



FOCUS ON CLEANING UP GEORGIA

Sadagi, since 2021, has organized 30 cleanups at 25 locations in 8 regions across Georgia. And they are hungry for more...

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Georgian Dream Initiates Impeachment Procedure against President Salome Zurbishvili

BY MARIAM GORKHELASHVILI

In a press conference this week, Georgian Dream Chairman Irakli Kobakhidze announced the commencement of an impeachment procedure against Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili. Kobakhidze acknowledged that while the process requires the support of the opposition in parliament, the party views it as their constitutional duty to address what they perceive as a violation of the Constitution.

The grounds for impeachment, as outlined by Kobakhidze, stem from President Zurbishvili's alleged breach of the Constitution by embarking on a series of foreign visits without the government's approval. According to Georgian Dream, the Constitution explicitly mandates that the government has sole authority over both domestic and foreign policy.

While it is understood that garnering support from the opposition is pivotal for the impeachment process to proceed, Georgian Dream maintains that the primary objective is to have the Constitutional Court officially confirm the violation of the Constitution by President Zurbishvili.

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Source: Instagram

Prepared for Georgia Today Business by **GALT & TAGGART** CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

As of 05-Sep-2023

Markets				STOCKS			
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m
BONDS				Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 34.70	-2.1%	+10.5%
GRAIL 07/28	86.88 (YTM 7.30%)	-0.0%	-0.0%	Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 9.72	+2.0%	+5.9%
GEOPAP 03/24	100.15 (YTM 344.17%)	+0.0%	+0.7%	TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 28.20	+0.2%	+12.1%
SILNET 01/27	98.38 (YTM 8.93%)	+0.1%	+0.1%				
TBC 06/24	99.20 (YTM 6.80%)	+0.1%	+0.2%				
				CURRENCIES			
				GEL / USD	2,6237	+0.0%	+0.6%
				GEL / EUR	2,8133	-1.4%	-2.0%
				GEL / GBP	3,3029	-0.4%	-0.6%
				GEL / CHF	2,9475	-1.2%	-1.3%
				GEL / RUB	0,0269	-1.8%	-1.5%
				GEL / TRY	0,0979	-0.7%	+1.2%
				GEL / AZN	1,5448	+0.0%	+0.8%
				GEL / AMD	0,0068	+0.1%	+0.8%
				GEL / UAH	0,0710	-	+0.4%
				EUR / USD	0,9326	+1.5%	+2.6%
				GBP / USD	0,7959	+0.6%	+1.5%
				CHF / USD	0,8895	+1.3%	+1.9%
				RUB / USD	97,5709	+2.2%	+2.0%
				TRY / USD	26,7861	-0.7%	-0.7%
				AZN / USD	1,6975	-0.0%	-
				AMD / USD	385,2900	-0.1%	-0.2%
				COMMODITIES			
					Price	w/w	m/m
				Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	90.04	+5.2%	+4.4%
				Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)	1,926,12	-0.6%	-0.9%
				INDICES			
					Price	w/w	m/m
				FTSE 100	7,437,93	-0.4%	-1.7%
				FTSE 250	18,491,42	+0.1%	-2.3%
				DAX	15,771,71	-1.0%	-1.1%
				DOW JONES	34,641,97	-0.6%	-1.2%
				NASDAQ	14,020,95	+0.6%	+0.9%
				MSCI EM EE	37,15	-4.1%	-8.7%
				MSCI EM	985,84	-0.2%	-3.2%
				SP 500	4,496,83	-0.0%	+0.4%
				MSCI FM	2,152,98	-0.8%	-3.9%

Ukraine Latest: Moscow, North Korea 'Actively Advancing' Arms Deal

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

North Korea and Russia look to be forging deeper military and political ties as Moscow's appetite for weaponry grows amid the ongoing war in Ukraine.

A White House official said Monday that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un plans to travel to Russia to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin this month and that arms negotiations between the countries "are actively advancing."

The New York Times also reported Monday that Kim Jong Un would likely travel from Pyongyang to Russia's Pacific Coast city of Vladivostok in an armored train, citing unnamed US and allied sources.

Meanwhile, talks between Putin and his Turkish counterpart aimed at reviving a grain export deal with Ukraine ended in failure Monday, with Putin saying the agreement wouldn't be revived unless obstacles to Russian exports were removed.

"I would like to reaffirm our principled position: we will be ready to consider the possibility of reviving the 'grain deal' ... and we will do this immediately — as soon as all the agreements on lifting restrictions recorded in it are fully imple-



Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un held talks in 2019. Alexander Zemlianichenko | Afp | Getty Images

mented for the export of Russian agricultural products," Putin said following the talks in Sochi.

RETURN OF AMERICAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS TO THE UK WILL BE SEEN AS 'ESCALATORY STEP,' RUSSIAN OFFICIAL SAYS

The return of American nuclear weapons to the UK will be perceived by Moscow as an "escalatory step," according to Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova.

There is increasing evidence to suggest that the US may be looking to house American nuclear weapons in the U.K.,

according to the Federation of American Scientists, who listed a location around 100 kilometers away from the capital, London, as the planned dormitory.

Atomic bombs had been stored at the Lakenheath Royal Air Force base from 1954, before they were removed in 2008, according to the Federation.

Zakharova described the move as "leading exactly in the opposite direction from the solution of the urgent task of withdrawing all US nuclear weapons from European countries, where they are deployed in the framework of the so-called NATO joint nuclear missions." Moscow also regards the West's plans

to expand weapons production in Ukraine as further confirmation of its involvement in the war between Russian and Ukraine. Zakharova said the Kremlin "paid attention" to announcements by the likes of Rheinmetall and subsidiaries of BAE Systems to assist in maintaining equipment for Ukraine's armed forces.

"We consider such intentions as another confirmation of the Western ruling circles and military-industrial complex's direct involvement in the conflict and support for the criminal Kiev regime," she added.

TOP RUSSIAN GENERAL RESURFACES AFTER PRIGOZHIN MUTINY, MEDIA REPORTS

A photo has emerged online that appears to show Russian General Sergei Surovkin, a top military figure who was regarded as an ally of Yevgeny Prigozhin, alive and in public.

Surovkin had not been seen since Prigozhin's failed mutiny in June, prompting speculation that he had been detained for his links to the ill-fated mercenary boss. Prigozhin, the head of the mercenary Wagner Group, died last month in a plane crash.

The general's last public appearance was on the day of the rebellion itself as he called on Prigozhin to turn back as he and a band of Wagner mercenaries headed to Moscow. The rebellion was seen as the culmination of a long-running

dispute between Prigozhin and Russia's defense ministry.

On Monday, however, a photo was posted on Telegram by Russian media personality Ksenia Sobchak purportedly of Surovkin and his wife.

"General Sergei Surovkin is out. Alive, healthy, at home, with his family, in Moscow. Photo taken today," Sobchak wrote in a caption on the picture on Telegram.

The general was reportedly arrested in June and then dismissed as the head of Russia's Aerospace Forces in August, according to the Moscow Times.

Meanwhile, the New York Times reported that Surovkin appeared to have been freed but cited unnamed US officials as saying it was not clear if his movement was restricted.

The Kremlin and Russian defense ministry have refused to answer reporters' questions on the whereabouts and role of Surovkin now.

Surovkin had been appointed to lead Russia's armed forces in Ukraine last October, and was credited for spearheading the building of deep lines of Russian defenses on occupied territory ahead of Ukraine's counteroffensive. The defensive lines have proved a hard obstacle for Ukraine to overcome.

Surovkin was replaced by Putin loyalist General Valery Gerasimov in January 2023, with speculation that he was replaced because he had become too powerful.

Statement by Spokesperson of Charles Michel, President of the European Council, on Armenia and Azerbaijan

President Michel has continued to be intensely engaged in advancing the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization process. His efforts over the past weeks, supported by Toivo Khaar, EUSR for the South Caucasus, have focused as a priority on addressing the humanitarian situation of Karabakh Armenians.

EUSR Khaar and President Michel's team have been in frequent contact with Baku, Yerevan and representatives of Karabakh Armenians to work out a solution for unblocking access.

The current humanitarian situation on the ground is deteriorating rapidly; it is imperative to take steps to address the needs of the local population.

European Council President Charles Michel has proposed a step-by-step approach which would reflect a sequencing in the full-fledged operation of the Lachin corridor and the opening of the Agdam route.

Sequencing of these steps and the type of cargo that would be delivered by each of these roads, as well as attendant procedures, have been the core of the recent discussions.

The EU strongly believes the Lachin corridor must be unblocked, in line with past agreements and the ICJ Order, and

notes that the use of the Agdam road to provide supplies can also be part of a concrete and sustainable solution to the provision of urgent and daily basic needs. Discussions on these elements had started following the last meeting of the leaders in Brussels on 15 July 2023.

The EU side has also stressed the need for Baku to provide clarity to Karabakh Armenians in terms of procedures for their movements through Lachin corridor to and from Armenia.

In parallel, exchanges have also focused on restoring electricity and gas supplies to Karabakh Armenians as soon as possible.

Beyond the immediate situation, the EU side has stressed the need to address legacies of the conflict to facilitate a long-term sustainable resolution.

Dialogue between Baku and representatives of Armenians living in the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast will be essential in this regard. The rights and security of Karabakh Armenians must be guaranteed and discussions on specific modalities should start as soon as possible.

The dialogue between Baku and the Karabakh Armenians needs to strengthen confidence and trust. To this end the EU has provided various suggestions for international support to this process,

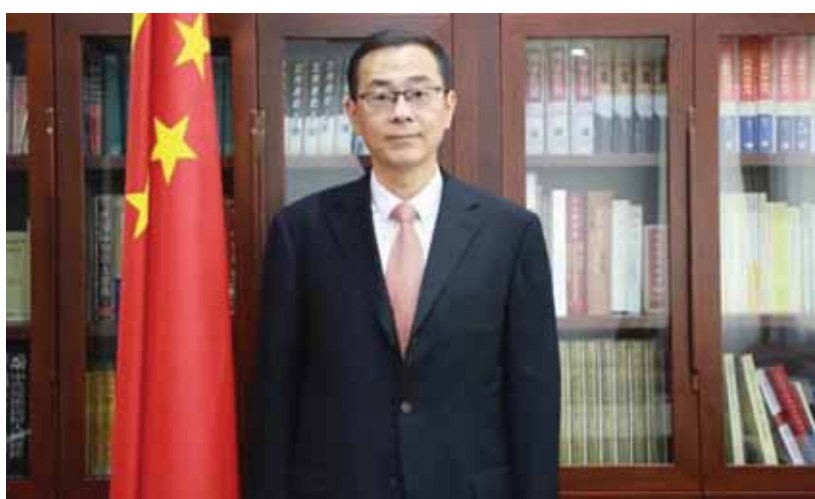


as well as for engagement on the ground to underpin the implementation of agreements reached.

All the above efforts have only one goal: ensure irreversible normalization

of relations between Baku and Yerevan for the benefit of all populations on the ground. It is now time for courageous compromise solutions, also in light of today's escalation.

The EU has been engaged with other international actors in these efforts, through regular personal contacts and exchanges of views on how best address the current unsustainable situation.



Ambassador: China and Georgia are Independent Countries, we Have the Right to Choose Who is Our Partner

I think that China and Georgia are independent countries, we have the right to make choice who is our partner, who is our strategic partner, - stated Ambassador of China to Georgia Zhou Qian. With this statement, the Ambassador answered the question about the US reaction to the strategic partnership signed between Georgia and China.

"China and the EU have a comprehensive strategic partnership. And my personal view is that without China and

the EU, there will be no success for the Middle Corridor," he said. "Why? Because what's important for the Middle Corridor is the logistics between China and the EU; manufacturing power and goods power from China ending up in consuming markets. It means that without support from China and the EU, there would be no success for the Middle Corridor," the Ambassador stated.

In answer to a question on the port of Anaklia, Ambassador Zhou Qian said: "Generally speaking, for all the infra-

structure projects, along the Belt and Road and Middle Corridor, there will be interest for some Chinese companies and Chinese enterprises."

"So if we have good conditions, I think there is no problem for Chinese companies to be involved in the construction of Anaklia or other projects," he added.

For the record, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili recently pledged a strategic partnership with China while on an official visit to the country.

Georgian Dream Initiates Impeachment Procedure against President Salome Zurbashvili

Continued from page 1

The party contends that this move will serve to shed light on what they perceive as a close alignment between the President and the radical opposition.

"The meeting of the political council of the party was held, where, in addition to other issues, we discussed the gross violation of the Constitution of Georgia by the President of Georgia, who started a series of visits to foreign countries without the consent of the government. According to the Constitution of Georgia, only the government is authorized to implement the domestic and foreign policy of the country.

"According to Article 52, Clause 1, Sub-Clause A of the Constitution of Georgia, the President of Georgia shall exercise representative powers in foreign relations only with the approval of the government. As such, the text of the Constitution does not leave even minimal space for its non-uniform interpretation. It is known to the public that the President of Georgia has a radically different attitude from the government towards the processes related to Georgia's EU membership candidate status. In particular, her position is that Georgia did not deserve the candidate status last year.

"Moreover, according to her, the parliament and the government are only formally fulfilling the requirements of the European Union, which means that, in her opinion, Georgia does not deserve the status of a candidate even now.

"Given such an attitude, it is obvious that any European visit of the President of Georgia is counterproductive from the point of view of Georgia's chances to receive the candidate status and directly opposes the efforts of the Georgian gov-



Source: Facebook

ernment to receive said status. Therefore, the refusal of the Georgian government regarding the European tour planned by the President was justified both from the legal and political point of view," said Kobakhidze.

He claimed that Salome Zurbashvili is trying to play "a kind of invincibility game."

"On the one hand, she knows that from today's point of view, the prospect of granting Georgia candidate status has increased, and she wants to earn points from such a possible development of events. On the other hand, she will try, as much as possible, to prevent Georgia from receiving the candidate status.

"The Constitution of Georgia provides

for the only effective legal mechanism for responding to its violation - this is impeachment. Yesterday and the day before yesterday, we were repeatedly pointing out that despite the gross violation of the Constitution, impeachment was impossible in the given political situation. The support of 100 MPs is required for the implementation of impeachment and, accordingly, without the votes of the radical opposition, it has no prospect of execution. Despite this, at the meeting of the political council of the party, we made a decision to initiate the impeachment procedure against the President of Georgia. First of all, this is our responsibility before the Constitution of Georgia. Turning a blind eye to

gross violations of the Constitution undermines the rule of law of a legal state and democratic constitutional system. In addition, the impeachment procedure will once again expose the common agenda of the radical opposition and Salome Zurbashvili, which is directed against the state interests of Georgia, including Georgia's candidate status.

In order to initiate the impeachment procedure, the signatures of the members of the parliamentary majority will be collected in the next few days, and the relevant constitutional submission will be filed with the Constitutional Court of Georgia," Kobakhidze said.

The impeachment procedure, as outlined in the Constitution, necessitates

the backing of at least one-third of the full parliament membership (50 deputies). To actually remove the President from office through impeachment, 100 votes are required. This highlights the significance of cooperation with the opposition in this endeavor.

European Parliamentarian Viola von Cramon has weighed in on the situation, expressing the view that the initiation of impeachment may be seen as an attempt to divert public attention from other pressing issues.

"In my opinion, this is an attempt to divert public attention from real problems," the MEP stated.

The process outlined in the Constitution stipulates that the matter must be referred to the Constitutional Court, which is tasked with considering it and presenting its conclusion to the Parliament within a month. If the Constitutional Court confirms the violation of the Constitution or the presence of signs of a crime, the Parliament must then consider and vote on the issue of the removal of the official from office through impeachment within two weeks.

Ultimately, the President of Georgia can only be removed from office by impeachment if the decision garners the support of at least two-thirds of the full membership of the Parliament. Should the Parliament fail to reach a decision within the specified period, initiating the impeachment procedure on the same grounds is prohibited.

In light of these developments, the initiation of the impeachment procedure against President Salome Zurbashvili marks a significant political event in Georgia's recent history. The outcome will hinge on political maneuvering and cooperation between the ruling party and the opposition in the days ahead.

TOGETHER WE MAKE LIFE EASIER!

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In the month of September, you can enjoy your meal at "Craft House" and therefore become a charity fundraiser. After every transaction you make for your meal at "Craft House" the Sheraton Grand Tbilisi Metechi Palace will donate 2 GEL to the charity organization "MAC Georgia".

MAC has educated hundreds of **teachers, parents, community leaders, and institutional staff** about disabilities and has **encouraged children** in outlying regional areas to go to university by giving 88 children university scholarships. **Massage therapists are taught techniques** for working more efficiently with children, and **hundreds of children have been evaluated** by MAC staff. **Autistic children** have a voice through their parents' participation in parents' group, and the **first IQ test** in Georgia was normed by MAC.

Craft House working hours:
Mon-Sun: 11:00 - 01:00

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Giorgi Kalandarishvili on Electronic Technologies for the First October Midterm Elections



On October 1st, parliamentary by-elections of Georgia and extraordinary mayoral elections will be held - what news awaits voters at the polling station? what are the changes for voters, and what is the progress of introducing electronic technologies in the election process? The chairperson of the Central Election Commission, Giorgi Kalandarishvili, will respond to this and other questions.

THE SECOND ELECTION WILL BE HELD THIS YEAR USING ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGIES, WHERE AND WHO WILL THE VOTERS CHOOSE?

On October 1st, parliamentary by-elections of Georgia and extraordinary mayoral elections will be held. On October 1st, the voters will elect the majoritarian deputy of the Parliament of Georgia, Gori-Kaspi, and extraordinary mayoral elections will be held in Gurjaani.

These elections are of special importance because, in addition to the fact that the voters will be able to choose their representatives in the Parliament of Georgia or in the self-governing body, they will do so using new technologies. As in the spring elections, the election administration will use electronic technologies on a large scale. Why this is important? It has already been determined that 90% of the voters who come to the polling stations for the parliamentary elections in 2024 will be able to vote using electronic technologies, and this will be the first precedent for the largest-scale use of technologies in elections in

Georgia. Therefore, it is important to thoroughly study and test the technologies, and the elections held on April 29 gave us the opportunity to do so, which, it can be said, represented a kind of "general rehearsal". It was during these elections that we tested technologies on a large scale and saw in practice how the technology worked and what its advantages were. The reports of all local organizations were studied, and challenges and needs were identified.

The election administration has already used electronic technologies on various scales in 7 elections, which it has been testing and piloting since 2018. The men-



90% of the voters who come to the polling stations for the parliamentary elections in 2024 will be able to vote using electronic technologies

tioned pilots, as well as visits to other countries to observe their elections and share experiences, gained us important experience.

On October 1, together with electoral stakeholders, we will see again in practice whether there will be any issues that will require some attention from our side in order to face the elections in 2024 even more prepared.

HOW WILL THE ELECTIONS BE HELD ON OCTOBER 1? IS IT NECESSARY TO GO TO THE POLLING STATION OR WILL IT BE POSSIBLE TO VOTE REMOTELY?

On October 1, 85.3% of voters will have the opportunity to see for themselves how electronic election technologies work. 133 polling stations will be opened for the elections. According to the decision of the CEC, voting will be held at 103 polling stations using voter verification and vote counting machines.

The introduction of these new technologies does not mean that it will be possible to vote from home, from your own device. In order to make a choice, the voter must go to the polling station or, if there is a relevant reason, request a mobile ballot box. We will use two types of technology, including both voter registration/verification machines and vote counting machines. I want to emphasize that in no case will the devices be connected to the network or the internet, so as to prevent the threat of cyber interference. The registrar will verify the data of the voter who has arrived at the polling station with an electronic verification device. Only the list of voters of that

particular polling station will be loaded into the verification machine. The verification machine allows for double verification. In particular, after scanning/checking the identity document on the machine, the photo of the document owner will be displayed on the screen, based on which his identity will be confirmed. A corresponding receipt will be printed and signed by the voter.

The ballot paper will also be different in this case, the voter should not circle the number of the desired candidate, but should color the circle in front of the candidate's name. In addition, the ballot has additional security features - an individual QR code and a barcode, which prevents a ballot from another district or the same ballot from being repeatedly placed in the box.

Of course, the secrecy of voting is preserved - after coloring the circle in front of the desired candidate in the secret voting booth, the voter must turn over the ballot and place it in the vote counting machine using a special frame envelope. This machine will automatically count the votes and after the completion of the voting, it will print the summary of the preliminary results of the voting immediately after the completion of the mandatory procedures.

Ballots are also counted manually and only after that a summary protocol is drawn up.

HOW WILL THOSE VOTERS WHO DID NOT MAKE IT INTO THIS 85% PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTIONS?

Elections will be held according to the

traditional methods in districts where the number of voters is less than 300 and which are more than 20 kilometers away from the location of the District Election Commission, as well as in areas which will be created in exceptional cases or are in a hard-to-reach place.

The fact that the elections are held in these precincts using the traditional method does not mean that we will reduce our efforts. Voting in these precincts will definitely be held in accordance with appropriate international standards, all the more so in light of the fact that to some extent these areas will also be modernized and, in addition, in order to increase transparency, the ballots will be digitized and made public.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF INTRODUCING TECHNOLOGY IN ELECTIONS? WILL THE TIME FOR COUNTING VOTES AND ANNOUNCING THE RESULTS WILL BE REDUCED?

For years now, the election administration has been using electronic election technologies in pilot mode and studying the possibilities of implementation. In addition, we are systematically familiarizing ourselves with the experience of other countries in this direction. It is the piloting of electoral technologies and the gained experience that has shown that the use of technologies in the electoral process ensures the simplicity of the procedures and to some extent insures against human errors. The voting process is more comfortable for voters; the time of voting and voter's delay at the polling station is reduced; and vote counting devices allow for prompt processing of data, thus providing timely information to the public.

However, it is important that both modernized and traditional precincts ensure transparency, which is manifested by manual counting the ballots. In particular, after the machine counts the ballots and prints the preliminary data, manual recounting is still required, after which a summary protocol with legal force is created. However, we are not waiting for the results of manual counting to publish the preliminary data. The vote counting machine automatically counts the votes and after the completion of the voting, as soon as the mandatory procedures are completed, the machine will print out the results, which will be sent to the CEC as soon as possible and will also quickly be made public.

We have a new approach and solution as to how to send the preliminary data printed at the polling station to the Election Commission from both modernized and traditional polling stations: Tablets. This allows for the summary protocols to be photographed, and data to be scanned and instantly transferred to the central server, which was successfully tested for the first time during the April 29 elections.

WHEN VOTING USING AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE, HOW WILL THE PRIVACY OF THE VOTE BE PROTECTED?

Secrecy is a fundamental principle of elections and will certainly be ensured and protected. The voter must place the ballot in the vote counting machine using a special frame-envelope, in an inverted form. Therefore, it is impossible for anyone in the precinct to identify who the voter voted for.

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Giorgi Kalandarishvili on Electronic Technologies for the First October Midterm Elections

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WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGIES, WHAT CHANGES DIRECTLY FOR VOTERS? CAN ONLY PERSONS WITH AN ID CARD AND PASSPORT PARTICIPATE IN ELECTRONIC ELECTIONS, OR IS IT POSSIBLE TO USE A LAMINATED CERTIFICATE?

The verification machine provides an unmistakable confirmation that the voter participated in the elections, for which ID cards and passports are used. On October 1, it will be possible to vote in the elections with a laminated identity document, because the verification machines have the function of manual data entry, but in the 2024 elections, voter verification will be possible only if an electronic ID card and passport are presented.

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT SOME OF THE MACHINES AT THE POLLING STATION WILL MALFUNCTION? WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS CASE?

According to the experience of the election administration, the probability that any of the machines will go out of order is minimal. But, of course, such cases are provided for. The main thing is that in no case will the voting be stopped. For example, if one verification machine fails, the number of registrars will be reduced and accordingly the failed machine will be removed and verification will continue using another machine. In the event that all the machines are out of order, the voters' desk lists will be sealed at the polling station and the voting process will continue in the tra-



The voting process is more comfortable for voters; voting time is reduced, and vote counting devices allow for prompt processing of data, thus providing timely information to the public

ditional way. campaign "Talking to voters" is held, within the framework of which representatives of district and precinct election commissions meet voters and inform them of election procedures, hand out information brochures, and help them verify their data in the voter list. Demonstrations of electronic technologies in crowded places have already been carried out and are planned. Information-advertisement rings will be placed in the media. We will use every opportunity to bring all the important information to the voters.

However, as I already mentioned, these elections are of special importance, because electronic technologies will be used on a large scale in these elections and will allow us to once again observe and study all the peculiarities of the use of technologies. Among them, let's observe which means of information works more effectively, and take into account the experience gained in order to conduct the 2024 elections in accordance with international standards.

Modernization of elections is a very complex issue. Therefore, I think that the election administration, political unions, representatives of the civil sector and the media should work together to promote the raising of voters' awareness in the direction of technology and the conduct of elections in accordance with international standards, as well as the establishment of an election culture corresponding to the new reality, because elections are a common cause.



On October 1, 85.3% of voters will have the opportunity to see for themselves how electronic election technologies work at 103 polling stations

ditional way.

There will be at least two vote counting machines at every polling station. If one machine fails, it will be replaced by another machine, and if both fail, the scanner machine attached to the top of the box will be removed and the process will continue in the old way (the voter will place the ballot in the slot of the box).

TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE ELECTION ADMINISTRATION READY TO USE TECHNOLOGY TO CONDUCT THE OCTOBER 1 ELECTION AND WHAT IMPACT WILL IT HAVE ON THE 2024 ELECTION?

Of course, the election administration is ready and doing everything it can to ensure that the election process is con-

ducted in full compliance with the legislation, transparently and at a high professional level. In addition, the election administration has already planned purchases for the technical support of the elections, and in cooperation with the state procurement agency, on the basis of an open international tender, a vendor company was identified. During the years 2023-2024, the "Smartmatik" company will serve the election administration with electronic election devices and relevant software. Smartmatic has a lot of experience in conducting electronic elections in different countries and produces the appropriate equipment itself. Since 2000, the company has been a global leader in the election industry and has experience modernizing elections in more than 30 countries. Among them, it has implemented projects of this

type in Great Britain, USA, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Belgium, and the Philippines.

In order to conduct elections at a highly professional level, it is a priority for us to provide information to voters, to implement large-scale information and educational campaigns. An action plan has already been developed, which defines all the activities in detail. Educational projects, this year and next year will be completely devoted to the issue of participation in voting by electronic means. In addition, innovative voter information campaigns are planned. There are educational projects of the CEC and the Education Center - for example, "CEC Election School", "Election Camps", "Election Administrator Courses", "Elections and Young Voters", etc. In addition, for each election, an information cam-

CEC
ELECTION ADMINISTRATION OF GEORGIA

E-ELECTIONS

ELECTIONS ARE COMMON CAUSE

Carrefour's 11th Anniversary: Cosmic Discounts Await You at Carrefour from September 1



Carrefour, owned and operated by Majid Al Futtaim in Georgia, is celebrating 11 years of serving Georgian communities. In Georgia, it has become an annual tradition to celebrate Carrefour's anniversary, where customers look forward to being treated with special surprises for their ongoing trust and loyalty. This year is no different. Starting from September 1, Carrefour

launched an exclusive anniversary campaign to make this year's celebration even more memorable for its valued customers. Loyal customers across all Carrefour branches have been provided with the opportunity to enjoy "1+1" promotions. This exciting offer enables MyCLUB members to buy two products for the price of one, effectively getting the second product for free. On this special occasion, and in addition

to offering outstanding offers and prices, Carrefour is providing customers with the chance to win prizes. Participating in the draw is very simple – upon purchasing a product at any Carrefour branch, you can scan "MyCLUB" for a potential reward. MyCLUB is Carrefour's loyalty programme, through which customers can exchange points for any product, utilise special discounts, or enjoy cashback and customer-tailored offers.

Also, to celebrate the anniversary of Carrefour in Georgia, the brand will host 11 influencers at 11 different branches. Customers can then meet their favourite celebrities, who will introduce offers to people who come to the store and celebrate the occasion. The first Carrefour hypermarket opened in Tbilisi Mall in 2012 and, since then, the brand has continued to provide its customers with unrivaled shopping experiences, competitive prices, and high quality, fresh products. Throughout these 11 years of operation in the Georgian market, Carrefour has

been at the forefront of serving customers' best interests and providing them with unbeatable value. Carrefour's celebration is a testament to its dedication to customer satisfaction and loyalty. With special promotions, loyalty rewards, and prize draws, Carrefour continues to create unforgettable moments and provide excellent value to its customers. So, whether you're a long-time Carrefour shopper or considering your first visit, don't miss out on the fantastic deals and surprises that await you during this special anniversary celebration.



Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili Announces Telavi Airport Construction



Source: BM.ge

BY MARIAM GORKHELASHVILI

Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili has announced plans for the construction of an airport in Telavi, Kakheti, which is scheduled to begin this year. During a government meeting, he revealed that the airport is expected to welcome its first passengers in May-June 2024, with a budget allocation of 25-30 million GEL. "There was a historical airfield in Tel-

avi, and we want to install new, modern infrastructure, and create a new Telavi airport in this place," he said. "We will start construction this year. We want the airport to receive its first passengers in May-June 2024, it will be completed very soon. For the project, 25-30 million GEL has been allocated. We will completely renovate, the runway will be extended to 1,700 meters, modern navigation systems will be arranged, the entire infrastructure will be updated, new parking spaces will be created, and comfortable spaces for passengers. Telavi will have a modern airport!"

In July, Georgia's Economy Grew by 5.5% Compared to this Period of the Previous Year

BY MARIAM GORKHELASHVILI

In July, the preliminary estimates from the National Statistics Service revealed noteworthy economic trends when compared to the corresponding period in the prior year. Notably, there was a substantial 5.5 percent increase in the growth of the real gross domestic product (GDP). Looking at the broader picture, the average growth for the initial seven months of 2023 stood at 7.2 percent.

Specific sectors played pivotal roles in this growth during July 2023. These sectors included financial and insurance activities, construction, trade, as well as professional, scientific, and technical activities. In contrast, a decline was evident in the processing and mining industry, alongside the information and communication sectors.

Turning attention to foreign trade in goods for the period of January to July,



Source: commersant.ge

a clear pattern emerged:

- Exports of goods (FOB) summed up to 3.5 billion US dollars, marking a robust increase of 15.9 percent in comparison to the same interval in the previous year.
- On the import side, the value of

imported goods (CIF) reached 8.5 billion US dollars, reflecting a noteworthy rise of 19%.

- The total foreign trade turnover surged to 12.1 billion US dollars, signifying a substantial 18% increase.

This Year, the Export of Georgian Wine will be 120 Million Liters

BY MARIAM GORKHELASHVILI

According to the Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture Otar Shamugia, 120 million liters of wine are set to be exported from Georgia in 2023.

According to the minister, the amount of processed grapes has increased from 50,000 tons to 260,000 tons in the last 10 years, while the income of wine-growers has increased from 35 million GEL to 270 million GEL.

"Where 10 years ago, the export was 20 million liters, this year we expect to export about 120 million liters of wine. In total, the export of wine and

spirits will be \$400 million," Shamugia said.

According to the minister, 10 years ago the government spent 1.8 million GEL on the marketing of Georgian wine, and this year the state allocated 16 million GEL. Shamugia notes that by 2030, Georgia should receive \$1 billion from the export of wine and spirits.

Georgia & Armenia Tech/AI Hub Summit & AI Workshop

Speakers and Panelists



Special Guest



Venue Sponsor



Media Sponsors



Date: September 21st, 2023

9:30 AM to 2 PM including lunch

Lunch 2 PM at Parnas Restaurant

Location: Tbilisi Marriott Hotel, Grand Ballroom, 13 Rustaveli Avenue

free entry for first 40 delegates

Agenda

- Armenia & Georgia Challenges and Opportunities as a hub
- Armenia & Georgia multinationals developing AI
- AI as a way to reduce work force or a way to share increase shareholder value?
- Deploying AI in a company
- AI and copyrights
- **AI WORKSHOP**



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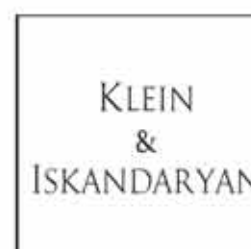
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SADAGI on the Move... Some Observations from the 2023 Annual Meeting



Nik Shurgaia, Sadagi founder

BY PAUL AND CHAUNCIE
RODZIANKO, SADAGI MEMBERS

Since its recent founding in May of 2021, SADAGI's astonishing growth has been nothing short of miraculous. Using common parlance for internet companies with viral potential growth and value creation, perhaps SADAGI has the makings of becoming a "Unicorn" charity - a uniquely successful entity! Let us make the case by examining the track record as presented at SADAGI's recent second Annual Meeting held at Kiketi Farm in August.

TRACK RECORD SINCE INCEPTION:

SADAGI and its supporters have organized over 30 cleanups at 25 locations in 8 regions across Georgia.

Our efforts include the beautification of ski resorts, national parks, stadiums, tourist destinations, historic monuments and community facilities, as well as sponsored tree plantings and clearing access to critical municipal infrastructure. Within these efforts, over 300,000



SADAGI is a very solid, promising, entrepreneurial charity demonstrating a pent-up selfless desire by many Georgians and others to support this exciting mission



With its vision and visionary leadership, the potential for SADAGI's growth and expansion is almost limitless: It could well become a Unicorn Charity!

liters of waste, not including large quantities of bulk items (tires, construction materials, etc.), have been collected and properly disposed of by the local municipalities.

Over 1,000 volunteers have participated with many repeat participants, among them a growing list of celebrities who have contributed their time and support for our activities and have helped spread our message, while more than 30 corporate sponsors have contributed both monetarily and with in-kind support of our efforts.

SADAGI has featured on 19 TV and radio programs 10 internet media portals and boasts more than 4,500 social media subscribers. SADAGI's Facebook/META page was accessed by almost 600,000 unique accounts and received almost 1.5 million hits.

The capability of SADAGI's dedicated core staff (Dato Berdzenishvili and Maia

Mestumre) has been multiplied many times over by volunteers with special expertise and expenses have been minimized so that membership fees and other financial support has enabled SADAGI to grow steadily since its beginning 2½ years ago.

A "Unicorn" must also operate in an environment with the potential for enormous growth and a management with the vision and skills to realize ambitious goals.

WHAT ARE THOSE GOALS?

There are hundreds if not thousands of beautiful and important locations within each of Georgia's regions that would benefit from SADAGI's efforts, and tens of thousands of Georgians who care so much about their neighborhoods that they could easily become pro-active SADAGI guardians of our clean environment. Enough Georgians believe in the



Assessing a year of achievements

dignity, satisfaction and camaraderie inherent in this simple physical activity to lead by example, and, as such, SADAGI can serve as a platform so that many more Georgians can become energized to beautify our homeland both for today and for future generations.

A very high priority is to create a volunteer management structure by region to permit cleanups in new locations at least once a month, creating a sustainable long-term capability under local volunteer teams to clean up - especially vulnerable locations such as Gudauri or Bakuriani at least once a year, or as needed.

To measure progress objectively a country-wide Pollution Index should be established and partnership with local governments, corporations, local businesses and other charities and NGOs should be enhanced to facilitate cleanups as well as to find ways to reduce the pollution left by local communities and visitors, including transnational truckers.

Sadagi's mission needs to be publicized

and popularized by partnering with sponsors to produce impactful videos aimed at young people and featuring Georgian heroic figures.

To stage, as soon as possible, a one-day nationwide cleanup with at least 50,000 volunteers!

The energy, creativity and inspiration to reach these goals originate with SADAGI's founder, Nikoloz Shurgaia and the core team. When Nik Shurgaia made his presentation at the Annual Meeting, he stressed, in many cases by name, the contributions of the many people and organizations (both large and small), all of whom have collaborated so supportively to help make the SADAGI dream a growing reality. Among the largest and most frequent contributor members and other donors mentioned were Euroins Insurance, Dressup, Wondernet Express, Pasha Bank and Procredit Bank.

Nik also expressed much gratitude to the volunteers, particularly the most prolific and active participants of SADAGI clean-ups: over 20 youth organization members from Gori, Ninutsa Gabisonia and Bachi Valishvili from Tbilisi, Gigi Gogia from Senaki, and many others (The full list of donors and contributors is too long for this summary and is incorporated on the Sadagi website).

"We need additional structure to handle the organizational and logistical requirements of making the SADAGI vision part of our national consciousness, part of our fellow citizens' way of life and belief system. An effort such as this needs many Georgians to work together towards a common goal over a long period of time," Nik noted.

He also expressed his thanks to Zaza Nishnianidze for hosting the Annual Meeting at his beautiful Kiketi Farm. Though acquainted for years, Zaza only recently heard about SADAGI via a social post. Our mission resonated very strongly with him: he felt that what he was doing on a local level SADAGI was aiming to accomplish on a national level, hence his spontaneous invitation. In the future, we will interview a number of SADAGI supporters for their perspectives on the SADAGI mission.

In closing, Nik cited Mark Twain's belief that "Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do." to which we could add: "The secret of getting ahead is getting started." And that is exactly what the SADAGI team has done - with no regrets! Let's stand together, as each of us can!



One of Sadagi's many clean-ups in Georgia

Rustavi Opens Municipal Service Center – A First-ever, Adapted One-Stop Shop to Comfortably Serve Local Community

On September 1, Rustavi hosted the opening of the Rustavi Municipal Service Center (RMSC), marking the culmination of the transformative journey and collaborative efforts between the Rustavi City Hall and the USAID Local Governance Program. This achievement represents a significant milestone towards enhancing inclusivity and the accessibility of local government services for all residents in the city.

Designed to ease the life of all citizens, RMSC is an innovative model on a local level, as it's the first to offer multiple municipal services in one, modern space. The Center is part of municipal service delivery reforms initiated by Rustavi City Hall and will serve as a single point of contact for citizens to deliver more than 200 municipal services including administrative, architecture, inspection, property, economic, employment, and social services. The Center can serve as a good example for promoting a citizen-centered governance approach in other municipalities.

"Georgia is recognized world-wide for its advanced service delivery models. Public Service Halls across the country provide a single venue for citizens to obtain central government services and information, but this good practice has until now not been adopted at the municipal level. USAID is very grateful to have been a small part of this important work through the targeted assistance offered to the Mayor and her outstanding team. Congratulations to the Mayor of Rustavi and Rustavi City Hall for their leadership in introducing this one-stop-shop model at the local level, which will enable Rustavi residents with easy access to more than 200 municipal services", Juniper Neil, Acting Mission Director, USAID Georgia.

As part of the USAID Local Governance Program's assistance to Rustavi City, special attention was placed on ensuring complete accessibility of the Center for people with special needs. The Program assisted City Hall to undertake critical steps to ensure that the center is fully accommodating individuals with visual impairments. This involved conducting a Screening Mission and an Adaptation Workshop, where the perspectives and insights of blind and visually impaired individuals played a central role in shaping the center's accessibility plan.

SCREENING MISSION: ASSESSING THE ENVIRONMENT

The USAID Local Governance Program Team supported municipal staff in conducting an initial assessment of the building's environment and its surroundings, and to identify potential areas where tactile paving could be incorporated to enhance accessibility for Persons with Disabilities. This mission set the foundation for future adaptations to be made to the center, with a keen focus on creating an environment that meets the needs of individuals with visual impairments.

ADAPTATION WORKSHOP: EMPOWERING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AS CO-DESIGNERS

On July 26, 2023, an inclusive Adaptation Workshop took place, following 'human-centered design-thinking' principles ensuring that blind and visually impaired individuals were at the heart of the decision-making process. Participants included a diverse group of persons with disabilities, totaling eight individuals with varied types of visual impairments, accompanied by their care givers.

During the workshop, these individuals assessed the accessibility of the RMSC building and provided valuable insights

into how the center's internal floor planning could be improved to enable smooth navigation for persons with disabilities. The Program team helped to ensure that every participant's voice was heard and valued. The experience and specific needs of persons with disabilities guided the discussions, throughout the 'customer journey mapping' exercise, enabling participants to freely express their challenges and preferences as they walked throughout the center along the predefined pathways. By creating a safe and inclusive space, the Program Team supported Rustavi and the City Hall in advancing its citizen-centered governance objectives.

EXPERIENCING EMPATHY: UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES

To facilitate better understanding and empathy among participants, relevant human-centered design methodologies and tools were employed to simulate the experience of visual impairments. By immersing themselves in the shoes of the visually impaired, individuals gained firsthand insight into the challenges faced during navigation. This exercise further emphasized the importance of creating an inclusive environment that accommodates the diverse needs of all citizens.

IMPACT AND FUTURE PLANS

The unique feedback collected from the Adaptation Workshop served as a basis for development of the RMSC tactile paving plan. This plan is considered a blueprint for the installation of tiles in the building, ensuring that persons with disabilities can navigate the center confidently, independently, and without barriers. This not only enhances their overall experience but also promotes a sense of autonomy and equality within the community.



"The Municipal Service Center will serve as one of the first subnational public places, consolidating all municipal services under one roof for the convenience of Rustavi's residents," said Nino Latsabidze, the Mayor of Rustavi City. "This Center is set to transform how citizens engage with local government services, streamlining the process and making it more efficient, thereby saving valuable time for our community members. We truly appreciate the support extended by the United States Government and the USAID Local Governance Program throughout the Center's development. Their contributions span equipment provision, employee training, and overall conceptual guidance. We hope to undertake numerous successful collaborations of this type in the future."

By incorporating the perspectives of blind and visually impaired individuals, Rustavi City Hall is taking proactive steps towards building an inclusive service delivery ecosystem and is setting a powerful example for inclusivity in municipal service delivery. This will in turn be leveraged by the USAID Local Governance Program as it advances its efforts towards supporting other partner municipalities embarking on a similar journey toward inclusive service delivery. Through peer-to-peer exchanges and knowledge sharing events with the active participation of Rustavi municipality as a peer leader, the Program will inspire and empower other communities to take proactive steps towards building a society where every citizen is treated

with dignity and respect, regardless of their abilities.

By taking incremental steps and generating small wins toward creating a network of inclusive municipalities, the Program seeks to promote a culture of accessibility and inclusivity that extends far beyond a single municipality's borders.

ABOUT THE USAID LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAM

The United States and the American People stand firmly behind Georgia and its citizens, offering steadfast support to further advance its democratic governance systems. To achieve this goal, the USAID Local Governance Program was initiated. The five-year program aims to strengthen local communities and increase the quality of their life, by strengthening subnational governance systems and improving the delivery of inclusive and citizen-centered public services at the subnational level. The Program brings together central government and local government representatives to work with civil society and the private sector to achieve the goals of Georgia's decentralization reform. It strengthens accountability across the local governance ecosystem and supports central-level institutions to manage the implementation of decentralization and public administration reform. Through the program, USAID will provide support to at least 22 municipalities and include others in learning, exchange, and outreach activities.

XV საერთაშორისო ფესტივალი
XV INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

ღამის სერენადები
NIGHT SERENADES

ART
არტ პლანსი

ფესტივალის დამფუძნებელი
ლიანა ისაკაძე
FOUNDER OF THE FESTIVAL
LIANA ISSAKADZE

საბუნების ბელმდღვენილი
გიორგი ისაკაძე
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
GIORGIS ISSAKADZE

AUGUST 22, BORJOMI
Hotel BORJOMI LIKANI 19:00

AUGUST 24-25, BATUMI
Ilia Chavchavadze Professional State
DRAMA THEATER

SEPTEMBER 22-23-24, TBILISI
Tbilisi State
CONSERVATOIRE, GRAND HALL 20:00

Festival Base Orchestra
GEORGIAN VIRTUOSI
GEORGIAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

ENSEMBLE BORJOMI

TKT.GE

Bicycle Built for Two



BLOG BY TONY HANMER

It was 2011 when several new forms of transport first appeared in Upper Svaneti (in my experience), which I remember clearly. They no doubt had realized that the newly renovated road, President Saakashvili's doing, in cement and tarmac, was changing everything. The mafia had been "made an offer they couldn't refuse" too, making things much safer for foreign tourists.

Full-size buses, marked taxis, motorcycles and bicycles all began braving the journey in that year. Eventually, they would be followed by other more exotic vehicles, mostly for rent in Mestia: 4x4 quads, electric bikes, and at least one Segway. The typical form of tourism, coming in singly or in small groups only by set-route van-bus from Tbilisi or elsewhere, also changed. People were even making the journey on foot: some sticking to the road, but more and more trying the trails between villages which

cars cannot take. The Transcaucasian Trail organization started renovating these trails and adding more, making themselves our heroes. Private vans brought whole loads of 15 or 16 people to trek, starting at Chuberi or Nakra and going via us to Mazeri, Mestia and Ushguli.

But yesterday... a new first arrived on our doorstep. Jurgen from Germany had been our guest some 5 years ago; now he was back, newly married, with his wife in tandem. Literally, on a tandem bike.

This dream machine, expensively handmade to order by a specialist on Lake Constance, folds in half. It has a multi-gear system, panniers, lights, everything necessary, and a weight of only about 24 kg. The couple flew with it into Georgia and are near the end of a three-week journey around the country, having a fantastic time. They did add pepper spray after a rather scary incident of being chased by a pack of six angry dogs, but have also had other dogs trot alongside them purely for companionship.

I checked: tandem bike patents date

from the mid-1880s, a venerable age. The name refers to an arrangement of riders in a straight line, one in front of the other, never side by side, which is a different category. The world record tandem bike has 8 cyclists, and was built a few decades ago in Philadelphia, USA.

Other forms of locomotion which have come our way, though rarely, include people on horseback and skis. As of yet, no one has come through by unicycle, tricycle (pedaled or powered), motorcycle WITH sidecar, camel, ostrich, elephant, balloon, microlight plane, helicopter, dogsled, skidoo, roller skates, inline skates, skateboard, moped, canoe, kayak, other boat, or toboggan. Trendsetters, your moment awaits!

I must close with a strange tandem connection, lyrics from the song "Daisy Bell" written by Henry Dacre of Britain in 1892:

Daisy, Daisy, given me answer, do
I'm half crazy all for the love of you
It won't be a stylish marriage
I can't afford a carriage
But you'd look sweet, upon the seat
Of a bicycle built for two!



This song has the distinction of having been the first one ever sung by computer-voice, by the IBM 704 in 1961. And it was creepily made the dying murderous computer HAL's last words as it was unplugged in the Stanley Kubrick-directed science fiction film "2001: A Space Odyssey", from the story by Arthur C. Clarke. 2001 was nominated for a number of Academy Awards, including Best Director, and won for Best Special Visual Effects, later being recognized as one of the most influential films ever, a rare distinction for a sci-fi film. So, from the

moons of far-flung Jupiter to the high roads of Upper Svaneti, the tandem bicycle appears to rule.

Tony Hanmer has lived in Georgia since 1999, in Svaneti since 2007, and been a weekly writer and photographer for GT since early 2011. He runs the "Svaneti Renaissance" Facebook group, now with over 2000 members, at www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/. He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri: www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti



Who Is Actually Working, and When?

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Philosophers have thought much, and they are still thinking, about the function and character of labor, because there is a very tight connection between the work we do and the wellbeing we enjoy. A speciously organized work process can tremendously damage our lifestyle. Our social and political life is tightly intertwined with what we do and how we behave at our workplace, and, conversely, our performance at work highly depends on the level of social and political culture we entertain in this country. So, whether we flourish or suffer economic drawback might greatly depend on how harmoniously our personal work habits interact with the general organization of labor in the nation.

Clearly and notably, a considerable chunk of the aggregate national time in Sakartvelo seems to be relentlessly wasted on several models of public conduct: The widest possible interaction of hundreds of thousands of our citizens within the framework of various social media, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Messenger, TikTok, Viber,



Illustration by Samar Haddad/The Verge. Photo by Robert Nickelsberg/Getty Images

LinkedIn, Telegram, and tens of other lesser-known, yet very intensely used ones, most of which fuel futile internet discourse, often belligerent and offensive, seeing users drowning in nonsensical interlocation literally for hours on end, shattering their nervous systems and making them forget the truly useful things they wanted to do; The catastrophic amount of TV time, which all but halts

our successful advance and the favorable development of our children due to the void of its general content and the stifling infatuation with political comments and discussions, while nobody is sure about their correctness and usefulness, and most of us have no idea what would be better to do in its stead; Endless street demonstrations, with a brief summer break, involving tens of thousands of our

people who want to change something in the life of this Republic, having no clue that the change would come easier if all the street time was used on fruitful labor in our workplaces instead of fruitless hysterical shouts into those deafening, stupid megaphones; The needless and aimless cruising in cars around the city and beyond it, wasting time and gas and polluting the air for no reason, because purposeless cruising is one of the most beloved pastimes for our men and women of all generations and social status.

And how about the hundreds of thousands of pointless "kitchen discussions," involving twice or thrice as many participants, with zero results at the end of the popular but unwanted get-togethers; The irrelevant amount of time spent on wakes, funerals and parties thereof, taken as indispensable in terms of keeping up our national traditions; Time used on entertainment, education and physical exercise, which are very good things to do, but which need hours and hours to enjoy; Time for habitual lengthy telephone conversations; Time for the regular daily routine needed for survival, including medical safety, nutritional needs and hygiene. This is the wrongly-organized labor and leisure process, within which our efforts and skills are misused and

our valuable time is wasted.

The list of the time-and-energy spent paradigms could continue, but let's stop here and go back to the main question: who is actually working, and when? Are we doing what we should be doing, based on our skills, qualifications, abilities and desires? The answer is probably "no" in most cases, some of us certainly being happy enough to have the jobs we have. In the best platonic tradition, the happiest among us are those who have some degree of chance to make a choice concerning work, and then go about it, in the best-case scenario each of us opting for what we are better qualified for, this being the best way to contribute to society and to take care of ourselves and our families. If our society is not organized in accordance with the model described herewith, we need to change something very seriously. Otherwise, the status quo, which we don't often appreciate, might last forever. The chance of change and improvement probably lies in knowing the value of time and having enough knowledge of how to organize our labor process and make it compatible with our prosperity. Wouldn't this contribute greatly to the cherished process of our Westernization? The trivial ABC of our life, isn't it? But it is so difficult to keep it up!

The 15th Anniversary International Festival "Night Serenades"

On August 24, the press conference of the 15th anniversary international festival Night Serenades was held at the Ilia Chavchavadze Professional State Drama Theater in Batumi.

The press conference was attended by Deputy Mayor of Batumi Sopho Khalvashi; Deputy Minister of Education, Culture and Sports of Adjara Akaki Dzneldadze; artistic director of Night Serenades festival, German-based musician and teacher Giorgi Issakadze; director of the festival Nina Tsagareli; concertmaster of the "Georgian Virtuosi" and first violin Lela Mtchedlidze; Soprano Eilika Wunsch, tenor Riccardo Marinello, violinist Heyeoon Park and pianist Tamar Licheli.

Organizers and supporters talked about this year's festival program, the invited artists, the latest news and future plans.

"Throughout the years, Night Serenades has always been distinguished, it will be important for our Batumi this year as well," noted Sopho Khalvashi, Deputy Mayor of Batumi. "Traditionally, Batumi City Hall is a supporter of the festival, and I want to wish the participants all the success, because this year's musicians are really outstanding, and listeners are in for a great celebration."

"Night Serenades is important not only for Batumi, but for the whole of Georgia, because Liana Isakadze is a brilliant musician, and the Batumi-Tbilisi geography of Night Serenades is one of the most outstanding musical episodes of the Georgian cultural space in recent years," noted Akaki Dzneldadze, Deputy Minister of Education, Culture and Sports of Adjara. "It is necessary to support this festival, and I would like to emphasize if it is possible, but I will say - it is one of the best cultural festivals in Georgia in terms of its intellectuality. Great thanks to this festival!"

Giorgi Issakadze, artistic director of the festival: "The program of the festival, as usual, is very diverse and interesting. This year, we will host a number of world-renowned foreign and Georgian musicians: Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestra della Toscana, Principal Conductor of the Orchestra Milano Classica and Principal Conductor of the Orchestra Scarlatti Young Beatrice Venenzi will perform famous Intermezzos and Overtures from Italian Operas. She will also perform Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with famous Georgian violinist and winner of the Wieniawski International Competition Veriko Tchumburidze. Laura Marzadori, concertmaster of La Scala orchestra, soloist and winner of international competitions, will present Mozart's Violin Concertos. Piano recital will be held by Antti Siirala, winner of the international Beethoven competition, professor of the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München and one of the outstanding pianists of his generation.

"Korean violinist Hyeoon Park collaborating with Tamar Licheli will play works by Franck and

Vaughan Williams, as well as Beethoven's Violin Concerto. The audience will also meet young

Georgian musicians. The soloists will traditionally be accompanied by Festival

Base Orchestra Georgian Virtuosi (First violins Lela Mtchedlidze).

"An amazing evening was presented to us by tenor Riccardo Marinello, winner of the German project "Das Supertalent" and the internationally renowned Georgian tenor Giorgi Oniani, who performed masterpieces of Italian opera and Neapolitan songs in Borjomi. I would like to mention the amazing performance of the world-famous German clarinetist Sabine Grofmeier.

Nina Tsagareli - Director of the festival: "We meet the fifteenth anniversary "Night Serenades" with important and joyful novelties. Our geographical area has expanded and Borjomi, a very important city for the history of the festival, has been added to the host cities. This year "Night Serenades" was solemnly opened with gala concert in Borjomi and then traditionally moved to the beautiful Batumi.

"The second most important novelty is that the Georgian Philharmonic Orchestra has become the partner of the festival, which will hold one concert every year within the framework of the festival.

"Along with 6 unforgettable evenings, master classes and workshops for music school students, students and people with disabilities, as well as an exhibition of the artist Eka Abuladze, the first representative of Astro-Art and Art-Science in Georgia will traditionally be held as part of this year's Festival.

Ricardo Marinello - tenor: "I'm very happy to be here. It's my first time in Batumi and I'm proud to offer my music to the audience of this festival. I'm Italian and I'll perform the masterpieces of vocal music such as "O Sole Mio" and the greatest aria "Nessun Dorma".

Eilika Wunsch - soprano: "I am the happiest that I am in Georgia and I will meet the audience in this beautiful theater. I will perform the most precious arias for me and I hope that the audience will enjoy it. Thank you Georgia for the invitation."

Heyeoon Park - violinist: "I am looking forward to the meeting with the audience, it's great pleasure and I want to show my abilities as much as possible - to play my best. I will play with Tata Licheli. She is a talented pianist and I am glad that I had the opportunity to work with her. I love Georgia, the weather is good, and the mood is too!"

"This year's international classical music festival Night Serenades is being held for the fifteenth time. The festival is hosted by three cities: Borjomi, Batumi and Tbilisi. Traditionally, at the concerts of Night Serenades world-famous musicians will perform works by famous composers.

The founder of the festival is the world famous violinist and conductor Liana Isakadze, the artistic director German-based Georgian musician and teacher Giorgi Issakadze.

On August 24 at 20:40 the concert was broadcast live on Adjara Public Broadcaster. Program:

César Franck - Sonata for violin and piano in A major

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - Exsultate, jubilate, K 165

Ernesto De Curtis - Torna surriento

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - Il re pastore - L'amerò, sarò costante



Emmerich Kálmán - Die Csárdásfürstin - Tanzen möcht' ich

Giuseppe Verdi - Rigoletto - La donna è mobile

Franz Lehár - Die lustige Witwe - Lippen schweigen

Giacomo Puccini - Turandot - Nessun Dorma

Eduardo di Capua - O sole mio

Giuseppe Verdi - La Traviata - Sempre libera

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On August 25, the final evening of the Batumi series of "Night Serenades" was held at Ilia Chavchavadze Professional State Drama Theater in Batumi.

The participants of the concert were world renowned Korean violinist Heyeoon Park, famous Georgian pianist Tamar Licheli, Festival base orchestra "Georgian Virtuosi" (first violin Lela Mtchedlidze). The concert program included Ludwig van Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D major, Op.61 (arr. C. Hynde for Violin and String Orchestra), Liszt/Counoud's Waltz from Faust, Vaughan Williams's The Lark Ascending and Rachmaninov's Hungarian Dance from "Salon Pieces", Op.6 N2.

Night Serenades will move to Tbilisi

from September 22 and will meet the classical music listeners at Tbilisi State Conservatoire Grand Hall.

Giorgi Issakadze: "We are so happy. The first three concerts of the festival were held with great success. The concerts featured excellent musicians, soloists, and we had a very huge vocal and instrumental program. Participants of the evening performed an amazing violin concerto in D major of Ludwig van Beethoven, op. 61 (K. Hind's version for violin and string quintet) Franz Liszt / Charles Gounod's - Waltz from the opera "Faust", Ralph Vaughan Williams's - The Lark Ascending and Rachmaninoff's Hungarian Dance, from "Salon Pieces".

"Our festival will continue in Tbilisi - on September 22, 23 and 24 we will meet listeners in the capital. The festival evenings will be held in the Vano Sarajshvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire Grand Hall, where fabulous artists will appear before the public."

Tamar Licheli: "It is the happiest day. Night Serenades returned to Batumi again with its amazing evenings. I am very glad to be a part of this festival. It is very pleasant to meet with listeners and talented participants. Our concert was held with great success and I would like to thank the organizers of the festival for giving a real musical celebration to music lovers every year."

Heyeoon Park: "I am the happiest to have played with the wonderful Georgian pianist Tamar Licheli. I performed works by Rachmaninoff and Williams and I hope the listeners enjoyed it. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this festival."

Lela Mtchedlidze: "I am the happiest that I'm a part of the Night Serenades, which was founded by the legendary Liana Isakadze. This festival is continued by the representative of the Issakadze family - Giorgi Issakadze. I am happy that the most precious festival is not lost and continues and develops. In addition to the fact that we had amazing soloists - Heyeoon Park and Tata Licheli, we as a quintet, of Georgian Virtuosi, presented the most difficult program, with a new version of Beethoven's violin concerto."

The founder of the festival is the world-famous violinist and conductor Liana Isakadze, the artistic director - German-

based musician and teacher Giorgi Isakadze.

Night Serenades is an international festival with the longest history in Georgia, which has been existing for 41 years. The idea of creating the mentioned festival belongs to the world-famous Georgian violinist and conductor, People's Artist of Georgia - Liana Isakadze, who is one of the greatest musicians of the century. She was included in the Encyclopedia of 2000 Prominent Musicians of the 20th Century by the Cambridge Bibliographic Center (England, 2002).

In 1982, Liana Isakadze founded the international festival "Night Serenades" in the most beautiful part of Georgia, Abkhazia, which took place in Bichvinta in summers and was very popular. Unfortunately, due to the tragic events in our country, the festival ceased to exist in 1991, and it was possible to restore it only 18 years later, in 2009, in the beautiful Black Sea city - Batumi.

Over the prolific history of the festival many legendary musicians have participated in it such as Alfred Schnittke, Kurt Mazur, Gidon Kremer and many others.

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