

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

August 12-14

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Date: **August 15, 2019**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. Mamuka Bakhtadze – Georgians and Abkhazians have common roots

Georgians and Abkhazians have common roots and our future has to be common – Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze said in Bakuriani winter resort in connection with the 27th anniversary of 1992 Georgian-Abkhazian war.

PM said that August 14 was one of the most painful dates in Georgia's modern history. "We have to overcome this pain with joint forces. . . . I am sure that with peace and development we will achieve peaceful unification of our county and establishment of a successful country. Peace and development have no alternative," Bakhtadze said (*1TV, August 14, 2019*).

❖ Tskhinvali Region (*so called South Ossetia*)

2. Occupants resume installation of barbed wires in Gugutiantkari

Representatives of the occupation forces resumed installation of barbed wire fences in the village of Gugutiantkari, Gori Municipality.

The information was confirmed by the State Security Service of Georgia. According to the Security Service, a hotline has been activated and the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia has been notified about the fact.

"This is another illegal and extremely destructive act. This issue will be acutely raised by the central government of Georgia in Ergneti at the meeting of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism," the State Security Service said (*1TV, August 14, 2019*).

3. Foreign Ministry calls on international community for taking effective measures about illegal process ongoing at occupational line

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is concerned over the resumption of the illegal process of installing artificial barriers by the Russian occupation forces in the vicinity of the village of Gugutiantkari. Such destructive steps are extremely aggravating the already dire humanitarian situation of the population living near the occupation line and further destabilizing the security environment.

The Georgian side continues to work intensively with the international community, the co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, the EU Monitoring Mission and the Diplomatic Corps accredited in Tbilisi to take effective measures to halt this illegal process.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs calls on the Russian Federation to stop illegal actions against Georgia and to fulfill its international obligations, including the EU brokered Six-Point Agreement of 12 August 2008.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs calls on the international community to take effective measures in connection with the ongoing illegal processes at the occupation line," reads the statement (*1TV, August 14, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

4. Eight Drones registered in Georgia for filming Hollywood movie episodes

For the purpose of producing professional air photo and video shooting, the foreign operator XM2 UK LIMITED has completed the mandatory process of registration of the unmanned aerial vehicles in accordance with the rules established by the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency.

The Civil Aviation Agency also granted the company permission to operate in a specific category, enabling the operator to fly with full compliance with safety standards, above the allowed height, with varying conditions.

Due to Fast and Furious movie shooting Rustaveli Ave. and Vazha-Pshavela Ave. will be closed starting from 18-20 August. The shooting will last for next 5 weeks (*1TV, Imedi, August 12, 2019*).

5. Kibar Khalvashi: I decided to sell Rustavi 2 through a transparent competition to those who would pay the highest price

"I decided to sell "Rustavi 2" through a transparent competition," – Kibar Khalvashi the owner of 100% of the Broadcasting Company released this statement today.

As Khalvashi noted in his statement the company faces a severe financial crisis and the competition must be completed within a week.

"Today I can state with full responsibility that the broadcasting company "Rustavi 2," under the care of Nika Gvaramia, has been in a catastrophic conditions for several years. Its credit debt is approaching to GEL 70,000,000, of which only GEL 27,000,000 is owed by the state budget. "Rustavi 2" has debt of nearly everyone – from water supply company to an exit-polling American company. Much of the debt has been accumulated over the last few years, just in time for the dispute, and it was clear that things were going with the interests of Gvaramia. I would also say that the talk is absurd that our demand for a seizure harmed the company. I have not yet found any expert justification or conclusion that would confirm this loss" – reads the statement of Khalvashi (*1TV, August 12, 2019*).

6. Paata Salia: All this gives rise to doubt that company has been bankrupted for years deliberately

"The costs of the company had been significantly increased, while the incomes had been decreased, although, despite the loss the company management received hundreds of thousands as bonuses. For example, I see indebtedness to specific legal entities in exchange for certain services and no one can tell me what this service is and where there are studies for which 600,000 GEL has been paid. All this gives rise to doubt that the company has been bankrupted for years deliberately.

We will certainly appeal to the Court, requesting compensation for the damages inflicted to the company for years by the former director general", – Paata Salia said (*1TV, August 12, 2019*).

7. Ia Kitsmarishvili goes to court seeking 30% of shares of Rustavi 2 TV Company

"I, as the legal successor of Erosi Kitsmarishvili, have every legal and moral right to claim 30% of shares. This demand has not arisen today, Erosi started the legal dispute in 2009. He applied to Saakashvili's

court requesting to return his shares. Saakashvili's court ruled that Kibar Khalvashi did not pay the amount for this share. I, as the legal successor of Erosi, have the right to claim this share, especially now when Khalvashi has filed a similar kind of lawsuit and 100% of shares has returned to him. Today, Kibar Khalvashi plans to sell Rustavi 2 and I would like to urge potential buyers to refrain from buying the disputed property", – Ia Kitsmarishvili said.

Kibar Khalvashi the owner of 100% of the Rustavi 2 TV Company released the statement today, according to which he plans to sell the TV company (*ITV, August 12, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

8. Mamuka Bakhtadze: Economic analysis evidences that leading factors are positive therefore optimism naturally exists in relation with GEL exchange rate

"Steps made by us give me all the grounds to state that we will regain the past and most growing trend in the tourism sector by all means", – Mamuka Bakhtadze Prime Minister of Georgia told journalists today.

According to the Head of Government of Georgia, losses in the tourism sector have reached 60 MLN USD by July indicators, though very promising trend was observed in June in Adjara with an increase of 40% in contrast with the similar period of the previous year (*ITV, August 12, 2019*).

9. Mamuka Bakhtadze: We will regain the most growing trend in the tourism sector by all means

"Today it is essential to support and assist the small and medium businesses operating in the tourism sector. We have designed two programs, which I believe to be sufficient for helping the affected SMEs in the quick recovery from the problems that we have encountered. As for the mid-term prospects, I am confident that we will regain the previous positive trend in the tourism sector", – said the Prime Minister of Georgia (*ITV, August 12, 2019*).

10. Georgian airports served fewer passengers by 44 959 people in July in comparison to same month of last year

Georgia's five airports of Tbilisi, Batumi, Kutaisi, Mestia and Ambrolauri served 571 848 passengers in July of 2019 that is fewer by 44 959 people in comparison to the same month of the last year – Union of Georgian Airports said in its report.

The 7, 3% decrease in passengers' flow was caused by the suspension of direct flights from Russia to Georgia after July 8 (*ITV, August 12, 2019*).

11. Finance Minister – GEL to find its equilibrium rate

Both fiscal and monetary policies are directed at prevention of further depreciation of the national currency – Ivane Machavariani, Finance Minister said. "Lari is experiencing the natural fluctuation and will find its equilibrium rate by all means," Machavariani claimed.

According to the Finance Minister, there are resources to make GEL more stable. "The resource is the growing export and I hope that tourism will also restore. The blow, which the tourism sector received, will be gradually restored till the end of the year." Machavariani said (*ITV, August 13, 2019*).

12. Finance Minister calls on TV Companies to pay off taxes accumulated over years

"Some TV stations have quite big debts, these are Imedi, Rustavi 2 and Maestro. Rustavi has about 28 million in debt, Imedi TV- 19 million and Maestro TV – 8 million. This is a tax debt that has been accumulated over the last few years. Unfortunately, we have this vicious practice in Georgia. The TV companies were accumulating debts, which were written off later. It's time to change this practice. There are other televisions, much smaller ones, but they pay [taxes] honestly. We are in one legislative area and it is not fair," Machavariani said (*1TV, August 14, 2019*).

13. Mamuka Bakhtadze – We need deepwater port, the state will fulfill its commitments

"Meantime, it is important to complete the financial issues so that each of us and the Consortium have the feeling that the financial resources are mobilized to complete the construction of the port within the announced timeframe. We will do our best to support the Anaklia Consortium to complete this project successfully. The current status of the port cannot be long-lasting as it damages the country, because of we a deep-water port, but at the same time, we have full support towards the Anaklia Consortium and I hope that the Consortium will be able to meet all the commitments taken by them," Prime Minister said (*1TV, August 14, 2019*).

❖ Sports and Culture

14. Construction of Ropeways for Freestyle Ski Championships to begin in Bakuriani

Construction of ropeways for 2023 Freestyle Ski and Snowboard World Championships will begin in Bakuriani winter resort of Georgia.

According to the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, the agreement will be signed with the Austrian-Swiss Company Doppelmayr/Garaventa Group, the world's leading manufacturer of ropeways, cable cars and ski lifts. The company will build ropeways on the territory of Didveli in Bakuriani.

Mamuka Bakhtadze, Georgian Prime Minister will open the signing ceremony. Minister of Economy Natia Turnava, Director of Mountainous Resorts Development Company Teimuraz Gamtsemlidze, Austrian Ambassador to Georgia and Regional Coordinator of Doppelmayr/Garaventa Group will attend the ceremony (*1TV, August 13, 2019*).

15. Mamuka Bakhtadze – I am proud that Georgia will host 2023 Freestyle Ski and Snowboard World Championships

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze said that being a Georgian citizen he was very proud that Georgia would host Freestyle Ski and Snowboard World Championships in 2023 at Georgian winter resort Bakuriani.

"This trust shows that our international partners recognize and believe in Georgia's correct, effective and purposeful strategy for the development of winter resorts," PM said in Bakuriani.

Bakhtadze said that the development of winter resorts was one of the main priorities of the Georgian government; infrastructure development needed large scale investments and meant more tourists and additional job places.

"The 2/3 of Georgia's territory is the mountains and represents a wealth of the country that has to be cared about," PM claimed.






Construction of three new ropeways for 2023 Freestyle Ski and Snowboard World Championships will begin in Bakuriani winter resort of Georgia (1TV, August 13, 2019).





Additional Information

August 15, 2019

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.9121 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5213 GEL	100 RUB - 4.4611 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2572 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5220 GEL	100 JPY - 2.7423 GEL

Thursday 15 August	Friday 16 August	Saturday 17 August	Sunday 18 August	Monday 19 August
				
19° 32°	21° 33°	20° 35°	20° 35°	20° 35°

-  **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](#)**