

## Georgian Government Allocates 35 Million for Patriarchate's Educational Institutions

By Liza Mchedlidze

According to the decree issued by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze on March 15th, 35 million will be allocated for certain educational institutions established by the Patriarchate of Georgia. This amount will be drawn from the 2024 budget, specifically from the financing program designated for general education schools.

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, without specifying the exact needs, addressed the increase in the budget for educational institutions established by the Patriarchate, stating that it became necessary to allocate an additional 5 million GEL to the funding.

"As for the financing of the Patriarchate, 30 million was allocated for the financing of educational projects, that is, it has a specific purpose, it is aimed at the Patriarchate, and it is specifically aimed at financing educational programs of the Patriarchate.

30 million was allocated, although there were certain needs, which made it necessary to increase the corresponding budget by 5 million, which was approved by the government decree. That is, there was a total of 30 million in funding, we added 5 million, which is impor-



tant for the relevant educational programs of the Patriarchate to be implemented accordingly," Kobakhidze stated.

Kobakhidze emphasized that the funding for this year was

already planned in last year's budget, stressing that it is unrelated to the upcoming elections. He underscored the significance of enabling the Patriarchate to carry out its own

projects, particularly in the realm of education.

The Prime Minister stressed that the necessity was justified and transparency ensured. He explained that the funding would

support several dozen educational institutions, including schools and higher education establishments, amounting to a total increase of 5 million.

## Georgian Dream Rejects Vetting for Judicial System

By Liza Mchedlidze

Mamuka Mdinardze, leader of the parliamentary majority, addressed the issue of vetting, stating unequivocally that it is now closed. Highlighting the importance of maintaining Georgia's sovereignty and independence, Mdinardze emphasized that decisions made by representatives of the Georgian government should never be influenced by citizens of other nations, regardless of diplomatic relations.

"Our government will never allow the creation of a system in

any field where the decision of the representatives of Georgia or any branch of its government depends on the citizens of other countries, no matter how friendly we are with these other countries. We categorically declare that we are not going to attack the sovereignty, constitution, and independence of the country with our own hands. Therefore, this issue is closed, and they should not bother themselves with excessive coercion or PR campaigns," said Mdinardze.

Minister of Justice Rati Bregadze also voiced strong opposition to the appointment of judges outside of Georgia, emphasizing that such decisions should be made within the country.

According to Bregadze, the decision regarding the selection of judges in European Union countries is made by the relevant bodies of the respective state.

"The unestablished system, which certain forces advocate for, implies that the decision on the appointment of judges in Georgia should be made outside the country, which is unacceptable for us. I support the stance of the

parliamentary majority that judges should be selected in Georgia. Let's not phrase it as if they are asking or requesting. Nowhere is it written that judges must be selected by foreigners.

Therefore, it is not true that Georgia cannot join the European Union if judges are not selected by representatives of any other country. In European Union countries, decisions, including the selection of judges, are made by the relevant bodies of the respective state," said Rati Bregadze.

According to the recommendation in the European Commission's enlargement report, which was published on November 8th, Georgia should amend the Law on General Courts to fully comply with the recommendations of the Venice Commission.

Vetting involves the implementation of an integrity assessment mechanism, often conducted with the assistance of international experts, to evaluate candidates for high positions within the judicial system. This process ensures that candidates meet the required standards of integrity and suitability for their roles.



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

**Parliament of Georgia  
Overturns President's Veto on  
Election Code Amendments**



The Parliament of Georgia has overturned the President's veto on amendments to the 'Election Code'. During the vote, 21 deputies backed the motivated remarks presented by Salome Zourabichvili, while 61 opposed them.

Afterward, the initial version of the draft law was voted on during the plenary session, garnering support from 78 deputies while 13 voted against it. Over-

coming the veto required a majority vote of 76 deputies.

The Georgian Dream argues that the procedure for the formation of the CEC, as proposed by the President to the Parliament, does not align with the practices

and experiences of EU countries.

President Salome Zourabichvili vetoed the amendments to the election code passed by the Parliament. On March 5, she presented motivated remarks to the Parliament. In her remarks, the President suggested that the authority to select and submit candidates for the CEC Chairman and membership to the Parliament should be returned to her.

**Foreign Minister of Ukraine  
Dmytro Kuleba: Putin's  
Ambitions Extend Beyond  
Moldova and Georgia**



Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba stated that Vladimir Putin's ambitions extend beyond the borders of Russia's neighboring countries, Georgia and Moldova, and will continue as far as they permit.

"I would not limit Putin's ambitions only to Moldova and Georgia. His plans go much further, and he will go as far as they will allow," said Kuleba.

According to Dmytro Kuleba, the best

way to stop Putin is by assisting Ukraine. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine emphasized that while there may be a cost to aiding Ukraine now, the cost of starting a war independently is

significantly greater, including the high toll on human life that Ukraine is currently enduring.

Kuleba stated that given Putin's desire to restore the Soviet Union, his ambitions extend beyond the borders of Russia's immediate neighbors.

"He does not recognize the right of many states to be within internationally recognized borders, so Central Asian countries should also be concerned," Kuleba added.

**T**BILISI, GEORGIA (19 March 2024) — The Asian Development Bank (ADB) yesterday launched a new country partnership strategy (CPS) for Georgia that will help develop the country into a green and inclusive regional gateway.

The 5-year partnership strategy from 2024–2028 aims for sovereign and private sector investments, policy reforms, capacity building, and knowledge to support Georgia's sustainable development. The strategy includes a particular focus on regional cooperation and integration, private sector-led growth including support for human capital development, and climate action.

"ADB and Georgia have been steadfast partners and we look forward to further helping the country transition to a green and integrated economy—and foster a more resilient and inclusive society," said ADB Director Gen-

**New ADB Country Strategy to Help  
Develop Georgia into Regional Gateway**

eral for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov. "We will continue to help Georgia leverage its geographical advantage and extensive free trade agreements to become a regional gateway connecting the Caucasus and Central Asia to Europe and the rest of the world."

Enhancing connectivity, expanding trade, and strengthening human capital are essential to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth in Georgia. They are also crucial to realizing the nation's aspirations to become a regional gateway between Europe and Asia, and a member of

the European Union. The new CPS directly supports three major priorities in Georgia's National Development Strategy (Vision 2030)—economic development, social policy and human capital development, and public administration.

"We are proud to maintain our partnership with the government as Georgia continues to develop into a regional transport and trade hub with climate-resilient infrastructure and stronger social security," said ADB Country Director for Georgia Lesley Bearman Lahm. "ADB will build on its strong foundations as one of Georgia's largest development partners by providing integrated support for complex infrastructure alongside transformative policy reforms, and enabling private sector development."

ADB will continue to help Georgia expand its multi-modal transport network, strengthen climate and disaster resilience, and scale up clean energy gen-

eration and trade. The bank will continue to support reforms to strengthen social protection in Georgia and the country's pension systems and capital markets development, while helping to strengthen the nation's education systems including vocational education and training.

ADB will also help improve the financial viability of Georgia's large state-owned enterprises by enhancing their governance structures and financial frameworks, and supporting their participation in capital markets.

ADB has supported Georgia since 2007 and is one of the country's largest multilateral development partners. ADB sovereign and private sector loans to Georgia total \$3.9 billion.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.



ADB's country partnership strategy for Georgia, 2024–2028 aims for sovereign and private sector investments, policy reforms, capacity building, and knowledge to support Georgia's sustainable development.

Weather

Wednesday, March 20

Day Light Rain  
High: 11°C

Night Mostly Cloudy  
Low: 2°C

Thursday, March 21

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 14°C

Night Light Rain  
Low: 6°C

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