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ECONOMICS

Georgian government and international partners provide €4 million assistance for the Abkhazia region during the pandemic



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International partners congratulate PM Gakharia on reappointment on the post



► The Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia was reappointed as the Prime Minister on December 24.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Parliament of Georgia has confirmed Giorgi Gakharia and his cabinet of ministers with 85 votes. (none against). The world's leading politicians, including German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and Prime Ministers of Ukraine, Estonia, and the Slovak Republic, have officially congratulated Gakharia on reappointment.

According to the Press Service of the Government Administration, in her official letter, the German Chancellor states that the close bilateral relationship between Georgia and Germany provides a ground for future cooperation between Governments and deeper relations between Georgian and German people. Merkel emphasized that Germany remains a reliable partner for Georgia in the path of developing a constitutional state and democratic institutions.

In the congratulatory letter of Estonian PM Juri Ratas to Gakharia, the PM Ratas expresses certainty that under Gakharia's premiership the two countries might further develop their relations.

"I wish to assure you of my country's commitment to be Georgia's honest and trustworthy friend in its democratic and economic development and Euro-Atlantic integration. I hope that in these challenging times for Georgia, you will continue to search for common ground

and compromises aimed at bridging the gap between various political forces," says the PM of Estonia in his letter.

According to Slovak PM, Igor Matovic, the Slovak Republic is ready to further assist Georgia in the direc-

tion of Euro-Atlantic integration. PM Matovic believes that the friendly and constructive relations between the Slovak Republic and Georgia will further strengthen in the future. He confirmed that the Slovak Republic remains ready to assist Georgia in reaching the integration ambitions and is committed to supporting its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal has congratulated PM Gakharia on reappointment as well. During a telephone conversation, the emphasis was made on the friendly relations between Georgia and Ukraine and the successful cooperation of countries in various fields.

According to the press service, the PMs stressed the common European aspirations as well as challenges, which Georgia and Ukraine share, and highlighted the importance of peace and stability for the further development of both countries.

After the conversation, the Ukrainian PM tweeted that Ukraine and Georgia have great potential for joint development. He mentioned that during the conversation with PM Gakharia, they discussed areas of cooperation to help achieve the goal and stressed that the platform for dialogue should be the 10th meeting of the Ukrainian-Georgian Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation.



► In their congratulatory letters, World leaders state that they keep supporting Georgia on its path towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Starting 2021, Georgian border police will decide who can enter the Schengen area

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

From January 1 on, the Georgian border police will decide who to can travel to the Schengen area - a new law will be enacted at the Georgian border checkpoints, according to which the Georgian Border Police will check a citizen with several criteria before flying to the Schengen area, and if any of them is violated, they will not be able to cross the Georgian border.

The person allowed in the Schengen zone should have: no history of being banned from entering the Schengen area, a valid biometric passport with more than 3 months left before the expiration date, a the ticket or booking required to leave the Schengen area, a hotel / accommodation booking or the consent of the host family (including residential address), a health insurance document valid in the Schengen area and the document proving the finances required for the trip.

The adoption of this law became necessary after Germany and Sweden openly stated that the tendency of Georgians to use the visa-free regime in bad faith is remarkable. The two countries even talked about suspending visa-free travel with Georgia.

The EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzel visited the Tbilisi Airport on December 30, two days before the law enters into force. He got acquainted with the new process of inspection and what Georgian citizens, wishing to travel to Schengen countries, should know about this.

According to him, this is not a new restriction, because Georgian citizens underwent a similar procedure after arriving in the Schengen countries.

"The law ensures the smooth functioning of visa-free travel between the EU and Georgia," Hartzel said. According to him, the European Union is working with the relevant agencies of Georgia to conduct border inspections as smoothly as possible, under international standards and regulation.



► According to the new rule, Georgian Border Police will be checking several criteria before allowing a person into the Schengen area.

The EU Ambassador considers Georgia's decision to check citizens at Georgian airports before flying to Schengen countries as crucial: "Visa-free travel is one of the most visible successes

in Georgia-EU relations and it is therefore very important to prevent the misuse of visa-free travel and ensure that this regime operates as efficiently as possible."

According to him, this is not a new restriction, because Georgian citizens underwent a similar procedure after arriving in the Schengen countries. Hartzel also recalled some challenges in the

implementation of the visa-free regime and emphasised that to solve the problems, Georgia and the Parliament of Georgia have made an important decision to adopt a law on pre-departure inspection.



► "Visa-free travel is a visible success of Georgia-EU relations, it is important to ensure the most effective work of this regime", Carl Hartzel said.

THURSDAY DECEMBER 31

Day ☀ Sunny skies
High: 9°C
Night ☁ Some clouds
Low: 0°C

FRIDAY JANUARY 1

Day ☀ Mainly sunny
High: 11°C
Night ☾ Clear skies
Low: 0°C

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Georgian government and international partners provide ₾4 million assistance for the Abkhazia region during the pandemic

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality Tea Akhvlediani has presented a report for 2020. she stated yesterday that this year, via the status-neutral coordinating mechanism, the central Georgian government and international partners have ensured up to ₾4 million worth of financial assistance for the occupied region of Abkhazia. According to the minister, dialogue and rebuilding of trust between divided communities are the key priorities of reconciliation policy. Akhvlediani stated that the ministry is ready to expand informal dialogues and cooperation based on common interests with the Abkhaz and Ossetian communities. She added that even though pandemic somewhat hindered meetings aimed at rebuilding trust outside the country, there have been recent successful examples of informal communication with the Abkhaz community and positive experience gained through cooperation in areas of common interests. According to the minister, through such dialogues and constructive attitude, in September, more than 1000 students, schoolchildren, and their families were transferred from Abkhazia to Georgian controlled territories for educational purposes. Akhvlediani noted that with the Georgian side's consent, international partners have launched 36 new Projects directed at trust-building.

According to Akhvlediani, as soon as the pandemic started,



► According to the Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality Tea Akhvlediani, dialogue and rebuilding of trust between divided communities are the key priorities of reconciliation policy.

the ministry declared that the people living in the occupied territories and near dividing lines would not be left alone facing this challenge. She said that during the pandemic, the government assured translation of information about coronavirus in Abkhazian and Ossetian languages, sharing experience between physicians through online consultations and visits of WHO experts to the Abkhaz region, provision of medical supplies by both government and international partners, transfer and treatment of patients in a controlled area. The minister noted that 250 Covid-19 patients



► With the Georgian side's consent, international partners have launched 36 new Projects directed at trust-building.

have been transported from the Abkhazia region for treatment so far, however, she stressed that due to the destructive approach of the occupation regime. Unfortunately, no similar assistance could be provided to the Tskhinvali region.

According to the minister, people living in the occupied territories continue to receive free healthcare services in the controlled territory, which has been used by 900 patients this year. This year, the assistance provided by the government of Georgia to the healthcare segment amounted to more than ₾5 million.

Enterprise Georgia fund purchase of fishing vessels

“At the initiative of the Prime Minister, we were able to support 10 fishing vessels in the shortest possible time,” stated Mikheil Khidureli, head of the Economic Agency Enterprise Georgia.

According to him, the agency continues to actively work on the development of the sector and new projects.

As of December 30, 2020, the agency “Enterprise Georgia” has funded the purchase of a total of 10 fishing vessels in the field of marine fishing. The loan volume of these projects is more than ₾37.6 million, and the total investment exceeds ₾38 million. A total of 161 additional jobs will be created under the projects.

The companies will benefit from the loan co-financing component, as well as the 6 companies with a credit-guarantee mechanism. In particular, dur-



ing the first 3 years, the loan interest will be co-financed by the agency and also the state will guarantee 90% of the loan principal.

With the new vessels, fishermen will be able to maximize the annual fishing quota when it is not fully utilized today. It should also be taken into account that according to the existing practice, Georgian licensees rent foreign ships and carry out their activities in such a way that Georgian ships are in a deplorable condition. Today we have 30 seiners (fishing vessels), which employ about 500 fishermen-sailors, but the vessels are outdated and can not meet modern requirements. Even due to the low reliability and productivity of the vessels, it is not possible to train the fishermen at the proper level and technology.