

Politics

Georgian delegation arrives in Brussels to participate in EU-Georgia Association Council meeting

FULL STORY ON Page 2

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerned over Russia's refusal to pay compensation to Georgia

FULL STORY ON Page 3

Economics

External trade down by 12% in February 2021



FULL STORY ON Page 3

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

European Council President Charles Michel's personal envoy to mediate Georgia's political crisis talks, Christian Danielsson, who was scheduled to have left Georgia after March 14 meetings, announced at the press briefing on Sunday that he would extend his visit to Tbilisi 'for an additional one day'. According to Georgian opposition parties, Danielsson will stay in Tbilisi until the parties come to an agreement on the issues of repeat parliamentary elections and the release of opposition leader Nika Melia.

Earlier that day, Danielsson met with the Georgian Dream twice, he also met with the leaders of the opposition parties and held a separate meeting with the leaders of the National Movement and the Republican Party. Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the Georgian Dream an-



"Georgia is an essential partner for the EU. That's why the EU is actively involved in the negotiation process," Christian Danielsson stated after the series of meetings held in Tbilisi on Sunday.

EU mediator extends his stay in Tbilisi



"We knew from the beginning that what we are doing here is difficult. We have been working hard, and we have seen progress... It is clear that we need some more time," said Christian Danielsson, a special envoy of the European Council President.

nounced after the meeting of the leaders of the ruling team with the EU mediator that the meetings were over and dialogue would continue after the visit of the Georgian delegation to Brussels. However, Danielsson noted later that despite the progress that had been seen as a result of hours of meetings, "it is clear that we need some more time. This is for the par-

ties to find the way forward and I'm trying to help them by doing that," said Danielsson.

Yesterday, on the 4th day of Danielsson's visit to Tbilisi, he met with Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili. As the Administration of the President reports, at their second meeting held at the Orbeliani Palace, Zurbishvili and

Danielsson discussed the negotiations ongoing between the government and the opposition. Danielsson held his first meeting with the President of Georgia on the first day of his arrival in Tbilisi.

Earlier yesterday, the EU mediator also met with the opposition.

CONTINUED ON Page 2



Georgian delegation arrives in Brussels to participate in EU-Georgia Association Council meeting



The Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili and the EU ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell

According to the press service of the government, during their stay, the Georgian delegation will hold high-level meetings in the European Commission, European Council, European Parliament, and NATO.

Gharibashvili started his official visit to Brussels by meeting with the European Council President Charles Michel.

Following the meeting with Michel, Gharibashvili met with the Prime Minister of Belgium. At the meeting, the successful bilateral cooperation between Georgia and Belgium, as well as the progress achieved by Georgia on the path of European integration was stressed. The parties underlined the importance of strengthening trade and economic ties with each other and expanding cooperation between businesses. The bilateral relations in the field of human rights and justice were also discussed.



The PM Gharibashvili met with the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium on the first day of his arrival in Brussels.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian delegation led by Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili, along with the EU ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell left for Brussels on Monday to participate in the sixth session of the EU-Georgia Association Council. The Georgian delegation includes Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Natia Turnava, and Justice Minister Gocha Lortkipanidze.

The session will focus on regional, Georgian political and economic issues, as well as the ongoing, EU-mediated talks between the ruling GD party and the opposition on the issues of repeat parliamentary elections and the release of opposition leader Nika Melia and

the co-founder of Mtavari Arkhi TV channel Giorgi Rurua.



Belgian Prime Minister reaffirmed the strong support of the

Kingdom of Belgium for Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration, as well as for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

On March 16, following the session of the EU-Georgia Association Council, Georgian PM, European Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell, and EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Oliver Varhej will hold a joint press conference.

The Georgian delegation will hold high-rank meetings in the European Parliament and NATO on March 17. Georgian PM will be hosted by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg at the NATO Headquarters. After the meeting, the officials will hold a joint press conference. A Meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission is also scheduled.

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

EU mediator extends his stay in Tbilisi

"We continue working and there are serious issues that remain to be resolved and it is important that the parties, who have been constructive, continue to see the need for compromises," noted Danielsson after the meeting.

Danielsson also met with the leaders of the ruling party - chairman of the Georgian Dream

party Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of the Georgian Par-

liament Archil Talakvadze, and GD party member Shalva

Papuashvili. The meeting at the EU delegation office was at-

tended by US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan as well.



Weather

Tuesday, March 16

Day Snow Showers
High: 11°C
Night Light Rain
Low: 4°C

Wednesday, March 17

Day Showers
High: 17°C
Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 7°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze
Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Natalia Kochiashvili
Executive Editor

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

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External trade down by 12% in February 2021



Geostat will publish detailed foreign trade figures on March 19.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) released its February 2021 Foreign Trade Report preliminary data. According to the document, exports from Georgia increased by \$ 270.3 million last month, which is \$ 7.7 million or 2.93% more than in the same period of 2020.

As for import volume, it decreased by \$ 85.9 million or 12.2% in February and amounted to \$ 618.2 million. The main reason for the decline in imports is the economic crisis in

the country, due to which the demand of the local economy for imported goods is reduced.

Georgia's external trade turnover amounted to \$1.65 billion in January-February 2021, which is 12% lower compared to the same period of the last year.

Overall, Georgia's exports in January-February were \$ 494.7 million, which is 6.8% less than in 2020. Imports were \$ 1.16 billion, down 14.1% from 2020.

The negative trade balance in the first 2 months of 2021 was \$ 664.6 million and accounted for 40.2% of foreign trade turnover.



Last month, remittances leaving Georgia totaled \$21 million, as compared to \$21.7 million in February 2020.

In February 2021, the volume of remittances to the country amounted to \$ 161.4 million, which is 17.5% more than in February 2020, says the National Bank of Georgia.

Italy (\$28.55 million), Greece (\$19.71 million), and Russia (\$25.14 million) were the largest remittance senders in February 2021.

According to the data pub-

lished by the NBG, 94.8% of remittances to Georgia come from the 19 largest countries, of which the volume of such remittances exceeded \$ 1 million in February.

According to the NBG, a total of \$ 71.07 million of the \$ 161.38 million transferred came from EU countries and \$ 90.31 million from other countries.

In February 2021, \$21 million was sent abroad from Geor-

gia, which is 3.4% less than the same indicator in February 2020.

According to a report released by Geostat, compared to January, the subsistence level increased in February.

As the new calculation reads, the one-month subsistence level for able-bodied men has increased by ₾ 1.7, reaching 197.2. On an annual basis, this figure is reduced by ₾ 1.6.

As for the subsistence level of the "average consumer", it is ₾ 174.7 GEL - is an increase of ₾ 1.5 compared to the previous month. On an annual basis, it was reduced by ₾ 1.4.

Note that by the new law, the subsistence level is calculated through a special food basket, which was determined by the order of the Minister of Health on May 8, 2003. Moreover, the subsistence level is the only indicator of the value of food. The subsistence minimum does not include the cost of utility bills, transportation costs, and other costs that every citizen is obliged to pay. The current system is based solely on the cost of food.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerned over Russia's refusal to pay compensation to Georgia



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CoE) expressed its 'profound concern' over Russia's refusal to pay a compensation amounting to €10 billion to the Georgian citizens who were illegally deported from Russia in 2006.

The compensation concerns the cases of arrest, detention, and consequent deportation of Georgian citizens from Russia in 2006 – the events that unfolded shortly after the arrest of four Russian officers on charges of espionage in Georgia.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled in

2019 that Russia is obliged to repay 10,000,000 euros for "non-pecuniary damage suffered by a group of at least 1,500 Georgian nationals":

"In its judgment in the interstate case concerning just satisfaction (Georgia v. Russia) the Court held that the Russian Federation had to pay the Georgian Government a lump-sum of €10,000,000 in respect of non-pecuniary damage suffered by a group of at least 1,500 Georgian nationals. It further ordered the Georgian Government to distribute the amount received between the victims of the established administrative practice," the Court press release reads.

Earlier this year, on January 8, Georgian Minister of Justice Gocha Lortkipanidze announced that Russia is finally ready to participate in discussions of its obligations to repay €10 million to Georgian citizens, as well as default interest accrued' after numerous refusals and after the expiration of the payment deadline in 2019.

However, during the recent meeting of the CoE, deputies expressed their concerns over the repeated delays in the payment of the compensation and urged both Russian and Georgian authorities to settle the issue "through a Council of Europe bank account held in escrow."

According to the Georgian government, more than 4,600 expulsion orders were issued by the Russian authorities in 2006,

2,300 of which were detained and expelled against their will, while the others left the country of their own volition.



Georgian Minister of Justice Gocha Lortkipanidze