

Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili Leads Economic Council Session: Positive Trends and Major Projects Discussed

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, the Economic Council convened for a session.

According to the press office of the Prime Minister of Georgia, the meeting held at the government administration focused on reviewing the positive trends within the country's economy.

As indicated by their reports, discussions encompassed topics such as the low level of inflation and the trajectory of budget execution.

Minister of Finance, Lasha Khutsishvili, highlighted that the annual inflation of consumer prices stood at 0.3 percent for July, and the budget surpassed expectations based on the indicators for the first six months of 2023.

During the session, the Prime Minister received updates on the advancement of infrastructure projects across various regions.

Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Irakli Karseladze, pointed out that the Ministry outperformed the state budget for the initial six months of 2023, exceeding it by 13.5% or 1,331.1 million GEL. Ongoing work involves the construction of 203 km of highways, with stages of completion planned between 2023 and 2024. Additionally, up to 1800 km of internal state and local roads are undergoing rehabilitation. Notable water supply and drainage ini-



tiatives worth over 3 billion GEL are in progress across 167 locations. The development of sports infrastructure includes active construction of sports complexes and multi-purpose sports halls in various regions like Akhaltsikhe, Zugdidi, Arkhiloskalo village, Bolnisi, and Tsnori. The construction of the Rustavi sports complex is also nearing completion.

In accordance with a decision by the Prime Minister, a total of 130 new kindergartens are

planned under the construction-rehabilitation program for kindergartens, with agreements signed and tender announcements ongoing.

The session covered discussions about the significant project involving the construction and rehabilitation of 800 schools, valued at a billion GEL. This project, also initiated by the Prime Minister, encompasses the construction of 80 new schools and the rehabilitation of 200 existing schools in its first phase.

Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, Levan Davitashvili, reported that the revenue generated from travel in the first and second quarters of 2023 surpassed figures from 2019. This period registered a remarkable record figure of \$1,804,529,935 USD, which equates to 123.9% recovery compared to 2019's equivalent figure. Travel revenue experienced a 57.9% increase compared to 2022. In total, international

travel contributed \$1.8 billion in income to Georgia as of the first half of 2023. Discussions also revolved around the potential addition of new air routes and enhanced flight frequency with China, recognizing the significance of such steps for tourism and the aviation sector's growth.

During the meeting, deliberations encompassed the progress of significant economic projects and the strategic steps to be pursued in this realm moving forward.



United National Movement Party to Interpellate Minister of Internal Affairs Over Shovi Tragedy

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The United National Movement party has announced its intention to summon the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vakhtang Gomelauri, through interpellation regarding the Shovi tragedy.

In a statement released by the party, Tina Bokuchava, the chairperson of the United National Movement parliamentary faction, has already submitted a letter to the legislative body.

According to the UNM leader Ani Tsitlidze, the government's unwavering opposition to establishing an investigative commis-

sion underscores suspicions of concealing information related to the Shovi tragedy. Notably, the Minister of Internal Affairs is one of the high-ranking officials with a direct responsibility and obligation to address these inquiries, particularly after having made statements at the scene. Tsitlidze stated that both the public and the families of the victims are entitled to clear answers concerning specific aspects of how this tragedy might have been averted.

Based on their information, the UNM has formulated the

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.6209; Euro - 2.8665; GBP - 3.3322; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.6586; Swiss Franc - 2.9919

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following questions to be addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs concerning the Shovi tragedy:

“Under the provisions of Article 43, Clause 2 of the Constitution of Georgia, and Article 149 of the Regulations of the Parliament of Georgia, we are directing the following questions to

you through interpellation:

1. A fundamental aspect of effective mitigation against human casualties resulting from landslides and other natural disasters is the establishment of a suitable national monitoring and early warning system. In 2021, during the presentation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs’ ten-year plan, you stated, ‘An early warning SMS system will be in-

troduced, which will notify subscribers in a dangerous area about an actual or potential threat.’ Could you please explain why this mentioned warning system was not implemented, despite your assertion and the statements made by other high-ranking government officials, which suggested that such a system could have played a decisive role in preserving lives during the tragedy that unfolded in Shovi on August 3, 2023?”

2. The landslide event in Shovi unfolded on August 3, 2023, approximately at 15:00. Based on information accessible to the public and accounts from eyewitnesses, the pertinent authorities initiated rescue operations three hours after the incident. What led to the delay in commencing the search and rescue operation?

3. According to the Prime

Minister of Georgia, during the execution of the search and rescue operation following the Shovi disaster, the authorities did not find it necessary to seek assistance from neighboring states. In your capacity as the Minister of Internal Affairs, overseeing entities such as the Emergency Situations Management Service, could you elaborate on the specific actions taken and their respective or collective efficacy that led to this decision, in collaboration with other pertinent government officials?

4. What is the current state of the rescue equipment within the Emergency Situations Management Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and how well does it align with international standards? Additionally, what types of search and rescue helicopters does the state possess, and do they feature modern com-

munication and navigation systems, including equipment for night vision capabilities?

5. Through Decree No. 2632 of 2015, the contract GG-B-UCL concerning the grant offered by the United States Government to the Government of Georgia for the “Acquisition of two HUEY II search and rescue helicopters” was ratified. However, this contract was subsequently revoked on November 11, 2016, by Decree No. 2363 issued by the Government of Georgia. What circumstances prompted the state to retract the plan to acquire two search and rescue helicopters (“HUEY II”) under a grant arrangement? Were the Ministry of Internal Affairs and its officials involved in the decision-making process, and could you provide the official stance of the Ministry on this matter?” read the party’s statement.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Geostat: Surge in Direct Foreign Investments in Georgia During 2022

ments in 2022.

The primary direct investors were the United Kingdom (\$437 million), Spain (\$360.5 million), and the Netherlands (\$196.2 million).

The combined share of the two largest investor countries in the

chairman of the ruling party, Irakli Kobakhidze, and the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vakhtang Gomelauri, should resign due to these statements.

Shortly after the rally began, the police arrived on the scene.

Law enforcement officers demanded that the protestors remove the posters attached to the fence around the chancellery. However, the protestors refused to comply. In a tense moment, one of the activists was holding

a poster in their hand. A policeman approached the activist and forcibly pulled and tore the poster away from their hand.

Activists have reported that two individuals were arrested during the incident.



According to verified data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia, the volume of direct foreign investments made in Georgia in 2022 is expected to reach \$2,097.9 million USD. This figure is 1.7 times higher than the corresponding indicator in 2021 and 4.9 percent higher than the preliminary data for 2022.

Geostat reports that reinvestment accounted for 65.7 percent of the total foreign direct invest-

total volume of foreign direct investments, based on the adjusted data for 2022, amounted to 38.0 percent.

Regarding the distribution of investments, the largest share originates from financial and insurance activities (\$538.0 million USD) and real estate (\$366.5 million USD).

Activists Report Two Arrests During August 14th Protest Rally

On August 14th, participants of the rally were protesting against statements made by representatives of the government team regarding the Shovi tragedy. They believe that both the

Ukraine: EU and German KfW provide grant for better water supply, sanitation, and wastewater treatment in Chernivtsi

Chernivtsi, a city in southwestern Ukraine, will receive a 14.93 million grant from the European Union and KfW, a German state-owned investment and development bank, for the modernisation of the municipal water management system.

The agreement was signed on

11 August in Chernivtsi between KfW, Chernivtsi City Council, and the municipal enterprise Chernivtsivodokanal, within the ‘Municipal Infrastructure Development’ project.

The project aims to bring the water supply, sewerage and water treatment systems in Chernivtsi up to EU standards, reduce technical and non-technical water losses and energy costs of water pumping, and support monitoring of transboundary water pollution.

“Since 2016, the EU has been co-funding the modernisation of

water supply and waste water treatment infrastructure in Chernivtsi by blending EU funds with KfW loans. Last year, we approved additional funding to address urgent needs of the city related to the impact of the war,” said Chloé Allio, Head of Section for economic cooperation, energy, infrastructure and environment of the EU Delegation to Ukraine. She added that the project will benefit citizens, including IDPs from other cities in Ukraine as well.

(euneighbourseast.eu)



Weather

Wednesday, August 16

Day ☀ Clear
High: 35°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 22°C

Thursday, August 17

Day ☀ Clear
High: 35°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 22°C

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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

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