

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Landslide Disasters in Adjara and Imereti Result in Fatalities

On February 5, in the high-mountainous Adjara region, tragic incidents occurred as a result of a landslide and avalanche triggered by heavy snowfall, claiming the lives of 2 individuals. Following this, on February 7, a landslide struck the village of Nergeeti in the Baghdati municipality, Imereti, resulting in the unfortunate loss of 8 lives. In response to these disasters, over 90 families have been relocated to shelters.

First Deputy Minister of Infrastructure Iliia Begiashvili stated that there was no prior information indicating that the Nergeeti village was at risk of landslides.

"There was no such information suggesting that this area was prone to landslides. Professionals may provide a more detailed explanation, but residents have lived here for decades, and they do not recall any such incidents occurring before," he remarked.

The majority MP Bezhan Tsakadze reiterated that the area was not considered prone to landslides.

"They will fully investigate not only this slope but also these areas. For so long, there was no notice that there is a landslide-prone zone here, and this disaster happened; everything was over in 20 seconds, as the residents explained to us," Tsakadze said.

However, in the newsletter of the National Environment Agency, which included the results of the natural geological processes' development in Georgia in 2022 and the forecast for 2023, it is noted that the activa-



tion of landslide processes was predicted in the village of Nergeeti.

Government leaders have responded to the tragedy and expressed their condolences to the affected people.

"I express my grief about the tragedy that occurred in Western Georgia, claiming the lives of many people. My heartfelt sympathies go out to their families, friends, and loved ones," said Prime Minister Candidate Irakli Kobakhidze.

"The tragedies resulting from the natural disasters in the village of Nergeeti in Baghdati municipality and the Adjara region are deeply saddening. My condolences go out to the family members and relatives of the deceased. Each of us shares in this loss.

Our courageous rescuers are tirelessly working in search and rescue operations. Our prayers are with those who are still missing," wrote Parliament Chairman Shalva Papuashvili.

Mayor of Tbilisi Kakha Kaladze commenced the meeting of the Tbilisi government by offering condolences.

"First and foremost, I want to address the natural disaster that occurred late last night in the village of Nergeeti, Baghdati Municipality, which has deeply affected all of Georgia. Landslides, triggered by heavy rainfall, have resulted in loss of life. The firefighters and rescuers of the Emergency Situations Management Service of the Ministry

of Internal Affairs are working tirelessly.

Additionally, in the Adjara region, a natural disaster in Kedi municipality has led to casualties. We mourn the loss of Temur Baramidze, an employee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who tragically lost his life in a landslide. My condolences go out to the family members, their relatives, and the entire nation of Georgia," stated Kaladze.

The Embassy of Ukraine Investigates Discovery of Explosive Devices, Urges Georgia to Avoid Politicization



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The Embassy of Ukraine stated that it is verifying the information disseminated at the briefing of the State Security Service of Georgia and is investigating all the circumstances.

The Embassy is referring to the case mentioned in the statement of the agency on February 5. According to this statement, "the transfer of an explosive device from Ukraine through Georgia to Russia was prevented - Georgian law enforcement officers removed containers in which 6 explosive devices were placed."

The Embassy of Ukraine in Georgia expressed hope that the Georgian side would refrain from politicizing the case.

"We express our interest and readiness for a constructive relationship with the law enforcement and other competent bodies of Georgia in order to objectively, impartially, and fully clarify all the circumstances of the case and to determine its real

organizers," read the statement.

According to the State Security Service, the discovered explosive devices and substances were transported from the Ukrainian city of Odessa through Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey to Georgia on January 19 of this year. The transport occurred via a minivan belonging to a Ukrainian citizen, passing through the Sarfi checkpoint. The intended destination was the Russian city of Voronezh, with the route planned through Darial.

The explosive devices were discovered when the car was about to cross the Georgian-Russian border, from the Georgian side.

According to the State Security Service, "the utilization of Georgian territory and the involvement of a large number of Georgian citizens in this process led to the belief that any terrorist acts, whether carried out in Georgia or abroad, would be attributed to Georgia in terms of both planning and execution."



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The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Prime Minister Candidate Irakli Kobakhidze Emphasizes Demographic Challenges



Irakli Kobakhidze, the Prime Minister candidate, highlighted demographic challenges as a significant concern for the country. He emphasized the need for attention not only to the birth rate but also to marriage-divorce statistics and overall demographic trends.

“We face serious challenges regarding demography. We are dissatisfied with migration rates, birth rates, and marriage-divorce rates.

These challenges are substantial; if you examine the numbers and statistics, you’ll realize the severity of the situation.

If we encounter particular difficulties anywhere, demography is at the forefront, requiring special attention from the Georgian government,” said Kobakhidze.

However, Kobakhidze noted that under the government of Georgian Dream,

the situation in this regard has improved compared to the previous administration.

“During the previous government’s tenure from 2004 to 2012, Georgia’s population decreased by 225,000 people. This trend has reversed since 2014, and comparing the years 2014 to 2023, we’ve seen an increase of 19,500 people,” Kobakhidze stated.

Public Defender Proposes Winter Eviction Restrictions



On February 7, 2024, the Public Defender of Georgia submitted a proposal to the National Bureau of Enforcement to restrict evictions for individuals losing their sole residence during the winter.

The Public Defender based his appeal on the principles of reasonableness and proportionality in the eviction procedure, drawing upon the definitions, general comments, and best practices of the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and European Social Charter Committees.

The Public Defender carefully considered the country’s socio-economic context, along with the principles and rights outlined in Georgia’s Constitution. It’s vital that the eviction process maintains a fair

balance of interests and doesn’t worsen the situation for individuals in vulnerable positions.

During the latest visit of the EU High Representative Josep Borrell to Ukraine on 6-7 February, the State Special Transport Service of Ukraine received a DOK-ING MV-10 demining system.

The MV-10 demining system disarms anti-personnel and anti-tank mines as well as other unexploded ordnance. Thanks to the remote control it is particularly safe to use. The system is suitable for large areas: it can clear up to 4,000 square metres per hour, also on steep slopes.

EU demining support also includes a special training course for Ukrainian operators who will work on the MV-10 system.

This is the latest delivery in the framework of the EU’s Euro25 million support package for humanitarian demining in Ukraine announced at the EU-Ukraine Summit of February

EU provides Ukraine with modern mine-clearing machine



2023. The package is designed to meet the urgent needs of Ukraine’s state mine action operators, ranging from basic equipment for demining teams to pyrotechnic vehicles, and robotic demining systems.

“This equipment will enhance the capabilities of our troops and allow sappers to clear de-occupied territories faster and more safely,” said Major-General Bohdan Bondar, head of the State Special Transport Service of Ukraine. “Russian aggression has left behind many explosive objects in Ukraine, and demining will take decades. Technological solutions will make it possible to speed up this work.”

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Thursday, February 8

Day Partly Cloudy High: 15°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 4°C

Friday, February 9

Day Partly Cloudy High: 16°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 4°C

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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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