

PM Gharibashvili talks about subsidizing grape harvest, tourism at the Gov't meeting



By Liza Mchedlidze

At the government meeting, the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili spoke about the government's plans to support Winegrowers by subsidizing grape harvest. According to him, they will subsidize the grape harvest this year as well and the price of 1 kg of white grapes will be at least 0,90 GEL. The Prime Minister added that they will collaborate with wine companies.

According to Prime Minister Gharibashvili, "not a single kilogram of grapes will remain

unclaimed and the state will provide maximum support to wine-growers."

"We have made a decision that this year, of course, we will provide subsidies. The price of one kilogram of white grapes will be at least 90 Tetri. Not a single kilogram of grapes will remain unclaimed, and the state will provide maximum support to our winegrowers. About 300 wine companies will be involved in the process, and we will work with them. We had good meetings, we have full coordination, a Wine harvest coordination headquarters has been created, which has

already started working, and this year we expect a record harvest, about 300 thousand tons of harvest, and this is a record figure, and taking into account all the challenges, all these factors, the subsidy will continue."

In total, the subsidy will cost the government 150 million GEL. Since this is a strategic field and our country is the cradle of winemaking and it is proven that winemaking started from us, that is why the right intervention and right help for wine-growers is necessary from the side of the state," Gharibashvili said.

At the meeting, Irakli Gharibashvili also spoke about tourism in Georgia. According to him, the incomes received from tourism in the month of July, for the first time after the pandemic, exceeded the data for 2019. According to him, in July, a record export volume of 540 million dollars was recorded.

The Prime Minister noted that, in total, the incomes received from travel in January-July amounted to 1 billion and 618 million USD.

According to the head of the government, similar trends observed in the direction of export and tourism allow us to say that the trend of high growth in the direction of economic activity will be maintained in July:

"You can see that a lot of tourists have come to the country, and I want to tell you that in July, the income from travel, i.e. tourism, exceeded the data of 2019 for the first time after the

pandemic. In other words, it did not recover and equalize but surpassed the data of 2019 and we have a record income rate. In particular: the revenues received from tourism amounted to 476 million USD which, as we told you, is 20% more than the same period of 2019, and if we compare it with the figure of 2021, it is about 130% more. In total, the revenues received from travel in January-July amounted to 1 billion 618 million USD. So, the similar trends observed in the direction of export and tourism allow us to say that the trend of high growth in the direction of economic activity will be maintained in July as well, which is very good for us. Of course, this means more employment, more of our citizens will be employed, income growth and poverty reduction," Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili said.



Finance Minister Lasha Khutsishvili discusses GEL currency stability and Russian tourist inflow in Georgia

By Liza Mchedlidze

Minister of Finance Lasha Khutsishvili, after the end of the government meeting, spoke about the current GEL currency and said that it has strengthened substantially in the recent period and it will remain this stability.

According to the minister, the stability of the Lari is ensured by the economic activity in the country today:

"GEL has strengthened substantially recently. You know that when the war started in Ukraine, the GEL was at 3.40, then it was stable at around 3.05. Today, as a result of the last 2 days of trading, it is 2.80.

The inflow of cash flows is determined by the increasing rate of exports, the increasing rate of tourism, and the increasing rate of cash inflows so that the GEL



can maintain stability in the medium term.

Naturally, depending on the daily data, there may be fluctuations, however, in the medium term, the GEL will be stable, and this will be ensured by the economic activity in the country today. It is very difficult to comment on the daily changes of GEL. This is related to many factors. Lari will maintain its stability in the medium term," Khutsishvili said.

Finance Minister Lasha Khutsishvili also spoke regarding Russian tourists' inflow in Georgia, saying that more Russian citizens were entering Georgia before the pandemic. He also discussed the 'fear' of Russian tourists entering the country, calling it 'absolutely incomprehensible'. Minister said that government doesn't see any risks regarding this topic:

CONTINUED ON Page 2

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

PM Gharibashvili talks fuel prices at Gov't meeting



The Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili, said at today's government meeting that despite the strengthening of the GEL, the price of fuel did not decrease proportionally, therefore, according to him, it is necessary to intensify the work with fuel importers.

Gharibashvili says that he recommended to the competition agency to start investigating and check the honesty of importers, and how well they follow the competition conditions.

"Of course, we will continue working. As the importers promised us, despite the fact that they reduced 10-10 tetri in July and August, they are going to reduce the price by 20-30 tetri in total by the end of August, but more transparency is needed.

We must provide our citizens with the most detailed information possible - what margins they work with, how much their profit is, etc. The government is doing everything to ensure that, for example, the GEL is stable. Recently, the national currency has strengthened a lot. Consid-

ering these and other factors, we urge importers to have more coordination with the government and more communication with our people. I will look into this matter personally, together with our economic team, and later I will provide additional informa-

tion to our people," said the Prime Minister.

He also recommended the Competition Agency to study the integrity of fuel importers, because, as he says, "there is still a feeling" that fuel is expensive in the country despite the strengthening of the GEL. According to Gharibashvili, on his instructions, the ministers of economy and finance met with importers and this coordination will continue.

"Despite the fact that the GEL has strengthened, fuel prices have decreased on the market, prices have gone down, we still have the feeling that fuel prices have not been reflected accordingly and have not decreased proportionally. Therefore, we need to intensify our work with fuel importers. I addressed the Competition Agency with a recommendation, to start investigating and checking the good faith of importers, how well they follow competition rules," Irakli Gharibashvili said.

'If Georgia is being used by Russia to evade sanctions, the response will be isolation' Toomas Ilves says



According to Toomas Ilves, the former president of Estonia, if it turns out that Georgia is being used by Russia as a way to evade sanctions, the response will be isolation.

"I don't believe that. I do not believe that anyone is trying to drag Georgia into any war. I am one of those accused of wanting war and trying to drag Georgia into the war. I never said anything like that, never. I think this is just the narrative of the current government. I don't understand it at all. I don't know [what drives this narrative]. It's all very strange if you ask me. I have no desire for Georgia to get involved in a war with Russia, of course, nobody wants to get involved in a war with Russia, including Estonia, and why should anyone want that for Georgia? I have never, in any context, expressed or disseminated this opinion. On the other hand, when it comes to sanctions, many other countries do that, which is what we would expect from someone we consider our own. If it turns out that Georgia is really being used by Rus-

sia as a means of evading sanctions, then you can be sure that there will be a response, and this response, in my opinion, will be very severe. [This response can be] isolation," said Ilves.

about Georgia's progress, but about failures in all directions.

According to Khoshtaria, the report showed that "in the conditions of 'Georgian Dream' and oligarchy, Georgia does not have a European perspective."

"Due to the issue of the candidate status and the war in Ukraine, this report has acquired even greater importance and practically, we can say, it determines our perspective of the EU candidacy. After we were told, on the one hand, that the people deserve a European perspective, and on the other hand, that it is impossible under the oligarchy, almost 2 months have passed and we are reading a report where, if not progress, we have failures in all fundamental directions.

I am not organizing the briefing to create any illusions and call on the authorities to do something, because this point has been exhausted, with this report it has been shown once again that under the conditions of the dream, under the conditions of the oligarchy, Georgia does not have a European perspective.

We know what we have to do, we have listed what we have to do, and it is our turn to act and free the country from the oligarchs," says Elene Khoshtaria.

Droa leader Elene Khoshtaria comments on EU report, says West sees no progress

The leader of Droa, Elene Khoshtaria, evaluates the report of the European Union and says that two months after the European perspective was given by the EU, the report does not talk



Finance Minister Lasha Khutsishvili discusses GEL currency stability and Russian tourist inflow in Georgia

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

"First of all, when we talk about unprecedented growth, we should look at the numbers and quantity. If we look at the numbers, we have to compare it to

whatever period it is comparable to. You can't compare it to a period of the pandemic when the borders were closed and border checkpoints were virtually non-functional, and you can't compare it to a period when there were some disruptions to traffic.

Of course, we have to compare it with the period before the pandemic, and if we compare the numbers, it is not increased but halved in number. Therefore, the fear expressed in this direction is completely incomprehensible. This information is pub-

lic, this information is available, and therefore, any person can access the information, analyze this information, and therefore, we do not see any risks in this direction," Lasha Khutsishvili said.

Weather

Tuesday, August 16

Day Clear High: 38°C

Night Clear Low: 23°C

Wednesday, August 17

Day Clear High: 37°C

Night Clear Low: 23°C

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