

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

June 3-5

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❖ Foreign Affairs

1. Georgian side is ready within its capabilities to receive and support the ships of NATO and member states in the Black Sea

The Georgian side is ready within its capabilities to receive and support the ships of NATO and member states in the Black Sea, – It is mentioned in the first annual report of the Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze, which has already been submitted to the Parliament.

The document says that the legislative project has been already developed, which envisages simplification of the diplomatic permits to enter the territorial waters and ports of Georgia for alliance's permanent marine units as well as for NATO vessels (*1TV, June 3, 2019*).

2. Austrian Ambassador released a statement in response to press reports where his words were misinterpreted

"Press reports attribute to me various statements criticizing Georgia. "In fact, they are taken out of context of an interview which highlighted the ample opportunities and discussed challenges of investing here including in the energy sector and tourism, areas where Austria is very active in Georgia.

Let me re-iterate that I have explicitly pointed out in the interview that corruption is low and the rule of law is warranted in Georgia. I also underlined that Georgia is an attractive hub for the whole South Caucasus. Austrian companies are very eager to invest in Georgia and the increased number of trade missions and the expanding trade volume is an impressive indicator for that. But the potential is not exploited and both Georgia and Austria work very hard to bring business partners together. In explaining the political environment some expressions that could be misinterpreted were used." – reads the statement (*1TV, June 4, 2019*)

3. PM Bakhtadze set to visit US on June 5-14

PM Bakhtadze will meet with representatives of leading companies in San Francisco, Seattle and Dallas and speak about Georgia's investment climate, his press office reported.

Mamuka Bakhtadze will also participate in the roundtable discussions and speak about the opportunities that Georgia offers foreign investors in various fields.

During his visit to US PM Bakhtadze will meet with high-level US officials in Washington DC as well (*Agenda.ge, June 4, 2019*).

4. UN adopts resolution on Georgian IDPs co-sponsored by 44 states

The UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution on Georgian IDPs and refugees which, for the first time, was co-sponsored by 44 other nations, during its 73rd session on June 4.

The resolution with the name 'Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia', condemns the forced demographic changes in Georgia's Russian-occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) and emphasises the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees, regardless of their ethnicity, to a safe and dignified return to their places of origin (*Agenda.ge, June 5, 2019*).

5. Salome Zurbashvili – UN Resolution is a success for our diplomatic efforts

"The United Nations General Assembly approved once again Georgia's resolution confirming the right of return of IDPs and their descendants to Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. This is a success for our diplomatic efforts and a stronger hope for the thousands of IDPs waiting to return home" – Georgia's President Salome Zurbashvili wrote on Twitter (*1TV, June 5, 2019*).

6. Ukrainian president says he has "no political plans" with ex Georgian president Saakashvili

Newly elected Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky says that he has "no political plans" with former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili after reinstating his Ukrainian citizenship on May 28.

Zelensky told currenttime.tv that his plans with Saakashvili "were very simple, only humane," making the decision he did only as he believed that his citizenship had been annulled illegally.

Saakashvili, who returned to Ukraine on the second day after the restoration of his citizenship "to help Zelensky fulfil his election promises," says that his Movement of New Forces face difficulties to run in the July 21 parliamentary elections in Ukraine (*Agenda.ge, June 5, 2019*).

7. Kyiv Mayor offers Saakashvili to chair his party

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko has offered ex-president of Georgia and ex-Governor of Ukraine's Odesa region Mikheil Saakashvili to chair the Udar Party and lead it to the parliamentary elections.

Klitschko proposes "joining hands for quick and effective changes" and asks Saakashvili to become chairman of the UDAR Party, Klitschko said in his video address posted on Facebook on June 4.

"Udar goes to snap parliamentary elections. And I invite our partners to go together. I remain the leader of the Udar Party, and I offer Mikheil Saakashvili to head the party," Klitschko said (*1TV, June 5, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

8. Mamuka Bakhtadze to submit the first annual report to the parliament by the end of June

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Mamuka Bakhtadze, will submit the first annual report on the implementation of the government program until the end of June.

Presentation of the annual report to the legislative body is determined by the new regulations, according to which the report will be presented to Parliament before July 1.

As for the time and format of the Prime Minister's report, according to the Rules of Procedure, the Bureau of Parliament, in consultation with the Prime Minister, determines the timing and after delivering the report, political debates will be held (*1TV, June 3, 2019*).

9. Renovated Orbeliani Square opens in central Tbilisi, \$31 mln spent

Orbeliani Square was opened by top Georgian officials late yesterday, after its renovation was officially completed. The cost of the project stood at about 31 million USD.

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze vowed that the Georgian government will boost funding for such projects (*Agenda.ge, June 3, 2019*).

10. IDFI: 7 governors spent a total of 132,208 liters of fuel in 2017-2018, on average equal to twice the circumference of Earth

Seven governors spent a total of 132,208 liters of fuel in 2017-2018, according to the IDFI analysis on Regional Governor State Vehicles and Fuel Expenses: 2017-2018.

The organization says that in 2017-2018, "7 governors drove 750 thousand kilometers in total, averaging at 52.5 thousand kilometers in 2017, and 54.7 in 2018. The distance driven by each governor in 2017-2018 is on average equal to twice the circumference of Earth."

According to the IDFI, nine regional governor administrations own a total of 78 vehicles, of which 49% are high-performance, and 46% are assigned to specific official or employee.

All regional governors use Toyota Land Cruisers, most of which were gifted to governor administrations free of charge. 73% of vehicles owned by governor administrations were not purchased with their budgets and they were transferred free of charge from other public institutions. The document says that "on August 21, 2015, Deputy Governor of Kvemo Kartli region appealed to Rustavi Mayor to transfer a vehicle that was purchased for GEL 71,373 on the same day from the municipal budget to the governor administration."

"In 2017-2018, vehicles assigned to governors drove an average of 150 kilometers per day including weekends, and 215 kilometers per working day excluding weekends. In 2017-2018, the average fuel consumption per 100 kilometers of vehicles assigned to governors ranged from 15 to 19.83 liters," the document reads (*ITV, June 4, 2019*).

11. Georgian leaders send warm wishes to Muslims on Eid-al-Fitr

President of Georgia Salome Zurbashvili and Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze have sent kind wishes to the Muslim community of Georgia on Eid-al-Fitr.

Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze hosted members of the Georgian Muslim community at an Iftar supper last night – an evening meal with which Muslims end their daily fast during Ramadan at sunset (*Agenda.ge, June 4, 2019*).

12. Parliament examines bill obliging moped and quad-bike drivers to have licenses

A new bill has been proposed to the parliament on making driver's license mandatory for all types of moped and quad-bike drivers.

A new AM category of transport will be introduced for mopeds and light quad-bikes. Another new A2 sub-category will also include bikes with no more than 35 kWh power.

Regulations that are applicable towards other vehicles will also apply to mopeds and quad-bikes, which will have to be registered in the Service Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (*Agenda.ge, June 4, 2019*).

13. Main witness in high-profile murder case of adolescents charged

The main witness in the high-profile murder case in Tbilisi in December 2017, Mikheil Kalandia, has been officially charged for the murder of one of the minors, David Saralidze.

Kalandia has been charged for intentional murder of a minor committed by a group of persons in aggravating circumstances, the Prosecutor's Office said.

Mikheil Kalandia was detained on June 4. The Tbilisi City Court is set to discuss over the preventive measures against Kalandia tomorrow at 12 p.m.

Prosecutor's Office is demanding Kalandia's detention. However, Kalandia's lawyer, Ana Kotetishvili said today that the defendant denies the charges (*Agenda.ge, June 5, 2019*).

14. Independent MP Davit Chichinadze to establish political movement

An independent MP Davit Chichinadze plans to establish new political movement "Tribune." In an interview with Georgian First Channel, Chichinadze said that he would make a statement about his future plans on June 22. The new political force will participate in the 2020 parliamentary elections (*1TV, June 5, 2019*).

15. Gia Volski – Opposition is in bad condition, Shalva Shavgulidze has political amnesia

The opposition is in bad condition, while Shalva Shavgulidze (candidate in Mtatsminda Majoritarian Constituency) has political amnesia – Gia Volski, Vice Speaker of the Georgian Parliament thus responded to the statement made by Giga Bokeria, one of the leaders of European Georgia Party.

According to Volski, representatives of former authorities, who are now in the opposition, forgot about their forming of criminal schemes, and are trying to shift the attention of the public.

Bokeria said during the briefing today that the fundamental strategy of Bidzina Ivanishvili's (Chairman of Georgian Dream Party) team was to retain power with the help of the criminal authorities (*1TV, June 6, 2019*).

16. President Zurabishvili visits Lugar Laboratory

President of Georgia Salome Zurabishvili visited Richard Lugar Public Health Research Center and got acquainted with its work.

According to the Administration of President of Georgia, Salome Zurabishvili met with the staff of the Research Center and inspected the Biosafety Level-3 National Facility and the laboratories of the General Bacteriology, Virology, Molecular Biology and Genome (*1TV, June 5, 2019*).

17. Tbilisi Pride to go ahead despite police statement they can't guarantee event's safety

The rally is scheduled for the concluding day of Tbilisi Pride, despite continuous threats by radical groups and a decision by the police to absolve themselves of responsibility for protecting the activists.

Organizers earlier rejected an offer by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to hold the event indoors. The MIA has told LGBTIQI activists the ministry is unable to provide security for the event if it is held outside in a public place.

Tbilisi Pride starts June 18 and concludes with a demonstration June 23, organizers say. Although the venue of the event is being kept secret for safety reasons, one of activists, Nino Boklvadze, told Imedi TV that they don't plan to hold the event on Rustaveli Avenue and "adjacent places" (*DFWatch.net, June 5, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

18. Government plans to increase pensions in 2020

In 2019-2020, 600 million GEL will be allocated for pensions. This is mentioned in the first annual report of Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze, which will be submitted to the Bureau sitting today.

The pension in Georgia increased by 20 GEL in 2019 and in 2020 the increase in pensions is also planned by 20 GEL (*ITV, June 3, 2019*).

19. Georgia's businesses enjoy 22.9b GEL turnover in Q1 of 2019, employ 663,800 people

The turnover enjoyed by Georgia's business sector is increasing, reaching 22.9 billion GEL in the first quarter (Q1) of 2019. This was 2.7.5% more year-on-year (y/y).

The value of production generated by the business sector also grew to reach 9.5 billion GEL. This was 9% higher y/y, said the National Statistic Office of Georgia.

Large businesses made up the majority of total turnover (54.5%), followed by small businesses (28.1%), and then medium-sized businesses (17.4%) (*Geostat.ge, June 3, 2019*).

20. How many people are employed in the business sector?

Georgian businesses employed about 663,800 people in the Q1 of 2019, of which 42.3% were women and 57.7% were men.

The number of people employed in the Georgian business sector increased by 4.2% compared to the same period of 2018.

The majority of people employed in the business sector (64.6%) worked in Georgia's capital of Tbilisi, which is regarded as the country's economic hub.

The majority of people (46.9%) worked in small businesses, 42.5% were employed in large business, and the remaining 20.6% worked in medium-sized businesses, said the statistics agency (*Geostat.ge, June 3, 2019*).

21. What is the average monthly salary in Georgia's business sector?

The average monthly salary for a person employed in the business sector in Q1 of 2019 was 1,151.9 GEL. This was an increase of 45.5 GEL y/y.

Average monthly salaries based on the size of business:

Medium-sized businesses: 1,291.2 GEL per month

Large businesses: 1,205.6 GEL

Small businesses: 1,017 GEL (*Geostat.ge, June 3, 2019*).

22. Number of tourists visiting Georgia increases 18% in May 2019

Georgia hosted 424,514 tourists (+18%) and 723,160 international travellers (+14.2) in May 2019, announces the Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA).

The countries with the most significant increase were:

- Kirgizstan (+135.4%)
- Uzbekistan (+90.5%)
- Kazakhstan (+84.6%)

- China (+56.4%)
- Belarus (+45.8%) (*Agenda.ge, June 4, 2019*).

23. Asian Development Bank finances repair work on Tbilisi Metro with \$15 mln

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is financing repair work on the Tbilisi Metro system with \$15 million, announces Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze.

The repair work includes the installation of new cables, 32 European standard ventilation systems and 28 airing tunnels.

We have a very difficult situation in Tbilisi Metro in terms of electric wiring... Since the metro was opened, these types of works have not been done yet. About 450 km cables will be replaced with modern, ISO standard cables", said Kaladze.

The work will be started on July 1 and will be completed by the end of the month. During this period Tbilisi Metro will work from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m (*Agenda.ge, May 5, 2019*).

Additional Information

June 6, 2019

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1 USD - 2.7500 GEL | 1 GBP - 3.4966 GEL | 100 RUB -4.2260 GEL |
| 1 EUR - 3.0990 GEL | 1 TRY - 0.4822 GEL | 100 JPY - 2.5397 GEL |

| Thursday 6 June | Friday 7 June | Saturday 8 June | Sunday 9 June | Monday 10 June |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 18° 31° | 18° 31° | 17° 30° | 19° 31° | 18° 30° |

-  **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](#)**