

# The Georgian Times

# Times

**NO 1**

NEWSPAPER IN GEORGIA

THE GEORGIAN TIMES



MEDIA HOLDING

Distributed free

No 4 (1578)

Friday, June 30, 2017

International Edition - Published by "The Georgian TIMES"

Media Holding Since 1993

www.geotimes.ge



## Vice President Mike Pence to Visit Georgia



On p. 2

Vice President Mike Pence will travel to Georgia in late July, the White House reported on June 29.

## Georgia, a model of reform, is struggling to stay clean

*A tree-loving oligarch is still pulling strings*

GEORGIA has been known for excess and eccentricity since ancient times, when it was called Colchis, the home of Medea and the Golden Fleece in Greek mythology. But even by Georgian standards, the latest hobby of Bidzina Ivanishvili, the country's richest and most powerful man, is extravagant.



On p. 8

President Announces Tentative Date for Municipal Polls

On p. 2

EU: Dropping Charges over Khurcha Murder 'Worrying'

On p. 2

New Constitutional Law to Define Adjara's Powers

On p. 2

Georgia in U.S. Human Trafficking Report

On p. 8

Government Hires Rasky Partners for U.S. Lobbying

On p. 8

## 'The Exhibition is wide-ranging and unique in the Caucasus region'



On June 8 the D. Shevardnadze National Gallery of the Georgian National Museum opened "Constellations", an exhibition of artworks by contemporary Chinese artists.

This wide-ranging exhibition brings together Chinese artists who are influencing the current political, social and cultural reality of China. Their artworks suggest distinctive problem-solving means.

Ai Weiwei, Xu Shao Yang, Lee Shurui, Liu Wei, Lu Pingian, Lu Shanchuai, Ma Qiusha, Van Guangli, Vang Sishuni, Vang Yuanji, Shi Molini, Qiu Qu, Shiu Zen, Jang Shing, Zang Ding, Zang Zenui, Zao Yao and Zao Zao are represented by the 40 or so avant-garde artworks exhibited in the National Museum.

The exhibition is presented in co-operation with

John Dodelande, a French collector who has been the citizen of Georgia for 7 years. The event partner is the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia and the media partner is BIO International and its founder Olga Babluani. It is curated by Ami Barack and will be open until September 11.



On p. 4

John Dodelande



## PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES TENTATIVE DATE FOR MUNICIPAL POLLS

President Giorgi Margvelashvili announced today that municipal elections will be held at the end of the third week of October, 2017.



"It is important for political parties to have a predictable electoral environment and today, four months earlier, upon joint decision with the Government, we are informing them of the future electoral calendar," Margvelashvili noted in his televised announcement.

The President added that an official decree specifying the exact election date would be issued in late August, 60 days before the election day, to avoid "budgetary and legal" complications.

The presidential decree on setting the election date will mark the formal launch of the pre-election period, which means that a whole set of legal obligations envisaged by the election code will go into effect, among them restrictions on use of administrative resources, and doubling salaries for election administration staff.

Early announcement of the election date for parliamentary polls led to uncertainty in 2016. Although the election date was first announced by President Giorgi Margvelashvili in early April, the date for the official start of the election campaign had remained unclear until early May, when President Margvelashvili and Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili agreed to set June 8 as the date for launching the election campaign.

Civil.ge

## VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE TO VISIT GEORGIA

Vice President Mike Pence will travel to Georgia in late July, the White House reported on June 29.

In Tbilisi, the Vice President will meet with President Giorgi Margvelashvili and Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, among others, and visit U.S. and Georgian troops participating in the Noble Partner exercise.

As part of his diplomatic tour in Europe, Pence will also visit Estonia and Montenegro.

Commenting the visit on June 30, Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili said the Vice President would travel to Georgia on July 31.

"This of course is a clear sign of the support of the United States to Georgia," the Prime Minister stated, adding that he is "glad" that the Government has managed to establish contacts with new U.S. administration "from its very first days."

"We are happy that the Vice President has chosen Georgia, along with Estonia and Montenegro, as [one of] the most important partners of the United States," PM Kvirikashvili noted.

Civil.ge

## EU: DROPPING CHARGES OVER KHURCHA MURDER 'WORRYING'

The decision "by the de facto Abkhaz authorities" to drop charges against Rashid Kanji-Ogli, Abkhaz serviceman, who was sentenced in absentia over the murder of Giga Otkhozoria, "is worrying, and prevents justice taking its rightful course," the European Union said in its June 28 statement at the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference.

"Impunity of serious crimes negatively impacts perceptions of security on the ground," the EU also said, adding that work on the case and other issues related to security on the ground "must continue."

In the statement, which was delivered on behalf of the EU member states and ten non-EU countries (Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia) at one of the conference sessions, the European Union stressed that the Geneva International Discussions "continue to be a crucial forum to address and resolve the challenges stemming from the conflict in Georgia."

The European Union also reiterated "its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders" and "underlined its deep concern about the continuing Russian military and security-related presence, infrastructure reinforcements, ongoing 'borderization' and closure of the crossing points in and along the Georgian breakaway regions."

In this context, the EU went on, "we continue to believe that a clear non-use of force commitment by Russia is necessary." "The EU calls on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures of 8 September 2008 and to grant EUMM access to the breakaway regions."

The Annual Security Review Conference, held on June 27-29 in Vienna, gathered high-level experts and diplomats to address a broad range of topics related to the politico-military security in the OSCE.

Civil.ge

## NEW CONSTITUTIONAL LAW TO DEFINE ADJARA'S POWERS

Along with the amendments to the constitution of Georgia, the Parliament of Georgia adopted on June 23 with 114 votes the draft Constitutional Law on the Autonomous Republic of Adjara with its second hearing.

The new constitutional law will not fundamentally change Adjara's status and competences, but new norms will be introduced, granting more freedom to the region to carry out its powers.

Unlike the current law, the new constitutional document does not strictly define the spheres, in which the region may set up its ministries. The draft law notes that Adjara will independently define the limits of its competencies in a number of spheres, such as economy, agriculture, tourism, healthcare, social protection, education, culture, sport, youth policy and environmental protection on condition that it will not interfere in the spheres of exclusive competences of the central government or local self-governments.

Moreover, according to the new constitutional law, central government will be able to delegate its powers to Adjara along with transferring relevant material and financial resources to the region.

Unlike similar law adopted in 2004, which provides a detailed description, the new law contains only five articles and addresses the issues of Adjara's institutional arrangement.

The new constitutional law echoes current provisions, according to which the number of members of Adjara's legislative body should not exceed 21 lawmakers, while the region's government shall be accountable to the President of Georgia, the Government of Georgia and the Supreme Council.

According to the new constitutional law, the President of Georgia maintains important functions in the process of government formation. In particular, the President will have the right, through the consent of the Georgian Parliament and in the cases defined by the constitutional law, to dismiss the Supreme Council of Adjara. Moreover, the President of Georgia, following the consultations with the political subjects represented in the region's legislative assembly, will submit the candidates for government's chairmanship and ministers to the Supreme Council for approval (presently, Adjara's government consists of the head of government and four ministers).

The third and the final hearing on the constitutional law will be held in autumn, 2017.

Adoption of the new constitutional law will entail bringing Adjara's constitution in line with the document. Within six months after adoption of the constitutional law, Adjara's Supreme Council will have to submit amendments to Adjara's constitution to the Parliament of Georgia for approval.

The current constitution of Adjara was adopted in 2008. It is based on Georgia's constitutional law on the status of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, which was approved in 2004 after the end of political crisis in the region caused by then leader Aslan Abashidze's reluctance to accept the authority of the central government.

The ongoing constitutional reform process does not entail changing the powers and the constitution of Georgia's another autonomous entity - the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. All members of the Supreme Councils of Adjara and Abkhazia (in-exile), however, will join the 300-member college of electors, who will elect the President of Georgia.

Civil.ge

## RUSSIAN OFFICIAL: NEW LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY IN TSKHINVALI 'DECIDED MATTER'

At a meeting with Tskhinvali leader Anatoly Bibilov on June 26, Russian Deputy Interior Minister Igor Zubov said that establishment of the "Information-Coordination Center of Internal Affairs Agencies" in Tskhinvali was a decided matter.

According to Zubov, only technical issues were remaining,

such as overhauling and equipping the building for the Center. "The funds have been designated, they must be used this year," he added.

The Russian Deputy Interior Minister also noted that the Center would be a "legally independent agency, practically an international organization" and added that the first head of the Center would be a local.

Igor Zubov signed the agreement on creation of the "Information-Coordination Center" together with a representative of the Russian-backed authorities in Tskhinvali on July 4, 2016.

The purpose of the Center according to the agreement, is "countering organized crime and other dangerous types of crimes." For that, the Center will document, analyze and exchange the crime-related information; as well carry out "inter-governmental search and extradition of persons," and assist in conducting "the necessary agreed activities to combat dangerous types of crimes that pose threats to the security of the Republic."



According to the agreement's addendum, "financing of the Center's activities is carried out at the expense of the funds provided by the Russian Federation for its maintenance."

Russia signed a similar agreement with Sokhumi on May 18, 2017, causing controversy in the region. In Tskhinvali, however, the "Information-Coordination Center" will enjoy wider powers than in Sokhumi.

In the case of Tskhinvali, the Center's officers will have a right to "store, carry and use" firearms. Besides, if the Center agents use these weapons in the region, the "legal assessment" of such incidents is going to occur "together with authorized representatives of the Center." Moreover, the Center officers will have a right to conduct "operative and search activities" in the region.

Unlike Abkhazia, where the number of the Center's employees is limited to 20, there is no limitation on the number of officers for Tskhinvali. In addition, in Tskhinvali's case it is formally specified that the working language of the Center will be Russian.

Civil.ge

## RUSSIAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CRITICIZES GEORGIA FOR NATO PARTNERSHIP

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin criticized Georgia's policies towards NATO and its occupied regions in his interview with Russian daily Izvestia newspaper published by the Russian Foreign Ministry website on June 29.

Karasin said he hoped his next meeting with Zurab Abashidze, Georgian PM's special representative for relations with Russia, scheduled for early July, would "pass, as usually, in a business-like atmosphere," but at the same time, he blasted Tbilisi for "getting closer" to NATO and for demonstrating "fundamental differences in the approaches towards political processes in the South Caucasus region."

The Deputy Foreign Minister called it "regretful" that on the issue of cooperation with NATO "the position of the incumbent Georgian authorities does not differ from the position of [Mikheil] Saakashvili's regime."

"Three large-scale military exercises with participation of NATO member state units were held on the territory of Georgia last year. Operative military hardware transfers from Europe have been conducted for the second year already," Karasin noted.

The Deputy Foreign Minister also mentioned the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's recent declaration on Georgia, saying it "clearly demonstrated the interest of the Alliance towards Georgia and its desire to gain its foothold in the South Caucasus."

Grigory Karasin added that Georgia's cooperation with NATO "acquires the forms that actually make Tbilisi part of NATO's containment policy towards the Russian Federation."

On Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, Karasin pointed out that Tbilisi continued to speak of the occupation of its territories by the Russian Federation, instead of "establishing good-neighborly and equal dialogue with its neighbors - Abkhazia and South Ossetia."

In the interview, Karasin also spoke of easing the visa regulations for citizens of Georgia, saying it would be "a hard task" in the absence of diplomatic relations, which was "severed upon the initiative of Georgia" and the prospects of its restoration "depends exclusively on Tbilisi as well."

Civil.ge

## The Georgian TIMES

# 1 English-Language Newspaper in Georgia

First published in 1993.

The Founder and the President Malkhaz Gulashvili. Tel: (+995) 577 461 046

The Georgian Times Media Holding.

12, Kikodze str, Tbilisi, Georgia. Tel: (+995 32) 2934405,

E-mail: office@geotimes.ge; http://www.geotimes.ge

Publisher/Editor in Chief

Nana Gagua

Tel.: (+995) 555 293 003

E-mail:

gul@geotimes.ge

Executive Editor:

Mariam Toidze

Tel.: (+995) 577 727 207

E-mail:

editor@geotimes.ge

Copy Editor

Rumwold Leigh

Tel: (+995) 599 501 452

E-mail:

rumwoldleigh@netscape.net

Director:

Kakha Maskharashvili

Tel: (+995) 551 501 313

E-mail:

director@geotimes.ge

Contributions to The Georgian TIMES are welcome. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item, ect. please contact; Tel/fax: (+995 32) 2934405





**COME AND ENJOY OUR INTERNATIONAL BREAKFAST BUFFET, REKNOWN FOR ITS LARGE VARIETY OF QUALITY PRODUCTS AND FRESHLY HOMEMADE DELIGHTS**



**WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON SOURCING THE BEST INGREDIENTS TO OFFER YOU A GREAT CULINARY EXPERIENCE THROUGHOUT YOUR STAY, A TRUE TASTEMENT TO OUR COMMITMENT TO LUXURIOUS GEORGIAN HOSPITALITY**





# ‘The Exhibition is wide-ranging and unique in the Caucasus region’

*John Dodelande*

**On June 8 the D. Shevardnadze National Gallery of the Georgian National Museum opened “Constellations”, an exhibition of artworks by contemporary Chinese artists.**

This wide-ranging exhibition brings together Chinese artists who are influencing the current political, social and cultural reality of China. Their artworks suggest distinctive problem-solving means.

Ai Weiwei, Xu Shao Yang, Lee Shurui, Liu Wei, Lu Pingian, Lu Shanchuai, Ma Qiusha, Van Guangli, Vang Sishuni, Vang Yuanji, Shi Molini, Qiu Qu, Shiu Zen, Jang Shing, Zang Ding, Zang Zeniu, Zao Yao and Zao Zao are represented by the 40 or so avant-garde artworks exhibited in the National Museum.

The exhibition is presented in co-operation with John Dodelande, a French collector who has been the citizen of Georgia for 7 years. The event partner is the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia and the media partner is **BIO International** and its founder Olga Babluani. It is curated by Ami Barack and will be open until **September 11**.

John Dodelande gave GT a short interview.

**What motivated you to hold this exhibition?**

I decided to organise an exhibition in the Silk Road countries a couple of years ago. As Georgia is the geographical centre of the Silk Road it would be appropriate to begin in Tbilisi and move to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan later. Nearly 40 artworks by 12 artists are represented here, and they tell us much about the current global

processes, not only in politics but economics and new technologies.

**Who has helped you organise the exhibition?**

My curator Ami Barack, who has curated exhibitions in Canada, Israel, and Russia; he is quite experienced in this field. The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia has also helped us a lot, along with BIO International and its founder Olga Babluani. She is our media partner, and helped us a lot in letting numerous people know about the exhibition and its importance.

**Whose collections are being exhibited?**

It is mainly my own collection which is exhibited. From the very beginning I have focused on contemporary Chinese art. You will also see a number of pieces from other private collections from Georgia, Kazakhstan and China.

**How have Georgians taken to the exhibition?**

Very positively. The exhibition was opened on June 8, and the number of daily viewers has doubled since then. This means that awareness of the artworks has been raised, and this is a big success. Many journalists have also become interested in it, and I would like to thank you and all other media partners.

**How long will the exhibition run for, and what are your future plans?**

The exhibition will last until September 11, and after that we shall take it to Baku. We are planning to take it to Astana, its final destination, next year.

The Georgian Times wishes success to the talented collector **John Dodelande!**

*/Natia Ghambashidze/*



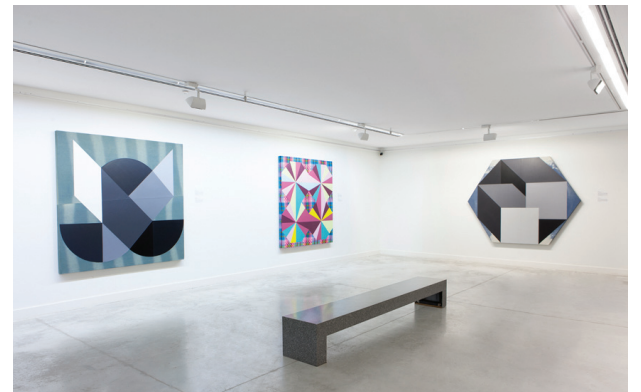
*John Dodelande*



*John Dodelande*



*Chicken Cup, 2015; Courtesy John Dodelande*



*Zhao Yao Spirit above all I-93A, 2012; A Painting of Thought. Courtesy John Dodelande*



*Ai Weiwei Chicken Cup, 2015; Wang Yuyang Aboard, 2015; Deliberately, 2013; Courtesy John Dodelande*



*Zhang Zhenyu Dust 131015, 2012; Dust and mixed media; Ai Weiwei Chicken Cup, 2015; Courtesy John Dodelande*



*Wang Guangle; Zhao Zhao Fragment, 2015 Brass; Courtesy John Dodelande*



*Xu Zhen Night Walk Palace, 2013; Courtesy John Dodelande*



*Yan Xing Arty, Super-Arty, Film Still No.3, 2013; Courtesy John Dodelande*





If you have not yet decided where you will spend the hot summer days, and are looking for a peaceful location with high standards and an ecologically clean environment, you are welcome to visit Hotel Prometheus in the centre of Tskaltubo.

One of the main advantages of our hotel is that it is right next to the resort's balneology centres, thus making your holiday even more comfortable. It is also fronted by a beautiful square, containing singing fountains and pretty plants.

The hotel is always open for visitors and offers high-standard services all year round, unlike other seasonal hotels.

Everything is arranged to make each guest feel relaxed and comfortable. The Lounge Bar on the fourth floor of the hotel contains an open terrace with an amazing view, which makes life-enriching impressions on our guests. You can also try the delicious food prepared by our head chef.

The hotel is an ideal place for those who appreciate comfort, coziness and peace; it offers a calm and harmonious atmosphere, a variety of services and traditional hospitality.

The hotel staff try their best to accommodate the requests and needs of each guest and to create an unbelievably pleasant environment for those who spend their time in our hotel.

Visit the Hotel Prometheus at any time.

You are always welcome!



სკალტუბო  
TSKALTUBO



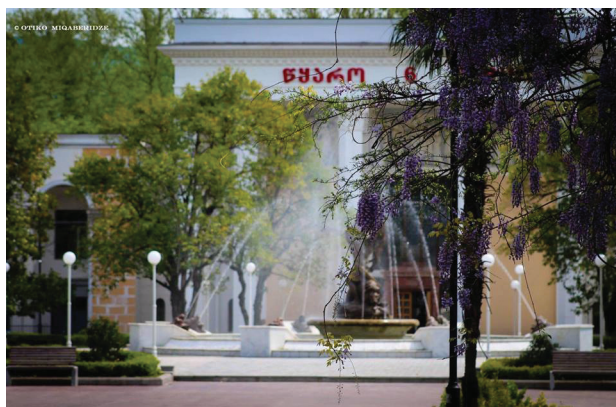
თბილი წყაროები  
HOT SPRINGS

Tskaltubo is a very unusual balneology resort. Its main mineral resource is its famous thermal healing water, which contains noble gas, radon emissions and a large quantity of nitrogen and helium. The natural temperature of the water (34-35°C) makes it possible to use it without initial heating or cooling. This water runs in the bathing rooms straight from the springs, without the need for pumps.

Tskaltubo is a non-seasonal resort, and as such is open throughout the year (including holidays). Tskaltubo's thermal spa springs heal the following diseases:  
Locomotive system diseases (osteochondrosis, osteoarthritis, Bechterew (Strumpell-Marie) Disease etc)  
Growth disorders (kyphosis, scoliosis, kyphoscoliosis), rheumatoid polyarthritis and spondyloarthritis-conditions (podagric, psoriatic, Reiter's Arthritis and others)

Cardiovascular diseases (including post-stenting and shunting rehabilitation)  
Nervous system diseases (polydiscopathia, discogenic radiculitis, post-stroke conditions, brain trauma, brain injuries), post-rehabilitation for neurosurgical post-operative care, further rehabilitation of post-traumatic conditions: orthopedic, spinal post-traumatic recuperation and post recovery of spine surgery  
Gynecological diseases (including infertility)  
Skin diseases (dermatitis, eczema, keratosis etc)  
Urological diseases  
Child and adolescent diseases like: juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, hemophilia, child cerebral palsy, autism, and so on.  
The Tskaltubo mineral waters also facilitate the recovery of people suffering from certain professional diseases: sportsmen, dancers, pilots, cosmonauts, sailors, oil dealers, miners etc. Prominent figures from the aforementioned professions have enjoyed vacations

in our sanatorium in the past century, and we have named its departments accordingly: "miner", "geologist", "railwayman", "light" (for blind community), etcetera.  
The following procedures are used for the treatment of the above-mentioned diseases:  
1. Mineral water baths  
2. Underwater (hydro-massage) therapy  
3. Physical exercise in the pool  
4. Classic medical massage  
5. Spinal horizontal extension in mineral water  
6. Physiotherapy  
7. Gynaecological irrigation  
8. Sharko (a shower)  
9. Circular shower  
10. Mechano-therapy in mineral water  
11. Peloido-therapy (mud application)  
12. Pressotherapy  
13. Colon hydrotherapy.





JOIN THE GOLDEN  
SUMMER PROMOTION OF PSP  
SUMMER-CHOOSE THE SUN  
PROTECTION PRODUCTS



THE MEMBER OF



1+1 2+1



SALES AND FREE GIFTS  
ON SUN PROTECTION PRODUCTS





# TRANSPORTER



**/ Kawasaki / QUICKSILVER® / JOBE**

Official distributor in Georgia  
Represents motorcycles, quadrocycles, SSV multifunctional vehicles, snowmobiles, scooters, boats, water sports accessories.



**Tbilisi showroom**

Beliashvili street N113b

2 14 71 71 / 595 37 11 77

**Batumi showroom**

Airport highway N187

595 28 11 77

**Bakuriani showroom**

Agmashenebeli street N35

595 50 11 77

[WWW.TRANSPORTER.COM.GE](http://WWW.TRANSPORTER.COM.GE)

[WWW.FB.COM/BRP.TRANSPORTER](http://WWW.FB.COM/BRP.TRANSPORTER)

[WWW.FB.COM/KAWASAKIGEORGIA](http://WWW.FB.COM/KAWASAKIGEORGIA)



# Georgia, a model of reform, is struggling to stay clean

*A tree-loving oligarch is still pulling strings*

**GEORGIA has been known for excess and eccentricity since ancient times, when it was called Colchis, the home of Medea and the Golden Fleece in Greek mythology. But even by Georgian standards, the latest hobby of Bidzina Ivanishvili, the country's richest and most powerful man, is extravagant. The reclusive oligarch, whose hilltop glass-and-steel castle towers over Tbilisi, the capital, buys the oldest and tallest trees in the country, digs them out and transports them by road and ship to his residence on the Black Sea.**

Most Georgians are amused, and hope he will buy one of theirs. But the image of a 100-year-old, 650-tonne tulip tree sailing over the water is an apt symbol for Mr Ivanishvili's role in Georgia. The billionaire, who holds no official post but pulls strings from behind the scenes, is changing not only its physical but its political landscape. He has also uprooted the largest figure in Georgian public life, former president Mikheil Saakashvili.

After taking power in a popular uprising in 2003, Mr Saakashvili forcefully modernised Georgia, broke with its

Soviet legacy and built an effective state. In 2010 his United National Movement (UNM) lost an election to the Georgian Dream party, an alliance put together by Mr Ivanishvili, whose accumulated wealth (mostly made in Russia) was half as large as Georgia's annual GDP. Mr Saakashvili was forced out of the country; some of his associates were put in jail. Yet the main reason the UNM lost power was not its reforms or anti-corruption efforts, but fear of its repressive use of the judiciary for political ends.

In some ways Georgia today is freer than under Mr Saakashvili. The number of court acquittals has risen, and the fear of persecution is gone. But Georgia has also lost its sense of mission, says Gia Khukhashvili, a political consultant once close to Mr Ivanishvili. Economic growth hovers around 3%, far short of the double-digit levels it saw under Mr Saakashvili. Georgia as a brand has lost its shine. Once a model of modernisation and one of the rare post-Soviet countries to have been successful at graft-busting, it now exemplifies the difficulty of transition. Critics say Mr Ivanishvili treats it as his playground. Oligarchs in other post-Soviet countries are envious.

To be sure, the changes brought in by the Rose Revolution in 2003 have not been fully reversed. Corruption has not returned; Georgia rates better than Italy and close to Spain on Transparency International's corruption perceptions index. It has a strong civil society. Indeed, many of Mr Saakashvili's former allies, including Giga Bokeria, the brain behind the country's reforms, think the country has outgrown its former leader. They say it was the fear of Mr Saakashvili regaining power that cost the UNM last year's parliamentary elections. (They are also angry at him for endorsing riots in Batumi in March.)

After that election, much of the UNM's leadership quit. In May they unveiled a new party, the Movement for Liberty-European Georgia, at a rally in Tbilisi's largest stadium. Waving flags of Georgia and the European Union, they pledged to eschew violence and hatred. "We will replace Ivanishvili without destroying our country," said Gigi Ugulava, the leader of the party. Elena Khoshvartaria, the female face of the party and a candidate for mayor of Tbilisi, talked about poverty and greenery. The split in the UNM may be tactically beneficial to Mr Ivanishvili, but it deprives him of a politically



convenient arch-enemy: destroying Mr Saakashvili's party was Georgian Dream's raison d'être.

It also sharpens the country's ideological conflict between modernisation and nostalgia. On June 18th the patriarch of the Orthodox church, a powerful figure, called for restoring Georgia's monarchy. A few years ago this notion would have been scorned by the young, westernised elite. Now it is backed by one of that elite's representatives, Irakly Kobakhidze, the speaker of parliament and the secretary of Georgian Dream. "We must take into account all factors, including our local peculiarities," he said.

Some believe this is an attempt to undermine the president, Giorgi Margvelashvili, who has clashed with Mr Ivanishvili. Although the president has had no executive power since 2010, he is elected by direct popular vote (something that Georgian Dream wants to change) and is viewed as an independent arbiter.

With its support declining, Georgian Dream has been trying to change the constitution. It has proposed banning parties from forming electoral alli-

ances (despite coming to power in an alliance seven years ago), imposing a 5% threshold to enter parliament, and giving all unallocated votes to whichever party comes first. Given the fragmented political landscape, this could give Georgian Dream another 20-30% of the seats.

On June 19th the Council of Europe's Venice Commission ruled that this combination of changes would "lead to a serious infringement of the principle of equality". A few days later, an emergency session of parliament approved a slightly amended version of the constitution that ignores the protests of the president, other political parties and civic activists. Georgian Dream also postponed until 2024 a planned shift from the current electoral system, whose combination of majoritarian and proportional voting benefits the government, to a fully proportional one, and barred the sale of agricultural land to foreigners.

Meanwhile, public life is starting to feel less free. An independent Azerbaijani journalist living in Georgia was kidnapped in Tbilisi in May and passed on to Azerbaijani authorities. An attempt by Mr

Ivanishvili's allies to take control over Rustavi-2, an opposition television channel, was stopped only by a decision of the European Court of Human Rights.

One closely-watched case is that of Lasha Tordia, the head of the state audit office, who says he was assaulted at a nightclub by Otar Partskhaladze, a former chief prosecutor. Mr Partskhaladze and his bodyguards allegedly beat Mr Tordia after an argument about his agency's investigation into a land deal. Mr Khukhashvili says that if the alleged assault goes unpunished, "it shows that Georgia is slipping back to a system where informal power trumps state institutions."

Another test of Georgia's future will be the mayoral election in Tbilisi in October. The field includes a former footballer for Milan (running with Georgian Dream), a popular TV presenter (running with the UNM) and an outsider who models himself on Emmanuel Macron, the French president. The contest will be a bellwether for the parliamentary vote in 2020. In today's Georgian politics, winning Tbilisi is the metaphorical equivalent of finding the Golden Fleece.

## NEWS

### GEORGIA IN U.S. HUMAN TRAFFICKING REPORT



Tier 1 (Green); Tier 2 (Yellow); Tier 2 Watch List (Orange); Tier 4 (Red). Photo: 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report

Georgia is a source, transit and destination country for sex trafficking and forced labor with the Government of Georgia demonstrating serious and sustained anti-trafficking efforts, according to the U.S. Department of State's annual report released on June 27.

The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, which covers the developments of 2016, places Georgia in "tier 1" in the three-tier system of evaluation. Tier 1 is the highest ranking, implying that a country might have a human trafficking problem, which the government has acknowledged and has made efforts to address.

In the 2016 report, Georgia was grouped under the same tier after three straight years in Tier 2, which lists countries whose governments do not fully comply with minimum standards, despite making significant efforts. Tier 3 is the lowest ranking assigned to countries whose governments do not fully comply with

minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

According to the new report, the government "demonstrated serious and sustained efforts by adopting the 2017-2018 national action plan and continuing proactive investigations and screening of vulnerable populations for trafficking indicators."

It says that the government "implemented a child referral mechanism expanding the pool of actors participating in proactive victim identification and provided free identification documents to vulnerable street children." "The government continued to provide comprehensive care for all identified victims and conducted robust awareness campaigns," reads the report.

The report, however, also notes that the authorities "did not increase anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts" and identified fewer victims in the reporting period. It also says that the labor inspectorate "continued to operate with an unclear mandate and restricted ability to investigate employers."

"Victim identification remained weak for children in exploitative situations on the street, such as those subjected to forced begging and criminality, and for individuals working in vulnerable labor sectors," the report also reads.

According to the report, Georgia remains to be "a source, transit, and destination country for women and girls subjected to sex trafficking and men, women, and children subjected to forced labor."

"Women and girls from Georgia are subjected to sex trafficking within the country, in Turkey, and, to a lesser extent, in China and the United Arab Emirates. Georgia is also a transit country for women from Central Asia exploited in Turkey. Women from Azerbaijan and Central Asia are subjected to forced prostitution in the tourist areas of the Adjara region and in saunas, strip clubs, casinos, and hotels. The majority of identified trafficking victims are young, foreign women seeking employment," reads the report.

The report also says that "Georgian, Romani and Kurdish children are subjected to forced begging or coerced into criminality in Georgia."

### GOVERNMENT HIRES RASKY PARTNERS FOR U.S. LOBBYING

The Government of Georgia has hired the Rasky Baerlein Strategic Communications (Rasky Partners from February 2017), an influential Boston-based public relations and public affairs firm, to lobby for its interests before the Congress and the U.S. administration.



Under the four-month contract, the Government is paying the company a monthly fee of USD 30,000, according to filings submitted by the firm to the U.S. Department of Justice under the Foreign Agent Registration Act.

The agreement, which is active from May 5 and is to be terminated on August 5, can be renewed upon agreement of both parties.

According to the document, Rasky Partners "will work to strengthen bilateral relations by supporting Government's outreach efforts to U.S. Congress and Administration that generates political support for Georgia and increase U.S. foreign security assistance."

The company will also "engage administration officials on the need to support greater U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) into Georgia and to grow bilateral trade relations."

Larry Rasky, who was the communications director to the "Biden for President" campaign in 2007, is the Chairman and the CEO of Rasky Partners. He previously served as press secretary for then Senator Joseph Biden's 1988 presidential bid, as communications director for John Kerry's first Senate campaign, and as deputy press secretary for President Jimmy Carter's re-election campaign.



**LB** **ლიბერთი ბანკი**  
**LIBERTY BANK**

**LB** **საქონლის სანაღველი**  
**CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT**

ყველაზე მაღალი სარგებლობა

# CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT

## HIGH YIELD ON YOUR INVESTMENT

Complimentary Services of Private Banking

Learn More: [www.LibertyBank.ge/CD](http://www.LibertyBank.ge/CD)



**MARIAM BOLKVADZE**

Tennis player  
Liberty Bank Brand Ambassador

CONTACT US AT: [PB@LibertyBank.ge](mailto:PB@LibertyBank.ge)

TEL.: +995 322 55 55 00 (1010)





**Mercure**  
HOTELS

9, V.Gorgasali Street, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
T (+995) 322 00 60 60; Fax: (+995) 322 00 61 61



**THE BILTMORE**  
TBILISI

The Biltmore Hotel Tbilisi, 29 Rustaveli Avenue, 0108, Tbilisi, Georgia  
t. +995 322 72 72 72 | f. +995 322 98 78 88  
info.bhtg@biltmorecollection.com  
millenniumhotels.com



**Hilton**  
BATUMI  
ჰილტონ ბათუმი

40, Rustaveli Str, Batumi 6010, Georgia;  
T (+995) 422 22 22 99; M (+995) 599 01 83 00  
<https://www.facebook.com/HiltonBatumi/>  
[www.batumi.hilton.com](http://www.batumi.hilton.com)



**ibis**  
STYLES  
HOTELS

4, G.Tabidze St, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
T (+995) 322 00 24 24; Fax: (+995) 322 00 25 25



**Chops**  
BY THE RIVER  
RESTAURANT & GRILL

2, Sukhishvili St, Tskneti, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
T (+995) 514 07 50 00



**Citrus**  
★★★★★

3, 9 Aprili St, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
T (+995) 0322 55 03 00



**ASTORIA TBILISI**  
HOTEL

12, Chitadze; 23 Chonkadze, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
T (+995) 322 2 49 70 10



**SKY BAR**


- OLD TIME AMBIANCE
- PANORAMIC VIEW AN ANCIENT CITY
- LIVE MUSIC
- DELICIOUS TRADITIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CUISINE

22, Metekhi St, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
T (+995) 592 32 32 32



**Sheraton**  
BATUMI HOTEL

26-28, Rustaveli Ave, Batumi, Georgia;  
T 0422 22 90 00



**Restaurant Mjseim Ujari**

156, Agmashenebeli str., Mtskheta, Georgia;  
T (+995) 568 555 555; (+995) 597 515 555



**OLD MEIDAN**

9/11, Samgebro str., Tbilisi, Georgia;  
T (+995) 0322 55 35 00



თსკალტუბო  
TSKALTUBO

თბილისი წყაროები  
HOT SPRINGS

Tskaltubo, Georgia;  
T (+995) 599 499 112



**RIXOS**  
BORJOMI

16 Meskheti str.; Borjomi, Georgia;  
T 0322 29 22 92

**Georgian Restaurant**  
**MEPETUBANI**



3, Erekle II square, Georgia;  
T (+995) 598 77 09 68



**Pianino**

8, Sioni str., Tbilisi, Georgia;  
T (+995) 558 511 811



**CHÂTEAU**  
**MUKHRANI**  
DEPUIS 1878

Mukhrani, Mtskheta, Georgia;  
T (+995) 591 99 25 69



**MARRIOTT**  
TBILISI

13, Shota Rustaveli Ave, Tbilisi;  
T (+995) 0322 77 92 00



**COURTYARD**  
**Marriott**

4, Freedom Square, Tbilisi;  
T (+995) 0322 77 91 00





IC GROUP  
INSURANCE

# HYBRID

From  
**1.79%**



220 33 33

[WWW.ICGROUP.GE](http://WWW.ICGROUP.GE)





**NEW DIRECT  
DESTINATIONS**

**LONDON**

**PRAGUE**

**KIEV**

**WWW.GEORGIAN-AIRWAYS.COM**

**f /GEOAIRWAYSS**