



Donald Trump immediately after the shooting. Source: tagesschau

FOCUS ON DONALD TRUMP

Col. (ret.) Jeffrey H. Fischer on the assassination attempt, and how Trump will play it next

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Hotel Holiday Inn Telavi – International Standard Hospitality in the Heart of Georgia’s Wine Country

INTERVIEW BY MARIAM MIVILISHVILI

Holiday Inn Telavi offers the internationally renowned full service expected of a hotel under the IHG brand. Based in Georgia’s famed wine-making region, Kakheti, the hotel features 85 rooms, an open lobby bar, and two restaurants- ‘Batontan,’ serving an inspiring and traditional Georgian menu, and ‘Iberiko,’ offering European dishes and enviable views of the Alazani Valley and Caucasus Mountains. Guests can enjoy both an indoor and an outdoor swimming pool, a sauna, steam bath, gym, terrace, and bar. To find out more, GEORGIA TODAY sat down with Levan Eristavi, director of Holiday Inn Telavi.

WHAT SERVICES DOES HOLIDAY INN TELAVI OFFER ITS GUESTS?

Holiday Inn Telavi offers the services expected of a hotel under the IHG brand. IHG hotels are globally recognized for their comfort, values, and attitude to guest satisfaction. They count an incredible 6000 hotels worldwide, and we feel very happy that one of those 6000 is located in the Kakheti region.

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Levan Eristavi, director of Holiday Inn Telavi

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| Prepared for Georgia Today Business by | | | | | | | | | |
| As of 16-Jul-2024 | | | | | | | | | |
| Markets | | | | | Markets | | | | |
| | Price | w/w | m/m | | Price | w/w | m/m | | Price |
| GEORG 04/26 | 92.19 (YTM 7.57%) | +0.4% | +0.9% | Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN) | GBP 45.35 | +6.3% | +19.3% | | |
| GBAL 04/28 | 88.57 (YTM 7.42%) | +0.2% | +0.4% | Georgia Capital (GCEO LN) | GBP 11.16 | +6.5% | +20.3% | | |
| GBGG 9 1/2 PERP | 97.72 (YTM 9.68%) | +0.1% | -0.0% | TBC Bank Group (TBCC LN) | GBP 30.60 | +7.2% | +26.6% | | |
| SILNET 01/27 | 99.82 (YTM 8.46%) | -0.1% | -0.1% | | | | | | |
| TBC 10 7/8 PERP | 100.16 (YTM 11.30%) | +0.2% | +0.1% | | | | | | |
| TBC 8 9/4 PERP | 95.49 (YTM 11.59%) | -0.3% | +0.1% | Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl) | 83.73 | -2.1% | +1.3% | | |
| TBC 10 1/4 PERP | 98.44 (YTM 11.63%) | -0.1% | -0.0% | Gold Spot (US\$/OZ) | 2 469.08 | +4.4% | +5.8% | | |
| INDICES | | | | | CURRENCIES | | | | |
| | Price | w/w | m/m | | Price | w/w | m/m | | Price |
| SP 500 | 5 667.20 | +1.6% | +4.3% | USD / GEL | 2.6949 | -2.1% | -6.1% | | |
| FTSE 250 | 21 213.79 | +2.8% | +5.4% | EUR / GEL | 2.9372 | -1.3% | -4.4% | | |
| DOW JONES 30 | 40 954.48 | +4.2% | +6.1% | GBP / GEL | 3.4947 | -0.7% | -3.9% | | |
| Russell 2000 | 2 263.67 | +11.5% | +12.8% | EUR / USD | 1.0859 | +0.8% | +1.8% | | |
| FTSE 100 | 8 164.90 | +0.3% | +0.2% | GBP / USD | 1.2974 | +1.5% | +2.3% | | |



Georges Mikautadze and the Golden Boot. Image source: Georgian National Team

Georgian Players Impress: Mikautadze and Mamardashvili Awarded by UEFA

BY TEAM GT

Statistical data from the official UEFA website this week revealed that Giorgi Mamardashvili, goalkeeper of the Georgian national team, nicknamed “The Georgian Wall,” had topped the tournament’s charts by making 29 saves throughout the Euro 2024 competition. Bart Verbruggen of the Netherlands followed with 18 saves, while England’s Jordan Pickford secured third place with 17 saves.

Further recognition came for Georgia when Giorgi (Georges) Mikautadze, striker for the Georgian national team, was awarded the Golden Boot of Euro 2024 for scoring three goals and providing one assist. He is one of six players to share this year’s Golden Boot award,

alongside Cody Gakpo (Netherlands), England’s Harry Kane, Spain’s Dani Olmo, Germany’s Jamal Musiala, and Slovakia’s Ivan Schranz. It is the first time the award has been shared since Euro 2000, when Patrick Kluijvert and Savo Milosevic both netted five times.

The European Golden Shoe, also known as European Golden Boot, is an award that is presented each season to the leading goalscorer in league matches from the top division of a European national league. The trophy is a sculpture of a football boot and has been awarded every season since 1967–68.

The Georgian football team was eliminated from its first European Championship at the Round of 16 stage when it lost to Spain.

The Spanish football team became the four-time champion of Europe on Sunday night. In the final of Euro 2024, Spain defeated England 2:1.

Georgian Women’s Team Gets through to Playoffs of European Championship Qualifiers

BY TEAM GT

The Georgian women’s national football team has made it through to the playoffs of the qualifying stage of the European Championship.

In the final match of the group stage, Iris Antman’s team defeated the Lithuanian national team with a minimal score. Maiko Bebia scored the winning goal in the 88th minute of the match with an 11-meter shot.

The Georgian team finished the group stage with 10 points and was included in the top three for second place in the selection stage.

The two-round playoff matches will be held in the fall. Within the playoffs, 28 teams of A, B and C leagues will compete

for 7 European Championship tickets.

Iris Antman (head coach of the women’s team): “We met Lithuania for the fourth time and we had the experience of losing and drawing with them. I am glad that we were able to win this time. Anyone who watched the match would be proud of our team. We started the match in a bad way, but, I think that in the second half of the match, the players went to the field to win.

“I’m proud of our players. They put a lot of work into this success.

“I want to thank the fans who always attend our matches. I believed that we would succeed and I am glad that we did.

“Everything is ahead, we have a very good generation in the national team, which needs support. I am glad that the Football Federation stands by us and supports the players. I am proud to be a Georgian today,” she said.



Speaker: Assassination Attempt on Trump Highlights October Elections as Decisive Moment for Georgia

BY TEAM GT

Georgian Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili commented on the weekend’s assassination attempt on former US President Donald Trump, linking it to the upcoming October 26 elections in Georgia.

Papuashvili’s remarks were shared on social media, where he stressed the significance of Georgia’s October elections, calling them a “watershed moment between war and peace.”

Papuashvili expressed his concerns about the potential consequences if the opposition, whom he referred to as “foreign-ruled individuals,” were to gain power. He warned that this could lead to national embarrassment, internal chaos, economic collapse, and widespread violence in Georgia. “Everywhere and always remember Georgia,” he urged.

The incident involving Donald Trump



Georgian Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili

occurred during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, where the former president was shot in the ear. While his life was not in danger, one rally participant was killed, and two others are in a grave

condition. The FBI has labeled the event as an “assassination attempt” on Trump. The gunman, identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks, was killed by Secret Service agents at the scene.

US State Department: With Favorable Business Climate, Georgia Ranks High on International Rankings



BY TEAM GT

Georgia, located at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe, is a small but open market that benefits from international trade, tourism, and transportation, states the US State Department’s report on the 2024 investment climate, mentioning Georgia.

The report claims that the country has implemented large-scale economic reforms since 1991 that have produced a relatively well-functioning and stable market economy.

The report reads as follows:

“The country has made sweeping economic reforms since 1991 that have produced a relatively well-functioning and stable market economy. In December 2023 the European Union granted Georgia candidate status and identified nine steps for the Georgian government to take to proceed with its accession process, including advancing deoligarchization and anti-corruption efforts. Georgia’s alignment with EU legislation will entail making structural reforms in many areas, including technical regulations and standards, competition law, government procurement, intellectual property rights, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

With a favorable business climate, Georgia routinely ranks high on international rankings for transparency, competitiveness, and economic freedom. The average growth rate was over five percent from 2005 through 2023. Fiscal

and monetary policy are focused on low deficits, low inflation, and a floating real exchange rate. The Georgian economy continued to perform well despite double shocks from the COVID pandemic and Russia’s continued invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Having recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, Georgia’s economy rebounded in 2021, with 10.4 percent growth, and continued to outperform expectations in 2022 with 10.2 percent growth due to tourism revenues, a surge in war-related immigration and financial inflows, and a rise in transit trade through Georgia. In 2023, the economy grew 7.5 percent and inflation dropped to 0.4, marked by a return to more traditional economic drivers: tourism, increasing exports, and strong foreign capital inflows. Following three years of sustained growth, Georgia’s GDP is expected to continue this trajectory with 2024 forecasts between five and seven percent growth.

Overall, business and investment conditions are sound, and Georgia favorably compares to regional peers. However, there is a continued lack of confidence in the judicial sector’s ability to adjudicate commercial cases independently or in a timely, competent manner, with some business dispute cases languishing in the court system for years. Other companies complain of inefficient decision-making processes at the municipal level, lack of effective anti-trust policies, accusations of political meddling, selective enforcement of laws and regulations, including commercial laws, and difficulties resolving disputes over property

rights. The Georgian government continues to work to address these issues, and despite these remaining challenges, Georgia ranks high in the region as a good place to do business.

The United States and Georgia signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty in 1994, and Georgia is eligible to export many products duty-free to the United States under the Generalized System of Preferences program.

Georgia suffered considerable instability in the immediate post-Soviet period. After regaining independence in 1991, civil war and separatist conflicts flared up along the Russian border in the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In August 2008, tensions in the region of South Ossetia culminated in a brief war between Russia and Georgia. Russia invaded and occupied the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia continues to occupy these Georgian regions, and the central government in Tbilisi does not have effective control over these areas. The United States supports Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and does not recognize the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia as independent. Tensions still exist both inside the occupied territories and near the administrative boundary lines, but other parts of Georgia, including Tbilisi, are not directly affected.

Transit and logistics are priority sectors as Georgia seeks to benefit from increased east-west trade along the Middle Corridor following Russia’s further invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The expanding Central Asian market has also driven recent increases in cargo through the Middle Corridor connecting Europe to Central Asian markets and could be the source of long-term growth for Georgia, particularly with strategic infrastructure investments and regional cooperation. In February 2023, the Georgian government announced a new tender for the development of the Anaklia port, a deep seaport whose original tender the government canceled in 2020. In March 2024, the government announced the international tender for the design and construction of Anaklia port’s marine infrastructure.

In April 2024 the government announced plans to build a new Tbilisi International Airport,” the report concludes.

Ukraine Latest: Germany to Halve Military Aid for Kyiv

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

Germany plans to halve its military aid to Ukraine to €4bn next year, despite concerns of dwindling support from the US. According to a draft of Germany's 2025 budget, the military aid for Ukraine will be cut down to €4bn (£3.36bn) in 2025 from around €8bn (£6.72bn) in 2024.

The country's finance minister assured that the bulk of the money and military aid Kyiv needs has been secured "for the foreseeable future thanks to European instruments and the G7 loans."

Germany has faced criticism for repeatedly missing a NATO target of spending 2% of its economic output on defense.

The blow to Kyiv comes as Donald Trump named as his vice presidential pick Senator JD Vance, who opposes military aid for Ukraine, and warned Europe will have to rely less on the US to defend the continent.

Ukraine's defense minister has said the war-hit nation will find a way to battle Russia's invading forces even if Mr. Trump wins a second term and imperils vital US support. "At this stage, we will focus on the battlefield," Rustem Umerov said. "Whatever the outcome" of the US elections, "we will find solutions."

Kyiv has been pleading with its allies for more weapons and ammunition to help shore up its frontline defenses after suffering long delays and shortages that allowed Russian forces to advance in the east.



The war goes on. Source: AP

"We understand that today every shot, missile, and ammunition is vital on the battlefield," Yuriy Dzhyhyr, the deputy defense minister, said in a statement. "Instead of disposing of the ammunition, we are disposing of the enemy," he added.

It comes as the Kremlin denied that its major ground offensive in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region had failed, as it sealed off more than a dozen Russian border villages in order to protect its civilians from ongoing Ukrainian shelling.

Russia's Defense Ministry claimed its forces had taken control of the village of Urozhaine in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, which, if confirmed, would be

the latest in a series of gains since capturing the strategic town of Avdiivka in February. Urozhaine was one of the few areas that Ukraine won back during its 2023 offensive. But Russia has been slowly taking territory in eastern Ukraine since that failed Ukrainian counteroffensive, as Kyiv's troops struggle with shortages of munitions and manpower.

Russia downed 22 Ukrainian drones overnight in the west of the country and over Crimea, Moscow's Ministry of Defense said. Fifteen drones were shot down over the Russian border region of Bryansk, six over Crimea, and one over Lipetsk. Separately, the governor of Kursk

said three more Ukrainian drones had been downed there.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian drone attacks deep within Russia have forced Moscow to beef up its defenses around Vladimir Putin's heavily-guarded palace north of Moscow.

UKRAINE AND RUSSIA EXCHANGE 190 PRISONERS OF WAR

Russia and Ukraine released 190 captured soldiers in the latest prisoner swap between the two sides on Wednesday.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky and Russia's defense ministry each said 95 of their soldiers had been freed in an exchange mediated by the United Arab Emirates.

"We continue to bring our people home. Another 95 defenders have been released from Russian captivity," Zelensky said on X, adding that the prisoners were from the army, national guard and border guards.

Vladimir Putin said in June that 1,348 Russian soldiers were being held in Ukrainian captivity, and that Russia had detained 6,465 Ukrainian POWs.

MEDVEDEV: UKRAINE JOINING NATO MEANS WAR

Former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev has warned the accession of Ukraine to NATO would be a declaration of war against Moscow, and said the alliance is perilously close to "shattering the planet into pieces."

Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council and a leading voice among the Kremlin's hawks, told Rus-

sian media that Ukraine's membership would go beyond a direct threat to Moscow's security.

"This, in essence, would be a declaration of war - albeit with a delay," he said in remarks published on Wednesday.

NATO leaders pledged at their summit last week to support Ukraine on an "irreversible path to full Euro-Atlantic integration, including NATO membership," but left open when that membership could happen.


CHINA AND RUSSIA BEGIN LIVE-FIRE NAVAL DRILLS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

China and Russia have kicked off live-fire naval exercises in the South China Sea as the two countries continue to strengthen military ties in the face of US sanctions.

The opening ceremony of the joint naval drills 'Maritime Cooperation - 2024' took place in the Chinese port of Zhanjiang, which will be followed by three days of exercises, the Russian defense ministry said.





During the sea maneuvers, crews of ships of the Russian Pacific Fleet and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy are expected to conduct joint air defense exercises, anti-submarine drills and artillery firing.


Wang Guangzheng of the PLA Navy's Southern Theater said: "The China-Russia joint patrol has promoted the deepening and practical cooperation between the two in multiple directions and fields... and effectively enhanced the ability to the two sides to jointly respond to maritime security threats."



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EU Delegation to Georgia: 11 x More EU Funding Allocated to Ministries Than Civil Society Organizations 2019-2024

BY TEAM GT

The EU Delegation to Georgia says 11 times more EU funding was allocated to Georgian ministries than civil society organizations between 2019 and 2024.

“Addressing the misinterpretation of EU support to Georgia, 11 times more EU funding was allocated to Ministries than Civil Society Organizations between 2019 and 2024,” the statement from the EU delegation reads.

“More than 2/3 of the €46.1 million of EU funds allocated to CSOs goes to organizations providing direct services and support to people in Georgia.”

They note that, based on recent analysis of European Commission data, ministries and other state institutions in Georgia were allocated €517 million in EU funding, while CSOs were allocated €46.1 million between 2019 and 2024.

“€46.1 million in EU funds covered 47 projects implemented by more than 170 CSOs operating all over Georgia across various sectors:

Human rights & gender equality: €8.6 million;



Democratic participation & media: €8.0 million;
Business development & vocational training: €7.9 million;
Security sector reform: €4.9 million;
Culture & creative industries: €4.6 million;

Conflict confidence building: €4.0 million;
Decentralisation & rural development: €3.9 million;
Environment & climate: €2.0 million;
Public administration reform: €1.2 million;

Legal & judicial development: €1.0 million;
“More than two-thirds of the €46.1 million in EU funds allocated to CSOs between 2019 and 2024 provide direct services and aid to people in Georgia in areas like assisting vulnerable groups,

vocational training, entrepreneurship, social services, culture and environmentally friendly measures.

“The remaining one-third of the funds are used by organizations to monitor, promote, and collaborate with the government on human rights, EU standards adoption, gender equality, and decentralization.

“Among the top 10 beneficiaries of EU assistance in Georgia (2019-2024) are the following governmental institutions:

€ 111.55 million – Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure / local authorities;
€ 101.40 million – Ministry of Finance;
€ 62.75 million – Ministry of Defense;
€ 57 million – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture & agencies;
€ 30.5 million – Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development;
€ 25.07 million – Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labor and Social Affairs & agencies;
€ 19 million – State Commission for Migration Issues;
€ 12.85 million – Ministry of Education, Science and Youth;
€ 10.5 million – Ministry of Internal Affairs;
€ 7.4 million – Administration of Government,” reads the information.



Parliament Supports Giorgi Gabitashvili's Candidacy for the Post of Prosecutor General

BY MARIAM MTIVLISHVILI

Parliament supported Giorgi Gabitashvili's candidacy for the post of Prosecutor General for a period of 6 years. He was elected by the Parliament with 80 votes.

Giorgi Gabitashvili has been working

as the Deputy Prosecutor General for the last 11 years.

“I have served as the Deputy Prosecutor General for 11 years. I fully understand the significance of this post, the intricacies and the immense responsibility it comes with towards the state, citizens, and the staff of the Prosecutor's Office,” said Giorgi Gabitashvili.

As he also noted the prosecutor's office is completely free from political influence.

121 NGOs Apply to Constitutional Court against Law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence”



BY TEAM GT

One hundred and twenty-one non-governmental and media organizations have applied to the Constitutional Court to demand recognition of the “Russian law” as unconstitutional. In addition, the co-authors of the lawsuit ask the Constitutional Court to suspend the validity of the disputed norms until the case is considered.

The authors of the lawsuit claim that the disputed law restricts the right of citizens to unite with a common goal to do good for the country and help people. They claim that by adopting the “Russian law,” the authorities are creating a hostile environment, where the enjoyment of various rights, including the

freedom of association and expression, is declared a risk and a threat.

“We welcome the decision of the president and members of the parliament to appeal to the Constitutional Court. Article 78 of the Constitution, with which these subjects request to recognize the controversial norm as unconstitutional, is the cornerstone of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration. We hope that the Constitutional Court will consider the petition to suspend the validity of the controversial norm as soon as possible and will grant it,” the co-authors of the lawsuit say.

The applying non-governmental and media organizations say that, in the near future, they will also send a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

“We repeat once again that we will not live by the rules of the ‘Russian law,’ and we will use all national and international

mechanisms to stop its operation, hinder it until it is completely abolished,” the authors of the lawsuit say.

The Russian law has been in effect in Georgia since June 3. It will give grant-receiving organizations the status of “carriers of the interests of a foreign power”, and, among others, the US, EU and international bodies which give grants to Georgia, the status of “foreign power”.

The adoption of the law was preceded by large-scale protests, violence against peaceful demonstrators, activists and opposition MPs and attempts to intimidate them. After the implementation of the law, the process of Georgia's integration into the European Union was stopped. In addition, both the European Union and the US, a strategic partner, imposed sanctions on the Georgian authorities. An expansion of the sanctions package has been announced.

Jeffrey H. Fischer on Where Donald Trump Stands after the Attempted Assassination



Jeffrey H. Fischer

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

Radio Free Europe/RI's Georgian Service this week sat down with retired Colonel and military fiction author Jeffrey H. Fischer, a man of extensive military expertise, with 30 years in the Air Force under his belt - seven combat tours, three diplomatic tours and two pentagon tours. Who better placed to discuss the weekend's assassination attempt on Donald Trump?

AS UNSAVORY AN EXPERIENCE IT MIGHT BE, LET'S LOOK AT IT FROM THE SHOOTER'S VIEWPOINT. HOW GOOD A CHANCE DID HE HAVE? HOW WELL THOUGHT OUT WAS HIS PLAN?

To look at this through the shooter's eyes, I would suggest we look at what we know of the young 20-year-old: He didn't have a lot of friends, he was pretty much a loner; he was abused in school and was bullied; he lived at home with his parents. He basically stole his dad's gun and shot. It's certainly not the case of a world-class sniper from the movies, planting there, evaluating the area for days and trying to get as much information as possible. The fact that there was a massive support base for Trump there perhaps made it easier for him, and that could have added to the lax attitude that enabled this young kid to get so close. So let's not discount the huge failure of law enforcement at large, not just the U.S. Secret Service, but law enforcement at large, to actually protect the area around the stage where Trump was speaking.

IT'S KIND OF A QUO VADIS MOMENT FOR AMERICA, ISN'T IT? WHAT DOES IT TELL US ABOUT WHAT BROUGHT US HERE AND WHAT'S TO COME?

As people gravitate away from some of those conspiracy theories and start to understand the magnitude and realize what has happened, it is a little bit of a "hey, what are we doing?" kind of moment, yes. President Biden was on TV last night and basically said, "we need to tone down the political rhetoric. We are all Americans, whether you're on the left of the spectrum or the right, we're neighbors, we're friends, we're family; we should be solving our political differences in the ballot box and not with bullets." What will be interesting is where the Republicans and Donald Trump stand on this, because this week in Wisconsin, the Republicans are holding their national convention, where

they will formally put forward their nominee. We all know it's going to be Donald Trump, and this is a chance where Donald Trump and many Republicans can address the nation and address all of the people on both sides of the spectrum. I, like many people, am very interested to hear what Donald Trump will say. He's already said that he ripped up his original speech, and started a completely new one, based on the shooting. So it will be interesting if he agrees in principle to tone down the rhetoric and keep this a little bit more of a traditional political campaign.

DO YOU EXPECT THE FORMER PRESIDENT AND HIS PEOPLE, INCLUDING HIS PICK FOR VICE PRESIDENT, TO ACTUALLY CHOOSE THAT PATH? OR DO YOU EXPECT THEM TO CAPITALIZE ON THE SHOOTING?

I would say I'm cautiously optimistic. It's a fool's errand to predict what Donald Trump will do, if you told me before he was shot in an assassination attempt that Donald Trump, after being shot, was going to stand up out of the huddle of Secret Service men, raise his fist and try and keep talking to people, most people would have said you were crazy. And yet that's what he did.

TRUMP, BLOODED YET DEFIANT, FIST IN THE AIR. HOW MUCH POLITICAL GOLD DID THAT ALREADY ICONIC PHOTO WIN HIM IN A MATTER OF SECONDS?

I live in Austria with my wife, and as you probably know, Europeans are not very fond of Donald Trump, to put it mildly, to a certain extent due the European media outlets painting him as some sort of a monster. But a lot of my more liberal-leaning European friends, when they saw that iconic image, as you rightly stated, were like: "Oh, my god, that looks so presidential, that looks so much like leadership." That means that no matter what Donald Trump's path is, there will be a lot of people who say, "that's my guy. That is the guy I want leading my nation."

When you look at that middle sector of America, the people who are the swing voters, that will go from the left to the right, depending on the panic. I think when they look at Joe Biden right now, they see some decent policies. President Biden is a likeable guy, right? There's a reason that his nickname is Uncle Joe. He's a likable guy. But what they believe he's lacking in is that leadership quality. You're the leader of the free world, whether you like it or not, the United States is a little bit of a hegemon right now. And there's a lot of nations

that look to the United States for leadership, and they're frustrated that Joe is not conveying that to the level or degree that they would like.

Now let's look at Trump - let's put that photo aside for a moment. There was a podcast recently, where two US congressmen laid out a story which basically ended with Donald Trump telling a Taliban commander: "I wanna leave Afghanistan, but if you harm a hair on a single American, I am gonna kill you." And he takes out a photo of that Taliban commander's home and hands it to him. The man got up and walked out of the room. And for 18 months, no U.S. service members in Afghanistan were killed. Trump is a little bit of a bully, and there's a lot of people that don't like him. I don't necessarily like him. I don't think Donald Trump and I will ever be friends. Even if he wanted to be friends, I just don't think he's the kind of guy that I want to be friends with. But this is just his modus operandi. This is who he is.

WHAT EFFECT WILL THIS AFFAIR HAVE ON THE POLLING STATIONS? MANY SAY ELECTION VICTORY IS ALL BUT ENSURED.

If the election was tomorrow, he'd win, no doubt. But, unfortunately, we have 24-hour media cycles. And I think Trump and his people can't keep this issue front and center for the next three to four months. That would be too long. As they move into October, November, it'll be interesting to see how they play it in the news, on TV, in campaign slogans.

THE KREMLIN WASTED NO TIME BLAMING THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION FOR "CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE" THAT PROVOKED THE ATTACK ON TRUMP. WHAT'S THE UNREAD BOTTOM LINE HERE?

The truth of the matter is that Russia wants you to think whatever narrative you think about Russia, that's great, because you're thinking about Russia. Russia doesn't really care all that much who wins the election in November. What they do care about,

what Vladimir Putin desperately cares about, is separating the American people from the American government. To sow fear, uncertainty, and doubt among the American population that their government can't function. Because the simple truth is that Russia cannot beat the United States in a conventional war. There's no way. The only way Russia can beat America is if America beats itself; if the United States topples itself because it's been undermined. This is the only way Russia has the ability to rise to power.

MANY IN UKRAINE ARE DREADING PRESIDENT TRUMP'S RETURN, ESPECIALLY AFTER HIS MUCH-TALKED-ABOUT PLAN TO "END THE WAR IN 24 HOURS." WHAT WOULD A TRUMP COMEBACK MEAN FOR UKRAINE?

Donald Trump doesn't have a plan for Ukraine. Or, rather, let me rephrase that: Donald Trump has not conveyed what his plan is. He stated what he thinks he can do, that he's going to bring peace within 24 hours, and he's going to cut a deal. No one knows what the deal is, but the facts on the ground are that the President of Ukraine is not willing to sacrifice anything that includes borders that existed pre-Crimea. And President Putin has said what he will do - "to the victor go the spoils." So, how Trump thinks he can cut a deal between that chasm of disagreement needs to be explained. And, hopefully, at the Republican convention, he will do that. I will go out on a limb and make a prediction: Donald Trump believes he can give away part of Ukraine. That's his plan. And if he loses the election to Joe Biden in November, the reason will be because of Ukraine, because there are many Republicans, many conservatives, myself included, that disagree with Trump's vision for Ukraine. Right now, Donald Trump does not have my vote, and he doesn't have my vote because of Ukraine, because of where he stands on Ukraine, because his lack of transparency on how he's going to cut that deal. But, to be fair, Joe Biden doesn't have my vote either.

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SOURCE: ADB

Asian Development Outlook July 2024

GDP GROWTH FORECAST

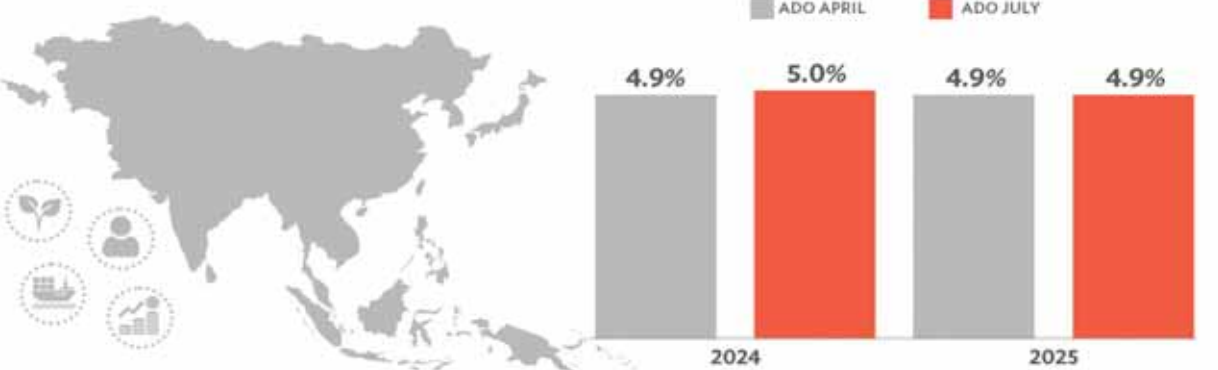


The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has slightly raised its economic growth forecast for developing Asia and the Pacific this year to 5.0% from a previous projection of 4.9%, as rising regional exports complement resilient domestic demand. The growth outlook for next year is maintained at 4.9%.

Inflation is forecast to slow to 2.9% this year amid easing global food prices and the lingering effects of higher interest rates, according to the latest edition of Asian Development Outlook (ADO), released today.

After a post-pandemic recovery that was driven mainly by domestic demand, exports are rebounding and helping propel the region's economic growth. Strong global demand for electronics, particularly semiconductors used for high-technology and artificial intelligence applications, is boosting exports from several Asian economies.

"Most of Asia and the Pacific is seeing faster economic growth compared with the second half of last year," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park. "The region's fundamentals remain strong,


www.adb.org/outlook

Source of image: Asian Development Bank Georgia

#ADO2024

but policy makers still need to pay attention to a number of risks that could affect the outlook, from uncertainty related to election outcomes in major economies to interest rate decisions and geopolitical tensions."

While inflation is moderating toward

pre-pandemic levels in the region as a whole, price pressures remain elevated in some economies. Food inflation is still high in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific, in part due to adverse weather and food export restrictions in some economies.

The growth forecast for the People's Republic of China (PRC), the region's largest economy, is maintained at 4.8% this year. A continued recovery in services consumption and stronger-than-expected exports and industrial activity are supporting the expansion, even as

the PRC's struggling property sector has yet to stabilize. The government introduced additional policy measures in May to support the property market.

The outlook for India, the region's fastest-growing economy, is also unchanged at 7.0% for fiscal year 2024. India's industrial sector is projected to grow robustly, driven by manufacturing and strong demand in construction. Agriculture is expected to rebound amid forecasts for an above-normal monsoon, while investment demand remains strong, led by public investment.

For Southeast Asia, the growth forecast is maintained at 4.6% this year amid solid improvements in both domestic and external demand. This year's outlook for the Caucasus and Central Asia is raised to 4.5% from a previous projection of 4.3%, driven in part by stronger-than-expected growth in Azerbaijan and the Kyrgyz Republic. In the Pacific, the outlook for 2024 is maintained at 3.3% growth, driven by tourism and infrastructure spending, along with revived mining activity in Papua New Guinea.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.

Export of Georgian Wine to US and Europe on the Rise

BY MARIAM MTIVLISHVILI

In the first six months of 2024, Georgia exported 54.5 million liters of wine worth \$156.7 million to 61 countries. Compared to the same period last year, the increase in volume is 26% and increase in revenue is 24%.

Notable increases in exports were seen being sent to Poland (19%, 3.1 million liters), the USA (53%, 654 thousand liters), Germany (34%, 674 thousand liters), Great Britain (28%, 182.5 thousand liters), Canada (110%, 121.3 thousand liters), and Turkey (47%, 239.2 thousand liters). Additionally, Georgia exported 23.4



million liters of alcoholic beverages to 45 countries, achieving a 55% increase compared to 2023. These exports have so far generated \$132.8 million in revenue.

324 New Hotels are Being Built in Georgia



BY MARIAM MTIVLISHVILI

According to this year's data from the National Tourism Administration, 324 new hotels are set to be built across Georgia between 2024 and 2028, including 22 international brands.

These hotels will provide a total of 18,778 rooms and 37,101 spaces. Some of these projects are already under construction and will be completed this year, while others will be developed in the coming years.

Chinese Airline AIR CHINA to Start Direct Flights to Georgia from September

BY MARIAM MTIVLISHVILI

Chinese airline AIR CHINA is expected to launch direct flights to Georgia from September.

The air company has been consulting with the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency on the launch of Tbilisi-Ürümqi direct flights, with the frequency of three times a week.

At present, China Southern Airlines operates regular passenger flights to-from Georgia, and in the past six months, has transported 19,991 passengers.

In 2023, the number of visits from China to Georgia amounted to 48,304, which makes a 554.5% increase year-on-year. Based on the data for the first two quarters of 2024, 32,853 visits were made from China. The rise compared to 2023 was 159.5%.



CAREC Program Calls for Nominations for the CAREC Gender Climate Awards 2024

BY MARIAM MTIVLISHVILI

Asian Development Bank Georgia stated that the CAREC Program is calling for nominations for the CAREC Gender Climate Awards 2024. The submission deadline is 15 August.

The Award aims to recognize individuals and organizations making significant contributions to gender equality in the context of climate change resilience, adaptation and mitigation within the CAREC region, including Georgia.

Awardees will receive the following benefits:

- Recognition in an award ceremony at the CAREC Women's Business Forum in Kazakhstan in November
- Exclusive membership to the CAREC

Women Empowerment Online Platform (WEOP) for networking and showcasing opportunities

- International media exposure
- Invitation to the CAREC Women's Business Forum and other CAREC high-profile events, regional workshops, and training, when appropriate.
- Engagement in leadership coaching and mentorship programs

ABOUT THE CAREC PROGRAM

The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program is a partnership of 11 countries and development partners working together to promote development through cooperation, leading to accelerated economic growth and poverty reduction. It is guided by the overarching vision of "Good Neighbors, Good Partners, and Good Prospects."

The program is a proactive facilitator

of practical, results-based regional projects, and policy initiatives critical to sustainable economic growth and shared prosperity in the region. Since its inception in 2001 and as of December 2023, CAREC has mobilized \$51.02 billion in investments that have helped establish multimodal transportation networks, increased energy trade and security, facilitated free movement of people and freight, and laid the groundwork for economic corridor development.

CAREC 2030 provides the new long-term strategic framework for the program leading to 2030. It is anchored on a broader mission to connect people, policies and projects for shared and sustainable development, serving as the premier economic and social cooperation platform for the region.

More info about the AWARDS at carecprogram.org.

Hotel Holiday Inn Telavi – International Standard Hospitality in the Heart of Georgia’s Wine Country

Continued from page 1

Holiday Inn Telavi has 85 different types of room, innovative public spaces, and an open lobby bar concept with the perfect modern, cozy environment for guests to relax or work in. On the first floor of the hotel is restaurant ‘Batontan,’ serving traditional Georgian cuisine, and on the fifth floor is our European restaurant and bar ‘Iberiko,’ with a special view of the Alazani Valley and the Caucasus Mountains. Guests can also enjoy the hotel’s indoor swimming pool with panoramic views, sauna, steam bath and modern gym. In addition, during the hot summer season, guests can make use of the hotel’s outdoor swimming pool, terrace and bar.

The hotel is designed for both the corporate segment and tourists. For the corporate segment, the hotel has a large conference hall for 100-120 guests and a small conference space for 35-40. For local vacationers, we have created an environment to suit families and friends as they make unforgettable memories in Kakheti.

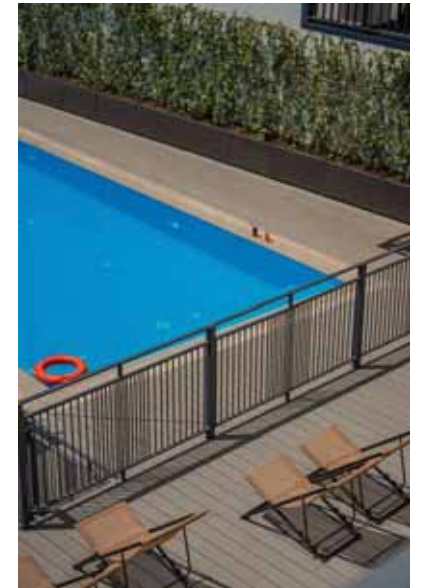
WHAT IS THE MAIN THING THAT SETS HOLIDAY INN TELAVI APART?

Holiday Inn Telavi is located in a historical, 19th-century building in the center of Telavi, the capital of the Kakheti region, which is known for its outstanding wine production culture.

We boast a modern interior that merges with local authenticity. The hotel’s international level service and excellent location are definitely among our main calling cards. Further, our service staff is trained according to international standards under the IHG brand, which is another important factor that makes our hotel stand out. Guest safety and security are top priority in the hotel, meeting international best practices, a fact which resonates particularly with our international guests.

WHAT IMPACT CAN HOLIDAY INN TELAVI HAVE ON EASTERN GEORGIAN TOURISM?

The hotel is involved in the IHG brand loyalty program, which has over 100 million customers globally. Our achievements and high positioning naturally help to attract more foreign tourists to the region. Indeed, our hotel was one of the first in the eastern Georgian market to operate under an international brand,



and we hope this will motivate local brands and businesses to seek to bring similar brands here in the future.

WHAT IS THE MAIN CHALLENGE IN THE TOURISM SECTOR IN KAKHETI?

The Kakheti region has a lot of potential. The tourist flow is increasing by the year, and we’re seeing it becoming an ever more attractive location for vacationers. Tourism development is one of the top priorities of our country, and our team is proud to contribute to this important process. It is vital for us

to participate in the development of the tourism and infrastructure of Georgia, and at the same time to create jobs of international standard. The hotel employs the local population and regularly trains them to those globally recognized standards. The motivational program ‘Made in Georgia,’ and those of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, have also played a big role in local development, and encouraged us to invest.

The main challenge in the Kakheti region is the amount of competition. The lack of an airport and a railway can

also be considered as obstacles to regional development, though we have already made progress in this regard and hope that in the near future we will be able to offer this comfort to our guests too.

TELL US ABOUT FUTURE PLANS FOR HOLIDAY INN TELAVI.

Holiday Inn Telavi is already ranked third among Holiday Inn hotels across Europe according to guest ratings, thanks to the selfless work of our team. This kind of evaluation motivates us to continue to grow and promote the development of tourism in the country. Guest

satisfaction is always a priority for us, and we try to take into account each recommendation and comment, being oriented to maintaining and further establishing our place in the international market and ability to adapt to vacationers of all segments.

Our development has come in stages. The first step was creating an outdoor area, which allowed our guests the opportunity to use an additional space in the summer. We’re not stopping there, though, and, over time, plan to offer even more interesting novelties to our valued guests.

MG Law on Consumer Arbitration Proceedings in the EU and Georgia

The popularity of consumer arbitration around the world is growing by the day. Consumer arbitration enables businesses and their consumers to submit disputes to an impartial third party, such as an arbitral institution. Interestingly, it is regulated differently in the European Union and in Georgia. Let’s discuss.

CONSUMER ARBITRATION IN EU

In the European Union, the procedure for conducting consumer arbitration is generally regulated by the Directive on Consumer ADR (Directive 2013/11/EU) and Regulation on Online Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (EU) No. 524/2013. The European Union has established the European ODR Platform, a specifically designed platform for consumers that assists them in resolving disputes with businesses. It suggests that parties negotiate amicably within 90 days after a consumer submits an online claim through the platform. In the event

of failure to reach an agreement, the parties will then have 30 days to choose an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) body. For example, such an ADR body might be the European Consumer Center Network, which unites national offices across the European Union, as well as in Iceland and Norway, and which is governed by the European Commission for cross-border consumer disputes.

The Directive on Consumer ADR has distinctive features. It applies only to complaints submitted by consumers against businesses, not vice versa. That is why the arbitration agreement that deprives the consumer’s right to bring an action before the courts and is concluded before the dispute arises should not be binding on the consumer. On the other hand, in most member states of the European Union, participation in ADR proceedings is voluntary for businesses.

As a rule, the overall term for dispute resolution under the Directive on Consumer ADR is approximately 90 days,

subject to extensions based on the complexity of the dispute. Such shortened deadlines help the parties to protect their rights in a timely manner.

CONSUMER ARBITRATION IN GEORGIA

In contrast to the European Union, there is no specific law in Georgia on consumer arbitration, and the Law of Georgia on Arbitration, which generally governs commercial arbitration, is also applicable to business-to-consumer disputes. In this respect, there are no specific provisions governing consumer arbitration. Business-to-consumer disputes are most often heard by local arbitration institutions in Georgia. Unlike the European Union’s model of consumer arbitration, Georgian legislation sets forth no obligations to refer to amicable settlement proceedings before commencing the arbitration process. Therefore, consumer arbitration may be directly commenced based on the parties’ arbitration agreement. However, there are certain

requirements that should be considered while drafting such an arbitration agreement. For instance, pursuant to the Law of Georgia on the Protection of Consumer Rights, the arbitration agreement that obliges consumers to refer to arbitration only is regarded as an unfair and void provision, provided such arbitration is not regulated by Georgian legislation.

The Law of Georgia on Arbitration requires the arbitration agreement to be made in writing and signed by both parties, provided one of the parties is a natural person, in this case a consumer. Since, in business-to-consumer disputes, consumers are considered weaker parties than business entities, such requirement of the Georgian legislation ensures consumers a full, equal opportunity to familiarize themselves with the arbitration agreement. This also reduces the risks related to the voiding of an arbitration agreement due to consumers’ lack of awareness regarding ADR mechanisms.

The Georgian legislation gives parties the possibility to execute arbitration

agreements before and after materializing a dispute, in contrast to the European legislation. Moreover, once a request for arbitration is made, there is no exemption for consumers or businesses from participation in arbitration proceedings.

PROSPECTS OF CONSUMER ARBITRATION IN GEORGIA

Considering the European legislation on consumer arbitration, there is a prospect to specific rules for the development of consumer-arbitration in Georgia. This will raise awareness regarding consumer arbitration and refine procedural mechanisms for arbitrating such disputes. Setting forth the pre-arbitration negotiation duties of the parties, as is the case in the European Union, might also help to resolve disputes amicably before even commencing arbitration proceedings. Since there is a backlog of cases in the Georgian courts, development of consumer arbitration may be the most cost and time effective resolution for the Georgian market.

Clouds in Cooperation

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

In a landscape, there are a number of things which can change. Lighting angle and intensity, as the planet rotates about its light source, the sun; seasonal coloring of vegetation; presence or absence of snow; and clouds, and how they affect both the sky's appearance and the directness or softness of that sunlight.

I'm processing more and more of my photography in black and white these last few years (though always from color originals). There are numerous ways to do this on a photo editing program such as Photoshop, and many of them also emulate what used to be done using film and accessories in the darkroom.

A selection of colored filters, for example, when placed over a color image

converted to black and white, will change the contrast of colors' tones relative to each other in grays. A yellow, orange or red filter will progressively darken skies from washed out light gray to dramatically darker. As the great American landscape photographer of the last century, Ansel Adams, wrote, in monochrome landscape images, we are not aiming for what was "actually there" (the world is colored, after all!), but what eye and memory imagine as the ideal. So, by all means, darken those skies!

Green or yellow filters will lighten foliage, if you are seeking contrast with a nice dark sky. And so on.

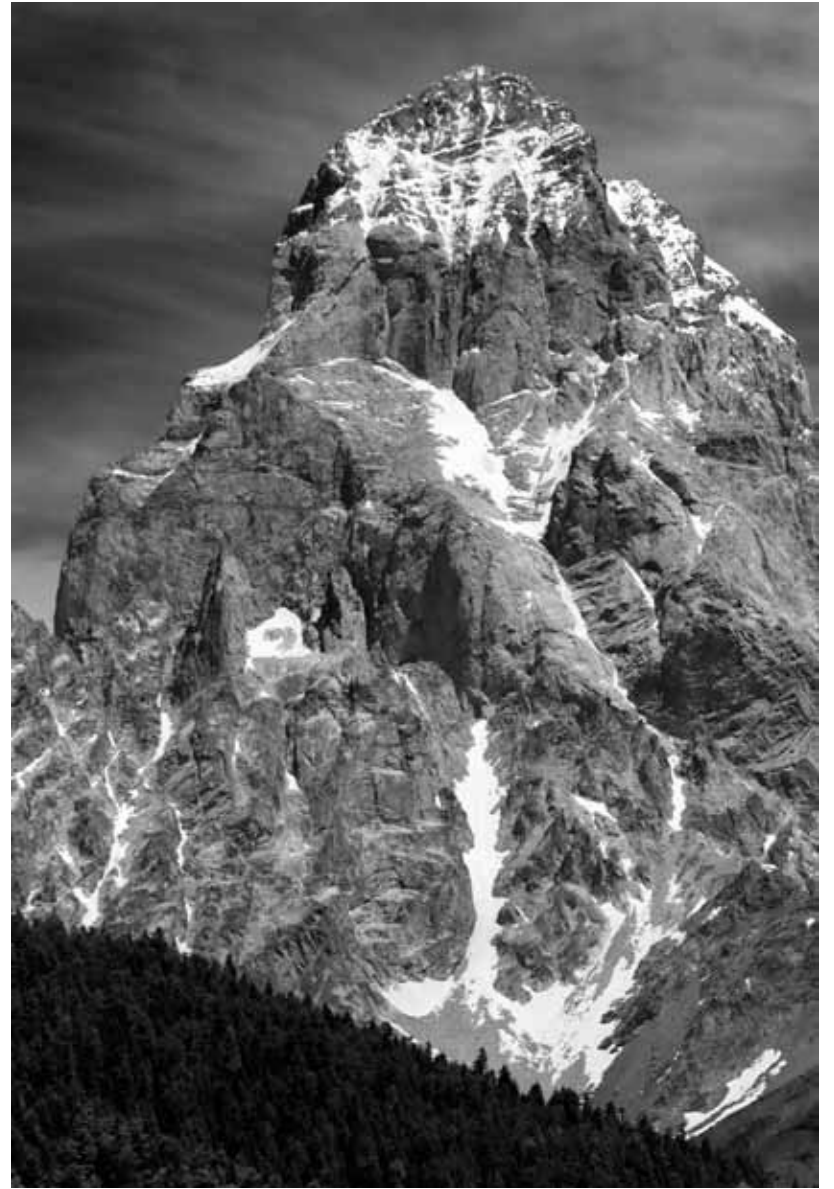
A few days ago I had to drive to Mestia for some supplies, and, as I always do, I took my camera along. The skies had been giving displays of high, wispy clouds all morning, and I hoped to find some drama in straight cloud shots and in skies along with mountains. I was

not disappointed.

We can't see Mt. Ushba directly from the house; the closest place to see its peak is about 10 minutes' walk from us. I didn't bother doing that, but just drove off towards Becho, from the approach to which you get the whole mountain's southern side in about the same time anyway; and the odds were good based on what clouds I could see. A cloudless blue sky is boring; a plain gray one too. But in between are endless variations.

You drive around a hairpin corner... and there, dominating the scene above Becho village, is The Mountain. I took a few shots, and some more from the other end of another longer hairpin, appreciating the thing's glorious solidity and the wispieness of the clouds.

By the time you reach Mestia, you have come nearly 90 degrees around Ushba, and it's hardly recognizable as the same peak as from Becho. I should say peaks,



though, because there are two of them, a meter apart in height, and from Mestia's angle you see them side by side.

I have a favorite spot, recently discovered, from where Lenjeri meets Mestia, to park and walk 5 minutes or so and see Ushba dramatically emerge from the mountains in the foreground. So I went there, and still the clouds (which I had been shooting in isolation on the way) contrasted perfectly with the rocky peaks' bulk. I could have gone on past Mestia to Mulakhi and the zig-zag pass between it and Ipari, but there were time constraints with the urgency of the shop-

ping; so I forbore. What I had was enough to remind me that landscapes are new every day, hour and minute, and to be ready. Such is my task, and my privilege.

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

Ertoba Festival – Breaking Stereotypes of Yoga

BY SHELBI R. ANKIEWICZ

The Ertoba Festival was a day-long event featuring various holistic practices, enticing newcomers and breaking the boundaries of what people think when they hear 'yoga'.

Held on July 13 by Lumos Yoga Studio, the day was full of events such as dances, therapeutic workshops, lectures, and regular practices, such as tai chi and yoga. The studio's owner, George Mirotadze, said they organized the festival as an outreach, so people could try various practices for the first time in a fun and collaborative setting. When people think of yoga, Mirotadze told GEORGIA TODAY, they tend to think of exercise and working out; however, it has various components.

"When they hear of a festival made by a yoga studio, they think there are only yoga people who are flexible and do yoga, but [at the festival] there were

many people who found out they could have fun together without alcohol or other things," Mirotadze noted.

The festival was held on Mtatsminda Hill to combine practices with the outdoors. The sessions were held by Lumos instructors, and guests who occasionally assist the studio with events. Mirotadze explained how many people saw it as a challenge to dance at the festival without any support from substances, but the structure of the sessions was very open, taking people successfully out of their comfort zones.

According to Mirotadze, the popularity of yoga and holistic practices continues to increase in Georgia, especially compared to when Lumos opened eight years ago, and very few studios existed. These practices are important, he says, because they can change destructive habits and help rid physical problems with the spine or muscles. Mirotadze noted that having a festival or workshop is the best way to entice people to these practices in Georgia, so it is not seen as 'work' or something that 'has to be done'.



Outdoor workshop at Ertoba. Source: Lumos Yoga Studio

"Georgians can do things with disciplines like yoga and tai chi if they have fun as well," Mirotadze told us. "It's easier for them, because, without it, their strength will not work as well, and they will say 'Okay I'm too lazy today to practice.'"

The word 'Ertoba' in Georgian has two meanings: unity, and to have fun. These are the two core components the festival focused on, seeing yoga emphasized not only as an element of physical health, but also of psychic and mental health. When people are suffering mentally, Mirotadze explained, coming together as a group can help solve problems quicker and more efficiently than if they try to withstand something alone.

"Group energies really help you understand more and to work together," said Mirotadze.

Sometimes people practice in a group

setting when they are first getting started and then decide to continue individually. Many yoga studios have different types of classes, from slow movement to upbeat or complex, that people can try to determine which 'line', also known as structure or way of doing, is best for them. Afterward, they individually pursue the practice that best suits them personally.

Nellie Agirba is a meditation teacher and music therapist who lives and works in Tbilisi. She started yoga and other holistic practices when she was a child, then returned to it years later after taking a gap to work. For the past 11 years, she said she has been actively practicing and discovering different methods.

At the festival, Agirba conducted a session on sound healing. She said it is an ancient healing practice where music is used as medicine to heal the body, soul, and mind. Agirba explained how people

have used this practice for thousands of years, and it is still popular in areas of the world today for connecting with 'the divine' or 'higher self'.

Her therapy sound practice was used to integrate guests into their surroundings and to feel connected with each other. Agirba said she started with kundalini dynamic mediation, which involves breathing exercises and poses, and Chinese tapping practices to make everyone feel relaxed. She said by doing this, people can feel the music through their bodies and connect, regardless of where they come from.

"It's a universal language; anyone can find it for themselves," said Agirba. "You don't need any education or experience to feel what the music wants you to feel. You can speak and communicate in this language without boundaries."

According to Agirba, these practices are important because they provide balance. If only physical health is being worked on, there will be a mental imbalance, and vice versa. She said yoga and holistic healing help align and improve every aspect of a person's health, so she encourages people, without much thinking or rationalization, to take it up.

The next festival will be held on September 28, 2024, the eight-year birthday of Lumos Yoga Studio. Mirotadze said the event will have a more celebratory mood because of the occasion, and the emphasis will be on song and dance. There will be singing circles, and all yoga practices will be accompanied by music. He said this is a chance for people to try something new, see what interests them, and help these practices gain more popularity.



Outdoor workshop at Ertoba. Source: Lumos Yoga Studio

Bolnisi Sioni: A Pillar in the World History of Art



Photo by the author



Photo by the author

BY IVAN NECHAEV

Bolnisi Sioni, the oldest standing church in Georgia, holds a paramount place in the annals of world art history. Constructed in the late 5th century, this architectural gem is not just a symbol of early Christian art in Georgia, but also a crucial link in the broader narrative of Byzantine and medieval art. Its architectural innovations, intricate sculptural details, and the unique synthesis of cultural influences make Bolnisi Sioni an indispensable study for art historians and cultural scholars alike.

ARCHITECTURAL INNOVATION AND INFLUENCE

Bolnisi Sioni, situated in the Kvemo Kartli region of eastern Georgia, stands as a monumental testament to the rich architectural and artistic heritage of the early Christian period in Georgia. Constructed between 478 and 493 AD, this



Photo by the author

basilica is the oldest extant church in the country, renowned for its historical and aesthetic significance.

The architectural layout of Bolnisi Sioni, a three-nave basilica, reflects the influence of the broader cultural and religious exchanges between Georgia and its neighboring regions. The basilica's design bears strong imprints of Sassanian architecture, evident in the use of foliate and geometric patterns that were prevalent in the Persianate world during this period.

SCULPTURAL MASTERY AND SYMBOLISM

The capitals and reliefs of Bolnisi Sioni are a testament to the high level of craftsmanship and the deep symbolic thinking of the artists. The intricate carvings include geometric and vegetal motifs, such as interlocking circles, vine scrolls, and acanthus leaves, which symbolize infinity, unity, and divine creation. These motifs are not merely decorative, but serve as theological symbols, enhancing the spiritual ambiance of the church.

The bull head reliefs on the capitals are particularly noteworthy. They exhibit a stylistic similarity to Sassanian art, with parallels found in sculptural works from Hajiabad in Fars, Iran. This indicates a significant cultural exchange and influence from the Persian artistic idiom, which melded with local Georgian traditions to create a unique ecclesiastical art form. Moreover, the incorporation of pre-Christian symbols like bull heads and various birds into the Christian context reflects a unique cultural synthesis. These elements indicate the assimilation of older religious motifs into the new Christian iconography, providing invaluable insights into the transitional period of religious art in Georgia.

INSCRIPTIONS AND LINGUISTIC HERITAGE

One of the most significant features of Bolnisi Sioni is its inscriptions, which are among the oldest examples of the Georgian alphabet. These inscriptions not only date the construction of the church, but also provide valuable insights into the historical context of its creation. The inscriptions mention the construction timeline during the reign of Shah Peroz and highlight the involvement of Bishop David, underscoring the Persian influence in the region at the time.

AESTHETIC LEGACY AND GLOBAL INFLUENCE

Bolnisi Sioni's aesthetic appeal lies in its synthesis of diverse artistic traditions. The facade and interior of the basilica are adorned with crosses of various shapes, including the distinctive "Bolnisi Cross" with extended endings within a circular frame. This symbol, unique to Bolnisi, exemplifies the local adaptation of universal Christian symbols and underscores the church's role in shaping the region's artistic vocabulary, which became a recurring motif in Georgian art.

The church's decorative scheme is not limited to its capitals; the entire structure is imbued with a sense of harmony and proportion, characteristic of early Christian basilicas. The use of green tuff stone for the construction adds to its aesthetic charm, creating a visual continuity that is both pleasing and spiritually uplifting.

Bolnisi Sioni's aesthetic influence extends beyond its immediate geographic region. The church's architectural and decorative elements have inspired subsequent generations of Georgian artists and architects. The geometric and vegetal patterns, as well as the symbolic use of crosses, have been emulated in various forms of Georgian art, from manuscript illuminations to modern public art and architecture.

In the context of global art history, Bolnisi Sioni stands as a pivotal example of how local traditions can intersect with broader artistic movements. Its design and decoration reflect a blend of Sassanian, Byzantine, and local Georgian influences, illustrating the dynamic exchange of artistic ideas across regions and cultures during the early medieval period.

RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION

Over the centuries, Bolnisi Sioni has undergone several phases of restoration, particularly following damage during invasions. Notable restorations in the 17th century by King Rostom and Queen Mariam, and later by King Giorgi XI, have helped preserve this architectural marvel. The last major conservation efforts were undertaken in the 1970s, ensuring that Bolnisi Sioni continues to stand as a beacon of Georgia's rich cultural and religious heritage.

Bolnisi Sioni is not just a church; it is a cultural and artistic treasure that encapsulates the early Christian era's archi-



Photo by the author

tectural and artistic ingenuity in Georgia. Its blend of Sassanian, Persian, and local Georgian elements creates a unique aesthetic that is both historically significant and visually captivating. As the oldest surviving church in Georgia, Bolnisi

Sioni offers invaluable insights into the early development of Georgian ecclesiastical architecture, and stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of cultural synthesis and artistic excellence in the region.



Photo by the author



Photo by the author



Photo by the author

Giorgi Gigashvili: Georgia's Rising Star Nominated for AFAS Edisons Klassiek

BY IVAN NECHAEV

In a notable achievement for Georgian music, pianist and composer Giorgi Gigashvili has been nominated for the AFAS Edisons Klassiek in the 'Nieuwkomer' category. This prestigious recognition, with the awards ceremony set for October 7, 2024, at the AFAS Theater in Leusden (Netherlands), underscores both Gigashvili's exceptional talent and the burgeoning global influence of Georgian musicians.

The AFAS Edisons Klassiek, established in 1960, are among Europe's most respected accolades in the classical music industry. As one of the world's oldest music awards, the Edisons were modeled after the American Grammys, which began in 1959. Named after Thomas Alva Edison, the inventor of the phonograph, these awards honor exceptional musical achievements. The 'Nieuwkomer' category is particularly significant, spotlighting emerging artists whose innovative contributions herald a promising future. Gigashvili's nomination places him among an elite group of musicians poised to make a lasting impact on the international stage.

A PHENOMENON UNDER 25

At just 24 years old, Giorgi Gigashvili has already captured the attention of the European music scene, and has quickly become one of the most effective cultural ambassadors of Georgia, promoting the country's rich musical heritage through his innovative compositions and performances. His style is characterized by its intricate interplay between traditional Georgian motifs and modern musical techniques. His performances are marked by a combination of technical precision and emotional expressiveness, making his interpretations both compelling and thought-provoking.



Photo from the website of Giorgi Gigashvili

MEETING MY SHADOW

Released on April 28, 2023, Gigashvili's album 'Meeting My Shadow' is a profound exploration of identity and introspection, showcasing his technical prowess and interpretive depth. The album features an impressive repertoire of classical compositions by luminary composers such as Beethoven, Scarlatti, Scriabin, Messiaen, and Brahms.

Gigashvili's interpretation of Beethoven's compositions reveals his command over classical technique, bringing out the intricate details and dynamic contrasts inherent in Beethoven's work. His rendition is precise yet emotive, capturing

the revolutionary spirit of the composer. Scarlatti's sonatas, meanwhile, are delivered with a crisp articulation and a rhythmic vitality that highlights Gigashvili's dexterity. His ability to balance the technical demands of Scarlatti's music with a playful expressiveness demonstrates his nuanced understanding of Baroque stylistic elements.

Scriabin's pieces, known for their mystical and sometimes tumultuous character, are performed with an intensity that underscores Gigashvili's profound emotional engagement with the music. His approach to Scriabin's compositions is both bold and introspective, navigat-

ing the complex harmonic structures with a clear interpretive vision. Messiaen's composition, with its intricate rhythmic patterns and rich tonal palette, is rendered with a sensitivity to the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of the music. Gigashvili's performance reflects a deep intellectual engagement with Messiaen's ideas, bringing out the contemplative and transcendent qualities of the pieces.

Brahms' works are played with a warmth and lyrical beauty that highlight Gigashvili's romantic sensibilities. His interpretation is marked by a flowing, singing tone and a subtle dynamic con-

trol, bringing out the rich harmonic textures and expressive depth of Brahms' music.

CULTURAL IMPACT AND GLOBAL RECOGNITION

Gigashvili's nomination for the AFAS Edisons Klassiek is a significant cultural achievement for Georgia, highlighting the country's rich musical heritage and its contemporary relevance. It positions Georgian music on the global stage, drawing attention to the country's unique contributions to the arts.

This recognition also serves as an inspiration for other Georgian artists, encouraging them to pursue their creative endeavors with the knowledge that their work can achieve international acclaim. Gigashvili's success is a testament to the vibrant cultural landscape of Georgia and its potential to influence the global arts scene.

On October 31, Gigashvili is set to make his debut at Carnegie Hall, marking another milestone in his rapidly ascending career. This performance at one of the world's most prestigious concert venues is a testament to his growing international reputation and the broad appeal of his music.

A VOICE FOR THE FUTURE

Beyond his musical achievements, Gigashvili has also become a vocal advocate for Georgia's future in Europe. In a recent interview, he expressed deep concern over the proposed foreign agents law, emphasizing that his ability to focus on his music is hindered by worries about the country's political direction. He stressed that the assurance of a peaceful and European-oriented future for Georgia is essential for him to continue his artistic endeavors. His stance highlights the interconnectedness of cultural and political spheres, and the role of artists as advocates for societal progress.

Titsian Tabidze - His Fate Would Have It



Titsian Tabidze with his wife and daughter

BLOG BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Most readers probably know of the English translations of the great Galaktion Tabidze's amazing poetry, but will likely have never seen a subtly impressive verse by Titsian Tabidze, another outstanding Georgian poet of almost Byron caliber. Said Titsian to his 16-year-old daughter, a brief while after the suicide of Paolo Iashvili, a Georgian poet and one of the leaders of the Georgian symbolist movement, who died in protest against the soviet repressions: "You will never be ashamed to mention my name, even if I am no longer around."

Recent history has it that the then communist party's high-ranking functionary Lavrenti Beria summoned the popular wordsmith to ask him to accuse Paolo of betraying the motherland as a foreign agent. Titsian refused to succumb to the

fiendish request:

Beria: [But] there is so much left for you to do, a lot of poetry to create. Your entire life is ahead of you. There is no way to help Paolo; he is already dead, so why can't you sign these few given words about him and get on with taking care of your own life?

Titsian: If I sign this, then nothing will make sense for me any longer, neither my poetry, nor my life.

That was the day when the Tabidze family's months-long torment in anticipation of the poet's arrest began. And eventually, right in the middle of one of their many sleepless nights, in October of the ill-remembered 1937, Titsian Tabidze was apprehended. The family held a years-long bitter belief that he would one day return home; almost 20 years waiting! All of them, the members of the bereft family of the innocent victim of those vicious times, wanted to believe that the genius would come back. But in vain. Twenty years on, the family was notified that Titsian Tabidze had

been executed in December 1937, named a traitor and spy working in favor of the motherland's enemies.

The proud Tabidze family is still around, having grown and multiplied, but having done so without that husband, father and beloved grandpa, who disappeared for no real reason, not to return to them ever after. Before his arrest, Titsian said to his wife: "Please don't feel hurt if my friends disappear on you, and never judge them if I am arrested. They will definitely be ready to help you out when necessary, but they will be scared to do so. There are no heroes. They might be afraid of their own arrest and torture in jail."

One of the family members of unforgettable Titsian Tabidze would remember that they came at three in the morning to take him. "That's exactly the time when the clock stopped and never started again, although it is still sitting among all our family paraphernalia, marking the ever-present painful and gloomy reminiscence of that devastating moment in our lives."

Indeed, the great poet's mother's hair went grey overnight. Life changed forever for the worse! Happiness as such might be buried forever, but hope dies last, as the saying goes. Indeed, all of them wanted to believe that the head of their family would not have died so simply; that something unknown would have kept him safe. But alas! When the news of his tragic demise arrived, they wanted to cling tightly to that ephemeral hope that God would help. But the power that disposed instead of Divinity always laughs at what Man supposes.

Time passes and we all have a proclivity to forget stories of this kind, but they did actually happen. The Georgian poetic thought and our people, the carrier of

that precious thought, lost Titsian Tabidze when he was only forty-two. The priceless and irreplaceable treasury of wisdom and verse left together with him, but he

is still here with us in what remains of the verses he wrote, striking those humanely elevated ideals into our hearts and minds.



Galaktion Tabidze and Titsian Tabidze

The Absolute Vision of Temo Machavariani: A Retrospective at the National Gallery



Photo by the author

BY IVAN NECHAEV

This year, as Temo Machavariani would have celebrated his 80th birthday, the Dimitri Shevardnadze National Gallery opens its doors to a retrospective exhibition honoring his profound legacy. This exhibition, featuring approximately 60 works, marks the first time his extensive oeuvre is being showcased in this prestigious venue, offering an intimate glimpse into the life and artistry of one of Georgia's most beloved painters.

AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY: FROM ACADEMIC RIGOR TO FREE EXPRESSION

Machavariani's academic journey began at the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts, where he initially enrolled in the Faculty of Art History. This early exposure to the theoretical foundations of art provided him with a robust intellectual framework. However, his transfer to the Faculty of Theater Painting under Parna Lapiashvili marked a significant shift. Here, Machavariani honed his technical skills and developed a keen understanding of theatrical composition, which would later influence the dramatic yet intimate quality of his landscapes and portraits.

Critic Leo Rcheulishvili aptly described

Machavariani's talent as possessing an "absolute vision." This vision is evident in his ability to capture the essence of his subjects with a naturalistic yet deeply expressive style. Machavariani's post-graduate studies with Ucha Japaridze further refined his approach, blending rigorous academic techniques with a burgeoning sense of artistic freedom.

CAPTURING THE SOUL: MACHAVARIANI'S AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY

Machavariani's aesthetic is deeply rooted in the landscapes and intimate portraits of his native old town and family members. His works are characterized by a profound sense of place and a deep emotional resonance. This is particularly evident in his portrayal of Tbilisi's historic districts, where he captures the interplay of light and shadow with a meticulous yet fluid brushwork that brings the city's character to life.

One of the defining aspects of Machavariani's work is his commitment to naturalness and sincerity. In his own words, "In order to create a good painting, sincerity is the first thing." This philosophy is not just a guiding principle, but a palpable quality in his art. His landscapes, for instance, are not mere depictions of physical spaces, but are imbued with a sense of time and memory, reflecting the artist's deep connection to his surroundings.

Machavariani's portraits are equally

compelling. Whether capturing the serene expression of a family member or the vibrant spirit of a local resident, his portraits transcend mere likeness to convey the inner life of his subjects. His use of color is particularly noteworthy, with a palette that ranges from the muted tones of his early works to the more vibrant hues of his later period, reflecting an evolving yet consistent aesthetic vision.

LEGACY AND INFLUENCE: THE TEACHER AND THE ARTIST

Machavariani's influence extends beyond his own creations to his role as an educator. As a teacher, he imparted his philosophy of sincerity and naturalness to a new generation of artists. His modest nature and deep understanding of art allowed him to connect with his students.

As we walk through the exhibition, we are reminded of the timeless quality of Machavariani's vision. His works, whether capturing the bustling streets of Tbilisi or the quietude of a family portrait, resonate with a sincerity that speaks to the heart. This retrospective is a fitting tribute to an artist whose legacy continues to inspire and whose vision remains as relevant today as it was during his lifetime.

The Temo Machavariani retrospective will be open to the public until September 1, 2024, offering a rare opportunity to experience the enduring beauty and emotional depth of his art.



Photo by the author



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Reg. # 06/4-309



I am Georgian and therefore I am European

Zurab Zhvania, Council of Europe, 1999

