

## POLITICS

Georgian COVID hospitals receive ventilators and protective equipment from EU and WHO



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## ECONOMICS

Over 35 000 Georgian citizens registered for temporary employment in Germany in 24 hours



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# Tbilisi City Court sentences UNM chair to imprisonment



► Nika Melia, Chairman of the United National Movement, did not attend his trial and spent the night in the party office with several opposition party members and UNM supporters.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The trial of Nika Melia, the Chairman of the United National Movement, was held yesterday at the Tbilisi City Court. On Tuesday, a few non-governmental organizations issued a joint statement regarding Melia's trial, noting that the analysis of the investigation conducted by the relevant agencies so far points to signs of selective justice. "This is a selective prosecution against the chairperson of the largest opposition party and it will seriously harm the

democracy level of the country and further polarise the political environment," reads the statement.

On 25 June 2019, the Prosecutor's Office charged Melia with leading and participating in group violence during the rally outside of the Parliament building on 20-21 June 2019. He was released on €30,000 bail on June 27, 2020. Melia was prohibited from leaving his residence without obtaining permission and informing the investigation authority, having any communication with witnesses, and making public statements

at public gatherings. In his speech on November 1st, Melia violated the conditions of his bail by publicly removing his surveillance bracelet and €40,000 was added to his bail in November 2020. The bail must have been paid within 50 days, however, Melia refused to do so. On February 16th, the Parliament stripped Melia of parliamentary immunity per the request of the Prosecutor's Office, which made it possible for the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia to apply to Tbilisi City Court with a motion to reverse his bail conditions to detention.

Melia himself did not attend the hearing presided by Judge Nino Chakhnashvili, at the Tbilisi City Court yesterday. Leaders of various political parties, as well as UNM supporters, gathered at the National Movement office to express solidarity towards Melia as they believe he is a victim of political revenge. Opposition members announced that they would act as 'human shields' and would not let law enforcers arrest him. "They would have to clash with unarmed peaceful civilians," he stated.

During the trial, Melia's lawyers demanded the judge's recusal of the case. Melia's lawyers claimed that the special law enforcers were mobilized at the UNM central office, which meant that the court's decision about Melia's imprisonment had already been made. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) denied this and stated that the footage of law enforcers aired in the media was shot at the Special Tasks Department base, located near the UNM office.

The trial lasted for 6 hours and found Melia guilty. The prosecutor explained that the accused had deliberately failed to comply with the bail conditions. Later yesterday pre-trial detention was ordered for the Chairman of the United National Movement Nika Melia. With this decision, the motion of the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia was fully satisfied.



► Opposition members gathered at the UNM office announced that they would oppose the court verdict peacefully.

# Georgian COVID hospitals receive ventilators and protective equipment from EU and WHO



► Providing medical equipment to COVID-19 hospitals in Georgia is a part of the joint support provided by the EU and WHO.



► Georgia is expecting the first doses of vaccines to be delivered at the end of February.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

On Wednesday, the European Union (EU) and the World Health Organization (WHO) handed over 10 ventilators and 1 000 items of protective equipment to N. Kipshidze Central University Clinic of Tbilisi State Medical University for the treatment and care of patients with severe cases of COVID-19. Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, Ekaterine Tikaradze, EU Ambassador to Georgia, Carl Hartzell, Head of

the WHO country office in Georgia, Silviu Domete, and Head of the EIB Regional Representation for the South Caucasus, Maciej Czura visited the clinic.

The support package has already provided a significant amount of medical supplies throughout the region, including more than 1.8 million items of personal protective and medical equipment which has been delivered to Georgia.

As EU reports, the initiative aims to assure an effective response to the current crisis and strengthen the overall readiness of the Health sector in Georgia.

Within the framework of the initiative, a series of training for the healthcare workers and awareness-raising events for the general public related to COVID-19 have been conducted in Georgia.

The Health Minister thanked the EU and WHO for their support and partnership and stressed that the close cooperation with the EU from the first day of the pandemic has helped the country successfully handle all the challenges.

As Ambassador Hartzell noted, the assistance, which is a part of € 1.5 billion worth of support

provided to Georgia for overcoming the COVID-19 crisis. The Ambassador welcomed the allocations of Covid vaccines under the EU-supported COVAX platform and affirmed the EU's continuous support towards Georgia.

Silviu Domete, Head of the WHO country office in Georgia notes that until Covid vaccines are available, parties should continue their efforts in reducing the spread of the virus, "including through strengthening capacities of Intensive Care Units managing critical patients and protecting the health workers."

According to the Head of the EIB Regional Representation for the South Caucasus, Maciej Czura, EIB has provided a €100 million loan to Georgia, guaranteed by the EU, to modernize 7 major hospitals and obtain essential Covid-19 related equipment.

"The loan covers the procurement of vaccines, and establishing an effective supply chain to provide comprehensive diagnostic and treatment services for COVID-19 patients. As a part of Team Europe, EIB provided EUR 400 million of financing, guaranteed by the European Fund for Sustainable Development, to support the participation of low and middle income economies in COVAX Advance Market Commitment," noted Czura.

The EU and Team Europe, including the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, and the Member States, are some of the strongest supporters of the COVAX, a facility through which Georgia will receive the first doses of vaccine. The EU and Team Europe have so far announced contributions of more than €870 million to the facility.

## Business representatives address government with 7 point plan

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Due to the crisis caused by the coronavirus epidemic, 10 business associations sent a 7-point appeal to the Prime Minister of Georgia and the Inter-agency Coordination Council.

Representatives of various businesses emphasize that the epidemic situation has significantly improved with the joint efforts of doctors, businesses, government agencies and the population, and it is important



► "We request a prompt working meeting with epidemiologists, the government's economic team and experts with the direct participation of the Prime Minister to discuss and to find ways to quickly pull the country's economy out of the current crisis."

to take bold steps to accelerate the process of recovery from the severe economic and social crisis. Business associations suggest considering:

1. Postponement of the start time of the "curfew" for 2 hours, from 23:00. This will significantly reduce the pressure on public transport during the peak period and also, will give a tangible economic result to the business sector;

2. Removal of weekend work restrictions for business sectors that are allowed to work on weekdays. This issue is especially critical for the retail sector, which generates 40% of its turnover on weekends;

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THURSDAY FEBRUARY 18

Day Cloudy skies  
High: 2°C  
Night A few clouds  
Low: -6°C

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 19

Day More clouds  
High: 4°C  
Night Cloudy  
Low: -2°C

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## Over 35 000 Georgian citizens registered for temporary employment in Germany in 24 hours



► Temporary seasonal employment is carried out within the framework of the agreement between Georgia and Germany.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

According to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons, Labor, Health and Social Affairs, the registration of Georgian citizens for temporary employment in Germany started on February 15.

According to the State Employment Promotion Agency, 35,121 Georgian citizens registered on the portal in Germany in the first 24 hours.

The project envisages employment for seasonal work in the agricultural sector, harvesting various seasonal crops.

In the German labor market, Georgian citizens will be able to have temporary legal employment for 3 months. Seasonal works will start on April 1.

As noted in the statement, the job seeker must meet a few requirements: Is 18 to 60 years old; Has not traveled to the Schengen area for 3 months before leaving for Germany; Is in good physical health; Has work experience and motivation for harvesting; Has no reason (violation) that restricts re-entry into the country; Has basic communication skills in German or English (in case of group em-

ployment, it is necessary for at least one member to be able to communicate in German or English). The language requirement is determined by the employer.

The duration of the temporary employment is from 1 to 3 months. Working hours include 5-6 days a week; 8 - 10 hours a day. Minimum wage - 9.50 euros per hour, which will be deducted from taxes, food and accommodation expenses. According to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons, Labor, Health and Social Affairs, registration for the program is free and is available on the portal throughout the year.

## Signing Ceremony of the Project within the GGP Grassroots Human Security Grant Program of the Embassy of Japan in Georgia



On February, 17 the Signing Ceremony was held for the project, funded by the Government of Japan, based on the goodwill of the Japanese people. The Signing Ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of Japan, H.E. Mr. Imamura Akira, representatives of the Keda Municipality and the Parliament of Georgia.

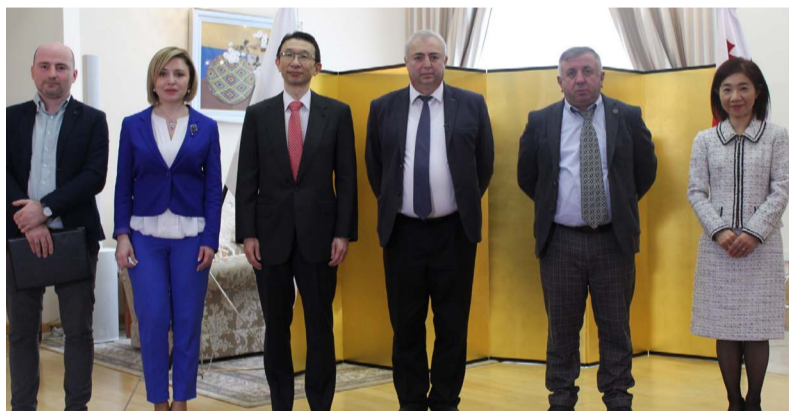
The project for "Provision of Community Eco Bus in Keda Municipality" is funded within the GGP Grassroots Human Security Grant Program of the Embassy of Japan and aims to develop a sustainable and inclusive transportation system in rural and mountain areas.

Within the project, community eco-bus will be purchased to improve the mobility of the local people to gain access to the goods, services and critical facilities. The energy-efficient bus will be fully adapted for people with disabilities and

provide accessible and affordable transportation. Moreover, by introducing an electric bus in mountainous region, this project will create a good precedent for replication, to reduce air pollution and emissions of harmful greenhouse gases.

The project implementer is Keda Municipality. Grant amount: 77,235 USD.

Since the independence of Georgia, Japan has provided 180 grants within the GGP Grassroots Human Security Program, totaling over 19 million USD, in addition to other grant schemes. The GGP program aims to support human security in Georgia in the following priority fields: environment protection, agriculture, infrastructure, healthcare and education. The major principles behind the GGP program are overcoming poverty, sustainable development, inclusiveness and participatory growth.



## Business representatives address government with 7 point plan

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3. Development of specific anti-crisis packages taking into account the specifics of the sector, which will actually allow individual sectors to be operated promptly. For example, there is talk of giving discounts to shopping malls in terms of 2021 property tax exemptions;

4. From 22 February, to allow the restaurant / catering business to work indoors, regarding the subject to the relevant strict regulations, on which the representatives of the industry have developed specific proposals;

5. Opening of mountain resorts from 22 February. Despite the literally ending winter season, hotels and locals will be able



► "We understand their concerns, they want to open not only open but also indoor spaces, lifting weekend restrictions, but their first enemy is the pandemic," Turnava commented.

to generate minimal incomes to avoid complete collapse and bankruptcy;

6. The Business Ombudsman of Georgia shall be elected and appointed in direct consultation with the business sector and with direct participation. In this regard, we are ready to participate in the development of the relevant model, which also means financing the activities of the ombudsman's office from the business sector;

7. Due to high social responsibility, we declare our readiness to be involved in the process of importing the vaccine and rapid vaccination in Georgia, finding and using relevant business contacts and financial resources.

Representatives of business

associations are demanding, with the direct participation of the Prime Minister, a working meeting with epidemiologists, the government's economic team and experts to work together to find ways to quickly pull the economy out of the crisis.

The application is signed by Associations of Georgian Restaurants, Gastronomy, Retailers Association, Distributors; Taxpayers Union, Producers Federation, Shopping Association, Transport and Roads Association, "Mountain Resorts Business Association" and Georgian Hotels Federation.

As announced early this week, the economy minister said she plans to meet with the restaurant business next week.