

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

March 7-10

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Date: **March 11, 2019**

## ❖ Occupied Regions

### ❖ Tskhinvali Region

#### **1. Tbilisi condemns meeting between Putin and de facto leader of Georgian occupied Tskhinvali**

Tbilisi has condemned a recent meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and the de facto leader of the Georgian occupied Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region Anatoly Bibilov.

Official Tbilisi has evaluated it as a provocation and an attempt to legitimize the occupation of historic Georgian lands and the ethnic cleansing in the two Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.

At the meeting held at the Kremlin yesterday Putin said that Russia will send observers to Tskhinvali to monitor the "upcoming presidential elections," which he hoped will be held "democratically." (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

#### **2. Japanese gov't gifts two modern fire-engines to Georgia for higher protection of Borjomi-Kharagauli national park**

The Japanese government has gifted two modern fire-engines to the Emergency Management Service of the Georgian Interior Ministry to timely extinguish fires in the most difficult areas of one of the largest parks in Europe-Borjomi-Kharagauli, located on the territories of Samtskhe-Javakheti, Imereti and Shida Kartli regions of Georgia.

The engines will help Georgia preserve and protect the unique park," members of the Japanese Embassy to Georgia have stated today in the headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Tbilisi (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).

#### **3. Georgia-Fiji sign visa free deal**

Georgia and Fiji, an island country in Melanesia, which is the part of Oceania in the South Pacific Ocean, have signed a visa free agreement yesterday, the Georgian Embassy to Australia has reported.

The agreement has been signed by Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandre Khvtisiashvili and his counterpart from Fiji Inia Seruitaru (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).

#### **4. Georgian MFA warns those who want to visit Schengen Zone to check necessary documentation**

The Georgian Foreign Ministry has warned Georgian citizens, who have plans to enter the Schengen Zone, to have all necessary documentation and on their person, as Georgian embassies in the Schengen Zone

countries have no legal levers to interfere in the decisions of immigration officers if they say that some of the documents are absent or invalid.

Recently the Schengen countries have made border control tougher. Consequently many Georgian citizens were refused entry as they did not meet necessary criteria or lacked some of necessary documents (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).

### **5. Georgian President: Lithuania is an example for us on our path to NATO and the EU**

Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili says that Lithuania is a good example for Georgia on how to join NATO and the EU.

“Lithuania has already walked the path we are standing on. Lithuania is an example for us,” Zurbishvili said after her meeting with her Lithuanian counterpart Dalia Grybauskaite.

“We are thankful that Lithuania provides all its efforts to help us enter NATO and the EU. Your country supports our sovereignty and territorial integrity and you are involved in the activities of the European Union Monitoring mission in Georgia,” Zurbishvili said (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).

### **6. Georgian President discusses economic ties with Lithuanian PM**

At the meeting they spoke of their countries’ trade and economic cooperation, bilateral sectoral ties, and cultural relations.

They also named a number of spheres, including agriculture, tourism, infrastructural technologies and innovations, in which Georgia and Lithuania will further cooperate (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).



### **7. Declaration signed on cooperation in cyber security between Georgia and Lithuania**

Minister of Defence of Georgia Levan Izoria and Minister of National Defence of Lithuania Raimundas Karoblis signed a declaration of intent on cooperation in the field of cyber-security today. The declaration aims to boost cooperation between the two countries in cyber-security.

“It is necessary to strengthen our national efforts, deepen our relations with international partners, learn from their experience, and conduct joint trainings in this field”, Izoria stated (*Agenda.ge,*

*March 8, 2019*).

### **8. Film about Georgia-Russia war to be released soon**

The Georgian National Film Center (GNFC) released the first trailer of Shindisi, a film about 17 soldiers who died during the August 2008 Georgia-Russia war.

The 20-member cast underwent training at a base of the Georgian Defence Ministry for fighting scenes. Actors Goga Pipinashvili and Dato Bakhtadze play the leading roles in the film, GNFC reports (*Agenda.ge, March 8, 2019*).

## ❖ Internal Affairs

### 9. Gov't promises to invest 1/4th of budget in education

The Georgian government has taken on responsibility to provide "unprecedented support" for education in the country and invest one-fourth of the state budget for educational goals, Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze stated earlier today during the presentation of the government initiative: Education - Way to Freedom.

Bakhtadze said that increasing funds for education will start this year and reach its maximum in 2022. He claimed that the government's efforts to provide for high-quality education will also encourage the private sector to invest money in the field, which will result in new schools and kindergartens, high-educational institutions and new campuses (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).

### 10. Georgian PM explains how gov't will spend quarter of state budget on education

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze has explained at a special briefing earlier today how the government intends to spend one fourth of the state budget on educational purposes.

He said that budget spending on education will amount to 1.6 billion GEL [ \$593,566,000] this year and the funds will increase in following years.

"In 2020, funding will reach two billion GEL, in 2021 it will reach 2.5 billion GEL [ \$927,447,000] and in 2022 it will be upwards of 3.4 billion GEL [ \$1,261,330,000 ]", Bakhtadze said (*Agenda.ge, March 8, 2019*).

### 11. What environmental and agricultural plans will be fulfilled in 2019?

This year windbreaks are planned to be created in the municipalities of Gardabani, Gori and Kareli, in order to maintain the fertility of the land and provide better yield in rural areas. Last year 6.5-km long windbreaks have been built in Dedoplistkaro municipality.

Starting this year all manufacturers in Georgia who place a product onto the market will be obliged to reduce negative environmental impact that may follow its production, use, waste recovery or disposal.

This will be regulated by the new Waste Management Code that was adopted in Georgia in 2014 and enters into force from 1 December 2019.

In 2019 the area of Georgia's protected areas will be increased by 190,000 hectares. Also this year, new eco-tourism infrastructure Okatse waterfall will be opened for the visitors that aims to increase the flow of tourists in Imereti region.

Davitashvili said that according to the researches only five protected areas of Georgia made contribution of 87 million GEL (about \$32.46/€28.71) to Georgian economy.

This year early warning systems will be installed in Georgia. For example a meteorological radar will be placed in western city of Kutaisi to forecast weather conditions in western Georgia and get warning on natural disasters on time

Also, a group of geologists will be created in western Georgia to determine the causes of the natural disasters and provide relevant recommendations (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).

### 12. Georgian PM: claiming gov't doesn't want Anaklia port is cheap, irresponsible

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze says that statements [by the opposition and others] that the Georgian Dream government does not want the Anaklia deep sea port to be constructed are the "cheap and irresponsible political speculations."

Bakhtadze stated at a briefing earlier today that the project has huge importance and he himself as the head of the Georgian railway, then later as the minister of finance and the prime minister, has provided much effort to pull the project through.

He said there are some people who are trying to link the project with the money laundering investigation involving top figures of TBC Bank (*Agenda.ge, March 8, 2019*).

### **13. Prosecutors interview former National Bank chief in TBC case**

"Today's interview has shown that there are no problems with the regulating authorities. The key questions concerned the functions and responsibilities of the Financial Oversight ...and concrete actions that concerns a very difficult period for our country [Russo-Georgian war in August 2008], as well as a specific inspection, which has no link with the problematic transaction [that prosecutors are investigating]," Kadagidze told the journalists (*Civil.ge, March 8, 2019*).

### **14. Mamuka Khazaradze recalls his last meeting with Ivanishvili**

"By the way, a meeting was held regarding Anaklia three weeks before Giorgi Kvirikashvili's resignation. The meeting was attended by Bidzina Ivanishvili, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Dimitri Kumsishvili, Maia Tskitishvili and me. Ivanishvili said at the meeting that the Anaklia project was important and thanked Giorgi Kvirikashvili for his efforts in this direction. I thought then that this was a final political decision and no one could hamper the project. Three weeks later Kvirikashvili was dismissed..." - Mamuka Khazaradze, one of the founders of TBC Bank, said in an exclusive interview with the Kviris Palitra newspaper, where he recalled the details of one of his last meetings with Ivanishvili (*Kviris Palitra, March 11, 2019*).

### **15. Mamuka Khazaradze says there will be a very serious dispute if they are forced to leave the Anaklia project, unlike the TBC Bank**

"Of course. We are not going to give up anything. We have not delayed the construction even for a day. When we saw that negotiations with banks were delayed not because of us, but because of their demands, we invested 70 million dollars to ensure smooth continuation of the construction. Thus we put ourselves under a risk. And now the state tells us we could not do something and we should go home. Is it a right thing that our energy is now spent to give interviews and assure investors? The only thing we demand is the quick investigation of the case. They could "investigate" the authenticity of the threat letter in one day. So how is it possible that they have not been able to investigate the money laundering for eight months?," Mamuka Khazaradze said (*Kviris Palitra, March 11, 2019*).

### **16. Mamuka Khazaradze does not rule out the possibility of his detention**

Khazaradze considers that speculations about his detention is an attempt to exert psychological pressure on him and his partners.

"Is not this a psychological pressure?! Is not this a leverage to influence my partners?," - Khazaradze said and called himself a victim of a huge state machine.

"It's like when someone is beating you and asking at the same time why you are not on your feet," the businessman said (*Kviris Palitra, March 11, 2019*).

**17. Businessman Vasil Sopromadze : Don't treat business like a hooker! Business will give you a proper answer**

"I, Vasil Sopromadze has not stopped, I speak, fight despite I have been hung in the air by the agencies of the Finance Ministry, which have failed to make a tax conclusion even based on violation of all regulations, because they know that they are totally wrong. I address you – politicians, who fill your cars with petrol at our filling stations, who buy products in our markets, who are provided with services by our banks...You led the country to this situation, you sirs! You and not the opposition. You are disputing with each other, what do you want? These hungry people, I do not speak on behalf of people, I speak what I feel that people live in poverty...They voted for you in exchange for corn-flour and 5, 10 Gels. And don't you know where from are you? How did you get in Parliament?" – Said Sopromadze, founder of the company "Fresco" (*March 8, 2019*).

**18. Kakha Kaladze: Since 2012, you cannot recall any fact of terrorizing or putting pressure on any business**

"If any person does anything illegal and incorrect, relevant agencies will be interested in and everybody will be held accountable. Of course, the investigation will be unbiased," Kakha Kaladze said.

In his vide address businessman Vasil Sopromadze slams the government for its attitude to business and urges politicians to use common sense. "I urge you once again " don't treat business like a hooker. Believe me, the business will give you a proper answer," Vasil Sopromadze says (*lpn.ge, March 8, 2019*).

**19. Ministry of Finance responds to businessman's accusations**

"On February 20, 2018, the audit department of the Revenue Service of the Ministry of Finance started tax audit of the Fresco Shopping Center LTD in compliance with the legislation.

As a result of the inspection, a draft of the relevant tax inspection act has been developed, however, the payer does not agree with it. At this stage, the dispute is being discussed by the Dispute Settlement Council of the Revenue Service under the Ministry of Finance and taxi payer is authorized to file an appeal against the decision to the Fort of the Dispute Settlement Council, which is represented by the representatives of various agencies and business sectors." – stated Ministry (*lpn.ge, March 8, 2019*).

**20. Newly founded party chairperson says early presidential elections is necessary in Georgia**

Georgia is under time pressure, we need early parliamentary elections,- Tako Charkviani, Chairperson of a newly founded political party "Law and Justice", said during her speech at the party's founding congress on Sunday.

According to her, the country is governed by the style of "Russian corruptive management" and "it should be over".

During the Presidential Elections, Tako Charkviani, daughter of well-known Georgian writer, was actively supporting Grigol Vashadze, she was having campaigns in the regions in order to get awareness on Vashadze and get votes for him. In addition, during public speeches Charkviani was presenting Vashadze (*lpn.ge, March 10, 2019*).

## ❖ Economy and Social Affairs

### 21. 30 Georgian companies at ITB Berlin 2019 tourism fair

Thirty Georgian tourism companies, among them the operator company of Tbilisi and Batumi International Airports TAV Georgia and Georgian National Tourism Administration, are participating at the international tourism exchange fair ITB Berlin 2019.

Over 10,000 exhibitors from over 180 countries are participating at ITB Berlin, which is considered one of the most prestigious events of the tourism and travel industry (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).

### 22. Georgian wine growers will have to prove Kindzmarauli, Mukuzani grown in place of origin

Wine growers in Georgia will be able to sell grape varieties of Kindzmarauli and Mukuzani during the 2019 grape harvest only if they prove that these grape varieties are really grown and picked in their place of origin.

A special electronic system will be launched soon where the wine growers will be able to register and indicate that their vineyards are located in the zone where Kindzmarauli and Mukuzani grape varieties are originally grown.

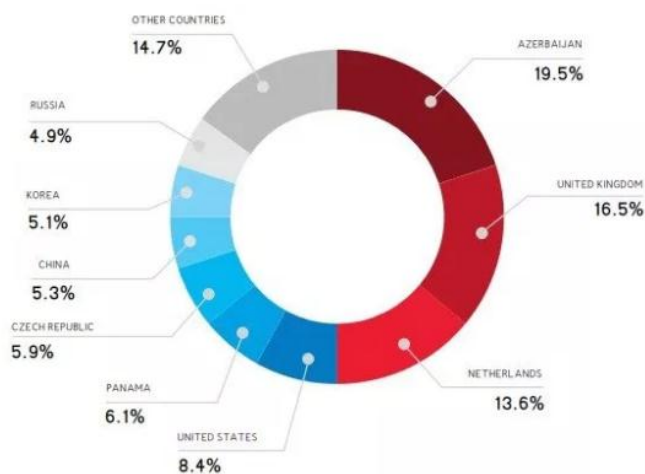
The process will be simple as Georgia has already created cadastral maps of its vineyards, prepared alphanumeric information about viticulture and vineyards, including varieties and other characteristics (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).

### 23. Japan hosts 'Georgia – Homeland of Wine' exhibition

An exhibition called 'Georgia – Homeland of Wine' has opened today in the Japanese capital of Tokyo. The Terrada Warehouse exhibition hall will be hosting archaeological artifacts and modern technologies revealing the uniqueness of Georgian wine culture, between March 10-May 7 (*Agenda.ge, March 10, 2019*).

### 24. 2018 FDI USD 1.2 bln – Preliminary Data

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Georgia reached USD 1.2 billion in 2018, which is 34.9% decrease compared to the same period of last year, according to the preliminary data released by the National Statistics Office of Georgia, Geostat, on March 11.



The financial sector received the largest share of FDI – USD 277.9 million, followed by transport – USD 209.9 million; energy sector – USD 157.2 million; manufacturing – USD 142.3 million; construction – USD 103.6 million; real estate – USD 90.0 million; hotels and restaurants – USD 72.3 million; mining – USD 66.7 million; agriculture and fishing – USD 15.9 million; health and social work – USD 13.2 million.

Most of the FDI came from Azerbaijan – USD 240.0 million. USD 203.7 million, USD 167.9 million and

USD 103.7 million came from companies registered in United Kingdom, Netherlands and United States, respectively, followed by Panama – USD 74.7 million; Czech Republic – USD 72.3 million; China – USD 65.4 million; South Korea – USD 63.2 million and Russia – USD 60.1 million (*Civil.ge, March 11, 2019*).

## ❖ Sports and Culture

### 25. Georgian proverb carved on pavement in The Hague

A famous Georgian proverb has been carved on a new block of pavement in a district of The Hague, Netherlands, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported today.

“ურემი რომ გადაბრუნდება, გზა მაშინ გამოჩნდებაო”, which means that the road only appears when the cart turns over.

Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, professor of linguistics in Leiden University, collected 33 famous phrases in 33 different languages related to a road. The reason of the decision to write the phrases in different languages is that The Hague is known as one of the most international cities in the world (*Agenda.ge, March 7, 2019*).

### 26. Diplomats join in race to promote healthy lifestyle in Tbilisi

Georgia’s capital of Tbilisi hosted a marathon for the representatives of the diplomatic corps aimed to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Lisi Lake, one of the most beautiful recreational areas in Georgia’s capital and located a short drive from the city centre in the bustling Saburtalo district, hosted the sports competition (*Agenda.ge, March 10, 2019*).

## Additional Information

**February 18, 2019**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.6878 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5318 GEL	100 RUB -4.0740 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0396 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4942 GEL	100 JPY - 2.4058 GEL

Monday 11 March	Tuesday 12 March	Wednesday 13 March	Thursday 14 March	Friday 15 March
				
4° 16°	5° 18°	9° 20°	7° 19°	7° 14°

-  **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](#)**