

POLITICS

City Hall offers free space to restaurants and clubs temporarily



FULL STORY ON Page 2

ECONOMICS

New textile factory opens in Rustavi, aims to employ 3 000



FULL STORY ON Page 3

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

At the special session, on July 14th, Healthcare and Social Issues Committee discussed for accelerated consideration and supported the legislative bill on the Public Health and Criminal Procedure Code, which enables the government to enjoin individual Covid-19 preventive restrictions without declaring a state of emergency till the end of the year. According to the previous also controversial bill adopted two months ago, this power was assigned to the executive branch until July 15th.

The opposition did not participate in voting and protested re-extension of the terms as they considered the disconnection of the parliament from the process to be unconstitutional.

In order to attend the special session, political party European Georgia had aborted boycott. Political opposition European Georgia and fraction Independent Members of Parliament, as well as Parliament's independent deputies, regard the bill as a tool from the government to restrict the supervisory function of the parliament and suppose that the ruling party will use the amendments for their political purposes.

According to the statement of the Parliament of Georgia, one of the initiators of the bill Dimitri Khundadze noted that in order to be prepared for the possible second wave of the virus, the government

The parliament adopts a bill about extending the time period of enjoining restrictions amid COVID-19



► Out of 100 deputies present at the session, 79 supported and 1 MP opposed it.



► The Political Party National Movement did not attend the special session.

should be eligible to manage the situation without declaring the state of emergency, therefore "we must extend Public Health Law until the New Year."

Khundadze also explained that the mobility of the elections could affect the spread of the virus and he believes that in order for the process to be led properly, the government should be granted with a leverage.

Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) also negatively estimates the decision of the parliament, which enables the authority to restrict rights under the sublegislative acts.

As GYLA notes in its statement, even though enjoining such regulations regarding the spread of the coronavirus serves a legitimate purpose, authorising the government with a power of restricting rights does not comply with the standard of Constitution and GYLA believes that mentioned regulations must be enjoined in accordance with a law.

GYLA states that the edge of restricting rights established by the constitution of Georgia as well as the standard of Human Rights and main freedom protection convention requires the rights to be restricted according to the law, with such juridical document that has been adopted with the high legitimacy and extensive engagement of the society. As the statement reads, the sublegislative normative act endorsed on July 14th is not an example of such a document.

City Hall offers free space to restaurants and clubs temporarily

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The meeting of the capital's government was held on 15th of July. Several new decisions and initiatives were voiced at the meeting. As announced, from 10th of September, a zonal-hour parking system will be launched on Pekini Avenue and its surrounding streets in Tbilisi.

According to Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze, parking will be free pre-registered for the residents of this district, persons with disabilities and owners of electric vehicles. For the rest, the parking fee will be €1 per hour. He recalled the pilot projects of Kote Abkhazi Street and the area around Orbeliani Street, where the zonal-hour parking was introduced, adding that it was very successful and showed potential for carrying out next stages.

Kaladze also announced that due to the expected change in the parking rules, 10 information booths will be set up on Pekini Avenue from August 10 where citizens will be able to receive information in detail.

"One important challenge is to upgrade public transport and make it so that citizens prefer public transport over private cars," said Mayor. He noted that concrete steps have already been taken including bringing new buses and reconstructing metro carriages and subway stations.

The mayor of Tbilisi offered the owners of restaurants and clubs, without any tax, to transfer and temporarily use areas owned by the municipality.

Municipality expressed readiness to provide these businesses a temporary benefit, without any tax, as long as these problems exist, in order to give them a chance to use and grow their businesses.



► "I have promised the people of Tbilisi that our city will be the greenest, safest and most well-equipped in Europe," Kaladze said.

Open-air restaurants and cafes have been operating in Georgia since June 1. Closed spaces were also opened from June 8.

In addition, Kaladze said at the meeting of the government of the capital that the project 'Under the Sky of Tbilisi' will be implemented this year as well.

Culture institutions and projects run in Georgia's capital will start benefiting from an increased financial support from the Tbilisi City Hall.

Mayor explained that the city hall would begin allocating a larger budget to events, programmes and organisations of the culture scene, in a bid to help them overcome challenges of the COVID-19 crisis. Thus the culture budget will be increased in order for the city hall to be able to support different representatives of the field and 'enable them to overcome the pandemic period without major pressure.' Lending land and building space - currently owned by the city hall municipality - to entertainment venues, and starting a series of open-air music performances were two of the examples of the city-wide support for culture Kaladze mentioned in his comments.

The Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia and the Kaladze opened a Veterans Recreation and Culture Park (Kikvidze Garden) after rehabilitation. Mayor addressed the citizens gathered on the spot: "We have a lack of parks, but I have promised the people of Tbilisi that our city will be the greenest city in Europe, the most orderly, the most updated, the safest, the most well-equipped. In this, of course, your support is always important," Kaladze said.

In the area of 72,100 square meters, a total of 12,124 trees were planted. €4,500,000 was allocated from the budget of the capital for the works.

The construction of a multi-functional center on the territory of Didi Dighomi in Tbilisi is starting. 9 000 m2 will be arranged in the area and will serve more than 10,000 beneficiaries after full load. Didi Dighomi Center includes a sports equipment store, a multi-functional library, a conference hall, an art school, bowling and board games, as well as underground parking. Construction of a similar sports complex in Varketili has already started.

The sports complex construction program aims to increase access to services, promote a healthy lifestyle and involve young people in sports life. Construction of the facility will be completed in 2021.



► The zone-hour parking system will be launched on Pekini Avenue.

THURSDAY		JULY 16	
Day		Clouds	
		High: 33°C	
Night		Mostly clear	
		Low: 22°C	
FRIDAY		JULY 17	
Day		Sunny	
		High: 34°C	
Night		Thunderstorms	
		Low: 21°C	

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New textile factory opens in Rustavi, aims to employ 3 000

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Local textile enterprise Adjara Textile is building its fourth factory in Georgia which will create 3,000 jobs in four months, announced the Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia who attended the event that marked the launch of the construction of the new factory. On July 14th, the foundation was laid for the construction of a 20,000m² factory on the 38,000 m² land.

The first three factories were built in the Adjara region of Georgia while the fourth and new one is being built in Rustavi. The factory will be built within the state programme Enterprise Georgia and operated by Kartli Textile which is owned by Ajara Textile.

“We are proud that many famous athletes across the world wear a uniform sewn with the inscription ‘Made in Georgia’”, Georgian Economy Minister Natia Turnava said at the launch of the construction of a new textile factory in Rustavi.

According to Turnava, it is very important for the government to develop Georgian production and create more jobs, including in heavy industry and the balance between industrial development and protection from environmental pollution must be kept.

According to Turnava, when the world is fighting Covid-19, any investment is important,



► “Beware of investors, enterprises, today they create products and employ people,” Turnava says.

“but this investment is special as it will employ 3,000 people.”

The Prime Minister also attended the presentation of the construction of Kartli Textile

which was given land from the state at a symbolic price - ₾1 with the buildings located on it.

Construction of this factory should be completed in 4

months. Ajara Textile is a Turkish investment. This is a direct investment and including the other three factories that operate in Georgia the total invest-



► Georgia will produce football uniforms for Liverpool, Chelsea, Borussia Dortmund.

ment of the company amounts to ₾350 million. The company creates products for export and the uniforms sewn in Georgia, including the sports uniforms, is worn today by many famous football players, famous sportsmen from all over the world.

Note that as RFE/RL reported, ‘Made in Georgia’ will be printed on labels on the inside of the uniforms of Liverpool, Chelsea and Borussia Dortmund, which will be released at the end of October. According to the Director of Ajara Textile Gia Lominadze the factory will employ locals, including residents of Gardabani, Marneuli and from nearby villages. All of them will undergo training.

Ajara Textile produces and exports more than 15 million items of apparel per year and cooperates with international brands such as Nike, Adidas and Puma. The company employs 3,500 people. It has been involved in the textile industry since 2009 and has so far combined three garment factories in Batumi, Kobuleti and Poti, employing a total of 3,500 people. The company sells sports products in the international market and cooperates with such major sports brands as Nike, Adidas, Puma, Lotto, Erima, Under Armor and others. The group produces 10,000,000 units of sports products annually, and the launch of a new factory in Rustavi will further increase production.

TDI appeals to court against the National Assessment and Examination Center



BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Tolerance and Diversity Institute released a statement, according to which, on July 15th, 2020, TDI submitted an injunction application to the Tbilisi City Court against NAEC (National Assessment and Examination Center). According to the statement, the center rejected a request of two university entrants, members of the Seventh-Day Adventist church to pass the English language exam on another day other than Saturday.

The university applicants addressed the NAEC on June

30th of 2020 with a request of rescheduling an exam registered on July 18th as they are unable to be tested on Saturday due to their religious beliefs. It is not allowed for the members of this church to be engaged in secular activities, including testing for exams. As TDI states, this right of theirs is protected under the freedom of religion and belief recognized by the Constitution of Georgia and international law.

According to the statement, the request has not been satisfied by NAEC because “the schedule had been already approved.” However, TDI states that the exams in English language are set on three different dates, July 17th- 19th, and since there is a possibility of switching exam dates for the mentioned applicants, considering the fact that they applied their request to NAEC on time, freedom of religion and belief



► As TDI notes, this year, followers of Judaism faced a similar problem as the members of Seventh-Day Adventist Church

is being violated. TDI believes that the right to education is also being violated as due to indifference of the state, these young people will not be able to participate in Unified National Exams of 2020 and to continue their studies in higher educational institutions. “The

refusal of the state entity is also discriminatory,” the statement reads.

TDI finds the state’s ‘insensitivity’ towards freedom of religion and beliefs alarming.

The statement reads that, regarding the UN’s declaration on Elimination of All Forms of

Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, freedom of belief and religion includes a right to rest on religious holidays.

“The injunction application submitted by the TDI on July 15th requests an interim measure of the court to order the NAEC to allow two members of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to sit the English language exam on July 17th or July 19th or any other day except Saturday,” reads the statement.

After the injunction application, TDI will file a lawsuit against the court with the demands of annulling the refusal on the request of rescheduling the exam, determining the facts of religion-based discrimination and the imposition of compensation for damages.

According to the statement, the Public Defender also studies the case.