditions in prison go. Jail is not the Kempinski Hotel. Visits, phone calls – the terms under which all these things are granted are set out in the law, which does not allow us to make exception for one person. It is stipulated in the law who has the right to visit an inmate and when," said Subari. He explained that while an investigation is taking place visits are regulated very strictly. "If either we or the Prosecutor's Office made an exception, I think the public would not be happy. Equality is a value, and the state should be based on it and is based on it," he said.

The MEPs also expressed concern about the health of the former Prime Minister. "I last visited Merabishvili 6 weeks ago. He has lost weight signifi-

cantly since then and I think he has to be examined by a doctor," said Kristof Liseac. In response, Subari stated, "I cannot make any comment regarding his weight. As far as I know, he does exercises; any inmate has the right to visit a doctor, including Merabishvili. There has been no healthcare level in the prisons so high as the one we have today."

The Minister explained why he cannot accept the comments of the MEPs. "These people have never been interested in what happened in January, 2006 regarding Sandro Gvirgvlani's murder, or why the European Court of Human Rights published severe criticism of the former government of Georgia. They have never been interested in the dozens

of murders committed in the streets or the hundreds of inmates who died in the prisons at that time. During the previous government's rule about 800 inmates died in the prisons, because due attention was not paid to prisoners' health. It would be good if they look back at all this and then start talking about the conditions of current inmates," said Sozar Subari.

Human right defender Nazi Jabezshvili says that the terms of pre-trial imprisonment are strictly regulated by law. She explains that the court considers various factors when sentencing someone to pre-trial imprisonment, including how likely it is that they will flee the country, hinder the investigation, not visit the investigative agency when instructed to, etc.

"The court has to assess the reasons why the person might leave the country. It is possible that the court saw a certain threat of flight. It is difficult to talk about their being a political motive behind this detention, as it is merely pre-trial imprisonment, no sentence has been passed yet," Jabezshvili told the Georgian Times.

Ucha Nanuashvili, the Pub-

lic Defender, says that Vano Merabishvili has not reported any sort of violation of his rights to the Public Defender's Office and as such it has no information about his health condition.

"Our representatives will visit him and check this information. As for family visits, these are banned by Georgian legislation while a person is accused. Merabishvili has not reported any violation up to now," said Ucha Nanuashvili.

Former Prime Minister and current UNM General Secretary Vano Merabishvili was detained on May 21. He is being questioned concerning several matters, and these include: the seizure of an apartment in Kvartali, the transfer of it into private ownership and the misappropriation of state funds for the refurbishment of these premises, the embezzlement of a large quantity of state funds through the simulated involvement of about 22,000 people in a so-called employment programme, who according to the Prosecutor's Office actually undertook political activities, the forcible breaking up of the protests on May 26, 2011, in which hundreds of people were injured and some died, and falsification of evidence and pressuring investigators during the Sandro Gvirgvlani murder case. Merabishvili's alleged involvement in these matters, based on evidence presented to the authorities, was considered a serious enough reason to detain him pending trial.

Number of Inmates Decreases by 60%

By MAKHA DEKANODIZE, GT

By July 15, 2013 a total of 9,279 prisoners had been released from penitentiary institutions. This is a 60.2% reduction in numbers since July 15, 2012. Minister of Correction, Probation and Legal Assistance Sozar Subari answered questions about the radical decrease in inmate numbers and other issues at the Georgian Times Press Club of the Georgian Times.

"Today, there are many more inmates than European standards would consider acceptable. The standard is 100-200 per 100,000 people, while it is 230 in Georgia. Only Georgia, Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus among European countries have over 200 inmates per 100,000 head of population," said Sozar Subari.

The Minister promised that the number of the inmates will be regulated and they will be correctly distributed to the different penitentiary institutions. Neither inmates nor their visitors will be put in unbearable conditions any longer.

"We have opened a new public reception for prisons number 5 and 6. This is where people will get legal and psychological assistance. They will not need to wait in an awful deserted place in the heat. It is also obvious that there is no longer such overcrowding as we had before," said Subari.

The Minister spoke about the infrastructural problems in the prisons and presented results of his nine months in office.

"We are examining all the existing infrastructure. Most of the jails had no architectural plan, no maintenance plan, no certificate of land ownership. This needs to be not addressed, and we are working on this so that we can have an absolutely well-functioning infrastructure," said Sozar Subari.

The Minister cited the results of a recent NDI survey as



proof of the success of the changes in the penitentiary system. According to the survey, since October last year 33% of interviewees think that the situation in the prisons has improved. In a survey of the most important problems in Georgia from November last year, prison reform was mentioned as a high priority.

"It was a high index, but in the analogous March and July 2013 surveys this index decreased to 1%. The people of Georgia believe that the situation has changed in the prisons, as many changes have been made in the penitentiary system," said Subari.

In addition, the Minister highlighted the article published on the Open Society New York website about the dissemination of the Hepatitis C in the penitentiary system, which will soon affect the general public. He said, that unfortunately Georgia was mentioned as one of the poor countries, where the treatment of hepatitis C costs 18,000 USD. Sozar Subari hopes that the cost of this treatment will decrease through the support of a Hepatitis C programme.

The Minister also reviewed other inmate health pro-

grammes and their successes. The fight against tuberculosis was proceeding well, and delegations were visiting Georgia to share the experience of other countries, like China.

"In these 9 months, during which we also began our fight against Hepatitis C, we can consider we have taken historic steps," said Subari.

The Minister said that inmates who had committed technical crimes and those who are habitual criminals will be separated.

"At the end of October we intend to open a new establishment for around 3,000 men. This will be a vocational educational institution where people will work, study and be free from any kind of criminal influence. This establishment will help those inmates who value study and labour," said Sozar Subari.

The Minister responded to a Georgian Times question concerning whether electronic tagging by means of bracelets is being planned as an alternative to imprisonment by saying that work in this direction has already started and a commission is investigating this option.

"There is a commission

working on criminal law reform which is discussing the electric armlet issue, which may be put on agenda as an alternative to imprisonment. Currently we have three types of measure, imprisonment, guardianship and guarantee. Before Saakashvili came to power there were many more alternatives, such as residing in set places and house arrest," said Sozar Subari.

The Minister also spoke about his previous threat to resign, made in this newspaper, and said that he has not made a final decision on this yet but has an idea what he will do. He suggested that he will leave after the projects he has planned have been implemented.

"As I am being asked about my resignation, I am being put in a very awkward situation. If I say I am ready to leave at any minute the headlines will appear next day saying where is he going? When is he going? Why is he going? I have not made such a decision yet, but I have an idea to go after the projects which are due to be implemented by the planned by the end of next year are completed. The certainly should be," said the Minister.

NEWS

Irakli Gharibashvili – Everyone who Expressed Violence Against National Movement will be Punished

Irakli Gharibashvili – Everyone who Expressed Violence Against National Movement will be Punished Minister of Interior Affairs of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili comments about the recent developments in Zugdidi saying that everyone who expressed violence against National Movement members will be punished.

"Police protected national Movement members and will do so to avoid incidents and provide their safety. Unfortunately, violence was showed against National Movement member by some people. I want to declare wit full responsibility that these people will be revealed and punished. We said and promised the population and the international commonwealth that the upcoming presidential elections would be exemplary. It will be another step forward to democracy. We won't allow this and we condemn any violence", Gharibashvili said.

He states that MIA condemns and will not allow violence.

National Movement leaders were pelted with bottles and stones before another round of primary of National Movement in Zugdidi.

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Mikheil Saakashvili – Changes in Russia Will Occur Faster Than We Imagine It

Mikheil Saakashvili – Changes in Russia Will Occur Faster Than We Imagine It The President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili is sure that political changes in Russia are inevitable. "The change will occur faster than we imagine it. Actually, destroying imperialism is inevitable. It will be presumably substituted by Nationalism, but nationalism may be less dangerous to us. Finally, Russia will be establishex as a free, democratic country and easily amicable for the neighbors. The most important is that Georgia is in shape before that. Shall we be ready and shall we endure? Georgian society must answer these two issues", Mikheil Saakashvili said at Avlabari residence on the meeting with experts and students.

He considers that we must be free from the illusions regarding Russia.

The President says that "Russia is what it is", and Georgia must not repeat the past mistakes.

"We must not make the same mistakes as Shevardnadze did in the 90ies. All the documents we signed then were destructive to us. Russia has its specific targets", Georgia's President declared.

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Irakli Gharibashvili – There are 17 500 audio-video Files of Secret Recordings

Irakli Gharibashvili – There are 17 500 audio-video Files of Secret Recordings The Minister of Interior Affairs of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili told journalists in Batumi that there are 4 barrels in addition to 8 found in the caches and in tote there are 17 500 audio-video files of the secret recordings. He says that the video footages contain information about the activity of politicians and journalists.

"Investigation has been launched on the footages found in the caches. Very grave video footages of torture have been discovered. We found 4 barrels in addition to 8 with 405 disks, a lot of material about hundreds of people. According to the latest data, the total number is 17 500 audio-video files, with footages depicting private lives, also including the activity of many political parties, politicians, famous people, journalists", Irakli Gharibashvili said.

He states that a special commission works on the issue of destroying the footages and they are waiting for Thomas Hammarberg's recommendation for the final decision.

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NEWS

Mikheil Saakashvili – Putin Gave 2 Billion dollars to Our Prime Minister

Mikheil Saakashvili – Putin Gave 2 Billion dollars to Our Prime Minister Putin gave 2 billion dollars to our Prime Minister, the President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili said at Avlabari residence, on the meeting with students.

He says that Vladimir Putin considers Georgian government must make concessions to Russia.

"After October a lot expected that our relations with Russia would change, but we have seen that Russia doesn't change – it's constructing barbed wire fences again, staging provocations, working against us on international arena and it is not a discovery for me. If the previous government stayed, we might have advanced more than today, as Russia doesn't consider it has to make concessions to the Georgian government. Russia gave 2 billion dollars to this government, the Prime Minister – more than they cost. Putin gave 2 billion dollars to our Prime Minister and considers that the Prime Minister must make concessions in everything", Mikheil Saakashvili said.

The President declares that legal, political and moral destruction of the acting president of Georgia and consent on everything he didn't agree for years are meant in the "concession".

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I Change Life with My Art – Introducing Kakadu Making a Difference

By TAKO AGARASHVILI, GT

Every day tons of people pass through our lives. Some we know, some we see for the first and maybe last time, some we meet and some change our lives.

David Matchavariani entered my life several years ago when he was playing the tam tam drum at Irakli Charkviani's live concert at the Adjara Music Hall (appearing alongside Ketato and Mamuka Berika). That concert was something one never forgets, as the vibe pouring from the scene could fill one's entire existence, the inspiration gushing from the stage could be enough for the entire world and the radiation of raw, true, authentic, honest music could consume whoever was there. That concert could change lives. We were no longer separate from each other, we 'became one'. "When there were no light, no gas, no heat in Georgia, this was the best time for music. Georgian music blossomed in the early 90s", says David.

David Matchavariani, aka Kakadu, is an artist, musician and DJ. I saw his beautiful paintings at his place on an autumn night after the war accompanied by his beautiful inspirational stories. Kakadu was one of the very first people who listened to rap and hip hop back in the day. African beat was also always close to him. He is a boy of the night. He is happily married. He has the quality of alluring you into his life, because he is an honest, giving and loving person. He speaks with warm admiration about people who have touched his life such as Gogi Dzdzuashvili, David Evgenidze, Kote Kubaneishvili, Niaz Disamidze, Irakli Charkviani and others. His emotions, his attitude and his works are first of all honest and well intentioned; they are full of stories and thoughts. He is a grateful person. He is dedicated to his talent and makes the most of it.

Let me put it in other words - he is a rare Georgian. Even his family demonstrates this. Kakadu and his wife Nino Babukhadiare one of those couples who enjoy their time together and are there for each other. You can sense their tender, sweet, respectful, peaceful, sunny love whenever you look at them. Most importantly, you witness the appreciation they have and show for each other.

Kakadu believes in what he does. He believes that some people, events and moments can change one's life, that one person makes a difference. He believes that life is beautiful, and he is out there ready and open to embrace it. He has been doing his fair share to make the world a better place his entire life. When I came across him in Batumi last week I was at first surprised that he was without his wife, but then happy that I could thus interview him and present his interesting, catching persona to GT readers.

Were you 'born on Sunday morning when your daddy took a trip to India'?

I was born in Soviet Georgia on the longest night of the year, December 21 1976. Night is



something mystical for me. I am a night person.

How did Soviet Georgia affect you?

I guess it developed the rebel in me, like in most people. When the Soviet Union fell apart it was not as scary for me as it was for the older generation. It was just something new.

With the country undergoing major changes it must have been hard to dedicate yourself to painting. How did you manage to do it?

I have been painting my entire life. In the 90s I took it seriously, thought of it as a profession and took classes. I met a lot of very interesting people there, people who were like me and shared the same points of view and interests.

What was the best outcome of this for you?

We founded a band called 'Out Of Need'. It didn't last long. We only gave one concert. We played punk.

Why punk? What instrument did you play?

It was the influence of the time. We all listened to heavy music; therefore we were a punk band. I was a drummer. When I was a kid I saw drums for the first time at my neighbor's. It was an amazing and exhilarating moment. I was hooked.

It looks like you adapted well to the collapse of the Soviet Union, is this so?

I did, it was a fascinating period. We switched from being in the pioneers to running around the streets. Most of my generation back in the day wanted to become 'mobsters', but even the word 'thief', let alone the concept, was unacceptable to me. It was something low and indecent in my universe. I grew up in a world where there were many religions and people of different nations around and then all of a sudden with the fall of Soviet Union Russians and Armenians became bad and Georgians wanted to become mobsters. It didn't make sense to me. I protested greatly against all this nonsense.

Let's go back to Irakli Charkviani. How would you describe your collaboration with him?

He was a smart, strong, rebellious, educated, charismatic man who wanted to make the world a

better place. He wanted to change the mentality of people, he was a guy who made a difference, and I was just 16 years old. He listened to me and picked me. It was a very intense, interesting time of my life. I learned a lot from Irakli. We shared the same attitude, we were against the same things, we fought for the same cause - he was my spiritual brother. His music was powerful because he was honest in every chord, every beat and every word. He was a leader; he led us into a higher world of better attitude and music which came from the heart. I would just sit back and listen to him while he was thinking out loud, discussing something. His words had meaning and this gave them strength. He introduced me to tons of interesting people who were older than me and had seen more of life. Like I said, we all shared the same attitude. We all were against the street 'mob' life and wanted to change this together. We wanted to create art with a purpose.

What was happening to the artist within you at that time?

I was interested in horror at the time. I studied how to make zombie-style, or Freddie Kruger-type make up.

Could you do that?

Well, I believe that the galaxy absorbs your wishes and somehow links you to them. So all of a sudden I came across French magazines about this particular make up.

Meanwhile we founded a new band, Energy Resource. We played industrial punk. It was a strong band. There is just one recording left from it, made after some festival. It was a time of musical madness and madness in general. Finally I entered the State Academy of Arts and met my future long-term girlfriend Irma Lezhava who said that Irakli Charkviani was looking for a drummer. I just loved banging on the drums. I had so much emotion and thought to get out of me. It was like setting my existence on fire and pulling that fire out of me through banging on the plates.

How did you express yourself more? In painting or in music?

Drums just did it for me. Painting has its way, its time; it's a bit of a different mode of self-expression. I used to do comics, illustrations and my own painting, but I used many different images. Music and drawing is a great mix. I used to have the theory that a pencil and a drumstick in the hand are actually the same tool, they simply produce a different art.

Let's go back to Irakli Charkviani. How would you describe your collaboration with him?

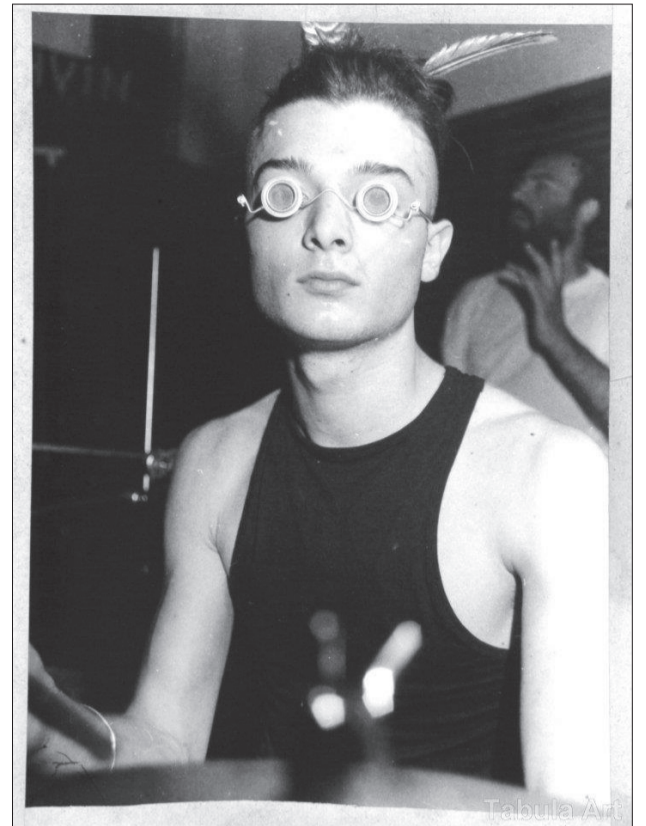
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It should illuminate, brighten people's minds and change them for the better. It should show people that life is not about politics alone, that people don't have to know the name of the President; he is supposed to serve people. That is what I think. I serve my country by creating art. That is what I do. I believe that art makes the world a better place.

How would you describe artists?

Artists have a touch of narcissism, but they do not want to serve their selfishness and ego but to develop and advance. An artist can't survive without this. Irakli had the fairest touch of it. It was not about getting girls or fame for him; his narcissism made his career healthy and natural. I didn't need girls either, I had one. I wanted her to be there when we had a concert. I would play better if I saw her in the audience. I only wanted to learn, to advance, to be really good at what I loved



doing the most. Irakli was the perfect example of someone with an organic and zesty touch of narcissism.

Seems like you were a devoted and romantic guy?

Actually I saw a post recently on Facebook - there is supposed to be one girl for the drummer, two girls for the guitarist, three for the bass guitarist and lots of girls for the vocalist. I had a girlfriend, Irma, who was older than me and helped me advance and grow. The drum is the backbone of a band; it is in charge of the beat. Being a drummer is more like a statement, he presents a certain steadiness and the qualities of balance, responsibility and loyalty.

What happened after Irakli?

I met Niaz Diasamidze, who was doing folk rock. The Georgian poet Kote Kubaneishvili wrote texts for him. His first album, 33a, turned out quite successful. Niaz gave me a love of the native, city sound. It was a new step for society. It didn't fly right away, because Georgians 'hate' everything new, it scares us.

Where you painting meanwhile?

Absolutely! I don't know how I managed to do everything. I went to classes and at the same time played drums with Irakli, Niaz, Bakur Burduli and other bands. I published my first comic strips in 1997 in the magazine Studia. I picked the 'Natsarkekia' (the 'Idler') theme and did strips. There was no advertising at the time, so I drew Natsarkekia with a huge pitcher on the hill which had Coca Cola written on it. It looked like an ad, but it was from my imagination. I kept on publishing my comic strips, it was fun. Meanwhile I played wherever I could play. I didn't limit myself to just one type of music; I went for all of it. I played reggae, jazz and all kinds of music. I tried different beats to enlarge my range.

How did you get into being a DJ?

Trying all that music out was like a first step towards this. Mixing different beats got me into spinning. It happened after Irakli passed away. I was deeply hurt. I quit playing, but that didn't last long. The organic narcissism in me needed to come out. I needed people, needed some attention, needed to bring something to people. I found its way out in spinning. When I saw people dance to my music, it was great. You are like a shaman if you get people dance to your music. Every

artist is a shaman of some kind.

You bring people to a club to listen to your music, have you brought people to your personal exhibitions?

I have participated here and there. Mostly I create art that isn't intended for sale, my art is on my walls. I had a personal exhibition of my illustrations for the 'Knight in the Panther's Skin' (by Bakur Sulakauri publishing house). What happened there was one of the most inspirational and overwhelming experiences of my life. People applauded. They actually raised their hands, put them together and clapped. Every single day of working on that book I accepted the possibility that people would not like the illustrations. I decided to just be honest with myself and paint with a true heart. Once they clapped I knew that my honesty is appreciated. It was one of the deepest and most beautiful experiences I have ever had.

Where are those paintings now?

I met this great girl in a few years ago. I fell in love with her and married her. I gave the paintings to Nino. She is a proud and happy owner and says she will never sell them. Nino has brought unlimited positives to my life. I have a life partner I am going to grow old with. She has taught me, showed me, inspired me and made me happen. The illustrations were like a bridge I built between Nino and Shota Rustaveli; they were like a performance before these two people.

It looks like you have remained a romantic, is this so?

I have, because I have found the one. I don't think it's just me and John Lennon who understand that 'all we need is love'. The entire world is searching for 'the one' because it gives us power. Nino is my backbone; she lifts me up to a higher and better world every day. I am lucky, and do my best to stay lucky.

What are you busy with now?

I am doing a game for Lemondo Entertainment. It took me a year to relax and remould my hand after the illustrations for the book. I am going to do books - graphic novels, big and small. The small one will be scandalous.

Let's come down to a few essential elements for an artist?

Inspiration, the tools to express it, a charismatic, strong influence and environment, hard work, noble purpose and of course LOVE.



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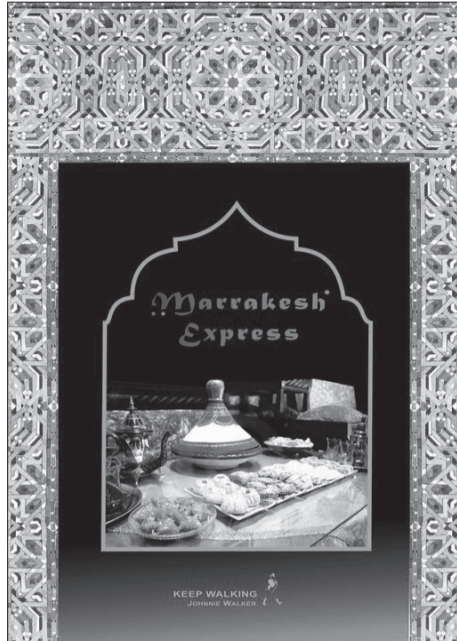


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