

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

October 30-31

Compiled by: *Aleksandre Davitashvili*

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❖ Foreign Affairs

1. Georgian PM congratulates Turkey on 95th Republic Day

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze has sent kind wishes to Turkey on the 95th anniversary of Republic Day of Turkey.

Bakhtadze met with Fatma Ceren Yazgan, the ambassador of Turkey to Georgia on Republic Day and stated that Turkey has overcome a number of challenges throughout these 95 years and transformed itself into a large economic and political power.

Bakhtadze noted that many regional and “historic projects” have jointly been implemented by Georgia and Turkey, including the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE), Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC), South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars BTK (*Agenda.ge, October 30, 2018*).

2. Embassy of Georgia to US releases statement regarding John Bolton’s visit to Georgia

The Embassy of Georgia to the United Nations has released a statement regarding US National Security Advisor John Bolton’s visit to Georgia. According to the statement, misinformation has been spread as if John Bolton expressed concern about the defense armament bought by Georgia.

According to the Embassy, the spread of misinformation by a questionable private blog is a classic attempt to harm the strategic partnership between Georgia and the US.

"This morning, anonymous source reported that John Bolton had expressed concern about the purchase of defense armament by Georgia. We declare with full responsibility that this is absolutely false information. The spread of misinformation by a suspicious private blog is a classic attempt to harm the Georgia-US strategic partnership, which has especially positively developed in recent years and is at the highest level of bilateral relations (*lpn.ge, October 31, 2018*).

❖ Internal Affairs

3. EU spokesperson evaluates Georgian presidential elections

EU Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Maja Kocijancic has stated that according to the preliminary conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission, the 28 October presidential elections in Georgia were "competitive and professionally administered", giving Georgian voters a genuine voice.

She says that some shortcomings were noted throughout the campaign and on the election day, notably instances of misuse of administrative resources, the sharp polarisation of the private media, negative campaigning and harsh rhetoric.

“These shortcomings should be addressed based on the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. Ensuring high democratic standards throughout the entire electoral process, including the second round, remains key. It

is important that all parties continue to adhere to democratic principles and to respect the will of the Georgian people,” Kocijancic said (*Agenda.ge, October 30, 2018*).

4. U.S. Embassy : We share OSCE/ODIHR conclusions that elections were competitive administered and concerns about shortcomings

The U.S. Embassy takes note of the preliminary conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission that the October 28 presidential elections were competitive and professionally administered, offering voters a genuine choice. We share international and domestic observer organizations’ concerns about shortcomings in the election process, such as mobilization of voters through inappropriate means and instances of misuse of administrative resources, and stress the importance of addressing these shortcomings in the second round (*Agenda.ge, October 30, 2018*).

5. 15 charged with election-related violations

Georgian Deputy Interior Minister Natia Mezvrishvili says that 15 individuals have been charged for 28 October election-related violations.

Mezvrishvili says that the individuals are supporters of both the ruling party and the opposition.

“We have been trying to keep neutrality in the pre-election period and on election day,” Mezvrishvili said. She stated that the Interior Ministry is investigating more than 10 incidents which took place on election day (*Agenda.ge, October 30, 2018*).

6. Independent presidential candidate says she is ready for runoff

“What happened on 28 October is a victory. Someone might think otherwise, we might have expected more but being a leader in the first round of elections is a victory indeed. Despite the dirty campaign against me, defamation and unfair methods that are characteristic of the Russian approach, being in first place in the first round is equal to a victory”, Zurabishvili said, adding that the voters have to make their choice not between two candidates or parties now but between ‘two Georgias’ (*Agenda.ge, October 30, 2018*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

7. International Monetary Fund completes third review in Georgia

The International Monetary Fund has completed the third review on the Extended Fund Facility approved last year under which Georgia is receiving \$285.3 million over a period of three years.

The Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze and Mercedes Vera-Martin of the IMF met today to discuss details of the third review. At the meeting they talked about economic trends in Georgia and in the region and the main parameters of the 2019 state budget (*Agenda.ge, October 30, 2018*).

8. Q3 2018: Georgian economy grows 4%

The Georgian economy grew 4% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2018 and 4.9% in the nine months of the current year, announces the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

The estimated real gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate in September 2018 was equal to 5.6% year-on-year, Geostat said.

Last month estimated real growth compared to the same period of the previous year was posted in manufacturing, financial intermediation, trade, real estate, transport, hotels and restaurants (*Agenda.ge, October 30, 2018*).

9. Regulations for Georgia's commercial banks postponed until November 15

New regulations on responsible lending practices that were supposed to come into force on November 1, 2018 have been postponed.

The National Bank of Georgia (NBG) announced that this process will be postponed "just by several days" and the regulations will be activated "no later than November 15" of the current year.

The regulations, set by the NBG for commercial banks, aimed to protect consumer rights and bolster healthy credit portfolios at commercial banks (*Agenda.ge, October 30, 2018*).

10. Turkish companies show interest in furniture production in Georgia

Representatives of large Turkish companies will arrive in Georgia next month to learn about prospects for developing furniture production in the country and the furniture market in Georgia in Georgia.

Economy Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kobulia has already met the heads of 12 leading Turkish furniture companies and the President of the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) Nail Olpak in Turkey.

Kobulia introduced Georgia's investment environment and the government's initiatives for supporting the furniture sector in Georgia to the Turkish companies (*Agenda.ge, October 31, 2018*).

11. London hosts Georgian wine events

London has hosted a Georgian wine tasting event this week which was led by British wine master Sarah Abbot. Abbot said 2018 was a successful year for Georgian wine on the British market.

"Georgian wine had fantastic results in the UK this year. British importers and wine traders discovered Georgian wines, signed new contracts and planned for future cooperation", Abbot said.

As for the recent wine tasting event in London, Abbot noted that a variety of Georgian wines had been represented at the event - red, white and orange wines (*Agenda.ge, October 31, 2018*).

12. TV Imedi announces emergency pre-election regime

Imedi TV channel has announced they will operate in a way so as not to allow the 'old regime' [referring to Mikheil Saakashvili's United National Movement] to return to power.

We have experienced severe attacks under the United National Movement leadership and now we are changing the programme schedule to not allow the regime come back," the Imedi TV announcement reads.

The Imedi TV leadership says that the presidency of the United National Movement candidate Grigol Vashadze is unacceptable for them, claiming Vashadze will pardon former President Mikheil Saakashvili, former Interior Minister Ivane Merabishvili and former law enforcement officials Data and Bacho Akhalaia (*Agenda.ge, October 31, 2018*).

13. Georgia ranks 6th among 190 countries in Doing Business 2019 report

According to the Doing Business 2019 report published by the World Bank today, Georgia ranked 6th among 190 countries in terms of simplicity of doing business. Currently Georgia is the highest rated country in the European and Central Asian region.

In this connection, Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze and World Bank's Regional Director Mercy Tembon held a joint press conference. As Mamuka Bakhtadze noted, promotion in such important and prestigious international ratings will help strengthen the economy of Georgia, which will ultimately be the prerequisite for overcoming poverty in the country (*Ipn.ge, October 31, 2018*).

Additional Information

November 1, 2018

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.7203 GEL

1 GBP - 3.4657 GEL

100 RUB -4.1366 GEL

1 EUR - 3.0848 GEL

1 TRY - 0.4946 GEL

100 JPY - 2.4037 GEL



- **Movie Events - English Sessions - [Tickets](#)**
- **Friends of Museum (Membership to access Georgian National Museums For free of charge after one payment) - [Membership](#)**
- **Marjanishvili Theatre - [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Rustaveli Theatre - [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Opera and Ballet - [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Concerts - [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Sports - [Events and Tickets](#)**