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BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia, and the speaker of the parliament of Georgia, Archil Talakvadze, met with the newly appointed Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Georgia. During the introductory meeting, the PM congratulated the ambassador on the beginning of his diplomatic mission in Georgia and expressed hope that his work will facilitate further development of the tight partnership between the two countries.

According to the press service of the government administration, the PM and the ambassador stressed the political relations and strategic partnership between the countries in bilateral as well as multilateral formats. Gakharia welcomed the fact that despite the difficult period, the seventh round of the Georgia-UK Wardrop Strategic Dialogue has been successfully conducted, which is 'another demonstration of High-Level partnership between the United Kingdom and Georgia.

The Prime Minister noted that Georgia appreciates the important role of the United Kingdom in the fight against COVID-19 and thanked the UK for its assistance provided to Georgia.

As the press service of the Government Administration informs, Georgia's progress achieved on the path to European integration as well as the country's new role in the wider Black Sea Region was pointed out at the meeting. The parties also focused on Georgia's public administration reform and the importance of maintaining a close partnership in this direction.

Mark Clayton met with speaker Tal-

Georgian PM and the chairman of the parliament meet the newly-appointed British Ambassador



► Mark Clayton, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Georgia and Giorgi Gakharia, the Prime Minister of Georgia.



► UK Ambassador Mark Clayton and the speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, Archil Talakvadze.

akvadze as well and discussed the close political and friendly ties between the two countries. The parties once again remarked upon the success of both countries in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and noted that the activation of trade and economic relations after the crisis is one of

the priority directions of the UK-Georgia bilateral cooperation.

Talakvadze emphasized the UK's role in the process of Georgia's democratic development and thanked the ambassador for the strong support of Georgia's territorial integrity and western aspirations.

On October 2nd, Mark Clayton also met the president of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili and presented his credentials. Clayton has been the British Ambassador to Georgia since September, 2020. He has over 20 years experience of working at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

Human Rights situation in Georgia's occupied regions discussed at 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

On October 5th, within the framework of the 45th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on cooperation with Georgia was reviewed. The report addresses the situation of human rights in and around Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Alexandre Maisuradze, permanent representative of Georgia to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva delivered a statement at the session, introducing to the member states of the United Nation the harsh humanitarian and human rights situation in Russian occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. The information is published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

According to the statement of the ministry (MFA), Maisuradze pointed out that regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian Federation proceeds to carry out destabilisation by intensifying the unlawful process of erecting wires along the occupation line.. He noted that Russia's refusal to emergency medical evacuation as well as the closure of so-called passages resulted in the deaths of innocent people. As stated, 15 Georgians have died to date, since the occupation line was closed in September of last year.

Maisuradze focused attention on the fact of wounding and illegal detention of Georgian citizen Zaza Gakheladze by Russian-led forces. According to him, opening fire on local civilians is another example of gross violation of the 2008 ceasefire agreement by Russia as well as a complete disregard of the UN's Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire.

As the statement reads, the permanent representative of



► Alexandre Maisuradze, permanent representative of Georgia to Geneva delivered a statement at the 45th session of the Human Rights Council.



► According to the MFA, the Delegations expressed their strong support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognised borders.

Georgia noted that the Russian Federation undermines the process of conflict resolution and hinders Geneva International Discussion process as well as the work of incident prevention and response mechanism.

Maisuradze called on Russia to fulfill obligations under the 2008 ceasefire agreement. He also emphasised the need for monitoring of the human rights situation in the occupied territories and the admission of international organisations, 'primarily the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.'

According to the statement, unfortunately, despite numerous attempts, the representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as in previous years, were still denied access to occupied territories. Therefore, the Office of the High Commissioner's report calls on the force exercising effective control over Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region to allow the human rights mechanism of the High Commissioner and other international organisations in this territory.

As the Ministry notes, at the meeting, statements in support of Georgia were made by the del-

egations of the European Union, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Greece, Ukraine, Finland, and Sweden.

The delegations welcomed the progress achieved in terms of Human rights, also, positively estimated the efforts made by the Georgian government against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The delegations expressed concerns over the violation of human rights in the occupied territories of Georgia, " which has become even more deplorable under the COVID-19 pandemic, " They also expressed worries about the ongoing process of 'borderisation', further restriction on the freedom of movement, and the establishment of the death penalty in occupied Abkhazia. In addition, according to the Ministry's information, the need for the introduction of international human rights mechanisms and the need for monitoring were stressed.

The Delegations expressed their firm support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognised borders.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 8

Day ☀️ Mostly sunny
High: **20°C**

Night 🌙 Mainly clear
Low: **11°C**

FRIDAY OCTOBER 9

Day ☁️ Partly cloudy
High: **20°C**

Night 🌙 Mostly clear
Low: **11°C**

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Parliament reviews the first draft of 2021 state budget



► Committees will be reviewing the first draft of the 2021 state budget from October 7th till October 16th.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Yesterday, the committees of Parliament of Georgia started reviewing the first draft of the state budget 2021. The document was discussed by the Defence and Security Committee and a joint sitting of legal issues and Human Rights committees was held.

In 2021, the expenditure of the state budget will increase by GEL 1147.6 million and will constitute GEL 17 071.4 million.

The initial draft envisages an increase in salaries of some teachers and a new system regarding pensions, according to which the growth of pensions will be tied to inflation. It is noteworthy that the expenses regarding the COVID-19 pandemic are not reflected in the budget yet. As it is mentioned in the explanatory note of the document, the mentioned expenses will be reflected in the final draft.

As for the expenditures for the ministries, allocations of the Ministry of Health were set at GEL 4,852 million, which is reduced by GEL 663.0 million compared to the 2020 approved plan.

Funding for:

Ministry of Infrastructure- set at GEL 2421.6, allocations increased by GEL 615.0 million compared to last year;

Ministry of Education - set at 1738.1, increased by GEL199.2 million;

Ministry of Agriculture- set at GEL 415.8 million;

Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development- set at GEL 356.5 million;

Ministry of Justice- set at GEL 251.0 million;



► Given parliamentary elections on October 31st, 2020, the final draft will be discussed by a new parliament.

Ministry of Defence- set at GEL 900.0 million;

Ministry of Internal affairs- set at GEL 790.0 million;

According to the document, in 2021, it is forecasted to receive GEL 12 200.0 million in the form of budget tax revenues.

As the initial draft suggests, 5% economic growth is forecasted in the next year.

The Parliamentary Finance and Budget Committee will hold its first concluding session on October 16th. The first stage of discussing the draft budget will

end by October 20th and will be sent back to the government with remarks and recommendations enclosed. The first draft of the 2021 budget must pass 3 parliamentary hearings before it comes into law. Considering that the elections are scheduled

on October 31st, 2020, the final draft will be discussed by a new sitting parliament. Parliamentary opposition does not support the introduced draft budget and believes that the introduced draft budget does not correspond to the needs of society.