

## Armenian president visits Georgia, meets Zourabichvili



Presidents of Armenia and Georgia meet at the Orbeliani Palace

### THE VISIT WILL LAST FOR TWO DAYS

BY NIKA GANTSEMLIDZE

The President of the Republic of Armenia Armen Sarkissian paid a two-day official visit to Tbilisi. He was met at the Tbilisi International Airport by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Davit Zalkaliani, the Head of the Administration of the President of Georgia Natia Sulava, and the Ambassador of Georgia to the Republic of Armenia Giorgi Saganelidze.

The official welcoming ceremony for Armen Sarkissian and his wife, Nune Sarkissian, was held at the Orbeliani Palace. Within the framework of the official visit, a face-to-face and extended meeting of the President of the Republic of Armenia and the President of Georgia was also held, after which, Armen Sarkissian and Salome Zourabichvili made joint statements.

At the press conference, President Salome Zourabichvili said that Georgia stands by the side of Peace. She also noted that during the conflict, Georgia also offered the sides a platform for discussions.

The meeting of the President of the Republic of Armenia and the Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia Archil Talakvadze is also planned. The President of Armenia will also visit the Armenian Cathedral in Tbilisi.

According to Zourabichvili, the visit of the Armenian president to Georgia was

planned a long time ago but was prevented because of the pandemic, as well as the conflict in the region.

According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Davit Zalkaliani, the visit of the President of Armenia to Georgia is an important event in bilateral relations.

According to him, this visit is a good opportunity to discuss all the main directions of bilateral relations and the current situation in the region.

"The visit is being held at a very important time and, naturally, there is a very good opportunity to discuss all the main directions of bilateral relations, as well as the situation in the region. During this

visit, we will have the opportunity to talk about the dynamics of Georgian-Armenian relations in recent years, as well as future prospects. It is necessary to exchange positions on the situation in the region and what needs to be done for long-term stability and development. I am sure that after this visit, our relations will move to a new level," said Zalkaliani.

Armenian President Armen Sarkissian visited Georgia in May 2018. On May 26, the Independence Day of Georgia, he took part in the celebrations dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the First Republic. The Armenian Parliament elected Armen Sarkissian as the President on March 2, 2018.



### POLITICS

US Department of State is disappointed by the lack of agreement among political parties in Georgia, Voice of America reports



FULL STORY ON Page 2

### ECONOMICS/POLITICS

Wizzair and Flyarystan to perform regular flights from Kutaisi Airport



FULL STORY ON Page 3



# US Department of State is disappointed by the lack of agreement among political parties in Georgia, Voice of America reports

By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Shortly after the Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, David Zalkaliani held a telephone conversation with the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Voice of America reported on the official statement received from the US Department of State. The US Department of State expressed its disappointment over the inability of the political parties in Georgia to come to an agreement and the inability of both the ruling party and the opposition bloc to put the interests of the state above the individual interests of the political parties. The statement referred, in specific, to the issue of holding the repeat parliamentary elections, as well as the release of a number of opposition-minded individuals, to whom the opposition bloc refers to as political prisoners. The statement also notes the majority of responsibility in resolving the ongoing crisis lies within the ruling Georgian Dream party's hands.

Earlier this year, prior to the European-mediated negotiations between the ruling party and the opposition bloc, members of the Georgian Dream have expressed, on multiple occasions, their readiness to reach a compromise on some of the items on the negotiations' agenda.

Following the conversation with the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani posted on his official Twitter page:

"Great to discuss with Secretary Blinken the security situation in Georgia and the region, our partnership, and Georgia's democratic consolidation. The United States' steadfast support of Georgia's territorial integrity and our Euro-Atlantic integration is crucial and remains strong. Looking forward to working closely with Biden's administration for the stronger partnership."

The political crisis in Georgia first erupted after the results of



the October 2020 Parliamentary Elections have been released. The country's opposition bloc protested against the election results, and claimed that they were falsified, and, thus, boycotted their mandates in the

Parliament of Georgia. The crisis has escalated further after the arrest of Nika Melia - the leader of the country's largest opposition party, the United National Movement. Melia was arrested on the grounds of violating the

conditions of his bail, as well as his refusal to post the bail on time, despite the repeated warning of the legal authorities. The escalation of the political crisis in Georgia has led to the President of the European Council

Charles Mitchel, as well as the EU special mediator Christian Danielsson to facilitate the negotiations between the ruling party and the opposition bloc, however, all rounds of negotiations have failed to result in an agreement.



<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>APRIL 16</b>
<b>Day</b>	Mostly cloudy High: <b>21°C</b>
<b>Night</b>	Partly cloudy Low: <b>11°C</b>
<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>APRIL 17</b>
<b>Day</b>	Mostly cloudy High: <b>22°C</b>
<b>Night</b>	Light rain Low: <b>13°C</b>

<p>published by <b>The Messenger</b></p> <p>43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia</p> <p>Founded by Prof. <b>Zaza Gachechiladze</b></p> <p><b>Tamar Gachechiladze</b> Publisher</p> <p>Phone: +995 99 56 56 21; +995 77 76 00 00 E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge http://www.messenger.com.ge</p>	<p><b>Nino Metreveli</b> Commercial Director</p> <p><b>Mariam Mchedlidze</b> Editor-in-Chief</p> <p><b>Natalia Kochiashvili</b> Executive Editor</p> <p><b>Nino Kavelashvili</b> Design and Layout</p>	<p>The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.</p> <p>All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.</p> <p>The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper,</p>	<p>and, therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.</p> <p>The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.</p>
--	--	--	--



EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.4432 | EURO - 4.1177 | GBP - 4.7375 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.5431 | SWISS FRANC - 3.7377 |

# Wizzair and Flyarystan to perform regular flights from Kutaisi Airport

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

On April 18, after a few months of pause, the first flight will be operated by the Hungarian airline Wizzair from Kutaisi International Airport. According to the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, the largest low-cost carrier in Eastern Europe will resume regular flights from Kutaisi to Warsaw and Vilnius, and from May - flights to Riga and Dortmund. 13 more destinations in Europe will be added gradually from June.

Another low-budget airline is entering Georgian air. From May of this year, the Kazakh air carrier Flyarysta will start operating. Aktau, Atyrau, and Nur-Sultan - these are the three new destinations from which regular flights will be operated at the Kutaisi Airport.

"In 2020, which was one of the most difficult years, the Georgian government was able to upgrade two international airports, including Kutaisi's Davit Agmashenebeli Airport, whose passenger capacity was quadrupled, which is an important basis for launching another low-cost airline in the country," noted the Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Guram Guramishvili.

According to him, the ongoing process in the aviation market also confirms that 'the recovery of the Georgian economy has begun', and, even though the dangers of the pandemic have not



Wizzair is considering restoring the base in Kutaisi. The decision will depend on the situation on the market, the number of flights the company will be able to carry out, and the number of aircrafts Wizzair can deploy in Kutaisi.

been eliminated yet, significant positive processes are underway in the aviation sector.

Besides, German low-cost airline Eurowings, which is part of the Lufthansa Group, is considering introducing regular flights in Georgia. The airline has already officially applied to the Civil Aviation Agency of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia for a permit for regular air traffic. From July 21 on of this year, Eurowings will operate Dusseldorf - Tbilisi - Dusseldorf flights. Flights will operate twice a week by Airbus 320 aircraft.

Recall that the global aviation industry has been one of the



Georgia Airports Union states that direct flights from Georgia were available in 18 directions in March, and 27 destinations will be added during the summer season.

fastest-growing and most stable sectors for many years despite the pandemic. In the first month of full closure (April 2020), the monthly volume of air travel worldwide decreased from an average of 460 million seats to 150 million. The pandemic has hit the European aviation industry most severely, with the most significant 91% decline caused by stricter restrictions than on other continents.

As Vako Chilashvili, Aviation Business Development Manager of the Georgian Airports Union has stated, the forecast at Georgian airports in 2020 was up to a 15 % increase in passenger traffic. In contrast to global trends, a positive trend was observed in the Georgian aviation market - in 2019, the passenger flow at Georgian airports amounted to 5.2 million, which is similar to the 640% growth of 2010.

According to Chilashvili, in March, 17 airlines operated regularly on the Georgian aviation market, and direct flights were operated in 18 directions.

"27 more directions will be added to the list during the summer season. We have positive expectations; several new airlines will start operating in the Georgian aviation market in the summer. If the epidemiological situation in the world and Georgia allows it, we hope that by the end of 2021, the passenger flow of our airports will be even 40-45 % higher than that in 2019," Chilashvili said.

# Opening Ceremony of the Project for Provision of Medical Equipment in Nikozi Village, Gori Municipality

On April 13, the opening ceremony was held in Nikozi village, for the project funded by the Government of Japan, based on the goodwill of the Japanese people. The opening ceremony was attended by H.E Mr. IMAMURA Akira, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Georgia; Mr. Giorgi Khojevanishvili - Majoritarian MP of Gori; Representatives of the State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality and Ministry of Health and the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia; Also, representatives of the Ambulatory and NGO Kartlosi.

The project was funded within the Grassroots Human Security Grant Program (GGP) of the Embassy of Japan. Within this project, the Ambulatory center of Nikozi village was provided with 64,643 USD worth of medical equipment, which enables to con-



duct in-depth investigations and improves access to healthcare services for the war-affected population. The medical equipment is already working at full capacity in compliance with all relevant regulations, which is vital for local people in the coronavirus pandemic. The "Grassroots Human Security Grant program" (GGP) provides assistance to relatively small projects and aims at the improvement of human security in Georgia in the following priority fields: environment protection, agriculture, infrastructure, healthcare and education. Since 1998, within the GGP program alone, the Japanese Government has funded around 200 projects, in total amounting to more than 19 million USD.

After the opening ceremony, Ambassador IMAMURA visited Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) in NIkozi village with the representatives of the Parliament, Ministries and Local Governments.