

## Politics

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By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Yesterday street vendors and store employees in Rustavi gathered to protest COVID-related restrictions imposed by the government. As a form of protest, they blocked traffic at the main road, where street markets are located, demanding a permit to con-

# Street vendors protest COVID-related regulations in Rustavi



Vendors in Rustavi demand either permission to continue working or financial support.

tinue working or receive financial compensation.

Along with many restrictions imposed, which entered into force on November 28, in large cities such as Tbilisi, Batumi, Kutaisi, Rustavi, Gori, Poti, Zugdidi, and Telavi, open and closed markets and fairs are not allowed to operate (only fruit and vegetable markets remain open). Also, according to the regulations, retail shops can only operate remotely through a delivery service, except for

groceries, pet/animal food, pharmacies, veterinarian drug stores, household chemistry and hygiene stores, press kiosks.

Protestors gathered near the so-called Istanbul market stated that they would not obey the government's regulations and would not halt economic activities as it is the only source of income for them. According to the vendors, the suspension of their work will lead them to hunger. One of the respondents told the media that these

vendors could not receive ₾300 financial assistance during the first lockdown either, since they did not have the relevant documentation.

At the request of the protestors, Rustavi city Mayor Irakli Tabagua arrived at the rally to negotiate with people to explain the reason for restrictions, however, according to the demonstrators, the mayor did not address their concerns and left the territory shortly. To a person who reported a possible hunger of her child, he replied: "Let me take your child with me then." After the mayor left, the protestors blocked the main street for 15 minutes until the police that mobilized on the ground forced them to clear the road.

According to protestors, they received threats that tractors would be used to disperse the rally. Vendors stated that they would proceed to protest until their demands are met.

The Minister of Health Ekaterine Tikaradze has responded to the event, expressing her concern over the rallies.

"I am sorry to hear that rallies are still being held and that we have not been able to communicate sufficiently and explain how important it is to suspend economic activities on all sites, the decision made by the government, headquarter, and the coordination council with the involvement of international experts," stated Tikaradze.

Vendors did not obey the restrictions on November 29 either and received a warning from the Supervision Service. They demand to continue trading or to receive financial assistance from the government. Otherwise, they will announce permanent rallies.



The rally protested their grave financial situation, condemning the government's careless attitude.



# Girchi considers to negotiate in exchange for judicial reform



**“I think there are some things that can be commensurate with early elections, for example, reform of the justice system with its guarantees.”**

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Opposition parties, which have already surpassed the 1% threshold in the first round of elections, have agreed to relinquish their parliamentary seats. All opposition parties say the election was rigged and the result does not reflect the will of the electorate. They demand the resignation of the CEC chairperson Tamar Zhvania, the change of the election legislation, and the re-election under the new election administration. The only condition for the Georgian Dream to reach an agreement is for the opposition to recognize the current election results.

With the involvement of international facilitators, the second

round of talks between the opposition and the government took place on 14 November, the EU and US ambassadors also held individual meetings with opposition leaders in the next days, including yesterday.

It is still unknown when the third round of talks between the opposition and the Georgian Dream will take place. Opponents of the government say they are waiting for a proposal from the ruling team to reach a consensus. In this regard, the leader of the Girchi party, Zurab Japaridze announced that his party is willing to enter the parliament in exchange for judicial reform.

“If the government refuses to hold early elections, but agrees

to the reform of the judiciary, which we have negotiated with the opposition, I would agree to stop the boycott.”

According to Japaridze, the alternative to early elections to end the boycott should be substantial enough. He considers such a compromise to be the judicial reform- since the court is one of the main pillars for the Georgian Dream, it would mean them giving up power.

Iago Khvichia, one of the leaders of the Girchi clarified that the judicial reform, on which an agreement was reached within the opposition, means the election of judges, police chiefs, as well as the selection of prosecutor by a victim, the abolition of the State Security Service and

the transfer of its functions to other agencies. At the same time, Khvichia notes that the Georgian Dream has no desire to give up their ‘clan’ in the Court.

Representatives of the opposition and the Georgian Dream responded to Japaridze’s statement.

Levan Tarkhnishvili, a member of European Georgia, believes that the only solution is new elections, a reform of the judiciary is not sufficient. According to him, there is no sign that the Georgian Dream is going to propose such a thing, and even if they did, they are not to be trusted, because “they did not fulfill any of the promises made.”

According to Khatia Dekanoidze, a member of the United National Movement, it seems unrealistic for the government to give up important levers

of the justice system.

Ana Natsvlishvili, representative of Lelo for Georgia said that reform of the judiciary is a very important and precious topic for the future of the country, but such a thing is not considered on the common opposition table. According to her, the demands of the opposition are new, transparent elections under the new election administration and the release of political prisoners.

Nikoloz Samkharadze, a member of the Georgian Dream electoral list, responded that the justice reform would continue in any case. According to him, several waves of justice reform have already taken place, as well as a change in the rule of a selection of judges of the Supreme Court. “Reform is an ongoing process and will continue anyway, whether they enter the parliament or not,” Samkharadze said.

Giorgi Amilakhvari, a member of the ruling party, says that the judiciary is independent under this government and that discussions on future reforms should continue in the Parliament.



**Georgian Dream says the justice reform will continue, although it will not be dictated by the opposition’s statements.**

## Permanent Representative of Norway to OSCE: Georgia needs a functioning parliament and functioning parliamentary opposition

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

On November 27, the Ambassador of Norway to the OSCE Anne-Kirsti Karlsen delivered a speech at the Permanent Council in Vienna, where she positively assessed October 31 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia. “Norway commends Georgia’s efforts to organize elections in a transparent way dur-

ing a challenging pandemic situation,” said the Ambassador.

Karlsen noted that Norway supports the conclusions in the preliminary joint statement of ODIHR and the parliamentary assemblies of the OSCE, Council of Europe, and NATO regarding the first round of Parliamentary Elections held in Georgia and looks forward to the final report.

Ambassador Karlsen expressed regret over the opposition parties boycotting the parliament and the second round of the elections and stated that Georgia needs a functioning parliament and most importantly

functioning parliamentary opposition “this is especially important in a time when the country is facing serious challenges due to the pandemic.” She called on every political party to find mutual ground and enable the new and more diverse parliament to fulfill its full role in Georgia’s democracy.

The ambassador paid attention to the revealed deficiencies detected by local and international observers during elections.

“Shortcomings in the electoral process identified by local and international observers must be addressed, and the responsible authorities must swiftly inves-

tigate all allegations in an impartial and transparent manner, and resolve them in accordance with the law in a timely way. The identified shortcomings show that there is a need for further efforts to consolidate democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.”

Karlsen also positively assessed the efforts of the Govern-

ment of Georgia and ODIHR to carry out an election observation mission against the background of the pandemic.

“Norway will continue to stay closely engaged, and we remain steadfast in our support for Georgia’s democracy and European path,” concluded the ambassador stated at the end of her speech.



**The Ambassador of Norway to the OSCE Anne-Kirsti Karlsen made the statement at the Permanent Council in Vienna.**



**“Norway will continue to stay closely engaged, and we remain steadfast in our support for Georgia’s democracy and European path.”**

### Weather

Tuesday, December 1

Day Showers  
High: 7°C  
Night Showers  
Low: 1°C

Wednesday, December 2

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 11°C  
Night Clear  
Low: 3°C

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## Questions & Answers, Messenger Ambassador Uehara says goodbye bows out



H.E. Mr. Tadaharu UEHARA

*H.E. Mr. Tadaharu UEHARA, the outgoing Ambassador of Japan to Georgia has just left Tbilisi as his term is nearing its end (2017-2020). The Messenger has reached out to the Embassy of Japan in Tbilisi for the interview with the soon to be former Ambassador Mr. Uehara.*

Firstly, I would like to express our team's gratitude for your final interview in the role of an ambassador to Georgia.

The recent parliamentary elections in Georgia were under the spotlight after the March 8 agreement. The 2020 elections sparked political disagreement between the ruling team and the opposition. The diplomatic corps has been calling for dialogue and the first two rounds of negotiations were already held. What are your stance and expectations on this matter?

Japan has supported Georgia based on our understanding that both countries share fundamental values, such as democracy, rule of law and human rights, etc. It was sad, on my departure as completing the mission to Georgia, to see a serious disturbance during the process of the

recent parliamentary elections. I would like to urge that this unusual situation is a big challenge for Georgian democracy. I believe that a Georgian politician will make the right decision to bring the country back on its feet for the people of Georgia. I believe that Georgian politicians can continue to keep the dialogue for finding the solution. The dialogue is the responsibility of both the ruling party and the opposition. The dialogue is the only way to maintain democracy. I do hope that Georgian politics will not waste time and build a democratic country of Georgia.

How would you assess the development of Japan-Georgia relations? And in which sectors do you see the room for further deepening cooperation?

It is my honor to say that Georgia has raised the attention of Japanese tourists and businesses for the last three years. I thank Tochinoshin (Sumo wrestler), Shkmeruli (the most popular Georgian food in Japan), and the Government of Georgia for a contribution to this positive change. I see that the appetite among Japanese businesses has never been discouraged under the very difficult economic environment due to Covid-19. They are interested in the fields of renewable

energy, ecologically responsible technology, sustainable urban development, and so on. It is a choice of Georgia to keep demonstrating its resilience against the Covid-19 pandemic and trustworthiness of the business environment based on rule of law so that Georgia can win the trust of foreign private businesses.

What is Georgia's potential in the role of a crossroad hub? Do you think our country is on the right track?

Yes, but it seems to me too slow to move. Transit between the east and the west drives the trade and the movement of people. Georgia plays a crucial role in the economic prosperity in Central Asia, Caucasus, and Eastern Europe by providing safe and efficient corridors. This is the opportunity of Georgia. At the same time, we need to understand that the economic corridor cannot work without cooperation with the neighboring countries and good governance which everyone can trust. This is Georgia's responsibility.

Looking back at your career years spent in Georgia, what would you remember as the biggest achievement in terms of the relations of the two countries? What were the most memorable projects in the last three years of your work here?

If I may say, we could reap the benefits thanks to my predecessors' preparation. We could successfully act thanks to my dear embassy colleagues who understood the mission and tried their best to achieve the goal to narrow the gap between the two countries. In the last three years, I have made every effort to introduce Japan to Georgian audiences and encourage Japanese businesses to pay attention to Georgian opportunities. Tokugawa Shogun event in Tbilisi, Japanese Doll Exhibition in Signaghi, Sakura (Japanese Cherry) tree planting in the Botanical Garden and some schools, many GrassRoots Human Security projects around Georgia and Business Forums or Round Tables. I have many, many lovely memories with my friends in Georgia. I feel happy if you can remember those events and share your happy moments or success stories with me.

How do you picture the cooperation of two countries in the post-epidemic era and what should be priority fields in the future, given the COVID-19 crisis and the global situation?

Covid-19 pandemic will bring us the 'new normal'. From this perspective, we have to think about new technologies, new institutional frameworks, and methods of adjusting ourselves to the new normal, without compromising the quality and our aspirations. I am sure we can use this challenge as an opportunity for sustainable growth. Japan and Georgia, in tandem, might be able to take initiatives in the development of Universal Health Coverage for the human security of the entire international community or in promoting the multilateral approach to world trade by improving the connectivity beyond the borders. Japan's support to Georgia has been and will be in an attempt to encourage Georgia to play an important role in the international arena so that we can

jointly and proactively contribute to the peace of the world.

Lastly, it will be interesting for our readers, was your favorite thing about living and working in Georgia?

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my friends in Georgia. Their stories always stimulate my curiosity; I have learned a lot of things from them about the mesmerizing beauty of nature, the rich history of Georgia, and the Black Sea. I had unforgettable experiences with my Georgian friends. I was impressed by the helicopter tour to the deep inside of Tusheti. But I try to stay away from the horseback-riding tour there, which my dear friends kindly offered me without knowing my height phobia. I have been fascinated by the history of the Black Sea which is full of mysteries and romances. But the Black Sea is unfortunately too far from the ordinary Japanese sentiments. I could not resist another glass of wine when Tamada kindly offered me even though I was already intoxicated at an enjoyable Supra. My favorite Georgia boils down to the friends I met. Nothing can make the experience more enjoyable than my friends in Georgia. I feel that Georgia is blessed with many colors of friendship.



Mr. and Mrs. Tadaharu UEHARA

## Debut Issuance of Depositary Notes in Georgia

30 November 2020 - JSC Georgian Stock Exchange ("GSE") and its subsidiary JSC Georgian Central Securities Depository ("GCSA") announced today that the GCSA has launched debut Georgian Depositary Notes (GeDNs) of JSC Silknet ("Silknet"), a leading Georgian telecommunications operator, linked to USD 200 million, 5-year 11% senior unsecured bonds listed on the Global Exchange Market of Euronext Dublin ("the Notes").

The GeDN program is a debut deposi-

tary instrument issued in Georgia enabling investors to take indirect exposure to Silknet's Notes. The GeDN prospectus was approved by the National Bank of Georgia and the GeDNs have been listed on the Georgian Stock Exchange. The terms and conditions of the GeDNs mostly match those of the Notes.

The GeDNs can be converted to the Notes and vice versa by investors through Georgian brokers. Silknet acts as the issuer and the program sponsor, while the

GCSA acts as the GeDN depositary. Notes converted to GeDNs are kept at the local custodian in the GCSA's name.

The USD 200,000 minimum denomination of the Notes as well as lack of access to foreign brokers and custodians effectively prevents many Georgian investors from directly investing in Eurobonds. Hence, the GeDNs' USD 1,000 denomination and the local listing ensures that local retail and institutional investors are now able to indirectly invest in the Notes through Georgian brokers.

Chief Executive Officer of the Georgian Stock Exchange and Chairman of the Georgian Central Securities Depository, George Paresishvili stated: "We listed Silknet's Notes on the

GSE back in July 2019, which was the second case of a dual listing on the local market, when a security can be traded both domestically and internationally. Now we welcome Silknet's GeDNs to the GSE in another landmark transaction for Georgia. For the first time we enabled domestic and non-resident investors simultaneously trade both the GeDNs and their underlying Notes on our exchange, which should increase local demand and liquidity for Silknet's Notes. The new instrument will contribute to the further development of the capital market in Georgia. We hope that other Georgian companies which have already issued their securities internationally, will follow suit".

(Georgian Stock Exchange)