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US Congress Delegation in Georgia visits occupation line, meets representatives of local NGOs



BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

US Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Rob Portman who arrived in Georgia on June 1, visited the occupation line near Zemo Nikozi village, bordering the Russian-occupied region of Tskhinvali, the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia has reported.

First in Zemo Nikozi, and later in the village of Ergneti, EUMM Monitors briefed the Senators on the security situation in the area, with a focus on 'borderisation' with as wire fences, observation posts, and surveillance equipment, and the negative impact on freedom of movement and other human rights of conflict-affected communities.

During the visit, the Head of Mission thoroughly updated the Congressional Delegation on specific challenges of the communities living along the administrative boundary lines, which have been further aggravated with the COVID-19 pandemic," the EUMM's press release stated.

EUMM's official report on the visit also

noted that the Senators applauded EUMM for its work as the only international monitoring presence on the ground.

Senators Shaheen and Portman also participated in a meeting with local NGOs, including the International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Society for Fair Elections And Democracy (ISFED), International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and Georgia's Young Lawyers Association.

According to the head of the Young Lawyers Association Nika Simonishvili, one of the most important topics of the discussion was the pressing need for judicial reform in Georgia:

"Since we have not yet seen enough political will from the government authorities on the subject of a compulsory judicial reform, as opposed to a limited number of procedural changes, we clearly need to discuss this issue with senators," Simonishvili said.

The US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan stated earlier that the visit of the US Congress delegation visit to Georgia is a clear sign of the US support towards the people of Georgia and their efforts to build a democracy.

A similar incentive has been expressed by the Georgian Ambassador to the US, David Bakradze who said that the timely visit of the US delegation to Georgia shows America's unwavering support to Georgia:

"Today, amidst the challenges caused by the complex situation in the region and the need for economic recovery in the aftermath of the global pandemic, their support is especially important to us", Bakradze stated.



Prime Minister of Ukraine pays official visit to Georgia

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Prime Minister of Ukraine Denys Shmyhal landed in Tbilisi on the night of 2nd of June and was welcomed to the country by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Davit Zalkaliani. During the official visit, Shmyhal held meetings with Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili, Parliament Speaker Kakha Kuchava and Patriarch Ilia II.

At the meeting in the government administration, the special friendship and strategic partnership between Georgia and Ukraine were underlined. The sides discussed the situation in the Black Sea region and regional security issues.

The position of the Georgian side towards the commitment to a peaceful policy of resolving the conflict was underscored.

“Ukraine will co-author the draft UN resolution on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, as well as the status of refugees,” said Ukrainian PM, expressing hope to actively cooperate with the Georgian side within the framework of the Crimean platform initiated by Ukraine, which is aimed at the de-occupation of the peninsula.

The meeting focused on the common challenge for Georgia and Ukraine - the threats posed by Russia and the dire consequences of the occupation. Gharibashvili expressed his ‘deep concern’ over Russia’s military activities near the borders of Ukraine and the temporarily occupied Crimea. He reaffirmed his support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The sides discussed the main directions of bilateral cooperation between Georgia and Ukraine. It was noted that trade and economic relations between the two countries are expanding, and to further increase trade turnover, it is important to make full use of the potential for economic cooperation. The importance of strengthening ties in the field of tourism and transport was also stressed. Ukrainian PM stated that the relations between the peoples of Ukraine and Georgia are gaining more momentum, which is an important signal for business and citizens of the two countries.



► The 10th session of the Georgian-Ukrainian Joint Economic Cooperation Commission will be held at the end of the year.

“Ukraine is one of Georgia’s most important trading partners in the top ten list,” Gharibashvili said, adding that the main task of the two countries is to double the trade turnover between Georgia and Ukraine.

“We agreed that at the end of the year, we would hold the tenth session of the Georgian-Ukrainian intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation,” said Shmyhal, underscoring that trade turnover between the countries decreased by 15.6% in

2020, however the positive trend has started in the first quarter of 2021, with 4% increase. According to him, meetings of the working group on transport, energy, agriculture and tourism will also be held in the near future.

At the same time, the Prime Minister of Ukraine noted that Ukraine and Georgia have significant transit potential, which is why in the future, they would focus on the joint development of international transport corridors. He also expressed his interest

in a more active development of investment cooperation in terms of modernization of transport infrastructure, the development of joint ventures, as well as the process of privatization of state property. “It was very interesting for both countries to implement state-private partnership projects. In particular, in the maritime sector, aviation and road economy,” he said.

Ukrainian PM considers energy security to be one of the key areas for further cooperation. The

sides promised to promote the development of green energy and energy efficiency, which will be facilitated by the Memorandum of Understanding between profile agencies. This document will be the basis for the development of joint approaches aimed at the development of renewable energy markets in our countries.

“We are ready to consider cooperation in this and other important areas, including within the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and GUAM, where we have similar positions and approaches to the further activities of these organizations,” said Denis Schmigal.

The meeting also focused on the integration of Georgia and Ukraine into European and Euro-Atlantic structures and the strengthening of bilateral cooperation in this direction.

According to Shmyhal, Ukraine and Georgia are strategic partners, adding these aren’t empty words, but ‘confirmed by concrete facts.’ He added that the current relations between Ukraine and Georgia are primarily based on joint goals of the governments of Ukraine and Georgia in terms of EU and NATO membership.

“I am convinced that the entry of our countries into the European Union and NATO is only a matter of time,” Ukrainian PM said.



► Ukrainian delegation honored the memory of the heroes who died for the unity of Georgia and laid a wreath at the memorial on Heroes’ Square.

FRIDAY JUNE 4

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 25°C

Night Light Rain
Low: 13°C

SATURDAY JUNE 5

Day Cloudy
High: 26°C

Night Showers
Low: 13°C

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GEOSTAT reports annual inflation rate in Georgia at 7.7%

THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX INCREASED BY 0.7 PERCENT



inflation rate, the GEOSTAT report indicates that the transport prices have increased by 17.4 percent, contributing 2.08 percentage points to the annual inflation rate. As for the housing and utilities, the prices for this group posted an increase of 6.6 percent. Food and non-alcoholic beverage saw an increase of 3.3 percent. As for Health, it was the second biggest contributor and increased by 13.4 percent. The opposition of Georgia says that the government of the country can't cope with the economic challenges in the country and say that it is their fault that the inflation is so high.

Saba Buadze, a member of Lelo, suspects that pricing in the oil market is done through interference and restriction of competition. According to him, the competition agency does not work in Georgia properly. "We have heard the fairy tales from the Central Bank president, saying that they are doing everything for the stabilization of the prices, which is a total lie. Today, there is no family left in the country who did not feel the impact of inflation, except Ivanishvili," said Buadze.

According to the member of the United National Movement Roman Gotsiridze, the inflation rate impacts people who spent most of their income on food and medication the most. He also said that all of this is the direct result of the economic policies adopted by the Georgian Dream government.

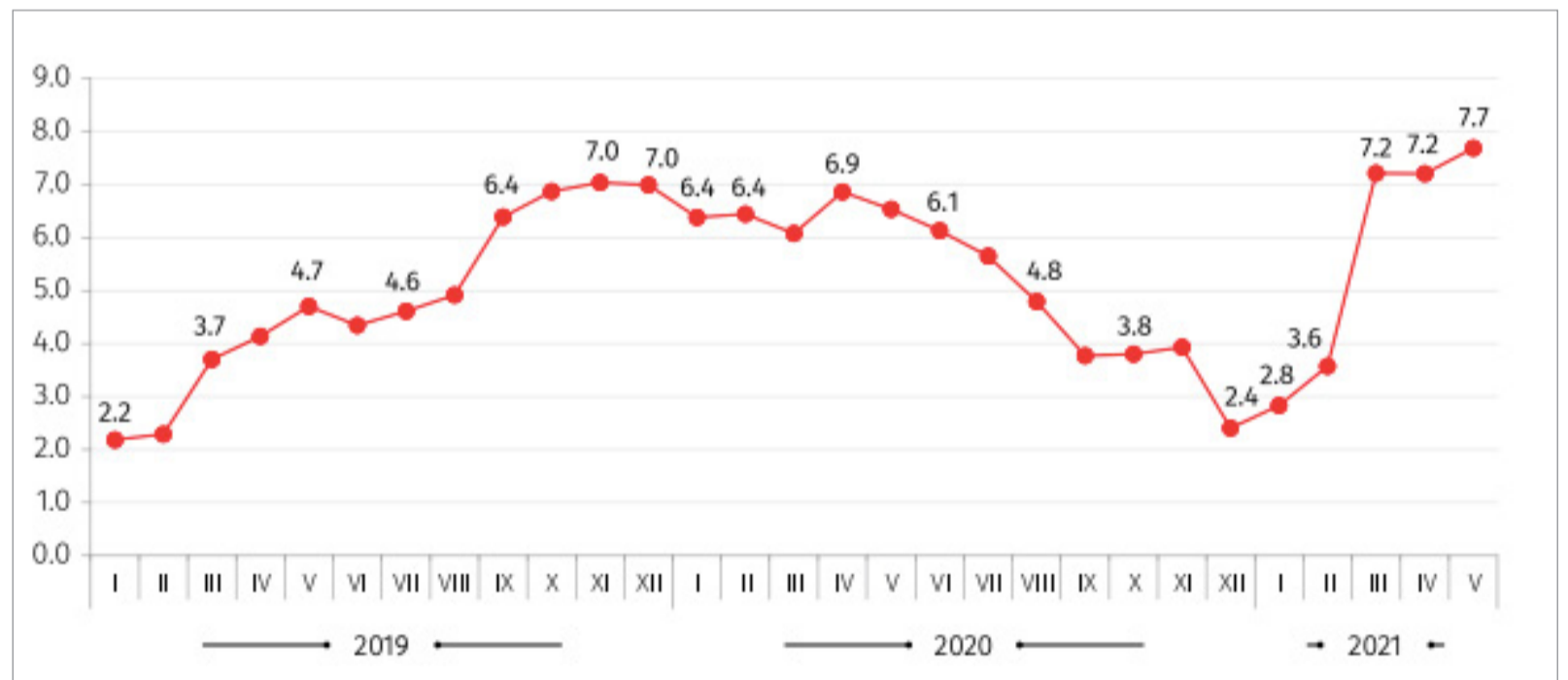
BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

► According to the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, the Namakhvani HPP project is one of the most well-studied projects in the Georgian energy sector.

The National Statistic Office of Georgia published an official report yesterday about the inflation rate in the country. According to GEOSTAT, the Consumer Price Index has increased by 0.7 percent in May 2021 compared to last month. As for the annual rate of inflation, it has amounted to 7.7 percent. According to the statement of the National Statistics Office of Georgia, the monthly inflation rate in the country was mostly influenced by the price changes in several groups.

One of the groups that heavily influenced the monthly rate in the country is transport. According to GEOSTAT's information, the prices of transportation in the country have increased by 2 percent. According to them, it has contracted 0.26 percent to the overall monthly inflation rate.

The prices for the group of restaurants and hotels have increased 1.4 percent, while furnishings, household equipment, and maintenance increased by 1.7 percent. As for the annual



► Georgian opposition accuses the ruling party of not taking necessary steps to help the Georgian economy

NEWS IN BRIEF

NGOs protest against the violent orthodox-owned school, police detains nine at the rally

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

According to Ana Arganashvili, the representative of the Partnership for Human Rights (PHR), tomorrow they will apply to the court and demand the removal of all children from the Ninotsminda boarding school.

"Tomorrow morning we will submit a new petition to the court and as a

security measure we will demand the immediate removal of all children from the Ninotsminda orphanage.

"A monitoring request alone is no longer sufficient. The new footage released today and information about violence and crimes against children is alarming us," Arganashvili wrote.

Recent interviews with the students and the alumni of the school confirmed that Ninotsminda orphanage teachers are violent. One of the anonymous former beneficiaries of the school said in an interview with Formula TV that he tried to escape from the school 'at least 90 times' along with 40 other children

due to unbearable, violent conditions. The anonymous interviewee said that he is a witness to the killing of a seven-year-old who was beaten to death by one of the teachers at the orphanage. As reported, the school made sure to get rid of the body after the incident.

At the time of the writing, police have arrested 9 people in front of the Prosecutor's Office, where a protest rally was being held in connection with the Ninotsminda Children's Boarding School.

The activists were arrested for "violating the law under the Code of Administrative Offenses."

Five of the nine activists, including

Giga Makarashvili and Nika Farulava, were released on bail. During the process of his detaining, Makarashvili's hand was broken.

The situation escalated after the activists attempted to enter the Prosecutor's Office to have their questions answered.

Ombudsman Nino Lomjaria issued a statement on April 15, 2021, stating that from June 2020, their representatives will not be allowed in the Ninotsminda boarding school. The decision was made by Bishop Spiridon who governs the school.