

Georgian Parliament Starts Working on Judicial Reform for EU Membership Conditions

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Parliamentary working group created to review judicial reforms for fulfilling conditions outlined by the European Union for granting Georgia the membership candidate status held its first meeting on Monday. The meeting was chaired by Speaker Shalva Papuashvili. The group created back in February will review the written analysis of the parties about the reforms, current challenges, and ways to tackle them.

Part of the opposition including Girchi, Citizens, European Socialists, For Georgia, and Republican Party Chair Khatuna Samnidze attended the meeting, while other opposition parties rebuffed to do so, citing 'lack of confidence' in the ruling party and demanding 'concrete compromise steps' to be included in the process. Beka Davituliani, a member of the Parliamentary majority, told the Georgian Public Broadcaster that the ruling team was ready to "carry out all the recommendations and continue the judicial reform."

Davituliani also commented on some of the opposition parties rejecting to participate in the meeting, stating that the goal of the opposition was to use the topic of EU conditions for "internal political purposes and to bypass the elections to take over the Government," adding 'they will not have this chance'.

MEP Markiita Gregorova earlier urged the decliners to join the process, saying, "the EU must see both sides are ready." According to Georgian Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili, the European Council brought up depolariza-



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tion to see a joint work of Georgian political groups, while "the opposition's opting out will affect our work."

The Parliament Speaker noted that the parliament cannot pass laws without the Georgian Dream majority or make any decision without the government elected by the majority population. He also stressed that the Parliament should work on EU recommendations and endorse the bills.

"There is no chance of making any decision without the government elected by the majority population. Therefore, those distancing themselves from this process are distancing themselves from Georgia's European future," the Speaker underscored.

He further added that those opting for the European Union will involve in the implementation of the EU recommendations, while those rejecting to do so 'do not fancy the EU'.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

PM Gharibashvili Says Georgia Maintains Double-Digit Economic Growth, Peace, and Stability

The world, especially poor countries, may be on the verge of famine, while Georgia's economy is growing. At the government meeting, Georgia's Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili said, "We sustain double-digit economic growth, peace, and stability at a time when economic processes in Europe and the rest of the globe are moving toward recession."

"I was recently in Austria and during a conversation with my colleague I discussed the current situation in Europe and the current dynamics in the world, what processes are taking place. Against the background of the war in Ukraine, a very difficult situation was created in Europe - inflation, high prices, problems in supply and logistics. There are also problems in the direction of food supply to less developed, poor countries. Experts and world leaders are talking about the fact that the world may be on the brink of famine, especially in poor countries. When economic processes in Europe and the world are heading towards recession, we maintain double-digit economic growth, peace, and stability. All this is due to our team and it needs to be maintained. We should not be satisfied with this, we should continue to work responsibly at an accelerated pace and protect the interests of our country. This should be our main task and motivation," said Gharibashvili.



The group created back in February will review the written analysis of the parties regarding the reforms, current challenges, and ways to tackle them.

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16 Billion Cubic Meter Gas Field Confirmed in Georgia

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The head of the State Oil and Gas Agency of Georgia, Giorgi Tatishvili, announced on the air of the 'Business Course' program that the existence of a natural gas deposit of 16 billion cubic meters in the country was confirmed.

The existence of natural gas resource near Tbilisi was confirmed through bore-welling carried out by Schlumberger, a technology company that partners with customers to access energy. Currently, the operator of the license is the company 'Block Energy', whose shares are traded on the London Stock Exchange. The company's main field of activity is oil and gas exploration in Georgia. The company owns the right to extract resources from Blocks IX and XI (B).

According to head of the State Oil and Gas Agency, the license block requires horizontal drilling, and under the conditions of its utilization, the country will be able to fully meet the demand

for 8 years of natural gas.

"Block Energy is one of our long-range projects, 16 billion cubic meters of reserves have been confirmed in the well drilled by Schlumberger, in the surrounding area. This amount is equal to the consumption of Georgia for 8 years."

Block Energy will get back to this project with a confirmed plan by the end of the year or early next year. Horizontal drilling is to be done here to cover more rock layers and procure more commercial gas. At the same time, Block Energy is also doing horizontal drilling in old wells, which has led to an 80% increase in retrieving gas. Block Energy extracts 30 million cubic meters of gas, which is equal to the consumption of, for example, Telavi or Sagarejo. After mastering this well, Oil and Gas Agency expects these figures to be much more significant and impressive.

According to the financial report, in 2021 'Block Energy' had an income of \$6.1 million and a



loss of \$4.8 million.

The market capitalization of the company, or the total value of its shares, is \$9.4 million. One share of the company costs \$1.35.

The News in Brief

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Elene Khoshtaria States 2 US Agencies Claim Georgia and Others Sea-Trade Route for Russia-Belarus, Transporting Sanctioned Cargo

The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network and the Department of Commerce, according to Droa head Elene Khoshtaria, have issued a document that states explicitly that Georgia, along with other nations, is a sea-trade route for Russia-Belarus to transit sanctioned merchandise.

"They published a document that, on the one hand, talks about the already existing black holes in terms of avoiding sanctions, and on the other hand, gives the whole world a guide on what deals, transactions, shipments, and what entities cannot be used to so that the Russian blood machine is prevented from getting supplied. Here I would like to point out that Russia and Belarus are considered together as the target of these sanctions. This document is a guidance document, on the one hand, on how to enforce sanctions and how to maintain control so that sanctions are not evaded. In this document, it is directly written that Georgia, along with other countries, is a trade route, in particular, a sea-trade route for transporting cargo sanctioned for Russia and Belarus. This is incredibly scandalous information. For the first time, America speaks in a document of the highest importance at the official level that the sea route of Georgia is used to avoid sanctions.

Of course, we must request information from the authorities, because we are in danger of the country being sanctioned, the port and sea routes being sanctioned, and the country suffering because of the oligarch and his entourage. Also, this document lists 22 clauses, and clause 16 states that doing business with sanctioned persons is prohibited. I would like to remind the public that Georgia signed a contract with a sanctioned Russian person, Mikhail Fridman, who owns Borjomi, and today, Fridman, a sanctioned person, owns 49.9% of Borjomi, which is also noteworthy and the government will have to respond to this too," says Elena Khoshtaria.

She claims that Droa intends to exert control over all 22 axes leading to the transactions or agreements stated in the document as the opposition party. They will work with non-governmental organizations and lobby the government, claims Khoshtaria.

"Also, I will be happy if I can cooperate with the business. Because our goal is for businesses to avoid sanctions and punitive measures. Our goal is not to be suppliers of the Russian blood machine. It should be this oligarch, oligarch's entourage, specifically those who are exposed to having connections with the Kremlin, who should be punished, and not a business and Georgian society," said Elene Khoshtaria.

Historic Victory - Georgian Rugby Team Defeats the Tier1 Representative, Italy



By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Georgian rugby team hosted the Italian national team for the first time in history, at the Batumi Arena and won the most important victory over the principle rival - 28:19. The hosts took an early lead scoring

two tries and a conversion without reply. Italy responded before Georgia scored another try at the end of the first half. The second half was dominated by penalty kicks as Georgia secured victory/

Having lost all 4 out of 4 meetings held against the Italians, this meeting was of great importance - the Georgian national team needed a strong argument to enter the 6 nations tournament, and victory against Italy was necessary in this regard.

Before this win, there was constant talk about the fact that

the hosts of the 6 Nations tournament should open the door to Georgia, and after this win, this issue is expected to become even more urgent.

The British publication 'Daily Mail' responded to this important victory of the Georgian national team.

"This was an open door for Georgian rugby, a chance to make a statement to the rugby world. How The Lelos took their opportunity... Georgia is a true rugby nation and needs more games like these to show their worth and aid their development as a tier-two country."

It was also emphasized that calls for them to join the Six Nations will now only grow louder on the back of this result. Many believe there should be a promotion and relegation clash to join the Championship each year.

Similar a scenario would primarily affect Italy, a team with just one Six Nations victory since 2015, while the Georgian national team is constantly winning the European Rugby Championship.

"That was the contest here and how Georgia proved a point."

The Georgian national team will hold its next match against the Portuguese national team on July 16.

Weather

Tuesday, July 12

Day ☀ Clear
High: 36°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 21°C

Wednesday, July 13

Day ☀ Clear
High: 36°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 20°C

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