

Kobakhidze Defends Public Sector Pay Rises, Says Low Salaries Encourage Corruption

BY MESSENGER STAFF

Georgian Dream Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze has defended planned salary increases for public officials amid criticism over the decision to raise pensions for people under 70 by just GEL 20.

Kobakhidze said he was prepared to give up his own planned salary increases but argued that reducing ministers' current pay could increase the risk of corruption.

"Although my salary is important to me, I am ready to forgo the increases planned for the coming years," Kobakhidze said. "I say this with full responsibility: if you pay a minister less than they currently earn, you are pushing them toward corruption and telling them, 'Go on, go and make money for yourself!'"

Kobakhidze argued that eliminating the salaries of all state officials would make little difference to pension payments. Even if the money were redirected to pensioners, he said, pensions would rise by less than GEL 3.

"If we add up all these salaries and imagine that not a single state official receives any salary at all, pensions would in-



crease by less than GEL 3," he said, adding that the combined salaries account for less than

0.1% of the state budget.

Kobakhidze said he was willing to forgo future salary in-

creases even if this meant that some senior civil servants could earn more than the Prime Min-

ister.

Turning to ministers' pay, he estimated that they currently earn around GEL 12,000 per month after taxes. He argued that this was modest compared with salaries for positions carrying similar responsibilities in the private sector, where he said earnings could reach GEL 50,000 to GEL 100,000.

Asked whether the previous government had encouraged corruption by paying officials inadequate salaries before salary indexation was introduced, Kobakhidze said their pay had not reflected the challenges they faced or the responsibilities they carried.

He also recalled that Bidzina Ivanishvili, the founder of Georgian Dream, had personally financed salary supplements for public servants during the previous government.

"This was an anti-corruption measure," Kobakhidze said, arguing that adequate compensation for public officials should be viewed as a way to prevent corruption.

Kobakhidze dismissed comparisons between pension payments and public officials' salaries as "pure speculation."

Symposium Opens in Tbilisi to Mark 1,700 Years of Christianity in Georgia

BY MESSENGER STAFF

An international symposium marking 1,700 years since

Georgia adopted Christianity opened in Tbilisi on October 11, bringing together representatives of the Georgian Dream gov-

ernment, the Orthodox Church, academic institutions and foreign church delegations to discuss the country's Christian

heritage and its role in shaping Georgian identity.

The multi-day symposium, titled "God, Homeland, Human Being," is dedicated to examining the historical, cultural and spiritual significance of Christianity in Georgia and its contribution to world civilization.

Patriarch Shio III opened the event, followed by speeches from Georgian Dream Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, President Mikheil Kavelashvili and Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili. The symposium is chaired by Roin Metreveli, president of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences.

In his address, Shio III spoke about Christianity's central role in shaping Georgian culture, history and national identity. He also discussed the challenges posed by rapid technological development, saying progress should serve humanity rather than undermine faith and human values.

The Patriarch paid tribute to the late Patriarch Ilia II and offered prayers for people living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region, as well as for Georgians living abroad.

Kavelashvili proposed bringing together two formulations of Georgian national values, "God, Homeland, Human Being" and "Fatherland, Language, Faith," in a broader seven-part formula

that also includes family. The latter expression is associated with Georgian public figure and writer Ilia Chavchavadze, while "God, Homeland, Human Being" was introduced by the late Patriarch Ilia II.

Kavelashvili said these values were important for preserving Georgia's national identity amid globalization and rapid technological change, including the growing influence of artificial intelligence.

Kobakhidze pledged continued cooperation between the government and the Orthodox Church, describing the Church as a longstanding pillar of Georgia's spiritual life and national unity. He stressed the importance of the Church's role in the country's history and in preserving its cultural traditions.

Papuashvili spoke about the importance of national identity in Georgia's historical development, saying that the preservation of the country's language, faith and traditions had helped Georgians endure periods when the country lost its statehood.

The anniversary symposium brings together clergy, historians, researchers and representatives of religious institutions to discuss Christianity's influence on Georgia's development and its place in the country's cultural and spiritual heritage.

