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Energy for sustainable development discussed at international forum

By Salome Modebadze

The 4th International Forum: Energy for Sustainable Development, took a start at the Sheraton Metechi Palace in the Georgian capital on September 17. The three-day forum brought together over 200 delegates from more than 25 countries including the Caucasus, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, Central, Northern, and South-Eastern Asia.

The Forum was organized jointly by the Government of Georgia, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).



The 4th International Forum: Energy for Sustainable Development underway

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Defense Minister Visits Georgian Troops in Afghanistan

Defense Minister Irakli Alasania visited Georgian troops stationed in the southern Afghan province of Helmand.

He was at Camp Leatherneck, the U.S. Marine Corps base in the Washir district, and then at the combat outpost Eredvi in Musa Qala in the north of Helmand province.

The 33rd and 42nd battalions from the third and fourth brigades of the Georgian Armed Forces are currently deployed in Helmand province. Georgia also has up to 50 soldiers deployed in Camp Phoenix in Kabul. Georgia has lost 29 soldiers in Afghanistan thus far.

"From here our soldiers are contributing to the foundation of our statehood's stability," Alasania said, while visiting the Eredvi combat outpost, where Georgian troops from the 42nd battalion are deployed.

This is Alasania's fourth visit to Afghanistan since becoming the defense minister in late October, 2012.

(Civil.Ge)

President criticizes constitutional amendments

By Gvantsa Gabekhadze



President Saakashvili criticizes proposed changes to the state constitution

President Mikheil Saakashvili strongly criticized the planned constitutional changes that are expected to be discussed among the legislative body this week. The president stressed that through the changes, the current prime minister of Georgia, Bidzina Ivanishvili, intends to rule the country when he leaves the political arena. Saakashvili touched upon the parliament's move back to Tbilisi as well, stating that the step will cause damage to Kutaisi development.

The statements were made during the president's meeting with the minority representatives on September 16.

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Meetings continue in Ergneti

By Ana Robakidze

The Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meeting took place in Ergneti on September 16. The participants reviewed the incidents and occurrences that have taken place since the previous IPRM meeting.

The 37th meeting co-facilitated by the Head of the EUMM, Gerard A. Fischer and Ambassador Andrii Deshchytzia, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Conflicts, lasted for 6 hours. The co-facilitators of the meeting expressed appreciation for the willingness of the participants to cooperate in defusing tense situations. However, the meeting did not turn out to be fruitful.

Participants complained after the meeting that it appeared to be the most difficult and it was impossible to negotiate with the South Ossetian side. Representa-

tives of the break-away region started to argue about terms and geographic names. They declared that there was no place called Akhagori, instead it had to be called Leningori.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs was very dissatisfied with the meetings. Representative of the ministry, Kakha Kemoklidze, said that the South Ossetian side had not prepared for the meeting and could not answer the questions other participants had. The Georgian side is particularly concerned over the planned regulations that the South Ossetian administration has initiated. The regulations establish restrictions passing the check-point to Akhagori. Also, the restrictions will be established on weight and cargo. Kemoklidze says this is a serious violation of freedom of movement of the local population.

In case the defacto government of South Ossetia does not abolish

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Parliament to discuss new legislative initiative of MIA

Georgian parliament will discuss a new legislative initiative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

The Interior Ministry has already drafted the law project that will be initiated at the Georgian Parliament. Amendments will be made to Article 331 of the Criminal Code, which envisages legal accountability in cases of "false report on terrorism" and thus the mentioned law will be substantially stiffened. Amendments will also be made to the Code of Administrative Offences according to which parents of underaged authors of false notification will have to pay solid fines. According to the acting legislation initiators of false notification, who are less than 16 years, have no legal responsibility.

MORE NEWS IN BRIEF ON P. 4

Energy for sustainable development discussed at international forum

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In his opening speech, Vice Prime Minister of Georgia and Minister of Energy, Kakha Kaladze,

said Georgia has applied for the full membership of the Energy Union, which means that in future years, Georgian legislation and normative database will approach

the European legislation step-by-step.

Stressing the importance of sustainable development, Kaladze said that today government officials have to make decisions with long-term results aimed at ensuring the welfare of the future generations. "The strength of the energy sector and its development in the right direction is the basis for the normal functioning of the country's economy and public development," said the minister.

Stressing that Georgia is rich with its renewed energy, especially hydro resources, Kaladze said implementation of hydro projects is becoming timelier. However, he said the international experience of using relevant environment protection standards and minimizing the affect on the social environment is also available.

Expressing the readiness to cooperate with the interested sides and share the international experience, Kaladze said the ministry is also ready to make the necessary legislative changes.

First Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Dimitri Kumsishvili, spoke of the importance of implementing the policy of energy efficiency which considers the decrease in the negative effects on the environment, the increase of energy security, together with the socio-economic development of the country.

Emphasizing the importance of hosting such forums for Georgia, Kumsishvili said energy efficien-

cy and sustainable development are among the important issues in the modern world. He said various steps have been made in this direction in the country from training courses and seminars to campaigns for raising social awareness.

This forum is a follow-up to the International Sustainable Energy Forums held in 2010-2012 in Central Asian countries. It supports the objectives of the UN Secretary General's Sustainable Energy for All Initiative. Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Andrey Vasilyev, said each year the participants build on success "as lessons learned during the past years."

Acting Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Georgia, Inita Paulovica, welcomed the first forum of sustainable energy in this region. "Sustainable energy in Georgia is the basis for economic growth. And also when we are talking about sustainable energy, it is important to talk about energy efficiency - how efficient energy is used," Paulovica said, stressing the importance of the forum as an opportunity for sharing various expert opinions and also "promoting green and sustainable energy."

In her speech Paulovica highlighted "Georgia's huge potential in natural resources and excellent prospects in investment in both renewable energy and energy efficiency."

Plenary sessions on Achieving Sustainable Energy Development through Policy Reforms and International Cooperation; Energy Efficiency in the Housing Sector;

and Investments in Energy Efficiency and Cleaner Energy Projects in the Context of Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Development, took place on Tuesday with the participation of various policy makers and experts in the field of energy efficiency and the sustainable use of energy, as well as in the fields of economic and social development, environmental protection, governance, financing, and energy and utility infrastructure development.

Workshops on Policies and Legislation to Promote Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy Technologies in the Caucasus Region; A Road Map to Energy Efficient Residential Sector; Case Studies of Policy Reforms to Promote Financing Energy Efficiency Investment and Advanced Energy Efficiency Technologies and Sustainable Energy Challenges and Opportunities in Transition Countries are on the agenda for the second working day.

The forum will explore the policies and legislation needed to support energy efficiency improvements, access to cleaner energy financing energy efficiency, and energy efficiency in buildings and infrastructure. Forum participants will discuss the necessary conditions for enabling and encouraging investments in energy efficiency and the sustainable use of energy as well as look at the environmental benefits of wider applications of energy efficiency and cleaner energy.

On the closing day of the forum the participants will issue a joint statement on the critical role that international cooperation can play in promoting energy for sustainable development.

NEWS IN BRIEF

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According to the chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Legal Affairs, Vakhtang Kmaladze, he will support this law. "Such facts inflict major financial damage to private companies and to the state budget," Kmaladze said.

(Front News)

Quake strikes Georgia

The Armenian National Seismic Protection Service released information on Tuesday at 8:56am.

According to the information, a magnitude-5 earthquake occurred, at 8:09am local time, in Georgia, 102 kilometers west of capital city Tbilisi, and in Russia, 159 kilometers southwest of Makhachkala city.

The tremor measured magnitude 6-7 at the epicenter area.

The hypocenter of the seismic activity was 10 kilometers beneath the surface.

In Armenia, the underground shaking was felt in Noyemberyan and Ijevan cities, with magnitude 3.

According to information received, the quake did not result in any casualties, injuries, or devastation.

(News.Am)

Nino Burjanadze meets with foreign ambassadors

Leader of the Democratic Movement - United Georgia, Nino Burjanadze held meetings with foreign ambassadors in Georgia.

She met with the EU ambassador Philip Dimitrov to report the details of the pre-election situation in the country and the most problematic issues she is facing as the candidate for the president.

Nino Burjanadze says she is the only candidate that has not been given time for free TV advertisements. She also says there are facts of using administrative resources by the ruling team.

(Rustavi 2)

Georgian presidential candidate from UNM holds meetings in U.S.

Georgian presidential candidate from the United National Movement David Bakradze started his one week visit to the U.S on September 17. Bakradze told the media at the airport that the U.S. is Georgia's friend and this visit is very important. "The U.S. is the

guarantor of Georgia's territorial integrity, its strategic partner and the meetings held in Washington will be significant," he said.

Bakradze plans to hold the meetings with the State Department, the Senate and the U.S. Congress. Presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Shalva Natelashvili, and the People's candidate Nestan Kirtadze, also visited the U.S and met with representatives of the U.S. authorities.

(Trend)

Three men, arrested in Batumi shooting incident

On Monday, a court in Batumi ordered pre-trial detention for two Georgian citizens and a Russian citizen from Chechnya arrested on September 13 after a shooting incident in Batumi in which three people were wounded.

One of those injured in the incident was Russian citizen Yusuf Lakayev, who, according to the Interior Ministry, opened fire after the police approached him and his two Georgian companions to check his identification document. A policeman and a passer-by were also injured.

The Interior Ministry has confirmed that Lakayev, who is currently being treated in a Batumi area hospital, is likely the same person who is in the list of individuals, which, the Russian security agencies claim are suspected of having links with "extremism" or "terrorism".

(Civil.Ge)

Armenia's environment minister travels to Georgia

An Armenian delegation led by Nature Protection Minister Aram Harutyunyan, on Tuesday headed to Georgia.

In Tbilisi, the delegation will attend the annual meeting of the Environmental Action Team (EAT) Task Force, informs the Nature Protection Ministry press service.

The event will bring together state officials from Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) countries and the countries that are members in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and representatives from partner organizations.

(News.Am)

President criticizes constitutional amendments

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According to new constitutional provisions, which will go into force after the inauguration of the new president elected during the October 27 election, the threshold for passing any constitutional amendment will increase from current two-third (100 MPs) to three-fourth (113 MPs) majority.

However, the constitutional amendment, initiated by the Georgian Dream (GD) in June, envisages keeping the threshold unchanged at two-third majority. The changes are also related to restrictions of the prime minister's rights that are significantly increased through the new constitution made under the former state administration of Georgia.

At least 100 votes are required for the GD to adopt the changes in the constitution.

"Passing of these constitutional amendments is related to the PM's intention to have such a political system in which he will be able to completely usurp the power after his so-called departure from poli-

tics," Saakashvili stressed.

The president emphasized that keeping the threshold unchanged will pave the way for a series of other constitutional amendments and the entire Georgian political spectrum, life and key decisions will be grabbed in the hands of Ivanishvili.

He also stressed that "Ivanishvili personally told him that moving the parliament building back to Tbilisi is aimed for him (Ivanishvili) to better control the political situation."

The draft of changes was not initiated at the parliament's bureau sitting on September 17. The parliamentary minority claims that the majority "tries to stretch the period, as the GD does not have the constitutional majority in the parliament that is required for adoption of the changes."

Minority MPs, Levan Bezhashvili and Gia Tevdoradze state the ruling power should wait for the recommendations of the Venice Commission that will be available in October concerning the constitutional amendments. They state

that despite the pressing policy of the Georgian Dream they have not gained the desirable 100 votes for the amendments.

The parliamentary majority states that the president's statements were not adequate, as the changes restrict the power of the prime minister.

"It is very characteristic for Saakashvili to shift all the blame on others. He destroyed the country for 9 years and now wants to accuse Bidzina Ivanishvili in suspending progress. A month and a half is left until his presidential term expires and we will bare him until the time... everything will be settled after Saakashvili's gone," MP, Davit Saganelidze said.

According to coalition MP, Irakli Chikovani, there are 4 packages of changes and all of them have already passed the period of discussions.

"Our aim is to restrict the prime minister's power and thus, the president's statements are inadequate concerning the changes," Chikovani stressed.

GD member Tina Khidasheli highlighted that everyone had and has information concerning the constitutional changes and the process has been transparent for all the interested sides.