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Georgian Dream points at another mistake by ISFED that helped radical opposition



BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Kobakhidze calls the issue of possible responsibility of ISFED delicate.

ISFED, which conducted a parallel counting of votes in the October 31, 2020, parliamentary elections, said on December 11 that a flaw had been identified in the formula for counting votes cast by the election subjects. In particular, in addition to the votes received by the election subjects, the invalid ballots were also counted, and as a result of the correction, the percentage of votes received by the election subjects changed slightly, however, the difference does not affect the number of mandates received. According to the initial results of the parallel count, the Georgian Dream had 45.8% of the vote, and after the correction-47.6%.

On December 14, the Georgian Dream demanded that the election observer NGO Fair Elections submit a list of 8% of the polling stations, where, according to the organization, the excess of ballot papers

was revealed. "This is a delicate issue because it concerns a non-governmental organization, and an even more delicate issue is that it is a project involving American and European taxpayers' money, and this is a project funded by the United States and Europe," the ruling party stated.

"Even though the radical opposition based on the PVT tried to bring the situation into crisis daily, Fair Elections carefully hid the falsity of the PVT for the next 2 weeks."

According to Kobakhidze, the Georgian Dream tried its best to avoid damaging the reputation of the NGO and consciously did not publicly make a reasonable assumption about the manipulation of the PVT, which was recorded in closed meetings.

"This assessment is as grossly wrong

as the initial data of PVT. The number of ballot papers across the country was finally recorded in only 19 out of 3847 polling stations, and the total number of surplus ballots was 25 out of 2 million ballots," he said.

According to Kobakhidze, they thoroughly analyzed the complaints filed by ISFED and the data of the appealed polling stations and found that the excess of ballot papers was not observed even in 8.1% of the polling stations counted by this organization. Out of 1000 precincts counted, only 8 precincts were reported, of which more or less substantial imbalances were observed in only 3 precincts.

He added that it takes exactly one day to verify this shortcoming and publish the data of the relevant precincts.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) responded

to ISFED, saying it values long-term, close cooperation with the independent and impartial ISFED.

They welcomed the decision of ISFED, which on its initiative verified the results of the parallel counting (PVT) and presented the internal audit report to the public. USAID wrote that ISFED is a professional and reputable civil society organization that is always responsible for providing transparent information, quality control of its data, and accuracy of results in accordance with the internationally recognized best practice of PVT.

"We support the transparent work of all election monitoring organizations and appreciate ISFED's work in the difficult post-election environment," USAID stated.



USAID

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

1337 new Coronavirus cases reported yesterday, recoveries outnumber new cases



In total, since the first outbreak of the virus, there have been 161 681 recoveries and 1839 fatal cases in Georgia.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Yesterday, 1337 new Coronavirus cases were reported in Georgia. Since the first case was detected in the country, there are a total of 191 063 confirmed cases. Luckily according to the recent statistics, recoveries outnumber new infection cases, yesterday Georgia had 3498 recoveries. Unfortunately, 49 people died.

New confirmed cases according to the regions is the following: 571 in Tbilisi, 212 in Adjara, 147 in Imereti, 168 in Kvemo Kartli, 48 in Shida Kartli, 16 in Guria, 74 in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, 41 in Kakheti, 41 in Mtskheta-Mtianeti, 18 in Samtskhe-Javakheti, and 1 in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti.

Yesterday, the Inter-Agency

Coordination Council led by Giorgi Gakharia, the Prime

Minister of Georgia discussed the performance of the Inten-

sive Testing Program and preparation for the vaccination process. It was noted during the meeting that within the scope of an Intensive Testing program, up to 20 000 PCR tests are performed daily.

“Analysis of the previous week gives us grounds for cautious optimism, as the test-positive indicator of the viral infection has declined to almost 22-23%,” reads a statement published by the government’s administration.

the Minister of Internal Affairs and Head of Labor Inspection Department under the Ministry of Health to the Inter-Agency Coordination Council provided detailed information on measures taken to ensure execution of restrictions and regulations imposed under the two-month plan. According to the agencies, yesterday, 878 cases of viola-

tions were reported throughout the country, including breaching quarantine/isolation rules (85 individuals fined) and not wearing a face mask (793 individuals fined).

The council actively observes steps taken for the timely arrival of the COVID vaccine as well as proper technical preparedness for implementing an uninterrupted vaccination process. Aside from the country’s engagement in the COVAX platform, which is “a mechanism designed to guarantee rapid, fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines worldwide,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and overseas diplomatic missions of Georgia are actively involved in negotiations with international partners and pharmaceutical companies to assure timely access to the COVID vaccine.



Inter-Agency Coordination Council: “Analysis of the previous week gives us grounds for cautious optimism, as the test-positive indicator of the viral infection has declined to almost 22-23%.”

Weather

Tuesday, December 15

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 10°C
Night Overcast
Low: 3°C

Wednesday, December 16

Day Cloudy
High: 10°C
Night Cloudy
Low: 6°C

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Minister of Economy presents 2020 activity report

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Natia Turnava presented the 2020 activity report, which includes the activities of the ministry in terms of fighting against the pandemic, as well as supporting the economy.

The minister opened the presentation with a quick review of 2019, since, according to her, the preparedness of the government to handle the pandemic, was largely due to reforms implemented in 2019. Turnava assessed 2019 as a very successful year for the Georgian economy.

According to Turnava, despite the pandemic, the ministry proceeded to implement reforms, improve the efficiency of services, create a more comfortable and attractive environment for businesses and investors. For example, a large-scale privatization project – 100 Investment Offers to Business was launched in 2019 and continued operating successfully throughout 2020. Within the framework of this project, 100 parallel auctions have been held constantly, as a result, 88 units have been sold, with a total privatization amount of ₾ 43 million. According to Turnava, in total, ₾ 124 million has been mobilized as a result of the privatization of state property.

The minister noted that during 2020, efforts of the entire government team, including the Ministry of Economy has been aimed at implementing anti-crisis



According to Natia Turnava, the Minister of Economy of Georgia, the salary fund of state officials will be significantly lowered in 2020.



The Minister mentioned during the presentation that the government plans to lift all restrictions on international flights from February.

sis measures. She noted that the ₾ 1200 assistance package project, which has been implemented this year for people who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, will also be carried out for the first six months of the following year. She also paid attention to additional financial assistance mobilized during the pandemic, including ₾ 300 assistance for self-employed people, support packages for vulnerable groups, including large families and people with disabilities, also one-time universal child-oriented assistance (₾ 200), and subsidies for utility costs.

The minister noted that within the anti-crisis plan, several electronic platforms have been created this year, including a business visitor management platform, which despite the restrictions and the pandemic, ensured the safe arrival of business visitors and investors. The minister paid attention to the Remotely From Georgia platform, which enabled foreigners to travel to and work remotely from Georgia.

According to Turnava, the salary fund of state officials will be significantly lowered in 2021, precisely, in the ministry of the economy, it will reduce by approximately ₾ 2 million. She also stated that pensions, as well as salaries of teachers, soldiers, and police officers, would increase in 2021.

Turnava stated that the government plans to lift all restrictions on international flights beginning February.

On December 14th the EU disbursed a EUR60 million (approx. GEL 240 million) grant to assist Georgia in coping with the COVID-19 outbreak. The funds are dedicated to assist the implementation of the Georgian Government's Anti-Crisis Economic Plan.

"The EU continues to stand firmly by Georgia during the pandemic. This GEL 240 million grant payment is a key part of the GEL 1.5 billion assistance package that the EU and Team Europe mobilised last spring. They are aimed at helping the Government respond to the pandemic and support Georgian citizens to cope with the serious challenges so many are facing these days" said Carl Hartzell, EU Ambassador to Georgia.

These funds are the first payment of the EU's EUR75 million (approx. GEL 300 million) "COVID-19 Resilience Contract for Georgia", through which the EU will support the country's Anti-Crisis Economic Plan. The Plan is composed of measures aimed at reducing the negative effects of losses of income and

EU disburses EUR 60 million grant for COVID-19 assistance to Georgia



preserving jobs, supporting businesses, and strengthening the healthcare system. The overall aim of EU financial support is to help citizens and businesses of Georgia recover from the impact of the pandemic.

This disbursement was approved after the Government's Anti-Crisis Economic Plan, economic policies, public finance management and budget transparency had been verified. The remaining funds will be disbursed based on an assessment of Government measures, including the delivery of social assistance for vulnerable households, support to businesses who have retained jobs, and an increase in the number of beds in Intensive Care Units.

This payment follows the EU's transfer of EUR 100 million (approximately GEL 400 million) in loans for macro-financial assistance on 25 November. Both payments are part of the wider GEL 1.5 billion EU support package for Georgia, which also covers support to health, social sector and economic recovery.