

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili Meets with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, met with the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan. According to the government administration, a face-to-face meeting was held before the session of the intergovernmental economic cooperation commission. During this meeting, the parties discussed the existing fruitful cooperation between the countries, which has now moved to a new, strategic partnership level.

"As Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili noted, the transition of relations between Georgia and the Republic of Armenia to the level of strategic partnership will strengthen cooperation between the countries.

The Prime Ministers discussed the main issues of the cooperation agenda between the countries and evaluated the dynamics of the work of the Intergovernmental Economic Commission. Attention was focused on the cooperation between Georgia and the Republic of Armenia in the fields of trade and economy, transport, logistics, and culture.

The parties also discussed new directions of cooperation in the field of the economy, exploring prospects for collaboration. The role of the Intergovernmental



Economic Cooperation Commission of the two countries was emphasized as a crucial platform for strengthening ties between them.

Among the issues discussed were the security environment

and challenges in the region and the world. Gharibashvili emphasized the importance of supporting peace and stability in the South Caucasus region, noting that ensuring peace and stability will bring new opportunities

to the region.

The meeting acknowledged the significant role and efforts of Georgia in promoting peace and stability in the region, highlighting events such as the meeting between the Prime Ministers of

the Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan held in Tbilisi. Irakli Gharibashvili emphasized that Georgia remains committed to directing efforts towards the peaceful development of the region," the statement reads.

Nikol Pashinyan Says They Discussed Border Delimitation with Irakli Gharibashvili

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

According to the statement from the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, he discussed the issue of completing the border delimitation between the two countries with the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili.

"During the discussions with Mr. Gharibashvili, we also decided to instruct the agencies to take effective steps to bring the issue of delimitation of the Armenian-Georgian border to a conclusion," said Pashinyan.

A memorandum of strategic cooperation between Georgia and Armenia was signed on January 29.

As Pashinyan stated, the introduction of joint control models at the border points of the two countries is actively being dis-

cussed, which will reduce the time required for customs processes.

During the meeting with the Georgian side, according to the Armenian Prime Minister, the conversation also touched on the Crossroads of Peace project of the Republic of Armenia.

"This project of ours aims at fostering regional relations, with the protection of states' sovereignty being a crucial aspect in this process. Our region can become a significant hub between South and North, West and East, and inclusiveness is of great importance. All states will be given the opportunity to participate in economic projects, with a notable example being the Black Sea cable project, in which Armenia has a keen interest," stated the Prime Minister of Armenia.



Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6750; Euro - 2.9056; GBP - 3.4050; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9857; Swiss Franc - 3.0979

Georgia's Political Landscape in 2024: Elections, Power Dynamics, and International Influence

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

With the beginning of 2024, politicians and experts are discussing what will be the main event of the year, and they are unanimous on this issue - it will be the parliamentary elections scheduled for autumn. However, there is no consensus on how these elections will end. They also agree that the political process in Georgia will depend a lot on the developments in the world and, first of all, on the course of the Russia-Ukraine war.

The elections of the Parliament of Georgia will be held on October 26, 2024. In accordance with the law, 13 parties with representation in the parliament already have the right to participate in the elections, and the rest of the parties must apply to the Central Election Commission by July 15 and submit a list of 25,000 supporters by August 1. It is also clear that in the conditions of the 5% threshold, the opposition parties should try to unite. Part of the opposition is thinking about unification, others are trying their luck independently. In this regard, we will see the final decisions already in

the spring, which will highlight the political entities in the election marathon.

Predictions regarding the results of the upcoming elections are diametrically different. The Georgian Dream leaders and pro-government experts unanimously declare that the opposition is unprecedentedly weak and the current ruling party will not only win again, but will be represented by a constitutional majority in the next parliament.

2023 ended with an internal political surprise - on December 30, Bidzina Ivanishvili, who had 'finally left' politics, returned for the third time. A special position - honorary chairmanship was introduced for him in the Georgian Dream. However, he will have more power than the official chairman - he will be able to select a candidate for the country's prime minister.

To this day, different versions continue to be expressed as to why Ivanishvili appeared openly in politics again. His appearance in politics did not change anything for the opposition, they already claimed that the government of the Georgian Dream was managed by Ivanishvili, but a lot of things are changing for

the Georgian Dream.

It is expected that Ivanishvili will introduce changes in the 'government design' during the election, removing some of the 'familiar faces' who either the people or personally Ivanishvili is tired of. It is already clear that the election campaign will be extremely intense and related to the actions of violent groups. If the Georgian Dream tries to record another victory, the opposition will protest the results of the elections, and the situation created after the 2020 elections, when all opposition parties refused to enter the parliament, may be repeated.

At that time, Western friends, and first of all Charles Michel, did everything to bring opposition parties into the parliament. According to them, the Georgian Dream and the opposition should have worked constructively in the parliament, but such work did not really work out, and the Georgian Dream strengthened its positions.

In 2024, the positions of the West will be different and stricter assessments will be given to possible violations during the election campaign.

Another likely important

event of 2024 is the start of accession negotiations with the European Union, but for this it is necessary to fulfil the 9 reservations given at the time of receiving the candidate status.

After the 2024 parliamentary elections, according to the constitution, one more event should take place. The electoral college of 300 people (150 parliamentarians and 150 self-government representatives) should elect the new president of the country.

Until now, the president was elected by the people. The new rule is not acceptable to everyone. Gakharia's party 'For Georgia' has already come up with an initiative to change the way of electing the president, not the electoral college, but the people to elect the president again. However, this issue will become a matter of real discussion only if the opposition coalition wins the elections.

The opposition believes that the Georgian Dream will not actually do anything to fulfil these reservations, for example in the direction of delogarchization, and it will be possible to take real steps to fulfil the reservations of the European Union, if the pro-Western

opposition coalition comes to the head of the government in the 2024 parliamentary elections.

The development of events in Georgia, as already mentioned, will depend a lot on the events developed in the world. No one doubts that Putin will win again in the presidential elections in Russia in March 2024 and will continue the same aggressive policy that he has pursued so far.

It is much more difficult to predict the results of the European Parliament elections and the results of the US presidential elections. If Ukraine does not receive proper assistance from the European Union and the United States, if Trump wins there, it will bring catastrophic consequences for Russia's neighbouring countries.

Regarding Georgia, the following can be said: Ukraine's failure in the war with Russia will activate pro-Russian forces in Georgia, and the Georgian Dream will even more actively look towards Moscow. Ukraine's victories will reduce Russia's aggressive capabilities and Georgian authorities will be more attentive to the West.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

President Zourabichvili Says She Was Uninformed About Nikol Pashinyan's Visit



სალომე ზურაბიშვილი / Salome Zourabichvili
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The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, voiced her disappointment, noting that she was not afforded the opportunity

to meet and host the visiting Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

"The President of Georgia welcomes the visit of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia to the country, but it is a pity that the President is not given

the opportunity to meet and properly host the leaders of friendly countries within the framework of his visit to Georgia.

It is also sad and worth noting that the relevant agencies do not inform the President about high-ranking visits, meetings, or events planned in the country," Zourabichvili wrote.

Fire-Damaged Paintings in Sokhumi to be Taken to Russia for Restoration

Russian media reports that 17 of the best restorers from Russia have arrived in Sokhumi to restore the works damaged by the fire on January 21. The initial stage involves sorting out which paintings require urgent restoration and which ones need

conservation.

According to reports, the assessment will last until Monday, and then the restorers will start their work. Some of the paintings will be transported to Moscow and St. Petersburg for restoration due to the lack of suitable working conditions in Abkhazia.

A fire broke out in the central exhibition hall of Sukhumi on the night of January 21. Accord-

ing to the Ministry of Culture of the de facto Republic of Abkhazia, approximately 4,000 artworks stored in the same building were destroyed in the fire. The official report states that about 150 works were saved. Unfortunately, the works of artist Alexander Chachba - Shervashidze were completely burned, including the digitized archive of the works.



Weather

Monday, January 29

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 6°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: -1°C

Tuesday, January 30

Day Mostly Cloudy

High: 4°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: -2°C

published by

The Messenger

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