

Politics

UNICEF says closing schools leaves 50,000 children in Georgia without access to education

FULL STORY ON Page 2

Economics

Hadron Therapy Center project works launched at KIU

FULL STORY ON Page 3

ADB supports Georgia's COVID-19 vaccine plan

FULL STORY ON Page 2

Girchi calls for Parliament to refuse suspension of 51 opposition seats



Iago Khvichia, Vakhtang Megreishvili, and Aleksandre Rakviashvili; (Photo courtesy Netgazeti.ge)

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

On February 1, three MPs of the opposition Girchi party—Iago Khvichia, Aleksandre Rakviashvili, and Vakhtang Megreishvili announced that in case the Georgian Parliament satisfies the request of 51 opposition MPs and suspends their seats tomorrow, they will too suspend their

own seats. The Girchi MPs also addressed the ruling Georgian Dream party to not support the decision of the opposition MPs to suspend their seats.

Khvichia, Rakviashvili, and Megreishvili added that the negotiations were carried out with the help of the country's dip corps, and neither the ruling party nor the opposition has publically

expressed that desire to quit the negotiations. Thus, none of the sides can be blamed for jeopardizing negotiations, however, Georgian Dream as a ruling party is responsible for the conduct of the controversial October 2020 elections, which is why it is also responsible for deescalating the ongoing political parties.

"We believe that the suspension of the

seats of our colleagues will both undermine the negotiations, worsen the crisis, and will, possibly, make the crisis irreversible. Thus, we call upon our colleagues from the Georgian Dream party to show that they are ready to cooperate and work together. Do not support the suspension of the mandates. Postpone this decision and give some more time for the members of the Parliament and their voters to realize the importance of reaching an agreement and the risks associated with the failure to do so.

"If despite our request, the Parliament votes in favor of the suspension of the mandates, we will treat it as a conscious decision of the ruling Georgian Dream party to quit the negotiations with the opposition bloc, and all of the MPs of the Girchi party will also suspend their respective seats," the party has announced.

MPs of the 6 opposition parties have already requested the suspension of their seats in the Parliament in defiance of the results of the Parliamentary Elections that took place last year. As of right now, only 4 out of 60 opposition MPs have entered the Parliament.

Girchi won four seats in the 10th convocation of the Georgian Parliament. One of the co-founders of the party, Zurab Japaridze quit Girchi shortly after the election results were announced and created a Girchi party of his own. On February 2, the Parliament will hold a vote on whether or not to satisfy the request for the suspension of mandates submitted by the opposition parties last year.



UNICEF says closing schools leaves 50,000 children in Georgia without access to education



UNICEF believes closing schools must be a measure of last resort, after considering all the other options.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

UNICEF Georgia welcomes the government's decision to re-open schools gradually. According to the statement published by UNICEF Georgia yesterday, the safe opening of schools and pre-schools should be a priority when lifting COVID-related restrictions in the country.

UNICEF notes in the statement that the closure of schools

has had a negative impact on children around the world. Their health, development, safety, and well-being are at risk. Children with disabilities and those from families in poverty are under the increased risk of being left behind. UNICEF points out physical and mental problems faced by children left without daily interaction with peers; they show loss of physical fitness and mental distress. UNICEF believes that closing schools should be an

extreme measure, after considering every other alternative as "without the safety net that school often provides, they (children) are more vulnerable to abuse, child marriage, and child labor."

The statement reads that where there are high levels of community transmission, where health systems are under extreme pressure and closing schools is inevitable, protecting measures must be taken. The measures should ensure that children at risk of violence in their homes, or those reliant upon school meals, whose parents are front-line workers are

able to continue their education in classrooms.

Per the government's decision, the educational process has been resumed in the classrooms in Georgia, however, the lifting of restriction does not apply to Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Rustavi. In this regard, UNICEF notes that Children in several big cities who are still affected by the closure of schools are forced to rely on virtual learning. As the statement reads, now that digital learning has become a major means of accessing education, unequal access to the Internet is further deepening existing inequalities.

"The closing of schools leaves more than 50,000 children in Georgia with no access to education. It is crucial that catch-up classes are provided to ensure that children, who have been unable to learn remotely are not left behind," UNICEF notes.

UNICEF calls on the government to prioritize the vaccination of teachers once medical personnel and high-risk populations receive the Covid-19 vaccine. UNICEF believes that this approach will help protect teachers from the virus, and will allow them to teach in person, and ultimately keep schools open.



"If children are faced with another year of school closures, the effects will be felt for generations to come," reads UNICEF Georgia's statement.

ADB supports Georgia's COVID-19 vaccine plan

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

On Monday, Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced that the bank has helped the government of Georgia develop its National Plan for Covid-19 vaccine. According to Georgian Health Minister Ekaterine Tikaradze, by the end of 2021, 1.7 million Georgian citizens will be vaccinated.

The information released by ADB reads that the plan, approved by Prime Minister Giorgi

Gakharia on January 21, will enable the deployment, implementation, and monitoring of COVID-19 vaccines, once they become available in the country.

"The plan covers legal, regulatory, and institutional aspects of vaccine deployment; cold-chain and logistical requirements; and the principles underpinning prioritization for certain target populations during the rollout," ADB stated and added that the bank has played a key role in the development of the plan in coordination with the World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, and other development partners.

As Tikaradze noted, with the



"The plan will help Georgia save lives and fully reopen," says ADB Country Director for Georgia Shane Rosenthal.

CONTINUED ON Page 3

Weather

Tuesday, February 2

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 15°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 2°C

Wednesday, February 3

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 16°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 3°C

published by
The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,
0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze
Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Natalia Kochiashvili
Executive Editor

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.3048; Euro - 3.9909; GBP - 4.5296; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.3625; Swiss Franc - 3.6888

Hadron Therapy Center project works launched at KIU



The treatment of the first patient is scheduled for 2024.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The design works of the Hadron Therapy Center have started at Kutaisi International University (KIU). The project is implemented by one of the world's leading architectural bureaus, the Spanish IDOM team. Representatives of the company visited the campus last week. Teams from IBA (Belgium), a leading company in the treatment of cancer through proton therapy, also arrived in Georgia to participate in the project.

The contract between KIU and IBA signed in the beginning of 2020, includes the production of Proteus®ONE clinical equipment and the production of an additional cyclotron for scientific research. Proton therapy center will be installed on the campus of the university.

The research center will be able to conduct scientific re-

search in elementary particle physics, radiation physics and biophysics. The research center will also support the establishment of a proton therapy center, in conjunction with the KIU School of Medicine.

"The Hadron Therapy Center is the biggest challenge in the field of healthcare," said Pablo Elores, the representative of IDOM Architectural Bureau in Kutaisi, who is the project director and architect. According to him this project is important not only locally for the region where it is being created, but for the whole country, because today the Cancer Research Center is responding to the challenging demands that are being created around the world.

"The IBA is pleased to participate in this wonderful project. It has extensive experience in the field of cancer treatment with the newest technologies," said Carlos

Egeres-Simones, Design Manager of the Hadron Therapy Center. He also informed that IBA is currently working on its tech-

nologies and in particular, cyclotrons, and expressed hope that after the process is completed, it will be possible to install these cyclotrons immediately.

The opening of the Hadron Therapy Center at the University is planned for 2024, the project is funded and implemented by the International Charity Fund "Cartu with a grant of about €40 million.

According to Nikoloz Chkhetiani, Chairman of the Board of the Cartu Foundation, Hadron therapy center will be a unique segment of KIU, which will allow the university to conduct research and experiments in the field of physics. It will also

function as a medical center that will offer oncology patients treatment with a new methodology.

KIU opened in 2020 and received its first stream of students. The university aims to gradually become one of the leading centers of international research and education in the region. Undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programs will be developed on the basis of the University Laboratories by attracting relevant science and leading experts in the field at KIU.

The University cooperates with the leading higher education institution in Europe - the Technical University of Munich (TUM).



Hadron therapy uses beams of charged particles like protons, carbon ions and other ions to kill tumor tissue. Unlike photons or electrons, which release energy along the length of their path, the charged particles deliver most of their damaging energy in one burst inside the tumor.

ADB supports Georgia's COVID-19 vaccine plan

CONTINUED FROM Page 2



According to the Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia, Georgia will be among the first 18 countries that will receive the Pfizer vaccine in the nearest future.

support of the Asian Development Bank, the ministry was able to quickly mobilize the experts and developed a comprehensive plan, according to which, 1.7 million Georgian citizens will be vaccinated by the end of the year.

ADB Country Director for Georgia Shane Rosenthal stated that the plan would help Georgia save lives and fully reopen the economy.

"The National Plan for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment is an important prerequisite for securing Georgia's access to COVID-19 vaccines and their smooth and successful deployment," Rosenthal stated.

ADB has significantly helped Georgia during the crisis by providing a financial and technical assistance package to mitigate the damage caused by the COVID-19. The statement reads that last year, in December, ADB approved a \$ 2.5 million grant financed from ADB's Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund with a contribution by the Government of Japan to provide necessary supplies and services for the communities affected by the pandemic. In May and October of 2020, the bank also approved loans of \$100 million and \$200 million to curb the spread of the disease, protect the livelihoods of the most vulnerable population, and strengthen Georgia's public financial management and social protection systems. Last August, ADB provided another grant for Georgia to obtain PCR equipment.