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in the focus of BBC



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## Economics

Machavariani's statement  
about entrepreneurs'  
income

According to the Minister of  
Finance, Ivane Machavariani,  
opening borders may cause  
economic crises instead  
of growth.

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# Hungarian Minister of foreign affairs and trade visits Georgia



"Georgia is EaP leader, distinguished NATO ally," Hungarian FM Szijjarto said. Photo: GoG

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

**H**ungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto paid a visit to Georgia on July 6<sup>th</sup>, making him the first high-ranking foreign official to travel to Georgia during the novel coronavirus pandemic. He announced that his arrival to Georgia amid the pandemic is a 'signal of our special ties and cooperation.'

Szijjarto held a meeting with the Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia. Szijjarto praised the reforms carried out by the Georgian government and the country's successful fight against the coronavirus. Parties discussed issues of bilateral cooperation and future prospects. The focus was on the country's European and Euro-Atlantic integration

agenda. Hungarian foreign minister noted that the country is a leader in terms of both the Eastern Partnership and NATO relations, adding that Georgia is a clear example of what kind of alliance it can have with non-NATO member states.

According to him, the efforts of the Georgian government and the people allowed for the country to be successful in fighting against the coronavirus.

Gakharia and Szijjarto discussed tourism opportunities and stated that lifting travel restrictions should take place gradually and cautiously.

Hungarian minister stated that Georgia has a favourable business environment and Hungarian companies are interested to start up their businesses here,

citing the activities of Hungarian airlines Wizz Air in Georgia.

During his meeting with Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani Szijjarto said that many Hungarians are eager to visit the country and agreed to create a working group for the fast exchange of information.

According to Szijjarto, Hungary's Exim Bank is opening a €155-million investment line for Georgia, which will be used by Hungarian businessmen who want to invest in Georgia, and the money will be spent on joint Georgian-Hungarian projects. He explained that 'the line of credit will be used by Hungarian businessmen aiming to invest in Georgia' and expressed hope that the line of credit will be fully utilised.

The two ministers also discussed the possibility of reopening borders. Georgian Foreign Ministry cited Szijjarto:

"We understand Georgia's motive for extending travel restrictions. As successful countries in the fight against the pandemic, we both take careful steps. We agreed to create a working group to regularly exchange relevant information."

The talks also touched upon the flights by the Hungarian low-cost airline operator Wizz Air, which has a base at the Kutaisi International Airport and offers low-fare routes to the rest of Europe. Hungarian Minister said Georgia remains among its priority destinations, Wizz Air successfully cooperates with Georgia and once the airline is fully up and running again, Georgia will be its 'priority destination.'

"Wizz Air does not go anywhere, it stays in Georgia and continues to operate," Zalkaliani said at a news conference after the meeting. He called the recent reports that the Hungarian airline is leaving Georgia speculative.

According to the Minister, the Georgian side is communicating with the representative of the airline to plan flights in a consistent and step-by-step manner, which will be implemented in the near future and, first of all, will depend on the epidemiological situation.

Wizz Air's low-cost airlines operated flights to 13 countries from Georgia to more than 25 destinations before the Coronavirus pandemic. Currently flights are suspended and the airline's base in Georgia is closed.

Szijjarto reiterated his country's support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He will also meet with the Georgian Ministers of Economy, Regional Development and Education, as well as Georgian Orthodox Patriarch Ilia II.



Szijjarto is the first high-ranking guest to arrive in Georgia since the World Health Organization announced the coronavirus pandemic.



# Success of Georgia in the focus of BBC



Paata Imnadze, Tengiz Tsertsvadze and Amiran Gamkrelidze

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

British Broadcasting Corporation dedicates an article to the Georgian epidemiologists with the headline “How ‘three musketeers’ helped Georgia fight virus.” The author pays attention to the dedication of epidemiologists, governments “swift response” to the challenge and the country’s overall success in COVID-19 terms.

The author of the article, Rayhan Demytrie points out that Georgia is included in a list of 15 non-EU states the European Union considers safe enough to open its borders to and adds that it is the only former Soviet Republic to achieve this.

The article suggests compari-

son according to which ‘coronavirus has been raging’ in neighbouring Armenia. Hundreds of new cases of Covid-19 are being registered there every day, the total number of infections has exceeded 26,000 and the death toll stands at nearly 500.

As the article notes, the first case of coronavirus in Georgia was detected at the end of February which was followed by the government’s ‘swift’ response. By mid-March, all the schools and universities as well as non-essential businesses were closed down and public transport was suspended. After the introduction of a state of emergency on 21 March, large gatherings and intra-city travel were banned.

Nightly curfews were introduced.

The author also pays attention to the restrictions imposed during Orthodox Easter, ‘Georgia’s most important religious holiday,’ when the authorities banned private transport and closed cemeteries.

In the email sent to BBC by the Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia, he states, “We took note of the pandemic’s threat a month before the first confirmed case. Given our country’s specifics, such as our location and small size, we could not use the examples of other countries.”

The article stresses Russia’s continuous disinformation campaign against the Lugar Labo-

ratory, an institution that was one of the most important indicators of Georgia’s success.

“The NCDC’s Lugar Laboratory has been a constant target of Russian disinformation, which has accused it of being part of a US secret bio-weapons programme,” reads the article.

The role of ‘three musketeers’ in the fight against the virus, was especially highlighted in the article. The trio includes the head of the NCDC, Amiran Gamkrelidze, the person in charge of the Lugar lab, Paata Imnadze, and the main virologist, Tengiz Tsertsvadze, who is head of Tbilisi’s infectious diseases, Aids and immunology research centre.

The article encloses the statement of the head of the NCDC, Amiran Gamkrelidze.

“By the gold standard, we have made almost 30,000 PCR tests per million of our population. The recovery rate has risen to 86%, but unfortunately, we had 15 deaths which represent

1.6%. Compared to global rates it is very low,” said Gamkrelidze.

Another popular figure, Marina Ezugbaia, medical head of Tbilisi’s infectious diseases hospital, who was the face of the public health campaign is also mentioned.

The article pays attention to the effective steps taken in order to prevent virus spread, which includes severe penalties for disobeying the rules during the state of emergency and ‘Stay Home’ warnings, digitally displayed at bus stops and the same message broadcasted on people’s devices by mobile phone operators.

Lastly, the article notes that many Georgian businesses and restaurants have reopened, though the wearing of masks is obligatory in indoor public spaces and there are tight rules on distancing and restrictions on large gatherings.

In total, there are confirmed 953 cases in Georgia and the rate of new confirmed cases is low. 830 patients have recovered and 15 have died.



There are now 19 laboratories across Georgia testing for coronavirus.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

According to the Georgian government’s decision, University entrants living in the occupied regions of Georgia will be enrolled at the universities without passing Unified National Exams and the government will fully fund tuition fees.

As the Ministry of Education informs, residents of occupied territories who are unable to register for the Unified National Exams or are not eligible to enter the universities, will have the opportunity to enroll at a state-accredited higher education program.

“University entrants living in the occupied territories who have studied for the last two years and have received a general educa-

## University tuition fee financing for the citizens of the occupied territories and the first day of Unified National Exams in Georgia

tion certificate which is approved and recognised by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports will be enrolled without passing Unified National Exams. Under these conditions, the temporary administrative-territorial unit of the Tskhinvali region and the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia will ensure the registration of those wishing to enroll and be financed.” The Ministry of Education said.

Also, Georgian University entrants living in Azerbaijani, who have registered for the 2020 Unified National Exams but due to the current situation are unable to enter the country in order to attend exams, will also be financed by the government. According to the Ministry, up to 70 University entrants will be

financed based on this decision.

The 6th of July was the first day of Unified National Exams in Georgia. As the head of National Assessment & Examinations Center, Sopho Gorgodze stated to the journalists, the first day passed in a calm atmosphere. Examinees were able to remove masks while writing and if the room temperature reached

30 degrees, turning on the air conditioner was permitted (while the windows would be open as well). As Gorgodze said, reserve space, a place where students with temperature were supposed to be transferred was used only for 4 of the examinees county-wide. There were also

two cases when based on the high temperature of the examinee and the decision of medics, they were not admitted to the exam and received a recommendation of taking PSR tests.



Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia



“The first day of the exams passed in a calm atmosphere,” said Sopho Gorgodze, the head of National Assessment & Examinations Center,

### Weather

Tuesday, July 7

Day ☀️ Clear  
High: 36°C  
Night 🌙 Clear  
Low: 21°C

Wednesday, July 8

Day ☁️ Partly Cloudy  
High: 36°C  
Night 🌧️ Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 22°C

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# Machavariani's statement about entrepreneurs' income



Minister of Finance, Ivane Machavariani

By ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

Machavariani made a statement, saying that opening borders may cause further crises instead of improvement. He stated that in this case the economic decline will be higher than the expected 6% and -7 or -8%.

"I want to tell all Georgian entrepreneurs that if someone thinks that the case of opening borders will increase their income, they are mistaken, because in this case, there will be

very little flow of tourists," stated Machavariani.

Machavariani stated that if the borders are open, about 50,000 tourists could enter by the end of the year, which would be only 0.5% of the number of tourists entering in previous years and will not be enough to boost the economy. He said that since we do not have internal distribution now and virtually all cases are registered at the border, domestic tourism has been easily launched; But he said that

if the virus spreads again after the border is reopened, domestic tourism will decline, which will have a greater impact on the economy. According to him, this will further cause a crisis for local entrepreneurs, cafe and res-

taurant owners, and so on.

The opening of the borders was scheduled for July 1<sup>st</sup> for international tourists. Government officials said that we would be one of the first countries to open borders, but this did not happen

and the process was postponed until July 31<sup>st</sup>. The government is saying that if tourists are admitted, "there will be a danger of another epidemic, which will further hurt the economy."



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- Autonomous supply of water (reservoir) and electricity (generator)

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Suggested selling price: USD 2.5 million, including all equipment and furniture

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