

Opposition United National Movement party enters Georgian Parliament



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Georgia's major opposition United National Movement party will enter the parliament after a six-month boycott, chairman of the party, Nika Melia has announced. Melia added that despite its decision, the United National Movement party will still refrain from signing the EU-brokered agreement between the ruling party and the opposition. Melia also noted that the party will be joining the parliament because of its unwavering efforts to put an end to the oligarchy of the former leader of the ruling Georgian Dream party, Bidzina Ivanishvili.

Members of the UNM have stated on

numerous occasions that the reason why the party refuses to sign the agreement proposed by the President of the European Council Charles Michel is because of the amnesty that it extended upon the party's leader Nika Melia, stating that amnesty implies some sort of guilt, while Nika Melia was just a political prisoner.

The ruling Georgian Dream party also commented on the United National Movement's move. On its official Twitter account the party posted:

"Radical United National Movement, having effectively admitted defeat of their destructive political agenda, takes up seats in Georgian Parliament. UNM, however, refuses to sign the EU-mediated

political agreement, which is the basis for consensus for ending the political crisis."

Meanwhile, the US and EU ambassadors to Georgia expressed strong regret over the UNM's refusal to sign the EU-mediated agreement:

"However, we strongly regret that the United National Movement did not seize the opportunity today to join the other parties in signing the 19 April agreement. The UNM shares the responsibility with the other elected parties to engage constructively in Parliament to address perceptions of politicized justice, adopt and scrutinise the implementation of ambitious electoral and judicial reform and participate in power-sharing within Parliament, among

many priorities. This is important work that needs the responsible participation of all of Georgia's elected leaders. By signing this agreement the UNM would demonstrate its commitment to carry out these fundamental objectives in the interest of Georgia, its citizens, EU-Georgia relations and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic future," read the official statement reads.

The United National Movement's decision marks an end to the opposition bloc's boycott of the parliament mandates, which began shortly after the results of the October 2020 Parliamentary Elections have been announced. The opposition claimed that the elections were rigged and called on the new ones to be held.

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Georgia celebrates Police Day

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgia marked Police Day on May 31. Georgian high-rank officials congratulated policemen on the day, praising their efforts to ensure public safety. The solemn event dedicated to the professional day of the police was held in front of the administrative building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Tbilisi.

The event was attended by President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, members of the government, and parliament, as well as representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited in Georgia.

Georgian Interior Minister Vaktang Gomelauri congratulated police officers and stressed that Georgian police are 'apolitical' and 'citizen-oriented'. During his speech, Gomelauri underscored that the effectiveness of the police during the pandemic "has been of great importance for the protection of public order, human health and life."

On behalf of Georgian police, the Interior Minister expressed gratitude to the international partners for their contribution to the capacity building of the Ministry. Gomelauri noted that for the successful implementation of visa-free travel with the EU, the cooperation with the European Border and



Units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs performed solemn marching at the event dedicated to the professional day of the police.

Coast Guard Agency has been enhanced. He also underscored that according to the resolution of the European Parliament, the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia in terms of fighting against crime and human rights protection were positively assessed. As Gomelauri said, the support from Georgia's strategic partners, the European Union and the United States, is essential in the ongoing reform process at the Ministry.

As PM Irakli Garibashvili stated at the event, "Certain anti-state forces are constantly

trying to discredit the police and police officers, which is absolutely unacceptable," adding that "the state will not tolerate any such attempt." The PM claims the Georgian police force is a politically neutral institution.

Noting that many policemen have sacrificed their lives to this heroic job, Garibashvili expressed his gratitude to the deceased police officers and their families.

President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili awarded three female police officers with Medals of Honor at the Solemn event. The Award was handed over to Eka Butskiridze, Ani Natsarashvili and Gvantsa Gogava, police officers involved in combating domestic violence against women and children.



President Salome Zourabichvili awarded three female police officers for their efforts to fight against domestic violence.

Georgia reports positive coronavirus cases among fully vaccinated persons, traveling rules to change

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Head of the National Center for Disease Control Amiran Gamkrelidze announced at a briefing on Monday that cases of coronavirus infection among individuals vaccinated against the coronavirus have been reported in Georgia. According to him, 0.8% of those who were vaccinated once and 0.2-0.3% of those who were vaccinated twice have tested positive for coronavirus. Gamkrelidze stressed that all of them had the disease in



As the Head of the National Center for Disease Control Amiran Gamkrelidze noted, depending on the epidemiological situation use of masks might be mandatory only at large gatherings after June.

a milder form, almost without any need for hospitalization or intensive medical care.

Until now citizens of all countries could enter Georgia if they presented a confirmation of being fully vaccinated at border checkpoints of Georgia. However, at the briefing Gamkrelidze announced that per the new decree, fully vaccinated individuals who want to enter Georgia will now be required to present a negative PCR test from the past 72 hours.

Georgian National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) is currently studying the first suspected case of the South African coronavirus variant. As the head of NCDC noted, the genetic analysis of the virus is underway and the

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TUESDAY		JUNE 1	
Day		Sunny	
		High: 29°C	
Night		Clear sky	
		Low: 16°C	
WEDNESDAY		JUNE 2	
Day		Sunny	
		High: 27°C	
Night		Clear sky	
		Low: 14°C	

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Government raises 2021 economic growth forecast to 6.5%

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) published the preliminary estimates for economic growth in April 2021. According to the report, compared to the same period of the previous year, real GDP growth was 44.8%, while the average for the first 4 months of 2021 is 8.1%. Record high economic growth is mainly due to the so-called 'base effect' caused by the reduced economy last year - due to the lockdown in the country in April 2020 it shrank by 16.6%.

Geostat data shows that in April 2021, compared to the same period of the previous year, growth was observed in the following sectors: manufacturing, construction, trade, transport and warehousing, hotels and restaurants, financial and insurance activities, real estate activities, professional, scientific and technical activities. A declining trend was observed in the mining industry.

According to Geostat, the turnover of VAT refineries in April amounted to €8.44 billion, which is 93% higher than the same period in 2020, which is also due to the 'baseline effect.' Exports, which have grown by 19.6% this year, have had a positive impact on the economy as well.

Executive Director of Geostat emphasized that compared to the previous year, there was an upward trend in all respects - "There was growth in construction, metallurgy was activated, the production of construction materials and cement has increased, the output of the financial and insurance sectors also increased (51%), trade became more active, Auto imports have grown by 86% compared to the previous year, and re-exports have increased 6 times, which



► "April's economic growth is the result of the right policy of the government, there are very positive attitudes and expectations in business," PM said.



► The updated forecast will improve the current account deficit and the dynamics of government debt reduction will be faster.

also makes a positive contribution," said Gogita Todradze.

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili responded to the Geostat economic growth rate saying that the average growth in January-April is higher than the rate of decline of the Georgian economy in April last year, which is understandable.

During the government session, it was decided to update the 2021 budget. According to the Minister of Finance Lasha Khutsishvili, the reason for the budget adjustment is the above-mentioned faster recovery rate of the economy. Adjustments due to this factor will be included in the macroeconomic forecasts of the budget and instead of 4.5% the target for 2021 is set at 6.5%. According to the Minister of Finance, due to the relatively high growth of the economy, the budget deficit will be adjusted, which will be reduced to 7.1%. The previous forecast was 7.6%. Khutsishvili also said that in an optimistic scenario, economic growth in 2021 is projected at 10.2%. He underscored that the 44.8% growth in April exceeds not only the 2020 rate but also the size of the 2019 economy. The minister stated that the 44.8% growth in April exceeds not only the 2020 rate but also the size of the 2019 economy. The Minister also reiterated that with the exception of the 'base effect', the size of the Georgian economy has increased by 21% compared to April 2019 this year.

"The updated figures are much more positive, namely exports increased by 70% in April, remittances increased by 144%, and the dynamics of budget revenues are very convincing. We expect a rapid recovery of tourism and the opening of land borders from tomorrow, which will be an incentive for economic recovery. The role of political stability must be mentioned as well," PM explained.

Georgia reports positive coronavirus cases among fully vaccinated persons, traveling rules to change

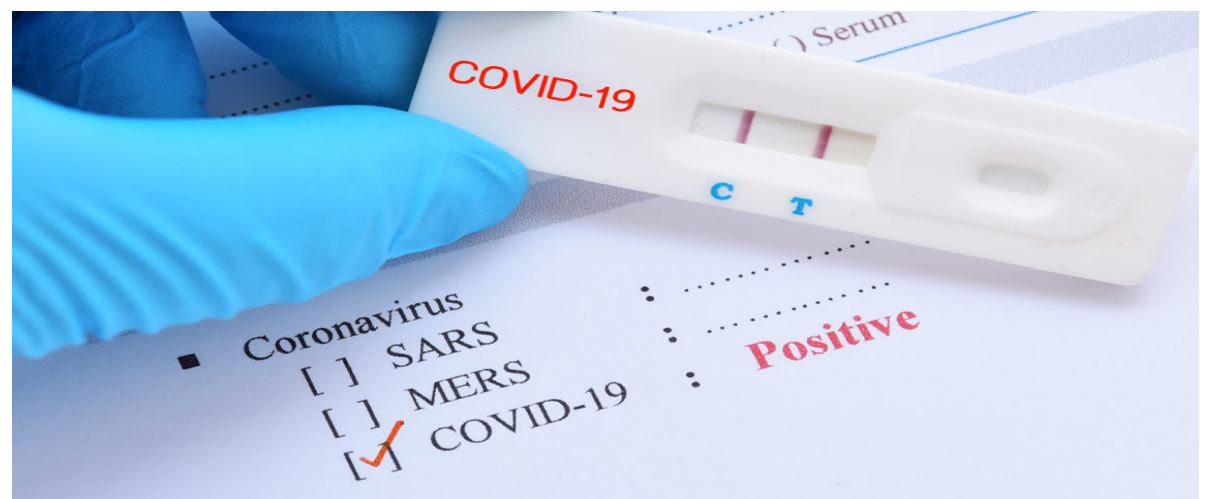
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answer will be known shortly.

Yesterday, Georgian, Ukrainian and Moldovan PMs have sent a joint letter to the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, requesting the EU's assistance in acquiring coronavirus vaccines. The prime ministers asked the EU to include the Eastern Partnership states in its vaccine sharing mechanism as it will help the countries fill their vaccine stocks promptly. The PMs underlined the EU's immediate assistance provided to partner countries

since the start of the pandemic.

As of Monday, Georgia reported 360 coronavirus cases, 1,195 recoveries, and 16 deaths. The highest number of 200 Covid-19 cases was recorded in the Georgian capital Tbilisi followed by the Adjara region with 43 cases and the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region with 24 cases. The daily rate of new cases stands at 2,95%, while 3,41% in the past 14 days. Georgia has reported a total of 343 963 cases, among them, 327 618 people recovered and 4 773 died. As of May 31, 138 914 people got the coronavirus vaccine.



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