

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Gov't to Subsidize Increased Electricity Tariff for Million Citizens

The subsidy for utilities has become more targeted and from now on, the subsidy will be given to the people who need it the most. The increase in electricity tariffs will be subsidized for a million people. Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili informed about it at the beginning of the government session. According to him, the decision will take effect in January and will be valid throughout the year.

"We will subsidize a significant part of the population, about a million people, with the increase in electricity tariffs. This applies to target groups, those with social scores below 150 thousand points." PM said, adding that this program has been in place since the day the pandemic started, it lasted for 2 years, it ended in January and now it has been extended for the socially vulnerable people - population most in need.

On January 1, 2021, the GNERC (Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission) approved an increased electricity tariff in Georgia, but the government subsidized the tariffs of some household and commercial customers and covered the increased costs from the budget. As the PM announced at yesterday's government session, this time the state will subsidize the increased tariff only for those with social scores below 150 thousand points within the first 200 kilowatts.

Before that, when the increase in the networks of "Telmiko" and "Energo-Pro" was set at 3.5 tetri for each category, then PM Giorgi Gakharia launched the subsidy project which would finance the difference between the new and old tariffs and the increase wouldn't be transferred to the population. All household customers who consumed up to 300 kilowatts of electricity per month were funded 3.5 tetris from the budget. This was a maximum of ₾ 10.5 per month per subscriber. 456 thousand subscribers connected to "Telasi" network received an average subsidy of ₾ 4.16 per month on the electricity tariff, while 809 thousand subscribers of "Energo-Pro" received an



Gharibashvili stated that from January 17 it will be possible to import high quality GMP standard medicines from the Turkish market.

average subsidy of ₾ 3.70 per month. According to the GNERC, ₾ 54.2 million was spent on this subsidy in January-October.

The Government of Georgia also announced after the session about creating a new type of Special Financial Zones which will be located on 110 hectares in Tbilisi and Gonio. These zones are supposed to bring the status of a regional financial center of Georgia. Legislative changes are needed first, and the government will be consulted on the model of these financial centers by Rothschild Investment Holding, with which the government signed a contract in December.

These centers will focus on fintechs, asset management companies, trading companies and so on.

"Special financial zones will offer international companies legal regimes based on common law principles, as well as regulatory and fiscal regimes based on international experience. Most importantly, more than half of the employees of companies operating in these zones must be Georgian citizens. Ultimately, we assume that this will contribute to the development of the capital market," Gharibashvili said.

In addition, Gharibashvili signed a resolution amending the Government of

Georgia №188 of October 22, 2009 "On Defining the List of Regulatory Bodies of Other Countries or Interstate Pharmaceutical Products." He announced that it will be possible to import high quality and low cost GMP standard medicines from the Turkish market in accordance with the GMP standard - the law to require this standard for importers is currently being drafted. Minister of Healthcare Azarashvili says that the market is fully open and as a result of this decision, prices are supposed to be reduced for 200 medicines.

"Several months ago, on the instructions of the PM, the Competition Agency studied the pharmaceutical market, to go through all the nuances that could be found to reduce the prices of medicines. The first step, which was considered urgent after doing this research, is to open the Turkish market. There are about 200 medicines, studied by different approaches, which in Turkey, for example, cost 5 GEL and with us 10 times more. In some medicines the margins go up to 1000%." Azarashvili.

Recall that the Competition Agency published the report 1.5 years after instruction and made 13 recommendations to the state, including the need to define the rules for indicating generic medicines in medical prescriptions, as well as the introduction of GMP standards and an electronic prescription system. The document deals with the structure of the pharmaceutical companies themselves and their organizational arrangement. The Competition Agency calls on the state to impose restrictive norms on the market holding structure.

The PM also instructed the Minister of Health to cooperate with the relevant parliamentary committees and set up a working group to work on amendments to the legislation.



PM instructs the Health Minister to set up a working group based on the recommendation of the Competition Agency.

Georgian FM meets Permanent Representatives of NATO Member States in Brussels

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Within the framework of his visit to Brussels, Davit Zalkaliani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia met with the Permanent Representatives of NATO member states to the Alliance. According to the Foreign Ministry, Georgia once again received strong support for the Euro-Atlantic integration from the partner countries and Alliance member states.

The importance of constant communication and coordination with NATO partner countries - Georgia and Ukraine on security issues was stressed at the meeting and as the ministry notes, it was highlighted that Georgia is a valuable and reliable partner of NATO. Georgia's role in the context of regional and global security was also mentioned.

Zalkaliani stressed after the meeting that NATO Partners have reiterated their position that they are unanimous and their decision remains unchanged regarding Georgia's NATO membership, despite the harsh rhetoric coming from the Russian Federation.

"The position of our NATO partners remains firm that the decision of the Bucharest Summit will not be reconsidered and that no one has the right to consider any region as their sphere of influence as



The meeting with the Permanent Representatives of the NATO Member States was held at the initiative of the Permanent Delegation of Poland to NATO.



countries have a fundamental right to choose which security alliance they want to join," Minister of Foreign Affairs noted, adding that the coordinated action of NATO and Georgia is important to further improve the progress made on Georgia's integration path. The Minister also briefed the representatives of the partner countries on the recent high-level communication with the United States and NATO and welcomed the increased dynamics of coordination between the partner countries.

According to the official statement, discussions during the meeting also focused on Georgia's visions regarding the current situation, the security environment in the region, and the ongoing developments in the occupied territories of Georgia. The Georgian side expressed solidarity with Ukraine and condemned the cyber-attacks targeted against the Ukrainian government agencies and private organizations, during which the hackers left threatening messages on targeted websites, noting that "all information about Ukrainian people has become public".

"Our partners from NATO have reaffirmed their pledge to support Georgia strongly," Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Davit Zalkaliani said.

Energy Community and International Renewable Energy Agency strengthen cooperation

January 17, 2022

The Energy Community Secretariat and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) have signed a Memo-

randum of Understanding (MoU) strengthening the organisations' cooperation in the field of renewable energy.

Leveraging on their expertise, the two organisations will team up to boost the uptake of energy from renewable sources, including by supporting regional dialogue on the challenges, gaps and opportunities for scaling up the deployment of renewables and intensifying cross-border



renewables cooperation. Another key dimension of the MoU is the sharing of information on topics such as the socio-economic benefits of renewables and the energy transition.

"With the new cooperation agreement, we will be even more equipped to support the Contracting Parties in the transition to a carbon neutral energy future. Together, we will help to

unlock new renewables investments, also by building the capacities of local communities and citizens to implement renewable energy projects," said Artur Lorkowski, Director of the Energy Community Secretariat.

The Energy Community is an international organisation which brings together the European Union and its neighbours to create an integrated pan-European energy market. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine take part in the Energy Community as Contracting Parties, and Armenia has the status of an Observer.

IRENA is an intergovernmental organisation that supports countries in their transition to a sustainable energy future, and serves as the principal platform for international cooperation.

Weather

Tuesday, January 18

Day Clear
High: 5°C
Night Partly Cloudy
Low: -3°C

Wednesday, January 19

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 4°C
Night Overcast
Low: -1°C

published by

The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,
0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.