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PM presents half a billion GEL program of Georgia's Urban Renewal



"The promotion of equal socio-economic development of the regions of the country is very important and the main goal of the state should be to improve the living, working, and development conditions," Gharibashvili said.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili presented a ₾ 500 million program aimed at promoting re-

gional development.

"We are starting a large-scale renewal of the country. This program envisages urban renewal in 63 municipalities, rehabilitation of important cultural and

historical sites, rehabilitation of municipal administrative centers, as well as arrangement of recreational spaces, development of tourist infrastructure in recreational parks in all municipalities,"

the Prime Minister said.

According to Gharibashvili, tenders for the projects will be announced this week, the works are expected to start in June and 15 thousand jobs will be created in the regions.

Gharibashvili says that "all the best architects" will be involved in the program and the projects will be implemented "while maintaining the existing authenticity on the ground."

The project is planned to continue for 4 years and the budget of ₾ 500 million will be divided in these years. It is yet unknown exactly how much money will be spent on the program in 2021. Recall, that in the fall of 2021, municipal-local self-government elections will be held in Georgia.

"₾ 500 million is an indicative cost of the first stage projects, which we are going to implement in 4 years, but there are some projects that will be implemented in the municipalities this year. There are projects that require content in a few years and will be implemented in the next 2-3 years," said Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Irakli Karseladze.

According to the Minister of Finance Lasha Khutsishvili, the project of Renewed Regions will not be financed at the expense of increasing the budget deficit and the implementation of new infrastructure projects will affect practically all regions, which will give new life to economic activities.



The projects will be implemented together with the municipalities by the Municipal Development Fund of the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure.

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By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Russia's occupation of Georgian territories remains main threat, says SSG

On Monday, the Deputy Head of the State Security Service (SSG), Aleksii Batiashvili, presented the annual 2020 report in the parliament, stating that the occupation of Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions by the Russian Federation is considered the country's main threat. Batiashvili reviewed the security environment in the occupied territories.

The Deputy Head of the SSG stressed that the official Moscow continued the policy of de facto annexation of the occupied regions and supported the alienation of the population divided by the occupation line. On top of that, he also emphasized that amid the pandemic, the fundamental rights of ethnic Georgians were further restricted and their condition deteriorated.

Batiashvili stated that militarization and military exercises are actively carried out on the spot. "Russian occupation forces and heavy military equipment illegally deployed in the occupied regions are damaging the security environment on the ground, which is a regional threat and an international challenge," the Deputy Head of the SSG said.

Batiashvili also touched upon the issues of the unlawful detention of Georgians by Russian occupying forces, the so-called bordereization, and other illegal activities on the ground. On April 25, SSG announced that Russian occupying forces had installed artificial barriers in the occupied territory near the village of Ghogheti in the Kareli Municipality.

As Batiashvili reported, in 2020, 64 cases of the so-called illegal detention in the occupied Tskhinvali region and 13 more cases in the occupied Abkhazia region were detected.

He stated that through the efforts of the central government of Georgia and international partners, tens of Georgian citizens have been released from illegal detention, however, some illegally detained Georgian citizens were given long prison sentences, including the cases of Zaza Gakheladze and Irakli Bebuva. "The occupation regime showed a particularly unfair and inhumane approach towards these individuals," Batiashvili said.



SSG detected 64 cases of the so-called illegal detention in the occupied Tskhinvali region and 13 more cases in the occupied Abkhazia region in 2020.



On April 25, SSG reported that Russian occupying forces had installed artificial barriers in the occupied territory near the village of Ghogheti in the Kareli Municipality.

Govt tightens restrictions ahead of Easter holiday

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Regarding the upcoming Easter holiday, which is marked on May 2 this year, the government has imposed several restrictions. Per the Inter-Agency Coordination Council's decision, municipal transport will be banned nationwide during May 3-12, and visits to cemeteries will be restricted. The government has announced the 4-11 May holidays, aiming to limit mobility.

The curfew will not be lifted even during the Easter Holiday, however, the restriction on movement will be eased for only one night as an exception in connection with the Easter Liturgy. Particularly, movement restrictions will be in force from 11 pm on May 1 till 4 am on May 2. celebratory Easter liturgy will be held at churches in full compliance with epidemic safety norms, including the sound system provided in the churches, social distancing, and wearing facemasks.

The Inter-Agency Coordination Council has decided to restrict visits to cemeteries to avoid gatherings there. Thus, roads leading to cemeteries will be blocked on the upcoming public holidays.

Georgia reported 521 coronavirus cases, 1,058 recoveries, and 18 deaths yesterday. The total of cases reached 304,272, among them, 287,029 people recovered and 4,043 died. The daily test-positivity rate stands at 4,64%, while 4.03% in the past 14 days.

It was noted at the coordination council meeting yesterday that the system is ready even for the worst scenario, the epidemiological situation is manageable and

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PM presents half a billion GEL program of Georgia's Urban Renewal

The Minister of Finance noted that part of the funding of ₾ 500 million comes from donor organizations like Asian Development Bank and World Bank, while the rest comes from the state budget. The Minister clarifies that the state will not have to make additional commitments for this. The share of do-

nors will be more than ₾ 150 million, and up to ₾ 300-350 million will be allocated from the state budget. These are various programs that cost the state less than they envisioned, including at the expense of holding tenders where savings were fixed.

According to the 2021 budget, the Ministry of Infrastructure will spend ₾ 2.36 billion. The main part of this is ₾ 1.5 billion for road infrastructure.

This year's budget for the renovation of regional infrastructure is already ₾ 241 million, while the budget for the rehabilitation of water supply infrastructure in the regions is ₾ 348 million.

According to Natia Turnava Minister of Economy, over the years and now the state is building an economy where the private sector is dominant, where it is important to protect private

property rights and support the rights of private investors.

"One of the areas of incentives for the private sector is enhanced public infrastructure projects because in this case, we share the risks and costs that would otherwise be borne by the private sector. Under normal circumstances, the private sector would take it upon itself, but because of the pandemic, when the economy shrank and the risks

to the private sector increased, this is impossible. That is why each of our invested GEL, even in road construction, development of urban centers, even in gasification will bring tens of GEL from the private sector. That is, at least 1/10 of the funds will be invested," said Natia Turnava. According to the minister, the government has launched an unprecedented privatization program.

Weather

Tuesday, April 27

Day Light Rain/Wind
High: 19°C

Night Light Rain
Low: 13°C

Wednesday, April 28

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 24°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 13°C

published by
The Messenger

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.4534; Euro - 4.1765; GBP - 4.8023; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.6059; Swiss Franc - 3.7779

Georgia economic update: Lari depreciation hits this year's anti-record, loans taken out in Georgian lari decreased by 3.93%



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

As a result of today's trading, the national currency of Georgia, the Georgian Lari, depreciated by 0.7 tetri against the US dollar, leading to \$1 costing ₾ 3.4534, hitting this year's anti-record. Similarly, the Georgian lari depreciated against the euro by 2.36 tetri, resulting in 1 euro costing ₾ 4.1765.

Compared to the exchange rates set earlier this year, the

Georgian Lari depreciated by a total of 17.68 tetri against the US dollar and by a total of 15.32 tetri against the euro. In an attempt to reduce the fluctuation of the national currency, the National Bank of Georgia carried out 7 interventions this year, resulting in the selling of a total of \$242.9 million including \$30 million that the National Bank of Georgia sold during the last auction that took place on April 22.

Earlier today, the National Bank of Georgia released new data which showed that the commercial banks in Georgia gave out 3.93% fewer loans in Georgian lari, while the number of loans given out in foreign currency increased by 0.85% month-on-month. In March 2021, Georgian commercial banks gave out a total of ₾ 37.94 billion in loans and received a total of ₾ 36.03 billion in deposits.

The amount of deposits made in March 2021 increased by 0.03%, while the number of loans decreased by 1.27%. Compared to February 2021, assets of the Georgian banks in general increased by 1.5% or ₾ 848.44 million amounting to a total of ₾ 58.15 billion. As of right now the equity capital of Georgia's banking sector equals 10.76% of the total assets of the commercial banks and amounts to approximately ₾ 6.26 billion. There are currently 15 commercial banks in Georgia, including one branch of a non-resident bank, and 14 foreign-owned banks in total.

Govt tightens restrictions ahead of Easter holiday



As an exception, due to the Easter liturgy, the restriction on movement will be in force from 11 pm on May 1 till 4 am on May 2.

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under control.

In accordance with the National Vaccination Plan, the vaccination process will continue actively. For World Immunization Week, members of the Government of Georgia and the Parliament will get involved in the vaccination process.

As of Monday, 38,553 people got the vaccine, among them, 21,910 people got vaccinated with AstraZeneca, while 13,756

people got the Pfizer shot. 2,887 individuals have already got two doses of the Pfizer vaccine. The Head of the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health, Amiran Gamkrelidze announced yesterday that the vaccination pace needs to accelerate in Georgia. He also mentioned the Indian coronavirus strain and stressed that the government has imposed appropriate restrictive measures. Indian strain has not been detected in Georgia yet.

AFD approves a grant of €300,000 in support of Georgia Land Management Agency for the modernization of agriculture



Mr. Levan Davitashvili

On April 26, the Minister of Agriculture and Environment of Georgia, Mr. Levan Davitashvili and the Ambassador of France to Georgia, Mr. Diego Colas visited the farm of Dmanisi Livestock Ltd. During the visit, the French Ambassador announced a € 300,000 grant to the French Development Agency in support of the National Agency for Sustainable Land Management and Land Use Monitoring. This document is a presentation of "GREEN ALLIANCE", in the framework of which, namely, French and Georgian investors introduce new technologies and modern training for the development of Georgian agriculture.

Agro Industrial Group "GREEN ALLIANCE" was established in 2019 by Georgian, French and Dutch partners who



H.E. Mr. Diego Colas

have many years of experience in the same field. The group is led by Mr. Jacques Flour, who has 25 years of experience in Georgia in the field of agro-industry, and his name is associated with the resumption of production of "Borjomi" and the reconstruction of "Chateau Mukhrani".

In December 2020, the Agence française de développement (AFD) has approved a grant of €300,000 under its FEXTE fund (Technical expertise and experience exchange fund) to support the newly established National Agency for Sustainable Land Management and Land Use Monitoring (NASLMLUM) operating within the framework of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA).

The aim is to create the conditions for

the development of modern agriculture that generates income for farmers. In October 2020, experts from the Agriculture, Rural Development and Biodiversity division of AFD conducted a mission in Georgia to define the different components of this technical cooperation program.

As part of this program, a detailed study will be launched to further analyze the challenges related to agricultural land management in Georgia, such as the high level of land fragmentation, the level of productivity, security of land tenure etc. This study will compound a historical approach of land management policies in Georgia, and initiate an analysis of the legal, institutional and operational framework and of the land market regulation.

Technical assistance will also be provided to the Land Management Agency, to support the operationalization of the agency, and establish a diagnosis of the land management sector in Georgia.

AFD grant will finance the partnership between NASLMLUM / MEPA and French partners, such as Geofit, the National Institute of Geography (IGN FI) and the Society for Land Management and Agriculture Property of Ile de France Region (SAFER Ile de France).

"This operation is fully in line with AFD's mandate in Georgia to support green and inclusive growth, in a sector identified for cooperation: agriculture. Different challenges exist on the question of agricultural/rural land and its management. For example, only 30% of land is currently registered, the status of communal land systems is not clearly defined and the level of fragmentation is very high. This induces additional difficulties when it comes to environmental

protection of the land, as well as productivity", said the Head of the AFD South Caucasus regional office, Mr. Raphael Joazan.

"After a year of health crisis and the related economic challenge, it is clear that agriculture is a strategic economic sector. Georgia has considerable competitive advantage in this sector and we, in France, working as part of Team Europe, are keen to be a major partner of Georgian authorities as they strive to develop this sector. This determination fits squarely in the emphasis on green and inclusive growth, a key objective both of the AFD and of Team Europe. With FINEXCOOP, an EU-funded and AFD-implemented project, we have, since 2018, provided technical assistance to many small scale dynamic semi commercial farmers. 12 pilots projects are operational, 8 more are projected to be operational before the end of the year." highlighted HE. Mr. Diego Colas, Ambassador of France to Georgia.

