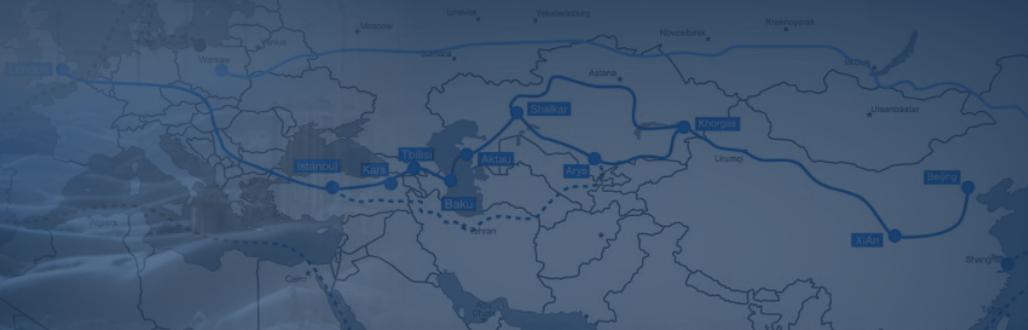




CASPIAN - ALPINE
SOCIETY

Voice of South Caucasus



III

APRIL-MAY
2025



BLACK SEA

CASPIAN SEA

Georgia

Armenia

Azerbaijan

CONTENTS

4-9 ARMENIA

- Union of Journalists Condemns Discriminatory Arrest of Investigative Reporter Lilit Agekyan 4-5
- Caught on Camera: Armavir Man Beaten by Police, Rights Group Demands Justice 6-7
- India to Send Second Batch of Advanced Air Defense Systems to Armenia As Part of \$700M Arms Deal 8

10-15 AZERBAIJAN

- Powering Europe: Azerbaijan's Role in EU's Green Energy Future 10-11
- Middle Corridor in Motion: How Azerbaijan and Georgia Are Shaping Eurasia's Transport Future 12-13
- Europe's Gateway to China: Azerbaijan's Expanding Role in Trade and Transit 14-15

16-22 GEORGIA

- What's Next for Georgia? A Nation Charging Toward Energy Freedom 16-18
- Georgia Eyes Government Efficiency Overhaul Inspired by U.S. DOGE Model 19-20
- Economic Diplomacy in action: Georgia Builds Bridges With Trump Administration 21-22



Union of Journalists Condemns Discriminatory Arrest of Investigative Reporter Lilit Agekyan

The Union of Journalists has stated that the arrest of journalist Lilit Agekyan from Gyumri, on charges of hooliganism and contempt of court, is discriminatory in nature.

According to the investigation, the reason for her detention was the use of obscene language directed at students and teachers at a school. Additionally, during the announcement of a court decision, she allegedly showed contempt for the court—shouting insults and using foul language.

The Union of Journalists noted that Agekyan was denied access to a lawyer for an extended period. It was also reported that her health had deteriorated—an ambulance was called—but despite this, the measure of restraint was not changed.

The Union expressed doubts about the legality and proportionality of the actions taken against Agekyan, seeing signs of discrimination in what happened. It was also emphasized that she is the sole caregiver for her elderly mother.

According to Armenian media, Lilit Agekyan had been investigating and exposing numerous cases of corruption, crimes, and other violations by the authorities. For example, the head of the Education Department of Shirak Province, Hrayr Karapetyan, was arrested based on her investigations.

One of her investigations involved the director of a school in Gyumri, where, according to Agekyan, clear violations had taken place. The school director was fired and subsequently filed a lawsuit against Agekyan. Judge Hayk Aghasyan openly took the side of the plaintiff. Agekyan criticized his behavior, calling him corrupt, after which the judge ordered her removal from the courtroom.

Following this incident, the school director and another teacher filed a complaint against Agekyan.

The case was taken up by the Investigative Committee, and the investigator qualified the journalist's statements as hooliganism. Added to this was the charge of contempt of court. As a result, Agekyan was charged under Articles 297 and 489 of the Criminal Code of Armenia: her actions were interpreted as disregard for public and moral norms.

In the past, Agekyan served as the press secretary for the mayor of Gyumri, Vardan Ghukasyan. On the day of the city council elections, she gave an interview in which she directly stated that the government in Gyumri needed to change. This interview determined her fate. She became inconvenient for many high-ranking officials, and they decided to get rid of her by initiating a criminal case.

Such practices have become common in Armenia, where authorities use administrative tools to pressure opposition figures. This was stated, in particular, by the head of the Union of Journalists of Armenia, Satik Seyranyan, in a comment dedicated to World Press Freedom Day.

Seyranyan recalled that the journalistic community possesses numerous video proofs, including an incident in which a female journalist was attacked in the Armenian parliament on the orders of Speaker Alen Simonyan, as well as regular cases of harsh treatment of journalists by pro-government MPs.



news.am



Caught on Camera: Armavir Man Beaten by Police, Rights Group Demands Justice

A new case of police brutality has emerged in Armenia after lawyer Ara Karagozyan of the Armenian Helsinki Association accused law enforcement officers of violently detaining and assaulting a resident of Armavir.

According to Karagozyan, the incident occurred when police officers entered the man's home and forcibly detained him, subsequently subjecting him to physical abuse at the police station. Video footage released by the lawyer shows at least five uniformed officers restraining the man, twisting his arms behind his back and pushing him to the ground. One officer is seen forcefully holding the man's face and pressing his head against the floor as he attempts to speak.

Three photographs accompanying the footage show visible injuries, including abrasions on the man's face, swelling around the eye, and severe bruising on his shoulder.

In response, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a statement through spokesperson Narek Sargsyan, who claimed on his social media page that the officers acted lawfully. According to Sargsyan, police visited the individual's home with a warrant issued by an investigator, and the resident displayed "inappropriate behavior" and refused to comply with police orders.

Karagozyan dismissed the ministry's explanation, calling it a preemptive attempt to justify the use of force.

"This statement once again shows that the police seemingly take no real steps to combat torture and disproportionate violence by officers, nor to expose such actions. Without conducting any investigation, the police representative publicly declares that the citizen behaved inappropriately and disobeyed lawful orders.

But if none of the parties involved—neither the victim nor the police officers—have been interrogated yet, how can such a conclusion be drawn in advance? The video clearly shows and records the police throwing the citizen to the ground, one officer pressing his face down with his hand.

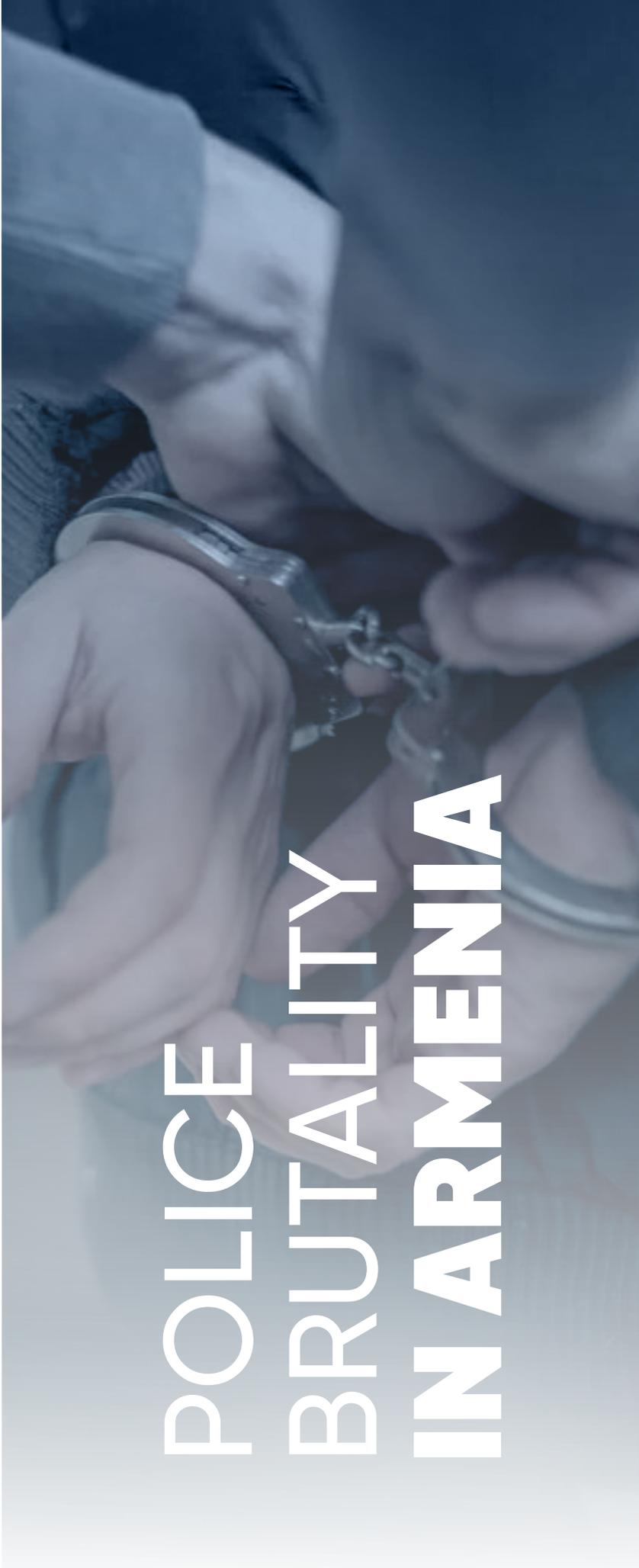
The man pleads to be let go, says he's suffocating and promises to come to the police station voluntarily. His wife also begs them to release him, insisting he will come on his own. The man later emerges from the police station with visible facial injuries," Karagozian wrote.

This latest instance of police brutality in Armenia further demonstrates that there have been no significant changes in the area of human rights protection. Local human rights activists have repeatedly raised the issue of police reform, noting that individuals with drug addiction problems are being recruited into the force.

According to them, most cases of police abuse are not even investigated. Officers who are dismissed are often reinstated in their positions after a time. Moreover, investigative bodies actively help cover up police misconduct. All of this only worsens an already disheartening situation.



newsarmenia.am



POLICE BRUTALITY IN ARMENIA

India to Send Second Batch of Advanced Air Defense Systems to Armenia As Part of \$700M Arms Deal

India will send the second batch of Akash surface-to-air missile systems to Armenia in July, according to the Indian publication IADN.

The Akash system, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), is a surface-to-air missile capable of targeting fighter jets, cruise missiles, air-to-ground missiles, drones, and other aerial threats at ranges of up to 25 kilometers. Each Akash battery, produced by Bharat Electronics Limited, includes one passive electronically scanned 3D radar and four launchers with three missiles each, all interconnected.

This delivery is part of a \$700 million contract between the two countries aimed at enhancing the Armenian army's capabilities to counter combat aircraft and cruise missiles.

Armenia's acquisition of foreign weaponry indicates that Yerevan does not hide its intentions to rearm its army, which was completely incapacitated following defeat in the 44-day war with Azerbaijan. All purchases of modern weapons are made with the possible resumption of military conflict with Azerbaijan in mind – a scenario considered likely if a revanchist opposition comes to power.

Thus, the procurement of arms, policy of acquiring lethal weapons and militarization, combined with the rhetoric of revanchist forces and Armenian officials trying to buy time, generally creates the impression that Armenia is not interested in establishing lasting peace with Azerbaijan. This could reduce the likelihood of peaceful negotiations and increase the risk of renewed hostilities.

In sum, the Armenian authorities' desire to militarize undermines stability in the South Caucasus, raises the risk of conflict resumption, and negates Azerbaijan's efforts toward peaceful resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.



x.com





A vertical graphic on the left side of the page features the colors of the Azerbaijani flag: green, red, and blue. A white crescent moon and eight-pointed star are positioned at the top, overlapping the red and blue sections. Below the flag, the word "Azerbaijan" is written vertically in a large, bold, dark blue sans-serif font.

Azerbaijan

Politics

Powering Europe: Azerbaijan's Role in EU's Green Energy Future

Amid the global race for cleaner energy and secure supply routes, Azerbaijan is emerging as a critical bridge between East and West, positioning itself as both a reliable energy partner and a vital transit hub. The country's geographic location, combined with strong investments in transport and energy infrastructure, has made it an increasingly important player in Europe's quest for energy security and sustainability.

Azerbaijan's green energy strategy—featuring ambitious targets of 30% renewable electricity generation by 2030 and 40% by 2050—has aligned the country with the Paris Agreement and EU climate goals. Major international partnerships, especially with the UAE's Masdar and Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power, are accelerating wind and solar development. The country's vast renewable potential—over 290 GW between onshore and offshore sources—is being harnessed to support domestic transformation and regional energy supply.

Perhaps the most ambitious initiative is the construction of a submarine power cable under the Black Sea, connecting Georgia and Azerbaijan to Romania and Hungary. Signed in December 2022, this multilateral agreement aims to:

- Strengthen Europe's energy security
- Enhance the renewable energy sector
- Increase Azerbaijan's export capacity

The project includes a 1,155 km cable (1,115 km underwater, 40 km on land), with a voltage of 525 kV and a capacity of 1,300 MW. It is scheduled to complete in 2030.

This is complemented by a fiber-optic line to enhance digital connectivity. If granted Project of Common Interest (PCI) status by the European Commission, the corridor will benefit from fast-tracked EU funding and regulatory support, reinforcing Azerbaijan's role in Europe's clean energy transition.

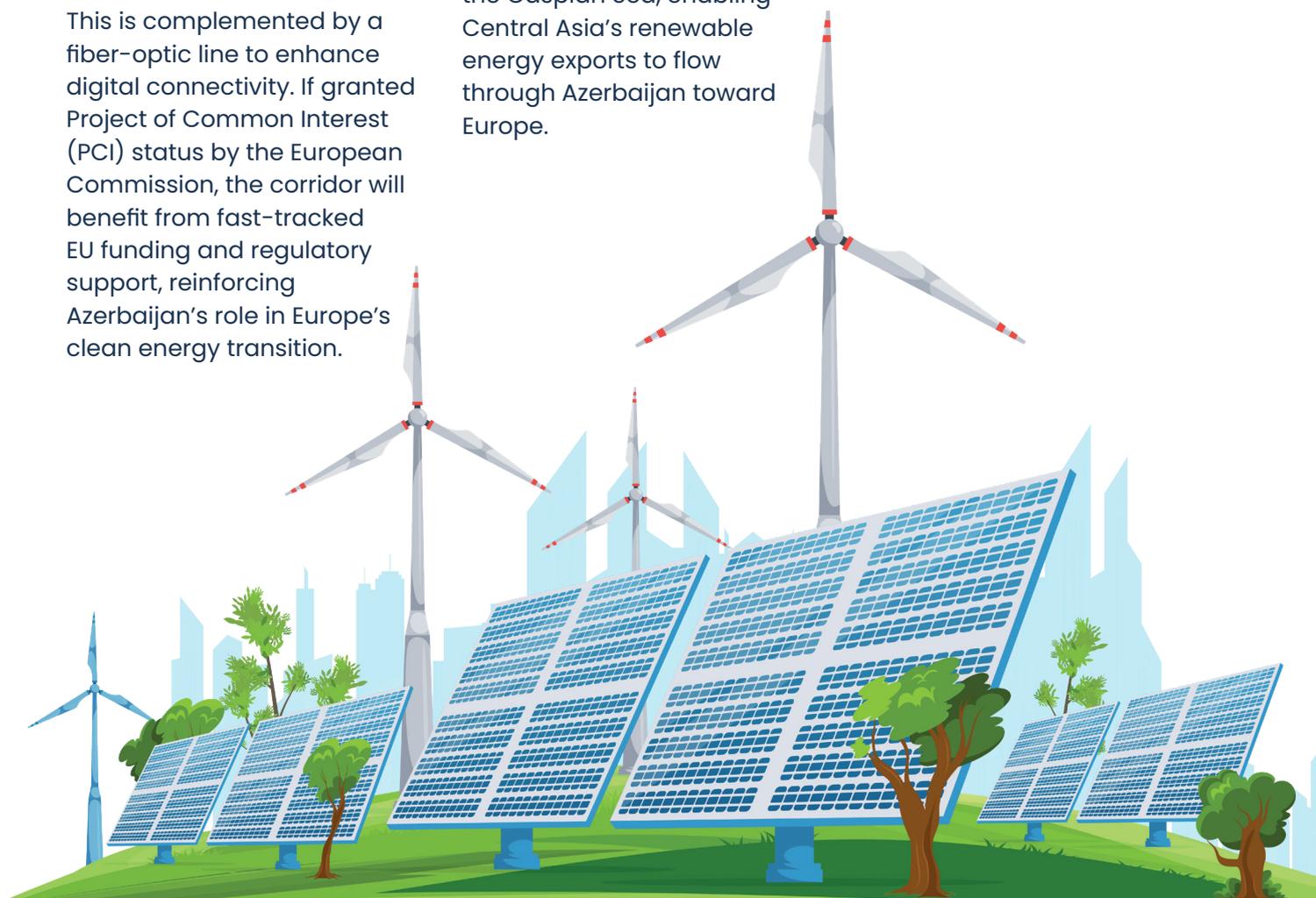
At the same time, Azerbaijan has turned its geographic proximity to both Asia and Europe into a practical advantage by investing heavily in transport infrastructure, such as the Port of Baku, a modern shipbuilding plant, upgraded rail links, and logistics hubs—forming the backbone of the Middle Corridor.

These developments have boosted east-west cargo volumes and strengthened Azerbaijan's role in transcontinental trade between China and Europe.

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan recently signed an agreement to lay a green energy cable across the Caspian Sea, enabling Central Asia's renewable energy exports to flow through Azerbaijan toward Europe.

Moreover, Azerbaijan continues to be a key natural gas supplier, delivering gas to 12 countries—10 of them European, including 8 EU members. It already supplies 50% of Bulgaria's gas demand and is expanding its footprint.

For instance, a new Azerbaijani-financed gasification project in Korçë, Albania, is set to begin this year, following successful investments in Georgia, where gasification rates increased from 30% to 80%. Similar discussions are ongoing with other European partners.



Middle Corridor in Motion: How Azerbaijan and Georgia Are Shaping Eurasia's Transport Future



Georgia's new President, Mikheil Kavelashvili, chose Azerbaijan for his first official foreign visit.

During his visit to Baku, Kavelashvili noted that the friendship between two countries is based on mutual respect and the consideration of each other's national interests.

The Georgia–Azerbaijan friendship and strategic partnership are uniquely special and exemplary, Kavelashvili said.

On his part, President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that the joint investment projects uniting the two countries are of strategic significance for a broader geography.

The Azerbaijani leader noted that the oil and gas projects, pipelines, and transport and communication initiatives jointly implemented by Azerbaijan and Georgia are truly vital.

They are not only key for the South Caucasus but are projects that have redrawn the energy and transport map of the wider Eurasian region, the head of state said.

The projects born out of Azerbaijan–Georgia relations are significant on a continental scale. Their success motivates both countries to deepen their cooperation and expand into other sectors.

President Ilham Aliyev noted that in transport and communications, the newly built railways and ports have created a strong synergy in both Azerbaijan and Georgia. According to him, today the projects linking the two neighboring countries have become an integral part of the Middle Corridor.

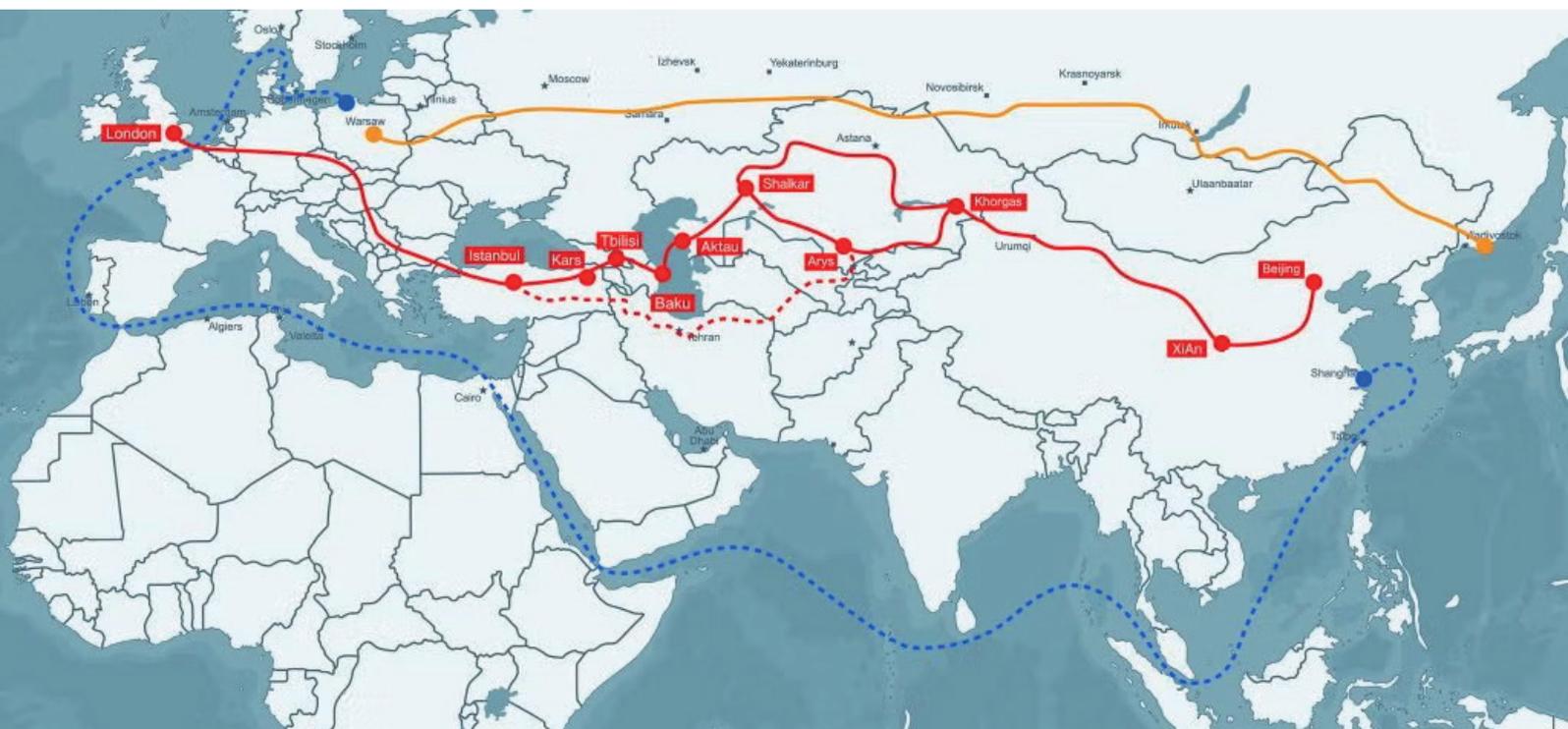
Noting that the section of the Middle Corridor in the South Caucasus includes the corridor passing through Azerbaijan and Georgia, the head of state added that the volume of goods transported through the territories of the two countries increases every year, and this volume is expected to grow even further.

The South Caucasus segment of the Middle Corridor is a unique transit route. Its originates at the Alat Port on the Caspian Sea in the east and stretches to the Port of Batumi on the Black Sea in the west.

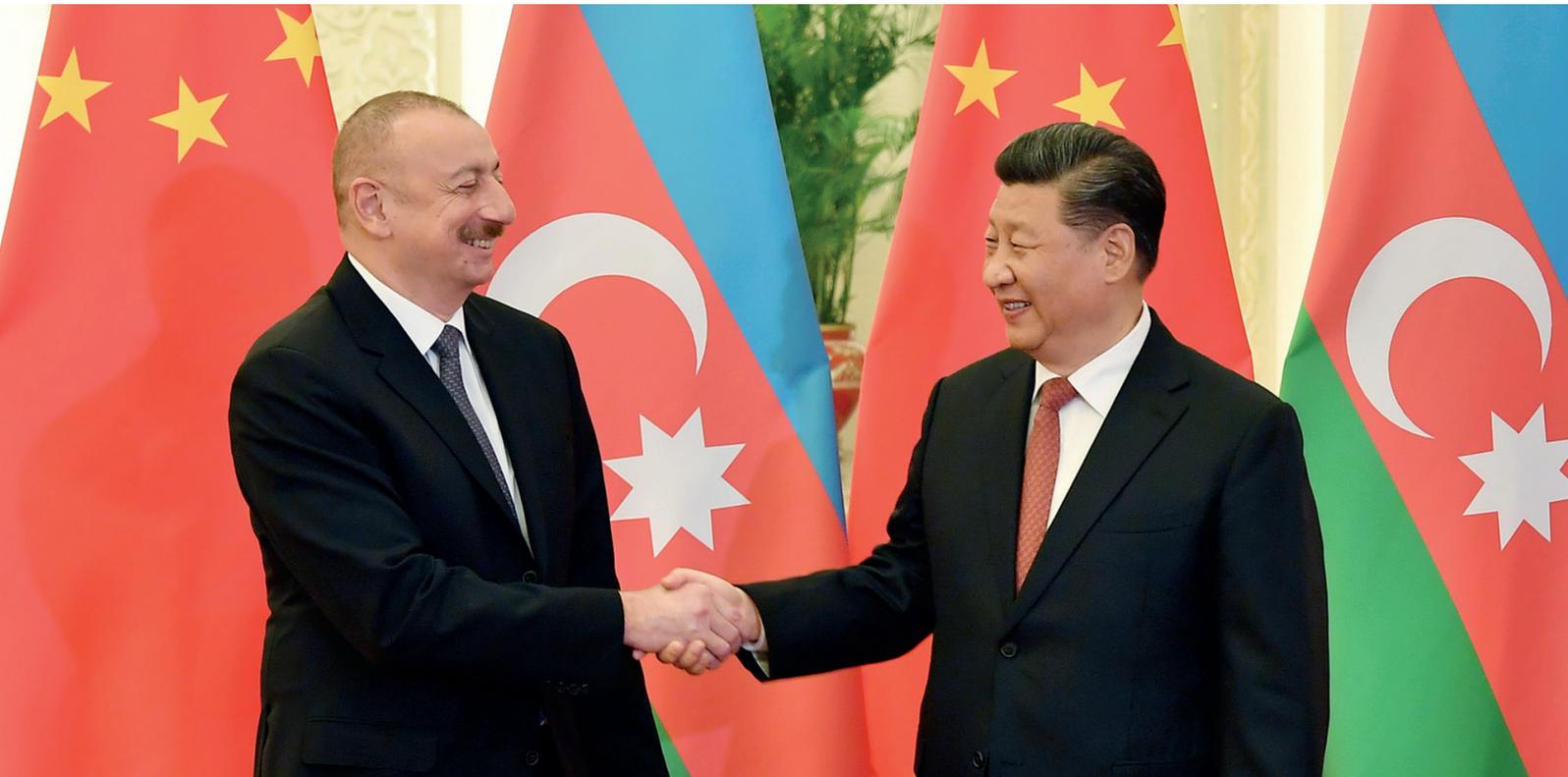
In other words, this is a multimodal network—rail and road—that connects two seas through two countries.

The efficient operation of this segment significantly impacts trade volumes between China and Europe, far beyond the regional scale. To enhance this effectiveness, synchronizing the operations of the Alat and Batumi ports—as well as the customs services of Azerbaijan and Georgia—is essential.

Currently, the South Caucasus segment of the Middle Corridor operates like clockwork—not just between the two neighbors, but also in coordination with their partners in Central Asia.



Europe's Gateway to China: Azerbaijan's Expanding Role in Trade and Transit



As Europe intensifies its engagement with the East, Azerbaijan is rapidly emerging as a key player—not only as a vital trading partner for China, but as Europe's most strategic window into the Chinese market and beyond.

Situated at the heart of the Middle Corridor, Azerbaijan is proving indispensable in linking Europe and Asia through efficient, modern, and secure transport and trade routes.

China currently ranks as Azerbaijan's fourth-largest trading partner and holds the top position in imports, accounting for nearly 18%. In 2024, it represented 7.9% of Azerbaijan's total foreign trade—approximately \$3.7 billion—marking a notable 20.7% increase compared to the previous year.

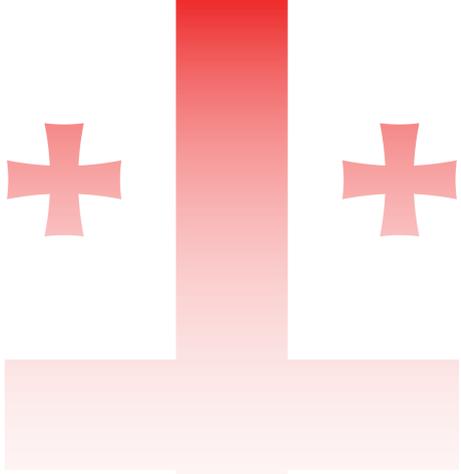
This upward trend has only accelerated: in the first quarter of 2025 alone, bilateral trade surged by nearly 40%.

With 375 Chinese-capital companies registered and 298 actively operating in Azerbaijan, the country is becoming a dynamic hub for Chinese businesses seeking access not only to the Caucasus, but to the broader European market. Following President Ilham Aliyev's recent visit to China, that number is expected to climb further. During the visit, a major business forum saw companies from both nations sign investment agreements worth more than \$300 million—figures that President Aliyev believes could grow substantially.

Azerbaijan has invested heavily in infrastructure: a modern sea port, railroads, a shipbuilding plant, and expanded logistics capabilities have transformed it into a premier overland trade artery. As a result, in 2024, transit shipments between China and Europe via Azerbaijan reached 378,000 tons. Last year alone, 287 freight trains traveled from China to Azerbaijan, and this number continues to rise.

Chinese firms are also increasingly involved in Azerbaijan's clean energy transformation. The China Energy Engineering Corporation Limited is leading several major renewable projects, including a 1-gigawatt offshore wind farm in the Caspian Sea and solar initiatives in the Fuzuli district. These initiatives align with Azerbaijan's broader climate goals and its commitment to international sustainability efforts, especially ahead of the COP29 conference to be held in Baku.

By 2030, Azerbaijan's renewable energy agreements are expected to yield 6,500 megawatts of clean power. The country is also pioneering a green shift in public transport, with a goal of transitioning to fully sustainable mobility nationwide.



Georgia

Economy

What's Next for Georgia? A Nation Charging Toward Energy Freedom

Once gripped by darkness and desperate shortages in the 1990s, Georgia is now pursuing an ambitious path toward energy independence. What began as a national struggle for survival in the post-Soviet era has evolved into a vision for sustainable self-sufficiency in energy. With growing electricity demand and the memory of past crises still fresh, Georgia is investing in a diversified energy future. Here's a look at what was, what is, and what may come.

As economies grow, so does energy consumption. Georgia's rapid GDP expansion in recent years is no exception. Experts forecast that by 2030, Georgia's electricity consumption will rise by more than 70%, reaching approximately 22 billion kilowatt-hours. This could pose a real threat of energy shortages if not addressed in time.

Recent data supports these projections. In 2024, Georgia consumed 14.4 billion kWh, a 5.1% increase from the previous year, while domestic production slightly dropped to 14.2 billion kWh, marking a 1.1% decrease.

The government, mindful of past hardships, is taking proactive steps to minimize electricity imports by 2030 and to ensure that most of the country's energy needs are met domestically.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia faced one of the most severe energy crises in its history. Electricity was available only for a few hours a day. Candles and kerosene were essential household items. Families cooked daily to avoid spoilage, students studied in coats and gloves, and public transport was unreliable at best.

For a short time, natural gas from Turkmenistan kept the country afloat. But in the early 1990s, unpaid debts ended the supply, and the infrastructure fell into disrepair. A 1996 bilateral agreement officially set Georgia's debt to Turkmenistan at \$393.6 million, later repaid through goods and services provided by Georgian companies.

A short progress that began in 2003 was followed by another crisis in 2006, when explosions on a gas pipeline in the North Caucasus left both Georgia and Armenia without power and gas for nearly a month.

Today, Georgia imports most of its energy, with Azerbaijan being the primary supplier of natural gas. In 2024, Azerbaijan supplied 75 percent or 2.3 billion cubic meters (bcm) of Georgia's total 3.1 bcm gas needs.



In 2023, Azerbaijan's share in Georgia's 3.32 bcm of gas imports stood at 78.5 percent. This year, 3.32 bcm of gas purchases is expected with supplies from Azerbaijan estimated at 2.91 bcm.

From 2013 to 2024, Georgia constructed 64 hydroelectric plants, one wind power station, and two thermal plants. The government introduced a price difference agreement model (CFD) to attract both domestic and foreign investors to the renewable energy sector. Under this model, the government covers the price difference between a set contractual rate and the market price for 15 years, ensuring investment security.

The Inguri Hydroelectric Plant near Jvari in the Svaneti region remains the backbone of Georgia's power supply. With a maximum capacity of 1,300 MW, it generates nearly half of the country's electricity. The dam, 271.5 meters high and 728 meters long, is one of the largest arched dams in the world and a cultural heritage monument since 2015.

To diversify, Georgia turned to alternative sources like wind and solar. The country's only wind plant, Kartli, built near Gori in 2016, generated 77.57 million kWh in 2024—just 0.5% of the national total. Although symbolic as the first commercial wind power station in the South Caucasus, its impact remains limited.

Plans to build large hydroelectric projects—Namakhvani, Nenskra, and Khudoni—have faced strong local opposition, especially from environmentalists and residents. The most notable failure came in 2021 with the suspension of the Namakhvani HPP project, which could have added 15% to the country’s electricity production. Investor ENKA withdrew, citing public unrest and poor communication from the government.

The Nenskra HPP, initially launched in 2012, remains stalled despite a billion-dollar investment plan. The Khudoni HPP—originally initiated in the 1980s and estimated at \$1.1 billion for a 702 MW capacity—has also seen multiple failed attempts at revival. In late 2022, the government announced its intention to buy back the project and restart development.

Georgia's journey to energy independence has spanned over three decades. From kerosene-lit homes to modern renewable energy projects, the country has laid the foundation for a diversified energy future. While full independence is still a goal, not a reality, many once-distant ambitions have already been realized.



Georgia Eyes Government Efficiency Overhaul Inspired by U.S. DOGE Model

In a move that signals an ambitious effort to modernize the machinery of governance, the Georgian government has introduced draft legislation to establish a new state body: the Government Efficiency Department.

While the official explanation frames it as a domestic initiative aimed at improving coordination within the executive branch, the proposed structure closely mirrors a recent American innovation—Donald Trump’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk.

The proposal, submitted by the Administration of the Government of Georgia, seeks to create a centralized department responsible for monitoring the implementation of decisions across the executive power spectrum.

Its mandate would include oversight of ministries and subordinate agencies, ensuring that state decisions translate more effectively into action.

Notably, the department would not have jurisdiction over special-purpose institutions—namely, agencies dealing with national security, defense, intelligence, and law enforcement. This carve-out appears designed to avoid conflicts with highly sensitive state structures, preserving the traditional boundaries of executive autonomy in security-related areas.

Vakhtang Bachashvili, the Parliamentary Secretary of the Government, was quick to reassure critics that the new department would not interfere with the existing powers of the State Audit Office.

Instead, he said, its function would be “coordinating and supportive,” aimed at preventing administrative inefficiencies and improving inter-agency collaboration. The auditing of state bodies, he emphasized, would remain under the purview of the existing audit system.

Interestingly, the official documentation does not cite any international precedent as the basis for the department’s creation. However, the timing and design of the initiative have led many observers to draw comparisons to the U.S. model.



After returning to office in 2025, President Donald Trump established the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), appointing tech mogul Elon Musk to lead it. DOGE’s mission was centered around streamlining federal operations, updating outdated government technologies, reducing budget waste, and optimizing bureaucratic procedures. While Georgia’s department may not have the same tech-heavy focus or celebrity leadership, the conceptual similarities are hard to ignore. Both initiatives aim to bring greater discipline and performance measurement to state governance—albeit within very different political and administrative cultures.

Whether the new Government Efficiency Department will serve as a meaningful engine of reform or merely a symbolic gesture remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that Georgia is engaging in a broader conversation about how to make government more effective in an era where public expectations for speed, transparency, and accountability are rising. The proposed structure could mark a step forward—if implemented with clarity, oversight, and genuine reformist intent.



newsgeorgia.ge

Economic Diplomacy in action: Georgia Builds Bridges With Trump Administration



Georgia is actively working to strengthen ties with the new U.S. administration under Donald Trump. During an official visit to Washington, Georgian Economy Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister Levan Davitashvili emphasized the alignment of values between Tbilisi and Washington.

“The convictions of Georgia’s current leadership fully align with the values of the new U.S. administration,” Levan Davitashvili said.

Speaking after his meeting at the US State Department with Deputy Assistant Secretary Joshua Huck, Davitashvili stated that this alignment will help create a forward-looking agenda for cooperation.

He also met with officials from the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Department of the Treasury, calling the meetings productive. Discussions focused on bilateral cooperation, future trade plans, financial issues, and U.S. participation in financial institutions. Sanctions enforcement was also part of the agenda.

Davitashvili noted that further meetings with other American agencies aimed at deepening U.S.–Georgia relations are ongoing.

Archil Sikharulidze, founder of the SIKHA Foundation research institute, spoke about Georgia’s strategy to reset its relationship with the U.S. following Donald Trump’s return to power.

“Georgia placed its bet on Donald Trump back in October. This geopolitical move began to pay off in January, though signs of change were visible as soon as Trump won. The U.S. embassy in Georgia, which had been actively funding protests and anti-government activities, ceased this activity. Ambassador Robin Dunnigan – previously a central figure in opposition to the ruling ‘Georgian Dream’ party – disappeared from the public eye. Recently, after refusing meetings with officials for a year, she visited the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economy, clearly under orders from Washington,” Archil Sikharulidze said.

He added that "Georgian Dream" has finally established contact with new officials at the State Department.

"It's long been clear ideologically that the Biden administration's policies were incompatible with those of 'Georgian Dream.' Since Russia's special military operation began in February 2022, the Georgian government's stance has been to avoid provoking or confronting Russia, maintain internal and regional stability, and rely on the conservative, Orthodox majority that supports family values. In that sense, 'Georgian Dream' is a much better strategic partner for Donald Trump than the opposition or Salome Zourabichvili. That's why the Georgian government has been seeking direct engagement with the new White House."

However, Sikharulidze also pointed out uncertainties in how exactly the relationship reset will proceed. A key point of contention is the deep-water port project in Anaklia, which was originally promoted during Trump's first term as a counterweight to Russian and Chinese economic influence. The project has since largely been handed over to China — a major red flag for the Trump administration, which sees China as a strategic rival.

"The key issue now is how 'Georgian Dream' can convince Trump that Chinese involvement in the Anaklia port will not harm U.S. interests in the region."

Despite this challenge, Georgia holds strategic advantages that could attract the Trump administration's attention:

"Georgia is a logistics hub. All roads, pipelines, and cables that bypass Russia and follow the East–West corridor go through Georgia. The country lies right at Russia's doorstep, making it a long-standing Western interest. It borders NATO member Türkiye and provides access to other regions. The Anaklia port itself has the potential to compete with Russian ports on the Black Sea. Georgia's strategic location is what will keep Washington interested," Archil Sikharulidze said.



info.imedi.ge



CASPIAN - ALPINE
SOCIETY

Contact information

Freigutstrasse 10, 8002 Zürich

info@caspian-alpine.org

www.caspian-alpine.org