

POLITICS

Political unity Lelo for Georgia files a complaint regarding imposed restrictions during the state of emergency



FULL STORY ON Page 2

ECONOMICS

World Bank to provide €45 million funding



FULL STORY ON Page 3

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Georgian Government's spokesperson Irakli Chikovani announced on July 8th after the Interagency Coordination Council meeting that Georgia will unconditionally reopen its borders to 5 EU nations, Germany, France, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania after months-long closure caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The citizens and residents of the five countries will only be allowed to enter Georgia via direct flights, upon arrival the visitors will be required to fill in e-form, indicating their travel history during the past 2 weeks and provide contact information about the places and people they intend to visit while in Georgia. Those who have a history of traveling to non-EU high-risk countries for the past 14 days will also undergo mandatory testing or quarantine.

With their consent, or in case of temperature exceeding 37 degrees as a result of thermal screening at the border, they will be tested for PCR at the airport.

During each stay in Georgia, during their stay in the country, they will be in proactive communication and will be taken care of by a specially created call center group.

The Government Spokesperson said Georgia reached an agreement with Lufthansa, the largest German airline, to conduct Munich-Tbilisi flights twice a week starting from August. Talks are underway with AirFrance and AirBaltic as well.

Georgia reopens borders with Germany, France and Baltics



► According to the government, work with EU countries that have decided to open the border continues with the relevant procedures. Photo: GoG

As for the rest of the countries, the Council took into account that several countries have opened their borders to states that are not on the list of safe countries defined by the EU.

Note, that on June 30th, the EU included Georgia in the list of 15 safe countries and recommended opening borders for them, which will be updated every 2 weeks. EU states make their decisions individually. Following this recommendation, the government is holding bilateral talks with the EU member states on the opening of the border.

Several EU countries will open the border to Georgia with some restrictions,

and some are not going to open the border at this stage.

According to the Georgian government, Italy, Slovenia and Cyprus are ready to open the border on the condition of a 14-day mandatory quarantine.

At this stage, the borders for Georgia are not opened: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Malta, Finland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. According to the government, a joint commission has been set up with Hungary to work on the restoration of traffic.

Georgia will maintain a similar regime with EU member states that have not opened their borders, and citizens

of countries that have imposed various restrictions on Georgia will have a 14-day mandatory quarantine if they arrive in Georgia and cover the costs themselves.

According to the Georgian government, work with EU countries that have decided to open the border continues with the relevant procedures.

As for the citizens of Georgia, they will undergo a 14-day mandatory quarantine in Georgia after visiting the EU for any purpose. This applies to the five EU countries that Georgia unconditionally opens on the basis of a bilateral agreement.

"In order to promote economic activity in Georgia, business trips from all countries will be carried out smoothly in advance, in accordance with the relevant form and in agreement with the relevant sectoral agency." - The Prime Minister's spokesman said at the briefing.

According to him, the guests who come to Georgia on a business trip have the obligation to take the PCR test on Covid19 with their own funds once every 72 hours, or to pass the mandatory 14-day quarantine, as well as with their own funds. Chikovani says this does not apply to citizens / residents of the five EU member states with whom Georgia unconditionally opens its borders.

Yesterday, 5 new cases of coronavirus were confirmed in Georgia. The total number has increased to 963. 3 more patients were cured of coronavirus. A total of 841 have recovered. As of the morning of July 8th, 107 patients are being treated. 3903 is in quarantine mode and 202 under hospital supervision.



► Georgian Government announced it would open the borders for international tourism starting from July 1st, however the closure of the national borders was extended, with the regular flights being suspended until further notice. Photo: Avianews

Political unity Lelo for Georgia files a complaint regarding imposed restrictions during the state of emergency



► Political Unity Lelo for Georgia

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

On July 8-9th, the constitutional court of Georgia discussed a complaint submitted in May by political Unity Lelo, regarding the existence of violating the constitution of Georgia while declaring and managing the state of emergency by the Parliament, the government and the president of Georgia. Political unity asks the constitutional court to determine a standard according to which the state of emergency should be managed without violating the constitution of Georgia and at the same time interests of the citizens should be protected.

The plaintiff believes that the state of emergency in the country at the time of the pandemic should have been enshrined in the President's decree and that the Georgian govern-

ment should not have had such powers, as the government had restricted various rights in its sole discretion.

As Ana Natavlishvili, one of the Leaders of the party stated, Lelo for Georgia was one of the first to support the declaration of a state of emergency, however when they saw that 'the government started managing the situation bypassing the constitution as a result of which interests of hundreds of citizens were damaged,' the party decided to submit to the court.

According to Natsvlshvili, on July 7th, the president of Georgia asked the parliament for the second time to expand the period of governments' sole governance. Natsvlshvili said that if the Georgian Dream wins the elections again, the citizens have no guarantee that the time period of a government possess-



► Ana Natavlishvili, one of the Leaders of the party stated that undoubtedly stringent sanctions seriously harmed the citizens economically, socially, culturally and psychologically.

ing such power will not expand even more.

Members of the political movement Lelo say that if their lawsuit is upheld by the court, the government will have to compensate the citizens who were fined for violating the curfew.

Grigol Gegelia, one of the members of the party com-

mented that the actions of the government are contrary to the best international democratic practice, which affects the international image of the country as well as the quality of democracy.

Gegelia believes that the politics conducted by the present government is motivated by pro-Russian purposes.

Many politicians believe the restrictions imposed during the state of emergency by the government and the sanctions followed in case of their violation to be unnecessarily harsh and severe.

The sanction for individuals was €3000 (8716 individuals fined) and €15000 for the juridical person (21 fined).

NGOs call for the government to establish Independent Anticorruption Agency

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Non-governmental organisations call for the government to take effective steps in the direction of fighting against corruption. The statement mainly refers to the house of representatives bill which states that Georgia will not receive 15% of financial as-

sistance unless steps will be taken towards strengthening democratic institutions, combating corruption within the government, and ensuring the rule of law in the private sector.

According to the statement on July 5th, 2020 the House Committee on Appropriations of the US Congress published the bill on allocation of finances for 2021 initiated by the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Subcommittee. The bill determines the State Department's priorities for 2021 fiscal year.

"Among others, financial assistance for Georgia in the amount of \$132,025,000 is mentioned in the document. However, the withholding of funds is also indicated in the bill, according to which, 15% of financial assis-



► the statement was signed by the following NGOs: Transparency International-Georgia (TI), Institute for Development of Freedom of Information(IDFI), Civil society Institute(CSI) and Green Alternative.

tance may not be obligated until the Secretary of State determines and reports to the Committees on Appropriations that such government is taking effective steps to strengthen democratic institutions; combat corruption within the government; ensure the rule of law in the private sector is consistent with internationally recognised standards."

NGOs point out that in Georgia, no significant reforms have been implemented in the last few years and that "the progress in this direction is no longer observed, moreover they state that the rate of success in fighting against corruption is aggravating year by year."

CONTINUED ON Page 3

THURSDAY		JULY 9	
Day		Cloudy	
		High:	33°C
Night		Cloudy	
		Low:	21°C
FRIDAY		JULY 10	
Day		Partly cloudy	
		High:	31°C
Night		Thunderstorms	
		Low:	21°C

published by **The Messenger**

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia

Founded by Prof. **Zaza Gachechiladze**
Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Phone: +995 99 56 56 21; +995 77 76 00 00
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Natalia Kochiashvili
Executive Editor

Nino Kavelashvili
Design and Layout

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 - 3.0552 | EURO - 3.4463 | GBP - 3.8159 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.2402 | SWISS FRANC - 3.2354 |

World Bank to provide €45 million in funding

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Finance Minister Ivane Machavariani and the World Bank's regional director for the South Caucasus, Sebastian Molineus, have officially signed an agreement under which Georgia will receive an additional €45 million in funding for Economic Management and Competitiveness Development Policy. This assistance from the World Bank will be used to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the country's economy.

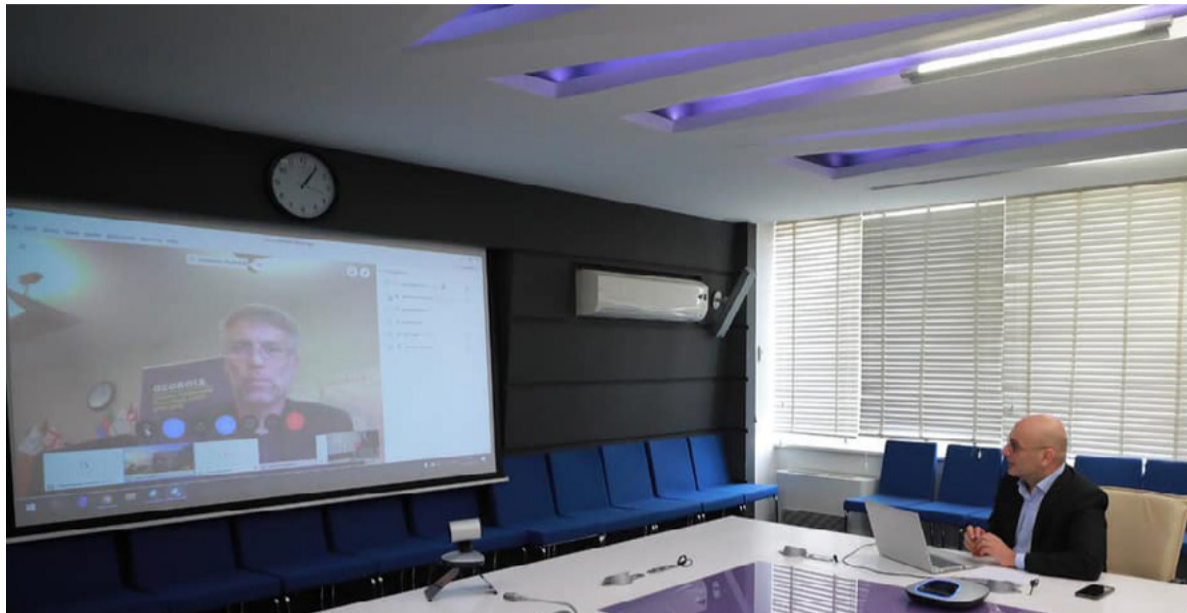
According to the Ministry of Finance, this assistance from the World Bank will be used to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the country's economy. The decision to allocate additional funding was approved by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors on June 30.

The signed agreement is part of the financial support that the Georgian government has received from partner international donor organizations to fight COVID-19 and further rehabilitate the country's economy.

"During this difficult time, we, as a strong partner, stand by Georgia and support the government's swift and effective anti-crisis measures aimed at saving lives, protecting their livelihoods, mitigating the economic consequences of COVID-19 and building strong economic reforms," said Molineus.

Agency reports that the additional financial assistance is related to the financing of €45 million previously allocated for Economic Management and Competitiveness Development Policy Measures, which was approved by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors in March 2020.

The overall goal is to promote reforms that create jobs, increase economic inclusion and maintain resilience. In particular, the focus is on improving the efficiency of the use of state resources; To promote more competitive mar-



► "The support of the World Bank is very important for our country, because it will be specifically aimed at solving the problems caused by COVID-19," said the Minister of Finance.

kets; On the diversification of the financial sector; To improve teacher performance and pay; And strengthening investment promotion.

An additional €45 million has been allocated in the second tranche to alleviate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with financial support from the World Bank for Georgia.

The first, a \$80 million financial aid package, was provided to the country through the 'Rapid Assistance Mechanism' to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on health and social welfare.

The third tranche will focus on helping micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and maintaining jobs that have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.



► Over the next 15 months, the World Bank will allocate about \$ 160 billion to help more than 100 countries to protect poor and vulnerable families, support companies and rebuild their economies.

NGOs call for the government to establish Independent Anticorruption Agency

◀ FROM Page 2

The statement reads that according to the 2019 Business Bribery Risk Index by Trace International, in the last three years business bribery risk increased by 3 points in Georgia. Out of the directions assessed by the index, the direction of corruption deterrence was determined to contain the highest risk.

According to the 2019 Economic Freedom Index of the Heritage Foundation, despite the success in fighting against

petty corruption, high-level corruption by public officials is still a problem.

As we read in the statement, high-level corruption was mentioned as a relevant issue in the 2018 EU Parliament resolution as well.

According to the corruption perception index by Transparency International, in 2019 amongst 180 countries, Georgia was ranked 44th with a score of 56, which is a worsened index compared to last year. According to the corruption perception index, limited separation of powers, abuse of state



► NGOs point out that, in the last few years there have not been any significant reforms for fighting against corruption in Georgia and the progress in this direction is no longer observed.

resources for electoral purposes as well as concentration of power in private hands remain as a problem in the countries of the region.

NGOs call for the government to take into account the recommendations of strategic partners and civil society organizations, implement a thorough analysis of the high-level corruption in the country and take such important responsibility as creating an independent, anti corruption agency, the main function of which will be to investigate and prevent high-level corruption.

With Support from USAID, the Partnership Fund, and StartUp Georgia, New Kombucha Production Facility to Create Jobs Near Administrative Boundary Line

On July 7th, 2020, U.S. Ambassador Kelly Degnan joined Executive Director of the JSC Partnership Fund David Saganelidze, Director of Start-up Georgia Giorgi Lomidze and Governor of Shida Kartli Giorgi Khojevanishvili to launch the construction of Kombucha Brew-

ers Georgia Facility in Karapila village of the Kaspi Municipality located along the Administrative Boundary Line.

“This is in many ways a perfect example of the kind of assistance the U.S. Government provides to Georgia. Right now, we have an empty field. But in

three months, thanks to the initiative of young Georgians and this partnership between USAID, the Partnership Fund and Startup Georgia, we are going to have an organic Kombucha facility here. This is the kind of inclusive economic growth that the U.S. Govern-

ment promotes, particularly in places like this. This is a project that brings jobs to families, to smaller communities, not only to big cities but to communities where there is a lot of initiative, a lot of interest in having these kinds of opportunities. And we are very pleased to be able to

support the kind of initiative these entrepreneurs have shown, and this community has welcomed. At the same time, we do hope it also sends a message to those communities along the Administrative Boundary Line that there are opportunities and that it also demonstrates to communities on the other side of ABL what can be done when communities work together. It is very important to the United States, it underscores our commitment to Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity,” U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan said on July 7th.

By implementing the Kombucha Production Facility project, USAID through its Zrda Activity and Partnership Fund through its Start-up Georgia are investing to start the production and promotion of Kombucha – organic and healthy, naturally fizzy, fermented tea drink rich in vitamins, enzymes and probiotics. According to Kombucha Brewers Georgia, raw materials will be sourced locally, and the major sales market will be Georgia, however they also target to reach export markets in future as the project expands. The project is expected to create 10 new jobs.

“I would like to congratulate the Kombucha Brewers Georgia team, and everyone present with the launch of the new project in one of the villages along the Administrative Boundary Line. This initiative will increase employment opportunities, promote SME growth and economic development of this region. I would like to begin with a special word of thanks to Ambassador Degnan for the continued support of our US partners which is particularly essential for us. We are very grateful to USAID/ Zrda Activity for the very productive cooperation and we strongly believe this project will be one more step forward for economic development of Georgia”, Executive Director of the JSC Partnership Fund David Saganelidze stated during the event.

Start-up Georgia and USAID/ Zrda cooperate and invest in innovative projects that are expected to provide tangible development results to ABL communities across Georgia. Growth and development of MSMEs in the ABL communities will ultimately help to build self-reliant communities that will eventually serve as a model for the rest of Georgia as well as an opportunity to build bridges with residents living in the occupied territories.



U.S. Ambassador Kelly Degnan at “Kombucha Brewers Georgia” Facility groundbreaking in ABL Karapila village of the Kaspi Municipality.

