

## Georgian Defence Minister Attends NATO Ministerial in Brussels



► Georgian Defence Minister Juansher Burchuladze and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian Defence Minister Juansher Burchuladze is visiting Brussels within the framework of a NATO ministerial. On Thursday, Burchuladze met with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and discussed NATO's political and practical support for Georgia, the security environment and challenges in the Black Sea region, as well as the war in Ukraine.

According to the Georgian Defence Ministry, the sides reaffirmed their support and solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people and also stressed the importance of deepening NATO-Georgia practical cooperation in order to strengthen Georgia's resilience, defense capabilities, and compatibility with NATO. The officials also discussed the importance of increasing NATO involvement in providing practical assistance and strengthening regional security within the framework of the NATO-Georgia Essential Package.

Secretary-General praised Georgia's reforms and the progress made in cooperation with NATO. According to the official statement, Stoltenberg reaffirmed the readiness to boost support for Georgia to enhance its cybersecurity capabilities to handle hybrid challenges.

The sides stressed the 'special importance' of the forthcoming NATO Madrid Summit against the background of the existing security environment amid the war in Ukraine. Stoltenberg also expressed hope that during the Madrid Summit the



► Defence Minister participated in the Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting, where the countries discussed the further building of Ukraine's defense capabilities to counter Russian aggression.

leaders "will recommit to our open-door policy and also restate what we said before since the Bucharest Summit on Georgia and NATO membership."

After the meeting, Stoltenberg noted that the alliance is working on how to provide more support and how to further strengthen the partnership with Georgia.

"We stressed, the allies and myself underlined the importance of stepping up support both political and practical support for allies that are vulnerable for Rus-

sian interference and of course, Georgia is very much among them because Georgia has already suffered the consequences of military intervention from Moscow in 2008," Secretary-General said.

After attending a working meeting held at NATO headquarters within the framework of the defense ministerial, the Georgian defense minister highlighted the role of Black sea region stability for the overall European security.

"Today we need to be united against the

aggressor like never before. The European security architecture cannot be perfect without security and stability in the Black Sea region", Burchuladze noted.

The minister also stressed that Georgia had been 'one of the biggest' contributors to NATO peacekeeping operations for decades, which, according to him, strengthened the country and made it more compatible with the alliance along with the modernization and transformation of the Georgian Defence Forces.

Victor Dolidze, the Head of the Georgian mission to NATO, announced yesterday that the question of Georgia's accession to NATO and the decision of the 2008 Bucharest Summit on the matter is "in force", with all alliance members states 'unanimous' on the issue.

Dolidze also highlighted the Georgian delegation's first participation in the Rammstein format of NATO in Brussels this week to discuss strategies and initiatives to assist Ukraine in combating the ongoing Russian invasion. According to him, Georgia's participation in the Rammstein format is "politically a very important decision, which underscores the importance of cooperation with the alliance, and the importance of Georgia itself to NATO".

The Georgian Defence Minister is also scheduled to meet with German and Lithuanian defense ministers to discuss Georgia's path to alliance membership, the importance of NATO's open-door policy, and Georgia's European Union membership bid.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 2.9436 | EURO - 3.0855 | GBP - 3.5609 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 5.2302 | SWISS FRANC - 2.9492 |

## Average Salary in Georgia Up by 15%

By MESSENGER STAFF

Geostat released statistics on salaries. As of the 1st quarter of 2022, the average salary in Georgia was €1,446, which is 15.1% or €190 more than the previous year. The average salary after 20% income tax is €1,156. According to official statistics, there is a big difference between the salaries of women and men - the average salary for women was €1,184, which is 15.8% or €162 more than the previous year. Taking into account the

income tax, this amount means a salary of €947. The average salary for men was €1,695, which is €221, or 15.1% more than the previous year. After taxes, it amounts to €1,356. According to Geostat, relatively high salaries were observed in the following fields: Financial and insurance activities - €3,037.5 (increased by 24.1 % compared to the same period of the previous year); Information and communication - €2 339.9 (increased by 8.3 %); Professional, scientific and technical activities - €1 963.5 (increased by

9.1 %); Mining and quarrying - €1,900.0 (increased by 15.9 %). In the first quarter of 2022, the average monthly salary in the non-profit and financial sectors increased by €177.4 (14.6%) compared to the same period last year and amounted to €1,390. Employees in financial and insurance activities have a relatively high average salary according to the types of activities. The highest average salary in Georgia is in Tbilisi at €1,675, while the lowest is in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti - €772.

## First ecotourism project Kass Land opened in Dashbashi, Tsalka Municipality PA

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The first eco-tourism project 'Kass Land' was opened in the village of Dashbashi, Tsalka Municipality, in the protected area with the investment of the Israeli company Kass Group.

A 240-meter glass bridge with a suspended cafe has been unveiled for visitors of southern Georgia's Dashbashi Canyon, with the brand-new infrastructure set to receive tourists.

Launched in a €120 million investment from an Israeli company, the bridge spans across the canyon with a diamond-shaped cafe hanging in the middle of the construction at an altitude of 200 meters. Construction works on the project began in the summer of 2019. The project includes a multi-faceted cafe in the middle of the bridge with unique features, an indoor and outdoor restaurant, 62 cottages, a hotel complex, a bike lane, and attractions.

A visitor center, canyon access paths with panoramic views, parking space, and a swing, have also been arranged in the surrounding area of the bridge.

The complex was arranged in the village



► Tsalka Canyon will receive visitors from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. The entry fee for Georgian nationals is €29, for foreigners - €49.

of Dashba, Tsalka Municipality. The area is owned by the municipality, but it was transferred to Kass Land for 45 years with special investment conditions.

Ekaterine Tordia, the General Manager of the company, said the cafe would be submitted to the Guinness World Records as the restaurant was suspended at the high-

est point from a bridge. Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, who attended the opening ceremony said the investment in the region had created 250 jobs, and pointed out the Government's main priorities were the protection of natural heritage and the development of ecotourism in line with international standards.

## IMF Executive Board Approves US\$280 million Stand-By Arrangement for Georgia

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a three-year \$280 million Stand By Arrangement for Georgia which provides support for the authorities' economic policies over the next 3 years. The authorities' IMF-supported program seeks to further entrench macroeconomic stability, build resilience, and strengthen medium-term growth as

the country emerges from the COVID 19 pandemic and contends with spillovers from the war in Ukraine. The program focuses on rebuilding fiscal buffers, strengthening fiscal frameworks, reducing external vulnerabilities and inflation, maintaining financial sector resilience, and fostering stronger and more inclusive growth. The Board's decision makes about \$40 million immediately available. The Georgian authorities intend to treat the new arrangement as precautionary.

The President of the National Bank of Georgia, Koba Gvenetadze responded that the continuation of sound macroeconomic policies and reforms is the best shield against the most difficult shocks for the Georgian economy.

According to Irakli Kovzanadze, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Finance and Budget, 'this is the result of the joint work of the Government of Georgia, the Parliament and the National Bank'.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

#### Zourabichvili on June 20 Rally: I Don't Attend Political Gatherings

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili says she will not attend the rally scheduled for June 20.

"I do not go to political meetings," she answered the question of whether she was going to attend the rally or not.

Zourabichvili says that he will not go to the rally, where there will be political speeches:

"Where there are political calls and organizations, presidents cannot select some [rallies] over others."

#### Lomjaria Meets with Students living in TSU Dormitory, Assess Situation as Degrading and Unlivable

Public Defender Nino Lomjaria met with protesting students of Tbilisi State University.

After the meeting, Lomjaria spoke about the problems of the students and asked both the Ministry of Education and the management of the university to take the students' problems to heart and take them seriously.

According to Lomjaria, there are thousands of students who are unable to come to Tbilisi and they are asking for benefits, not in exams, but in difficult socioeconomic conditions to study and adjust to the exam process.

Lomjaria also spoke about student dormitories, noting that the dormitories in Bagebi are degrading and have a life-threatening environment there.

"The main demand and problem that the students voiced is the problem of student housing. Today there are two dwellings - one in Bagebi, the other on Lisi.

As for the housing in Bagebi, the situation there is a degrading and life-threatening environment, neither students nor anyone, in general, can live there, it is inconceivable that in the 21st century students were offered similar living space.

<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>JUNE 17</b>
<b>Day</b>	Rain showers High: <b>28°C</b>
<b>Night</b>	Partly cloudy Low: <b>19°C</b>
<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>JUNE 18</b>
<b>Day</b>	Partly cloudy High: <b>27°C</b>
<b>Night</b>	Partly cloudy Low: <b>19°C</b>

published by **The Messenger**

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia

Founded by Prof.

**Zaza Gachechiladze**

**Tamar Gachechiladze**  
Publisher

Phone: +995 99 56 56 21; +995 77 76 00 00  
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge  
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

**Nino Metreveli**  
Commercial Director

**Mariam Mchedlidze**  
Editor-in-Chief

**Nino Kavelashvili**  
Design and Layout

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.