

US Secretary of Defense to Visit Georgia Next Week

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

According to Pentagon spokesman John Kirby, United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin will visit Georgia next week. As part of his European tour, he will also visit two other Black Sea countries, Ukraine and Romania. According to Kirby, this visit will end with the NATO Defense Ministerial in Brussels, which will be held on October 21-22. Kirby has not specified the exact date of Austin's visit.

Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani has confirmed the information and stated that the visit of US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to Georgia next week is 'historic' and points to the strategic partnership between the countries, which is based on "common values, interests, and goals." According to the minister, it's expected that the meetings will focus on deepening bilateral cooperation, as well as regional security and the process of Georgia's integration into NATO.

Zalkaliani noted that such a high-ranking visit by Georgia's key strategic partner is another clear message of sup-



► United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin will visit Georgia, Ukraine, and Romania during his trip to Europe.



► According to Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani, the visit will significantly contribute to further deepening the existing partnership between the countries.

port for Georgia's territorial integrity, its stable and democratic development, and the Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

"The United States and Georgia are long-time partners in the defence field, which plays a 'crucial role' in improving Georgia's compliance with NATO standards. Georgia is the loyal ally and partner of the US in the region, supporting the country's efforts to strengthen both regional and international security," stated the Minister, adding that Georgian and American soldiers have been standing side-by-side for years, including in Afghanistan, to strengthen Euro-Atlantic security. As Zalkaliani noted, the visit will significantly contribute to further deepening the existing partnership between the countries.

NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

Mikheil Saakashvili: I was in Batumi, Kutaisi, Poti, Lanchkhuti, several places in Samegrelo, I ate lobiani in Rikoti, I ordered khinkali before my arrest - it was not my first attempt of arrival, the first one almost ended tragically

"I was preparing for a long time, it was not my first attempt of arrival, everything did not develop as I had planned, something was done in such a way that the first attempt almost ended tragically. This was not a business class voyage, nor what was described in the media.

"I did not risk it because in this scenario shooting, blow up, purge and then blaming us for everything would be very easy... I came because I wanted to leave and I could not do otherwise and I think this is really a critical point in our history," said Mikheil Saakashvili. I was in Batumi, Kutaisi, Poti, Lanchkhuti, several places in Samegrelo, I ate lobiani in Rikoti, I ordered khinkali before my arrest and unfortunately, I only could eat one piece," Mikheil Saakashvili told Mtavari Arkhi.

Lawyer Says Mikheil Saakashvili's Hunger Strike Is Entering a Very Difficult Phase, He Has Problems with Movement and His Legs Are Swollen

"We can clearly see the consequences, he has problems with movement and his legs are swollen," Saakashvili's lawyer said after visiting the third president in prison. "When he speaks, both his motor skills and his movements make it clear that the negative consequences of hunger strike are visible. Nevertheless, Mikheil Saakashvili feels psychologically strong, but the hunger strike will further deteriorate his health, he is already facing problems today. It is important that Georgian society raises its voice in order to free Misha and change the oligarchic government. At the same time, it is important to give his personal doctor the opportunity to visit him, which is vital. Nikoloz Kipshidze knows best what he may need," said Beka Basilaia.

COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Dose Introduced for Special Risk-Groups & Travelers

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Georgia has reported 4,837 new cases of coronavirus, 1,586 recoveries, and 26 deaths in the past 24 hours. The previous day, on October 12, 4,775 cases of coronavirus were detected in Georgia, and 37 patients died. 30,256 remain infected with Covid-19 throughout the country.

The daily coronavirus detection rate is 9.79%, compared to 8.52% in the last seven days. The total number of deaths from the virus in the country is 9,332.

After the meeting of the Coordination Council in the Government Administration, the Deputy Minister of Health Tamar Gabunia said that this is an unusually high figure compared to the latest period when the number of indicators ranged from 2500 to 3000 and this increase will be especially

studied. She added that the causes for such a rise are increased mobility and a low rate of vaccination. The deputy minister didn't assess these numbers as indicators of the 5th wave, arguing that the country is still fighting the 4th one.

Head of the Georgian National Centre for Disease Control, Amiran Gamkrelidze, stated that the fifth wave of coronavirus will be more difficult for Georgia if the country is not able to raise the vaccination rate.

Gabunia also referred to the cases detected at schools, saying that the ministry is doing its best to prevent the closing of schools. She emphasized that schools have special protocols on how to act if an infection is detected and no further regulations are planned. 2.2% of public schools have already had to switch to online mode

and at the moment, the most important thing is to effectively manage the cases detected in the classroom environment.

"As for the kindergartens, the main thing here is to follow the rules and vaccinate the staff. Unfortunately, several kindergartens have been closed recently. Schools will continue to operate in the mode they are in today," Gabunia said.

A total of 31% of the adult population has been completely vaccinated in Georgia as of October 13, while yesterday only 6,837 individuals received the Covid-19 vaccine amid a surge of cases. The vaccination rate began to decline in Georgia in September, and less than 10,000 vaccine doses have been administered daily since the beginning of October.

Meanwhile, the Georgian government aims to vaccinate 30,000 people daily in

order to reach its vaccination goal of 60% of the country's population by the end of this year. Therefore, the government plans to undertake several initiatives to boost the vaccination rate, such as sending mobile units to various regions and organizing 'weekly marathons' to raise awareness about the benefits of vaccination. They are scheduled to last 3 months, starting October 15.

As of today, a total of 884,902 people are fully vaccinated in Georgia nationwide, while 1,004,298 individuals have received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. Currently, Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Sinopharm, and Sinovac vaccines are available in all regions of Georgia.

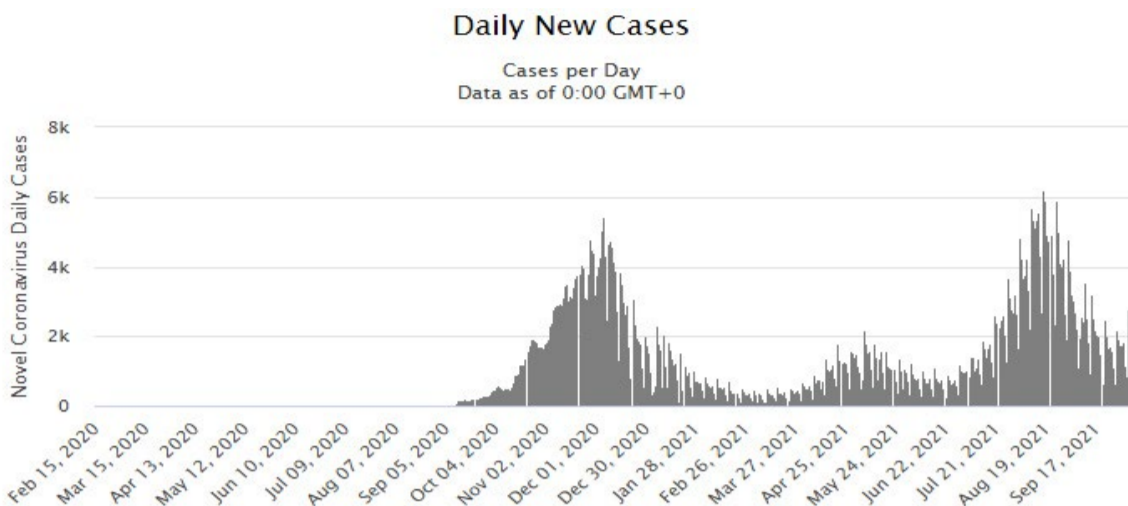
Continued to page 2

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.1319 | EURO - 3.6204 | GBP - 4.2661 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.3611 | SWISS FRANC - 3.3760 |

COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Dose Introduced for Special Risk-Groups & Travelers

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Deputy Minister also informed about the introduction of vaccination of children aged 12 to 15 years and booster doses for special groups, in particular, people with a high risk of severe complications of Covid-19 disease will be able to be vaccinated with an additional (booster) dose of Covid-19 vaccine, including people 50 years of age and older; Persons over 16 years of age living in long-term care facilities, their carers and persons employed in the facility; Special Penitentiary Service staff and accused/convicted persons over 16 years of age placed in penitentiary institutions (despite the lack of citizenship status and identification documents required by law); Medical staff; Persons between the ages of 16 and 49 with chronic diseases - in case of wishing to be vaccinated, these persons must submit a certificate of health status to the vaccinating institutions - Form №IV-100 / a. The Covid-19 Pfizer vaccine can also be given to children between the ages of 12 and 15 with chronic illness; Children between the ages of 12 and 15, at the reasonable request of a legal representative, who need to be vaccinated in order to travel, study, receive treatment or otherwise go abroad.



► Incidence per 100 thousand population is lowest in Tbilisi and Adjara, where the vaccination rate is high.

► "We can not call the current situation the fifth wave, because we could not get out of the fourth wave yet," Gabunia said.

"A person over the age of 50, of course, does not need to submit a certificate and can register directly or go for vaccination without registration," Gabunia explained.

The booster dose vaccination should be given at least 6 months after the completion of the initial vaccination course, which is calculated from the date of the second dose.

The booster dose can be the same or another vaccine if allowed by the vaccine manufacturer. If a person is vaccinated with Sinovac or Sinopharm, both, Chinese vaccines, as well as Pfizer, can be the booster dose,

but if a citizen is vaccinated with AstraZeneca, a booster dose can only be Pfizer.

Besides that, Georgian citizens vaccinated with either the Chinese Sinovac or Sinopharm vaccine can now receive an additional shot of the Pfizer vaccine for travel purposes starting today. If an individual wants to go abroad for travel, study, or medical treatment, at least 28 days must have passed since receiving the second shot of the Chinese vaccine to get the Pfizer jab. In order to get an additional Pfizer vaccine shot individuals must provide a 'travel ticket, booking or an invitation or a letter

from a business trip or from an employer [attesting to frequent business visits], otherwise, [additional] vaccination will not be carried out.'

The vaccination of the mentioned persons will be done at this stage without prior registration, on the basis of the documents submitted to the medical institution. In addition, individuals in risk groups will receive anti-flu vaccines for free, amid the upcoming flu season. Vaccination against flu for pregnant women, patients on dialysis, and doctors will start this week in Georgia. Recall that influenza vaccination is possible from 6 months of age.

According to the new recommendation of the US Centers for Disease Control, the flu and coronavirus vaccines can be made on the same day, but at different anatomical localization, and the gap of 2 weeks between vaccinations is no longer required. As of now, Georgia has 43,000 doses of anti-flu vaccines. Gamkrelidze noted that Georgia will import another 160,000 doses of anti-flu vaccines after October 20, which will be distributed to patients with chronic diseases and children in risk groups. He also hopes the private sector will purchase a sufficient amount of anti-flu vaccines in the coming future.

Stepping up governance reform in Georgia

The UK and UNDP are launching a new stage of support for public administration reform in Georgia

TBILISI. 12 October 2021 – Georgia is reforming its public administration as it modernises its governance systems and builds stronger democratic institutions. These reforms will help the country develop effective public institutions, introduce innovative approaches to policymaking, service delivery and citizen engagement, and ensure that Georgia's civil service is stronger and more professional.

The 'Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2015-2020'

defined the first cycle of this robust transformation. The government and civil society organisations conducted a series of assessments to provide an objective, critical account of the achievements and flaws in implementing the reform. The results of these assessments are informing the government's current work on a new strategy, which will guide the next reform cycle. The United Kingdom (UK) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are supporting this process under their wider programmes to assist public administration reform in Georgia.

"Ongoing reform efforts respond to Georgia's aspirations to develop a transparent, fore-

seeable and responsive public administration that serves the nation to effect positive change," said Government Administration Head Iliia Darchiashvili. "The next reform cycle will build on the achievements of the past years and will help address new challenges brought on by pandemic realities."

"United Kingdom is supporting Georgia's efforts to reform its public administration," said UK Ambassador Mark Clayton. "We are assisting the government to set and implement ambitious, coherent and commonly understood reform objectives at all levels of governance — from national public institutions to local municipalities."

"Georgia has made notable

progress in reforming and modernising its public administration – but there is more to be done," said UNDP Head Nick Beresford. "A strong start has been made in policy planning and coordination, service delivery and civil service reform. The challenge now is to make these fully operational for the benefit of everyone."

Since 2016, the UK and UNDP have been assisting Georgia's promotion of public administration reform across its entire public sector. This support contributed to a range of reform, including introducing integrated approaches to the functioning of the governance system, setting the 'whole-of-government' standard to policy development

and coordination, establishing a modern system of performance appraisal and professional training for civil servants, and developing uniform standards and introducing digital solutions to public service delivery.

As the pandemic strained the public sector, the UK and UNDP assisted Georgia's national and local institutions to adapt to new realities, improve telecommuting practices and introduce new electronic services for citizens and civil servants. The UK and UNDP also helped strengthen linkages between the public sector and civil society and helped engage civil society organisations in public administration reform planning, implementation and monitoring.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 14

Day Sunny
High: 25°C

Night A few clouds
Low: 13°C

FRIDAY OCTOBER 15

Day A few clouds
High: 23°C

Night Partly cloudy
Low: 13°C

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Treasure of Pompeii displayed in Simon Janashia Museum of Georgia

After the Vani Archaeological Museum, the treasure of Pompeii is displayed in Tbilisi, at the Simon Janashia Museum of Georgia. The exhibition – Life and Death – The Glorious Pompeii, featuring a variety of archaeological materials from the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, is organized by the Georgian National Museum and the Italian Embassy in Georgia. The exhibition is open to the public from October 13 until November 8, 2021.

The exhibition will present the history and the tragic end of the glorious ancient Roman city buried in ash as a result of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius on August 24, 79 A.D.

Visitors will be able to explore samples of wall paintings, diverse archaeological items discovered in various parts of the houses of Pompeii, and works of gold. Plaster casts of people who died during the eruption will be exhibited as well.

According to the Georgian National Museum, Pompeii, which has been the subject of archaeological study for the last three centuries, represents the features of the everyday life of Roman provincial cities. Discoveries in Pompeii have greatly contributed to developing modern European aesthetics, design, traditions of cuisine, and dining.

Vani was the first venue in Georgia to

host Life and Death.

“The visitors had a unique opportunity of getting acquainted with Antiquity in the prism of two cities – Vani and Pompeii – that existed for eight centuries with completely different functions, but both had magnificent history and tragic ends,” the Georgian National Museum notes.

The exhibition is the result of collaboration between the Georgian and Italian institutions. In 2017-2019, as a result of joint efforts of the Georgian National Museum and the Embassy of Italy in Georgia, visitors were able to explore the masterpieces of the most important artists of Italian Renaissance and Baroque,



modernism and postmodernism featured at the National Gallery.

The exhibition is supported by TBC, Italian company Global Project Consulting, Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia, Tsinandali Estate, VISA, and Georgian Public Broadcasting.

