

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze: Refusal to Open EU Negotiations Would Be Incomprehensible

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze has expressed strong concerns that it would be "incomprehensible" if the European Union were to refuse opening membership negotiations with Georgia. Kobakhidze stated that European integration is a key objective not only for the Georgian government but also for the Georgian people, as written in the country's constitution.

Kobakhidze highlighted that European integration is a foreign policy priority for Georgia, reflecting broad public support. He recalled similar setbacks Georgia faced in the past, particularly the denial of candidate status in June 2022.

The Prime Minister drew parallels between past and present challenges, pointing out that despite criticism and perceived injustices, Georgia's perseverance led to obtaining candidate status.

"Even when we were denied candidate status in 2022, we continued to fight, and eventually, we succeeded. Similarly, if we stand united now, I am confident that we can move forward with our European integration goals," Kobakhidze said.

He emphasized that if the EU



were to refuse negotiations now, it would be seen as a grave mistake, similar to the past decision to deny Georgia's candidate sta-

tus. Kobakhidze urged that the refusal to open negotiations would contradict the narrative that any step taken by the EU

would be in support of the Georgian people rather than the government. He stressed that the collective effort and unity of the

Georgian people are essential to advancing the country's integration into the European Union.

Construction Partner for Anaklia Project to Be Announced

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

First Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Levan Davitashvili revealed that the selection of a construction partner for the Anaklia project is set to conclude on July 26.

Davitashvili addressed journalists, stating, "The process is quite complex, both in terms of selecting a private partner and construction works. Therefore, we are very responsible and attentive to the process." He explained that the department has been working closely with international consultants to ensure the best choice for the project.

The selection process has been competitive, with a focus on choosing a construction company with extensive marine construction experience. "We had negotiations with the 'big four'; it was a competitive environment," Davitashvili noted. "Under competitive conditions, the construction company was selected to be as experienced as possible in terms of marine construction."

Davitashvili elaborated on the ongoing evaluation: "We sent clarifying questions to the bidder with the involvement of a consultant. We received detailed responses this week, which are again being processed by our European consultant. When we get the consultant's assessment this week, probably tomorrow, early next week at the latest, the fit will be clarified." He also indicated that if there are further clarifying questions, the dialogue with bidders may continue.

The engineering consultants have been engaged to assess the proposals submitted by the companies. Davitashvili assured, "We will complete this process tomorrow. Tomorrow, the construction partner will be identified and we will provide the public with information about this."



The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

For Change Coalition Announces Four Key Election Priorities



Zura Japaridze, a leader of the For Change coalition, has outlined the coalition's election program, which focuses on the Georgian Charter, rapid economic development, education reform, and regional strengthening.

Japaridze emphasized the coalition's commitment to the Georgian Charter, which incorporates the European Commission's nine recommendations for Georgia to begin EU negotiations. "We

are the only ones who have signed and adhered to this charter," he stated.

The coalition aims to double the economy, providing a foundation for further budgetary reforms. "Rapid economic growth is essential for our progress," Japaridze said.

He also highlighted the need for a modern education system, focusing on deregulating private educational institutions and introducing free-market elements to improve public education quality. "We want an education system that constantly improves without needing intervention," he explained.

The coalition plans to decentralize management, empowering local self-government. "Owners should appear on the

ground, incentivizing market operations and forming effective self-governance," Japaridze added.

On July 9, the parties Akhali, Droa, and Girchi - More Freedom announced the creation of a unified electoral entity, joining forces for the upcoming elections.

Public Defender Calls for Dialogue as Health Insurance Suspended During Evolution Georgia Strike

state provides basic medical services through the universal health care program. The office is prepared to investigate further if striking employees are restricted from accessing these state services.

The strike, involving over half of the company's employees according to the labor union, is raising concerns about the health risks to participants who might need medical care typically covered by private insurance.

The Public Defender has urged Evolu-



The Public Defender of Georgia has expressed concern over the ongoing strike at Evolution Georgia LLC, which began on July 12. The office reports that striking employees have had their health insurance benefits suspended, impacting those with significant medical needs, including pregnant women, cancer patients, and individuals with chronic conditions.

The Public Defender's statement emphasizes that while private insurance benefits are currently suspended, the

tion Georgia LLC to engage with striking employees and their representatives to resolve the dispute. The office calls for the restoration of health insurance benefits and improvements in working conditions.

Striking employees are demanding higher wages, better working conditions, the dismissal of managers accused of bullying, racism, and sexism, and the signing of lifetime contracts with new hires.

EU and USAID development officials visit Imereti and Shida Kartli to demonstrate partnership with Georgian people

Earlier this week, EU Head of Cooperation Nicholas Cendrowicz and USAID Georgia Acting Mission Director Juniper Neill visited Imereti and Shida Kartli to meet with community members and demonstrate the EU's and United States' long-standing partnership and development programming to support the people of Georgia and advance Georgia's security, prosperity, democracy,



and Euro-Atlantic integration. During the two-day trip,

Cendrowicz and Neill met with USAID and EU-supported busi-

nesses and organisations, including women entrepreneurs from conflict-affected villages, blueberry farmers who are exporting their products to the EU, local journalists reporting on issues that matter to communities, an independent living centre in Kutaisi that helps persons with disabilities fully participate in society, and civil society leaders and youth who are strengthening the country's democracy.

During the meetings, they discussed the benefits that Euro-Atlantic integration brings to Georgia, the tangible ways that USAID and EU

assistance has benefited the Georgian people, and how the United States and the EU can continue to effectively partner with citizens, families, and communities across Georgia.

"During the visit, we met with various groups, and it was wonderful to see how the support channelled to them has changed the lives of people and their communities," Nicholas Cendrowicz, the Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Georgia, said. "The European Union will continue to support Georgian citizens, businesses, and civil society as they strive towards a brighter future."

(eunighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Friday, July 26

Day Showers High: 24°C

Night Showers Low: 21°C

Saturday, July 27

Day Showers High: 25°C

Night Showers Low: 19°C

published by **The Messenger**

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

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.