

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

April 11-14

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Date: **April 15, 2019**

1. UK Foreign Secretary thanks Georgia for extradition of Shepherd



2. Italy offers €2 million for new air monitoring stations in Tbilisi

The government of Italy has allocated €2 million to help Georgia purchase new stations to monitor atmospheric air quality and to study the risks of natural threats in the capital city of Tbilisi, announces the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

A group of Italian experts are visiting Georgia to share their experience in monitoring air quality in the country following the example of Italy (*Agenda.ge, April 11, 2019*).

3. Former NATO Sec-Gen Rasmussen says alliance may use EU-Cyprus model for accepting Georgia

Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen says that the only way for Georgia to accede into NATO at present is through the use of the EU-Cyprus model.

Cyprus became an EU-member state in 2004 on the condition that the EU law is suspended in areas where the Cypriot government (Government of the Republic) does not exercise effective control.

"Georgia meets almost all the criteria for NATO membership. The only obstacle on the way are the occupied regions of Georgia [Abkhazia and Tskhinvali]," Rasmussen told the Georgian Public Broadcaster (*ITV.ge, April 11, 2019*).

4. Georgia to join NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion

Starting from 2020 Georgia will join the NATO Multinational Military Policy Battalion, composed of military police units of Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

The Battalion, or its elements, were allowed to be deployed from 2013 to any area of NATO operations where the need arises for coordinated multi-national police activities.

"We are happy that the decision is positive and from 2020, we, in the format of the military police, will be involved in different missions, exercises in the format of NATO. This is another recognition of our abilities and the expression of support," Georgian Defence Minister Levan Izoria stated in Croatia earlier today, after the meeting with his Croatian colleague Damir Krsticevic (*Agenda.ge, April 12, 2019*).

5. US Senator Roger Wicker: Georgia will become a NATO member, no one can prevent this

US Senator Roger Wicker says that Georgia will become member state of NATO and no one can prevent this choice of the Georgian people from taking place.

Wicker told this to the head of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Georgian parliament Sophio Katsarava in Washington earlier today (*Agenda.ge, April 12, 2019*).

6. Georgia hosts Czech journalists on country tour

Journalists of the National Geographic, Forbes, Vogue and Cosmopolitan editions from the Czech Republic are visiting Georgia to explore the country's touristic potential and introduce it to readers in their home country.

A group of journalists has already visited Kvareli, Telavi and Tsinandali towns in Georgia's Kakheti region and the capital city of Georgia, Tbilisi. The guests tasted Georgian cuisine and wine.

A special press tour has been organised by Georgia's National Tourism Administration (GNTA) with the aim of raising the awareness of Georgia and making the country a more popular touristic destination for foreigners (*Agenda.ge, April 12, 2019*).

7. Georgia awarded status of exemplary country combating Hepatitis C

The Ministry of Health of Georgia has been awarded a certificate of an exemplary country combating Hepatitis C by the European Association for the Study of the Liver and International Liver Foundation in Austria.

"It is a great honor for us to be given...this status. The Hepatitis C elimination programme in Georgia represents the best example of cooperation between private and state sectors, the US Disease Control Center and Gilead company laid the foundation," Health Minister Sergeenko stated (*Agenda.ge, April 12, 2019*).

8. President of Cyprus to pay historic visit to Georgia

President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades will visit Georgia on April 16-18. This will be a historic visit as the president of Cyprus will come to Georgia for the first time, the governmental administration of Cyprus says. The administration reported that strengthening bilateral relations, investments and trade issues will be on the top of the agenda (*Agenda.ge, April 13, 2019*).

9. Georgian citizen detained in Turkey for alleged contacts with ISIS released

Turkish court has released ten individuals, including one Georgian citizen detained for alleged contacts with the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The Turkish Security Service carried out a special operation and detained nine Syrian and one Georgian citizen in the Turkish city of Izmir on April 10.

Turkish media reported that all of them have been taken to the immigration service after they were released (*Agenda.ge, April 14, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

10. Two members of Adjara TV court demand the impeachment of Natia Kapanadze, Director of the TV

Two members of the Adjara TV board demands impeachment of Director, Natia Kapanadze Chairperson of the Board of Adjara TV Public Broadcaster confirmed that two members have demanded impeachment of Natia Kapanadze, the director of the broadcaster. According to the regulations, for the impeachment majority of the votes are necessary. There are five members in the board and in the case of the support of one member, Kapanadze will leave the post of Adjara Public Broadcaster.

The board was addressed with the demand of the impeachment of the director by following members: Irakli Dartsmelidze, elected by United National Movement quota and Giga Chkhartishvili, elected by Georgian Dream quota (*Netgazeti.ge, April 12, 2019*).

11. 13 NGOs expressed support towards Natia Kapanadze

Leading Georgian NGOs expressed support towards Natia Kapanadze, Director of Adjara TV. According to the statement after her appointment all international media researches and analysis say that Adjara TV is the most impartial and objective in Georgia.

In addition the statement reads that before demanding impeachment the risks towards media pluralism and independence should be taken into account. "We hope that other members of the board will have rational attitude towards the process and support independent editorial policy of the channel."

The statement is signed by following NGOs: *GYLA, Transparency International, Mediaclub, The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics, IDFI, ISFED and etc (Radiotavisupleba.ge, April 12, 2019)*.

12. Public Defender: I call the board to take responsibility for the aftermath of the impeachment

"Even if there are formal incidents to start procedures for the impeachment is a negative signal for those who might intend taking the post of the director of Adjara TV in the future. This means that despite its success the TV will not be supported if "someone" does not like it and they might lose the job easily. It was surprising for me to hear from media that the impeachment procedures have started. I have only heard only positive assessment towards the TV not only from local but, international organizations as well. I don't think that anybody will evaluate this decision as an objective one. I hope that public reaction that almost unanimously supports current director will influence the decision of the board members. I call them to take responsibility for the aftermath of the impeachment." – said Nino Lomjaria, Public Defender (*Netgazeti.ge, April 12, 2019*).

13. Georgian PM presents ruling party candidate for Mtatsminda district MP elections

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze has presented Doctor Lado Kakhadze as the Georgian Dream's candidate who will run in the Mtatsminda district parliamentary by-elections on May 19. Bakhtadze claimed that the ruling party has chosen a "distinguished candidate for a distinguished district."

"Kakhadze is a very worthy candidate. He loves his people and country very much and he has proven this for many years with his activities. For many people, Lado is an example of professionalism," Bakhtadze said (*Agenda.ge, April 12, 2019*).

14. Ruslan Abashidze set to replace Vakhtan Kolbaia on the post of the Chairperson of Abkhazia Government

Ruslan Abashidze, currently Deputy Minister of Reconciliation, will replace Vakhtang Kolbaia on the post of the Chairperson of Abkhazia. This information was confirmed by newly elected Chairperson of Abkhazia High Council Jemal Gamkharaiia.

"This information is true. First of all let me inform you that Kolbaia was acting Chairperson because of the one reason, there were not written procedures for electing the Chairperson. We have started procedures to appoint Abashidze as Chairperson not as acting/interim Chairperson." – said Gamkharaiia (*lpn.ge, April 12, 2019*).

15. Two detained for online drug trafficking in Tbilisi

Two individuals have been detained in Tbilisi for online drug trafficking, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported earlier today. One of the detainees was identified as the leader of a criminal group.

Members of the group stored different drugs for sale in a rented apartment, placed them at different spots in the capital city and contacted clients through the internet. After the reception of the transfer, clients were informed about the location of their drug purchases (*Agenda.ge, April 13, 2019*).

16. Georgia celebrates Mother Language Day

Georgia is celebrating Mother Language Day today, marking the country's victory over Soviet attempts to do away with Georgian as the official language of Georgia.

On this day 41 years ago, hundreds of Georgians took to the streets of Tbilisi in protest against the Soviet government's decision to remove words in the Georgian Constitution solidifying Georgian as the state language.

On April 14, 1978, local students, professors, teachers and citizens strictly opposed the decision – the government was forced to step back (*Agenda.ge, April 14, 2019*).

17. 'Defend Georgia' public movement holds meeting, presents priorities

A public movement "Defend Georgia" which is led by a Georgian poet Davit Magradze held a special meeting at Tbilisi concert hall yesterday.

Magradze called on everyone who considers that "a moral margin" between the current and former ruling parties – the Georgian Dream and the United National Movement (UNM) - has disappeared, to attend the meeting.

The public movement aims to change the Georgian Dream, but without the UNM's return to governance.

"Both political organisations that are currently occupying the political space are almost requesting idolatry", Magradze said.

"Young people are always free. Aspiration to freedom is their lifestyle and we want to lay foundation to this movement like it was long time ago", he added.

Magradze said “Defend Georgia” does not aim to become a political party, but he believes a public movement can also have “influence on life and politics” (*Agenda.ge, April 14, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

18. DCFTA benefits: Georgia-EU trade turnover up 17.7% in 2018

Trade turnover between Georgia and EU increased by 17.7% in comparison to 2017 and reached \$3.35 billion in 2018, much in part thanks to the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreement with the EU.

Exports grew by 11.5% and reached \$730.3 million while imports grew by 19.5% and reached \$2.62 billion, said Deputy Economy Minister Genadi Arveladze.

Arveladze also said that last year Georgia diversified export products to the EU while the number of companies that export from Georgia to the EU increased by 37% compared to 2014 and reached 789 companies (*Agenda.ge, April 11, 2019*).

19. Uzbekistan Airways to perform Tashkent-Tbilisi flights this summer

The Uzbek flag carrier will soon connect the capital cities of Uzbekistan and Georgia with new seasonal flights. Uzbekistan Airways will start to operate flights on the route Tashkent-Tbilisi from July 16.

During the summer season flights will be performed twice a week on Tuesdays and Sundays by an Airbus 320 type aircraft (*Agenda.ge, April 12, 2019*).

❖ Sports and Culture

20. Researchers unveil unique discovery solving mystery of Georgian chant manuscripts

Some of the most unique Georgian chants from medieval hymnographic collections could be brought back to life after their musical notations were reconstructed in a breakthrough study by researchers in Georgia.

On Friday in Tbilisi, historians and hymnographers presented the results of their study of Georgian medieval religious chants, unveiling links between the medieval notation systems with their modern counterparts.

Marking the achievement, a choir performed the chants — recognised as elements of major cultural significance for Georgian polyphony and hymnography — for the first time in public at the occasion hosted by the Georgian National Museum (*Agenda.ge, April 12, 2019*).

21. Georgian weightlifter Lasha Talakhadze wins European championship, sets new world records

Georgian weightlifter and Olympic champion Lasha Talakhadze has won three gold medals in the European Weightlifting Federation’s championship, which was held in Georgia’s seaside town of Batumi on April 6-13.

Talakhadze, 25, who is the Georgian and Olympic champion, took gold in +109kg category and set three new world records.

In total, the Georgian athletes ended the championship with four gold, six silver and three bronze medals. Batumi hosted over 325 athletes from 41 countries. The European Weightlifting Federation said the

championship is "the only Gold Level Qualification Event organised in the first qualification period in Europe." (*Agenda.ge, April 13, 2019*).

Additional Information

April 15, 2019
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.6953 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5252 GEL	100 RUB -4.1943 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0481 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4639 GEL	100 JPY - 2.4074 GEL

Monday 15 April	Tuesday 16 April	Wednesday 17 April	Thursday 18 April	Friday 19 April
				
11° 21°	10° 19°	7° 13°	6° 13°	5° 10°

-  **Movie Events - English Sessions - [Tickets](#)**
-  **Friends of Museum (Membership to access Georgian National Museums For free of charge after one payment) - [Membership](#)**
-  **Marjanishvili Theatre – [Events and Tickets](#)**
-  **Rustaveli Theatre - [Events and Tickets](#)**
-  **Opera and Ballet – [Events and Tickets](#)**
-  **Concerts – [Events and Tickets](#)**
-  **Sports – [Events and Tickets](#)**