

Georgia's Prime Minister Meets UAE's Deputy Minister Abdulla Nasser Lootah

By Liza Mchedlidze

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, met with Abdulla Nasser Lootah, Deputy Minister of Cabinet Affairs for Competitiveness and Knowledge Exchange of the United Arab Emirates.

According to the government's administration, Abdulla Nasser Lootah has extended an invitation to the Prime Minister of Georgia on behalf of the Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates to attend The World Government Summit 2024. The summit is scheduled to take place from February 12 to 14 in Dubai. The head of the government noted that Georgia is ready to leverage this platform to enhance cooperation with its partners.

The conversation at the meeting focused on the relations and cooperation between Georgia and the United Arab Emirates. The positive assessment of the dynamics of high-level visits exchanged in recent years was emphasized.

It was noted that Georgia is interested in deepening partnerships and fostering friendly re-



lations with the Gulf countries. The conversation also delved into cooperation in the economic and governance spheres.

They deliberated on the favorable investment environment

and potential in Georgia. The Prime Minister emphasized the substantial role that Georgia plays in terms of connectivity and transit with countries in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

The parties also addressed the significance of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CEPA) between Georgia and the United Arab Emirates. As per Prime Minister Gharibashvili, the

agreement establishes a robust foundation for the advancement of more resilient and consolidated trade and economic relations between Georgia and the United Arab Emirates.

Fire Destroys Thousands of Artworks at Abkhazian Exhibition Hall

By Liza Mchedlidze

A fire broke out in the building of the Central Exhibition Hall of the Union of Artists of Abkhazia, and thousands of

works preserved in the fund were destroyed.

As reported by local media, only a small portion of paintings from the National Art Gallery's collection survived the overnight

fire. The gallery was home to over four thousand works, including approximately 300 pieces by Alexander Chachba-Shervashidze.

Minister of Culture of the self-

proclaimed Republic of Abkhazia, Dinara Smir, said that the fire that broke out in the central exhibition hall is an "irreparable loss for national culture".

"It can be said that everything was burnt. Over 4,000 copies were stored in the funds of the National Art Gallery's exhibition hall, including about 300 works by Alexander Chachba-Shervashidze. This represents an irreparable loss for the national culture of Abkhazia," said Smir.

In response to the fire that broke out in the art gallery in Sokhumi, President Salome Zourabichvili urged the international community to prioritize the protection of Georgia's cultural heritage in the occupied territory.

"The fire that destroyed Sokhumi's National Gallery in occupied Abkhazia is a tragedy for us all. I deplore

what is a direct consequence of the neglect of cultural identity both by the de facto leadership and the Russian occupants

I call on the international community to revive its attention to the protection of our cultural heritage in the occupied territories," Zourabichvili wrote on X.

Gia Volski, the first vice-speaker of the parliament and a member of Georgian Dream, asserted that the fire in the central exhibition hall of the Union of Artists of Abkhazia in Sokhumi was deliberately started.

Volski suggested that the noticeable trend of developing positive relations in Sokhumi in the recent period may be connected to the fire.

"I apologize to my fellow Abkhazian citizens, but I firmly believe that this is a deliberately planned negative decision. The Ministry of Culture has no involvement; I believe this is a political issue. I have regular contact with Sokhumi, and I want to convey that the society's attitude has significantly shifted towards the positive. In my opinion, this is related to the fire that occurred at this exhibition.

While it may have occurred by chance, I am more inclined to consider the negative, given the noticeable trend of developing positive relationships lately," Volski said.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

GYLA Addresses Rights Violations and Advocates for Pensioners' Well-being



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საია პენსიონერთა უფლებების დარღვევის პრაქტიკას აფასებს

lems. These issues necessitate a timely response from the relevant agencies. GYLA has urged Liberty Bank to reassess the standard terms of the pension loan agreement.

sis for the suspension and/or termination of pensions. In the absence of accurate information, pensioners cannot avoid po-

for a new building to take its place. The Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili stated that, based on ex-



tential complications and are compelled to initiate lengthy legal disputes to protect their rights, imposing a heavy financial burden upon them," the statement reads.

Furthermore, GYLA has highlighted the problematic nature of high interest rates on pension-secured loans and other unfavorable terms in the contract, placing pensioners in unfair and vulnerable conditions.

perts' conclusions, the reconstruction of the building for the clinic to meet international standards is deemed practically impossible and economically unviable.

Gharibashvili noted that some employees of the Republican Hospital have already found employment in various state clinics, while others will be hired in the future.

As per Prime Minister's statement, a new, modern state clinic built on the grounds of Tbilisi Central Republican Hospital is planned to include 500 beds. The multi-disciplinary, high-tech medical institution will encompass all major medical specialties.

According to the government administration, the Ministry of Health has already initiated procurement procedures for the demolition project and the design works of the clinic.

Government Plans Demolition of Republican Hospital for Construction of New, High-Quality Medical Facility

As per the decision announced during the government meeting, the current structure of the Central Republican Hospital is set to be demolished, with plans

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) assessed the rights violations of pensioners, reporting that, during their provision of legal assistance to pensioners, they identified several systemic issues, including legislative prob-

According to GYLA, the reasons for suspending and terminating pensions are not adequately explained to pensioners during the pension appointment stage, and this aspect is incompletely regulated at the legislative level.

"There is a common occurrence where inaccurate information serves as the ba-

EU and UNDP Enhance Health Services for Conflict-Affected Communities

Renovated outpatient clinics serve 5,500 people in Samegrelo Region

ZUGDIDI. 19 January 2024 - In a joint effort to improve access to essential health services, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have successfully renovated outpatient clinics in Orsantia and Rike villages, benefitting over 5,500 people in the Samegrelo region of Georgia. This initiative is part of the broader EU4Dialogue programme aimed

at supporting communities affected by conflict.

The refurbishment project encompassed the installation of plumbing, electrical, and heating systems, along with enhancements to interior design. Crucially, the renovations prioritized increased accessibility for people with disabilities, ensuring inclusivity in both physical infrastructure and services.

On 18 January, high-level guests, including Douglas Webb, UNDP Resident Representative a.i. in Georgia; Agata Nieboj, Human Rights, Justice, and Home Affairs Team Leader at the Delegation of the Euro-

pean Union to Georgia, and Zviad Zviadadze, Head of Department at Georgia's State Minister's Office for Reconciliation and Civic Equality; visited the Samegrelo Region. The delegation, accompanied by Maizer Nanava, Deputy Mayor of Zugdidi, met with local communities and people displaced by conflict, assessing the ongoing healthcare initiatives and other support projects.

"The European Union is committed to enhancing access to essential services for disadvantaged communities, including people displaced or affected by conflict and people with disabilities. We

believe that greater social protection fosters resilience, promotes equality, and contributes to peaceful and sustainable development," said Agata Nieboj, Human Rights, Justice, and Home Affairs Team Leader at the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia.

Douglas Webb, UNDP Resident Representative a.i. in Georgia, highlighted the positive impact of healthcare projects on conflict-affected communities, benefiting up to 12,000 people, including 1,900 children, in Samegrelo and Shida Kartli regions. "Communities alongside administrative boundary lines need support to fully exercise

their rights to basic social services, including healthcare. UNDP is proud to work with the European Union and local partners in this initiative that improves lives and livelihoods."

The successful renovation of outpatient clinics in Orsantia and Rike villages follows a similar initiative in Mejriskhevi village (Shida Kartli region), where a newly refurbished medical facility serves around 6,000 people. The EU and UNDP's joint support extends to various villages across Georgia, enhancing access to healthcare and basic services for people living alongside administrative boundary lines.

Weather

Tuesday, January 23

Day Snow Showers High: 4°C

Night Snow Showers Low: -1°C

Wednesday, January 24

Day Cloudy High: 3°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: -3°C

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