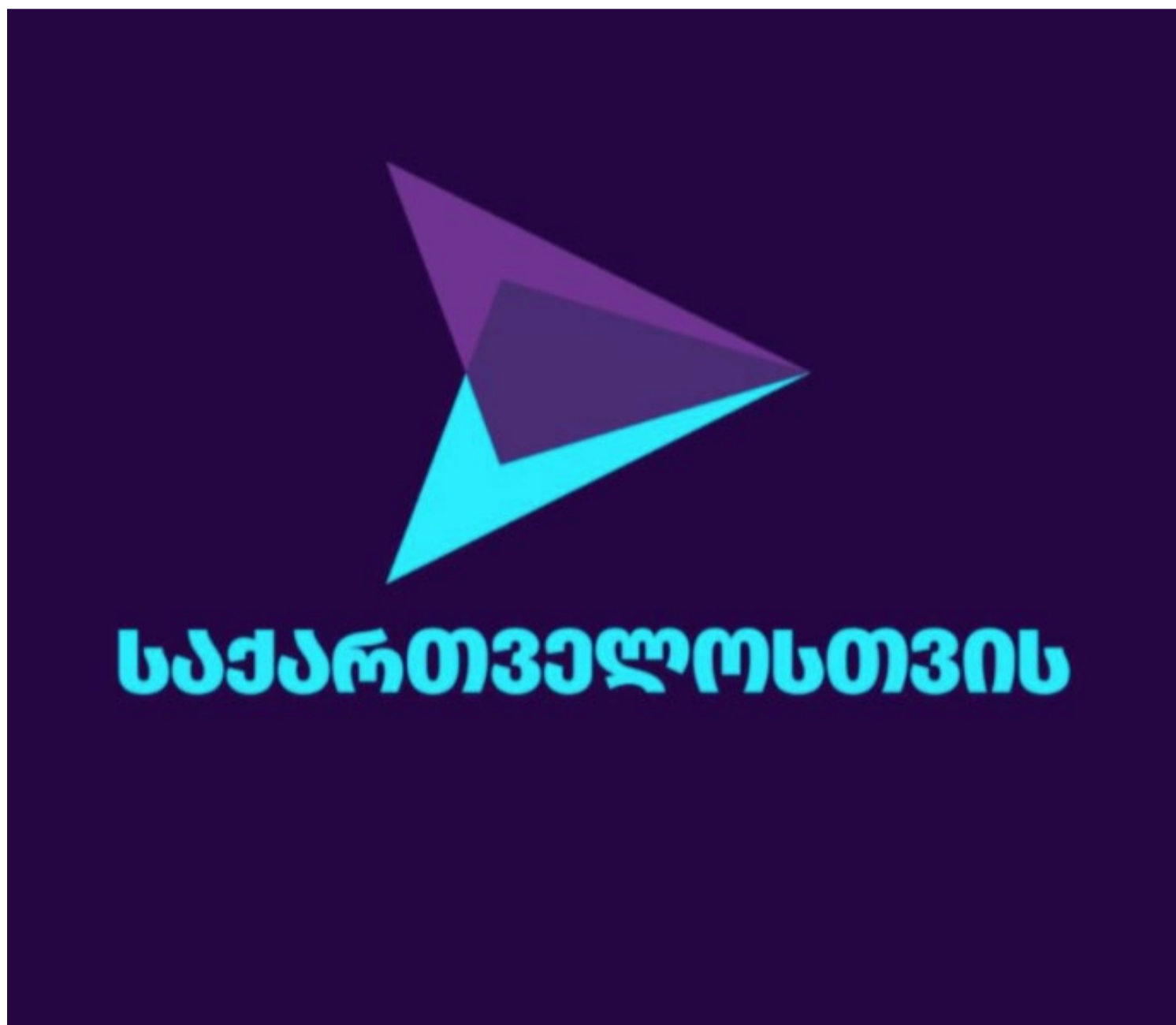


Member of the Party for Georgia, Tsalenjikha Sakrebulo MP Sentenced to Imprisonment for Fraud Charges



tigation into this case before the elections to put pressure on Gela Abuladze and his family members, which they failed to do, and we have talked to the members of our political team many times. The Dream government is not tolerating the lost elections in the municipalities and is trying to change the political situation and the choice of the citizens through illegal arrests, bribery, sabotage of the municipalities, etc.," wrote Berdia Sichinava, a member of the party.

According to him, the authorities have not yet investigated the fact of physical attack and threatening with a firearm on the leader of the Samegrelo regional organization - Malkhaz Toria and his minor son, who arrived at his father's grave.

Abuladze was elected in the October 2021 elections to the Tsalenjikha Sakrebulo in Georgia's western Samegrelo region, which emerged as one of a few opposition-led Municipal Councils after the municipal elections in the lead-up to which, For Georgia, along with other opposition outfits, repeatedly accused the Georgian Dream Government and law enforcement agencies of persecuting and pressuring its candidates.

Currently, in the 27-member Tsalenjikha Sakrebulo, Georgian Dream and United National Movement each have 11 councilors, Lelo party has 1, For Georgia has 3, and 1 member is independent.

Recall that chair of For Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia formed his own party after resignation from the post of the Prime Minister of Georgia in February 2021 over the forthcoming detention of United National Movement leader Nika Melia.

NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Tbilisi City Court sentenced Gela Abuladze, a member of the ex-prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia's Party for Georgia and a member of the Tsalenjikha City Council, to imprisonment as a preventive measure.

The other 8 people accused in the case were sentenced to €6,000 bail by the court.

The accused Sakrebulo MP does not plead guilty. The party assessed the detention as political revenge.

Abuladze was arrested by the State Security Service on March 28. According to the Anti-Corruption Agency of the State Security Service, based on a court ruling, a member of the Tsalenjikha Municipality Sakrebulo was arrested by a group with a preliminary agreement on a large-scale fraud case.

The investigation revealed that in the

first half of 2020, a member of the City Council contacted the representative of the mayor of Tsalenjikha municipality in the administrative unit of the village Etseri and demanded that persons and relatives close to him falsify the ownership document.

The agency alleged that in 2020 Abuladze conspired with an employee of the Tsalenjikha Mayor's office to fraudulently register nine state-owned plots of land, totaling 100,083m2 and worth €406,250, into private ownership of Abuladze's relatives and acquaintances.

The investigation went under Article 180 (2a, 3b) of Georgia's Criminal Code, fraud committed by more than one person with a preliminary agreement in large quantities and under Article 341, Forgery by an official, envisaging imprisonment from 6 to 9 years.

"We would like to remind you that the State Security Service launched an inves-

NEWS IN BRIEF

Germany Ready to Guarantee Ukraine's Security, Says Scholz

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told the Ukrainian president that Germany was ready to become a guarantor of Ukraine's security. This was announced by a spokesman for the German government.

During a telephone conversation with Zelensky, Scholz expressed his 'general readiness' to adapt to the role, according to Stephen Heberstright.

However, Heberschreit said it did not want to speculate on whether the role of guarantor included a military

component. Talks between the Russian and Ukrainian delegations ended on March 29 in Istanbul.

Ukraine has named security guarantees and the countries that should become guarantors. In addition, official Kyiv presented its positions on Crimea and Donbas.

"Ukraine, China, the United States, Turkey, France, Canada, Italy, Poland, and Israel can be the guarantors of Ukraine's security. They will act within the framework of an international agreement, including being able to close the skies at Ukraine's request," Davit Arakhamia said.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.1354 | EURO - 3.4652 | GBP - 4.1074 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 3.5715 | SWISS FRANC - 3.3505 |

Georgia Can Increase Wheat Self-sufficiency To 50%, Agriculture Minister Says



► In 2021, Georgia exported 338,000 tons of wheat worth \$87.4 million from Russia.



► As decided at the meeting with farmers, the relevant structures of the Agriculture ministry will start working on developing proposals and support mechanisms to tackle issues in the sector.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian Agriculture Minister Otar Shamugia announced on Wednesday that Georgia has the resources to increase its wheat self-sufficiency to 50 percent. During a meeting with farmers, he noted that the state is ready to develop stimulating programs to help increase wheat production. Shamugia noted at the meet-

ing that throughout the years the state policy has been focused on promoting local production and import substitution, adding that as a result, the production of Georgian products and their sale both in the local market and for export has significantly increased. As the minister noted, the dire situation in the region caused by the war in Ukraine has revealed how important it is

to increase the self-sufficiency of primary consumption products in the 'shortest possible time' and ensure food security.

During the meeting, the needs and challenges of the sector for ensuring the growth of crop production were discussed. The farmers informed the minister about the importance of an organized supply of highly productive seed material, accessibility to

financial resources and relevant equipment, as well as issues of land privatization and lease. As it was decided at the meeting, the relevant structures of the ministry would start working on developing proposals and support mechanisms to cope with the existing issues in the sector.

It is noteworthy that In 2021 Georgia purchased 367,000 tons of wheat, including 338,000 tons

worth \$87.4 million from Russia and 24.4 thousand tons worth \$4.6 million from the United States. As of now, there are enough wheat stocks in Georgia. Georgian Finance Minister Lasha Khutsishvili announced on March 28 that Georgia had wheat resources enough for more than a month, stressing that more could be imported if necessary for food security.

National Bank Increases Refinancing Rate to 11%

NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Monetary Policy Committee of the National Bank of Georgia (NBG) decided on March 30, 2022 to increase the refinancing rate. The monetary policy rate will be 11%.

The NBG says recent developments, particularly Russia's invasion of Ukraine and hostilities, have posed new challenges to the post-pandemic recovery world economy.

The bank expects the credit activity to be moderately high during the year, despite tightening monetary policy and recent macroprudential measures.

As for aggregate demand, according to preliminary data, in 2021 GDP will grow by 10.4%. According to previous forecasts, growth of 5% was expected in 2022, however, from today's forecast, the growth rate will be within 3-4%.



Amid the expected slowdown in economic growth, inflationary pressures from aggregate demand will be small and supply factors will remain dominant throughout the year. It should also be noted that in the light of current events, the scale of forecast uncertainty has increased significantly.

"Monetary policy is in a tightened phase as a result of the gradual increase in the monetary policy rate over the past year due to rising risks of inflation expectations," statement read, clarifying that policy will continue to tighten until the risks to rising inflation expectations are sufficiently mitigated. The bank said that in the face of even more heightened inflationary risks and long-term inflation targets, the Monetary Policy Committee considered it appropriate to raise interest rates by 0.5% points. The next meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee will be held on May 11, 2022.

THURSDAY MARCH 31

Day Sunny
High: **21°C**

Night A few clouds
Low: **6°C**

FRIDAY MARCH 1

Day Sunshine
High: **22°C**

Night Partly cloudy
Low: **9°C**

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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

Nino Kavelashvili
Design and Layout

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