

Opponents of Namakhvani HPP and Georgian government reach partial agreement



as activists, supported by a number of environmental experts, believe that the construction may pose serious seismic and ecological risks to the area, as well as leading the locals having to leave their homes and relocate elsewhere. The protests under the "Protect the Rioni gorge" slogan have been going on for several months, despite the efforts of the local law enforcement agents to disperse them and prohibit access to the protest site.

The project of building the

Lower and Upper Namakhvani power plants with a total capacity of 433 MW is being realized by one of the Turkish largest companies ENKA with the direct support of the government of Georgia. The government's main argument in favor of the construction is that the new power plant, can, potentially, ensure Georgia's energy independence, as the Namakhvani HPP would become the country's largest project since the Enguri HPP constructed during the Soviet Era.



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

For the first time since the protests against the construction of the Namakhvani hydroelectric power plant broke out in October 2020, the activists and the government authorities have been able to come to a partial agreement. Representatives of the Georgian government and the activists have met for the first stage of negotiations facilitated by the EU Energy Consolidation Dispute Resolution and Negotiation Center.

The parties managed to agree to the following three clauses: a risk assessment of the construc-

tion of the Namakhvani HPP will be conducted; all the fences at the construction site will be removed and free movement of the local residents will be ensured; the government of Georgia will create a 10-year plan for the country's energy security.

The parties have also agreed to continue negotiations, however, at this stage, representatives of the project's main investor – the Turkish company Enka did not attend.

The project of building the Namakhvani power plant in the Rioni gorge of Western Georgia has sparked a wave of protests,

NEWS IN BRIEF

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Barkalaia: Ninotsminda boarding school will be closed down

The Deputy Minister of Health says that the

Ninotsminda boarding house will be closed down.

The head of the Patriarchate's public relations department said after a meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Health, UNICEF, and World Vision at the Patriarchate that "the closure of the boarding house will not be considered."

According to Barkalaia, from April 1, 2022, the norms of the licensing law will enter into force, which will provide for the

closure of the institutions and the establishment of alternative services.

"April 1, 2022, is the deadline set by law, but until then we will continue to identify their problems and transfer them to alternative services.

The boarding house will be closed automatically, and alternative services will be strengthened in the form of small family houses. "At today's meeting, we talked about making this pro-

cess transparent for everyone," Tamar Barkalaia said.

6 years pass since the June 13 flooding of the Tbilisi Zoo

Six years have passed since the June 13 tragedy.

On June 13, 2015, a flood in Tbilisi killed 21 people. 2 people went missing.

The rain started at 10 pm on

June 13. On June 14, at 0:30, the situation became dangerous.

Up to 200 families - up to 1,000 people - were affected.

The disaster almost completely destroyed the Tbilisi Zoo. The Mziuri area was flooded.

Animals died in the flood, while some managed to escape the aviaries and fled to the city.

5 lions, 6 tigers, 6 bears, 13 wolves, and a hippo were found in the streets of Tbilisi.

Politics

Today's NATO summit - Anticipations of Georgian officials

This will be the 31st formal meeting of the NATO

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Politics / Economics

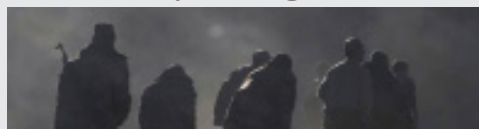
23 children still remain in Ninotsminda boarding school, says Deputy Health Minister

Meeting was held at Georgian Patriarchate

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Georgia applauds its role in the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations



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Today's NATO summit - Anticipations of Georgian officials

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

The 2021 Brussels Summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO will be held today, on June 14. This will be the 31st formal meeting of NATO. Georgia is also on the agenda of today's NATO summit.

Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili talked about the 2021 Summit yesterday. According to Georgian PM, the Georgian side expects that "the progress we have made will be properly assessed and appreciated."

As the head of the government noted, Georgia fulfills all the agreements and obligations honestly, and it is expecting that it will be properly reflected and appreciated.

"We expect the progress we have made to be properly assessed and appreciated. For our part, we are fulfilling all our commitments, which is defined in the declarations of previous NATO summits or the agreements reached - Georgia is fulfilling all the agreements and commitments honestly. We expect it to be properly reflected and appreciated," said the Georgian Prime Minister.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia also issued a special statement. According to the ministry, it is very important that Georgia is on the agenda of the 2021 summit.

A statement issued by the

agency said that the final document - the communiqué - will be adopted at the Brussels summit on June 14. The Georgian side expects that the communiqué "will adequately reflect Georgia's progress on Euro-Atlantic integration, reaffirm NATO's support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and focus on the difficult humanitarian and security environment in the occupied territories."

The Foreign Ministry also hopes that the Allies will reaffirm their commitment to the Bucharest Summit's decision to 'make Georgia a member of NATO' and note Georgia's special contribution to strengthening overall Euro-Atlantic security.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia David Zalkaliani hopes that the progress made in the direction of NATO integration will be properly reflected in the relevant decisions and declaration of the Alliance.

In parallel with the Brussels Summit, on June 14, the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili will take part in the Brussels Forum - a panel called - Investing in resilience, where he will discuss hybrid threats and Georgia's experience in dealing with them. In addition, the meeting will also emphasize the need for consolidated efforts and support from international partners to address these threats.



PM Garibashvili says that Georgia expects that the steps taken by the country will be properly assessed and appreciated during the summit



According to Foreign Affairs Minister of Georgia, Davit Zalkaliani, Georgia being on the agenda of the summit is very important

23 children still remain in Ninotsminda boarding school, says Deputy Health Minister

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

Deputy Health Minister Tamar Barkalia says that 23 children still remain in Ninotsminda boarding school. All the kids are being observed and supervised by social workers. The Deputy Health Minister

told reporters that the agency is working to find families for the children as well as for strengthening the families to make the integration of the children easier.

She talked about this after a special meeting at the Patriarchate of Georgia. According to her, every side involved in the talks, including the Patriarchate, the Ministry, as well as international partners said that the interests of the children are of



A special meeting at Patriarchate of Georgia was attended by Health Ministry representatives, as well as members of Holy Synod and international partners of Georgia

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Weather

Monday, June 14

Day Clear High: 31°C

Night Clear Low: 15°C

Tuesday, June 15

Day Clear High: 31°C

Night Clear Low: 19°C

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Georgia applauds its role in the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations

By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

On June 12, Azerbaijan has returned 15 detained Armenian soldiers in exchange for Armenia's landmine maps of the Agdam region, which has come under the control of Azerbaijan as a result of the second Karabakh war in the fall of 2020. The exchange of soldiers has been conducted on the border between Georgia and Azerbaijan.

PM of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili has been personally involved in maintaining constant communication with Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev:

"Proud of the role Georgia played in close coordination with our strategic partner, the USA, and Acting Assistant Secretary Reeker to facilitate Azerbaijan's release of 15 Armenian citizens detained during the conflict. Armenia providing Azerbaijan with the information about mined territories is an important step toward improved security in our region", PM Garibashvili tweeted after the exchange had taken place.

Georgia's efforts in facilitating the negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan were welcomed by the country's partners in the United States: "The U.S. welcomes the release by

Azerbaijan of 15 Armenian detainees. We're grateful to the Government of Georgia for its vital role in facilitating discussions between the sides. Such steps will bring the people of the region closer to the peaceful future they deserve," US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said in his tweet.

The US Embassy to Georgia has also expressed gratitude for the role that the country played in a recent exchange:

"We are grateful to Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and the Government of Georgia for the essential role Georgia played in facilitating these steps, which bring the people of the region closer to the peaceful and prosperous future they deserve.

The United States is pleased to support these steps and hopes they will lay the groundwork for additional cooperation. We continue to call for the return of all detainees and stand ready to assist the countries of the region in their efforts to continue cooperation and resolve outstanding issues between them. We also continue to urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to reengage in substantive negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to negotiate a comprehensive political settlement to the conflict," the Embassy said in its statement.

United Nations Statement

UN calls for greater protection for children and deinstitutionalization

The United Nations Country Team in Georgia condemns any form of violence and other abuses against children.

Safety, well-being, exercise of rights by and development of any child placed in care settings should be thoroughly monitored by relevant national actors, including by the Public Defender's Office. Limiting a constitutional entity, such as the Public Defender's Office, in implementing its mandate contradicts Georgia's aspirations and obligations towards human rights and ensuring the rule of law. Hence, we condemn any attempts to prevent the Public Defender's Office and relevant state monitoring institutions from exercising their constitutional duties [and in line with the United Nations Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT)].

We note the judicial decision to move children with disabilities from the Ninotsminda boarding school to their biological families, foster care or small group homes. We recommend that the court decision be extended to all children in institutions, mindful of the right of children to live in a family environment and the right of children to be heard, as per the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and noting the need for the preparation and readiness of the children for the transition to family- and community-based care. Moreover, considering the best interest of a child, we urge all actors to respect the right of all children and their families to privacy at all stages of the deinstitutionalization process in line with Article 16 of the Convention.

The UN General Assembly Resolution on the Rights of the Child adopted on 18 December 2019, by all of the 193 member states of the United Nations, including Georgia, reaffirms the state's responsibility to end the institutional care of children and to provide high-quality, family and community-based alternative care for children.

Immediate and stringent measures are necessary from the state to develop and approve a detailed deinstitutionalization action plan in order to enhance childcare services and to ensure that quality alternative care services for children are provided with a focus on family- and community-based care.

We recommend the creation of an appropriate mechanism to oversee the deinstitutionalization process in line with international standards to ensure that children's well-being and rights are fully guaranteed. In addition, we recommend the creation of a case management team of social workers and health professionals, including psychologists and therapists, to support the development and implementation of individual case management plans so that children are fully supported throughout this process.

We also call for dedicated efforts to improve family support mechanisms, including the child protection system and social welfare protection procedures.

Finally, we call for immediate action to eliminate all forms of interference with relevant state monitoring institutions' constitutional mandate and implement the interim measure of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The UN in Georgia remains committed to work with the Government institutions, the Public Defender, civil society groups, international NGOs and all interested religious denominations to address systemic challenges in all care settings.



23 children still remain in Ninotsminda boarding school, says Deputy Health Minister

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utmost importance.

Yesterday, another rally was held in front of the Parliament of Georgia by civil society. People gathered to protest the facts of possible violence against children in Ninotsminda boarding school. Among the demands of the protesters were:

- Immediately admit the Public Defender to the boarding house, as well as organizations working in the field of children's mental health and children's rights;
- Remove all children from the boarding school;
- Large orphanages and, above all, Ninotsminda Orphanage should be closed.

In addition, representatives of ultra-right groups arrived in the parliament with special anti-

LGBT posters. They said that there are no problems in the Ninotsminda boarding school, and the current process is pressure on the Patriarchate of Georgia.

After the meeting in the Patriarchate of Georgia, the Ambassador of the EU to Georgia, Carl Hartzell also talked about the ongoing events with reporters. As he said, the meeting was a huge step forward. According to him, all sides believe that the most important thing is the interests of children.

According to Carl Hartzell, the meeting also discussed a broader strategic approach, as the issue is broader than just the case of the Ninotsminda boarding school.

The scandal around the Ninotsminda boarding schools erupted after the representatives



Another rally was held in front of Parliament organized by civil society

of the Public Defender were denied entry into the building twice. It was followed by massive protests from NGOs as well as the public, after which, sev-

eral former residents of the boarding school came forward to talk about the violent environment in the Ninotsminda boarding school.

The fact was followed by massive protests in Georgia as well, after which, dozens of children were taken away from the boarding school.