

President Zurabishvili to discuss proposed amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences with opposition bloc members



BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Earlier yesterday, it was announced that President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili will be meeting members of the country's opposition bloc in order to discuss the proposed amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences. The

president has already met several opposition politicians including one of the co-founders of the opposition Girchi party Iago Kvichia and representatives of the Citizens party, and she is going to hear the opinion of the other opposition parties on the matter, including Strategy Aghmashenebeli's leader Giorgi Vashadze and Salome Samadashvili.

The proposed amendments aim at introducing stricter punishments for administrative offences, specifically petty hooliganism and disobedience to the law enforcement agents. Under the new bill, the fine for a repeated case of petty hooliganism will be increased from ₾ 500 to ₾ 1,500, and the maximum fine threshold will be increased from 1,000 to 2,000 GEL. Similarly, those, charged with failure to comply with the legal requirement of a police officer in the line of duty, will now be facing a fine of up to ₾ 4,500 (as opposed to the ₾ 4,000 maximum thresholds that were in place before), and the minimum fine for such an offence will be increased from ₾ 1000 to ₾ 2000.

The proposed bill will be passed if the president signs it. Meanwhile, a number of opposition parties have urged the president to veto the bill. The criticism of the proposed amendments was also expressed in the official statement issued by the US Embassy in Georgia:

"We are deeply disappointed by the ruling party's rushed passage of amendments to Georgia's Administrative Vi-

lations Code today. Expedited passage of these amendments was unnecessary and unhelpful. The lack of meaningful consultation with opposition parties, civil society, and other stakeholders raises questions about the purpose of the amendments.

[...] Georgia now has a broad-based multiparty Parliament, which is what voters chose. It is time for all parties, especially Georgian Dream, to work together in Parliament to address the priority issues of importance to the people of Georgia", the statement reads.

In turn, some members of the Parliamentary majority stated that there is no reason to veto the proposed bill:

"There is no reason to veto the law in any way. Let's wait for further developments, but we think that the justification behind the proposed amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences is enough to convince everyone that this law is based on the existing data, is a constitutional decision and serves no other purpose," member of the Parliamentary majority, MP Davit Matikashvili told journalists.

Politics / Economics

Right-wing businessman Vasadze announces he's entering politics



Additional doses of AstraZeneca vaccine arrive in Georgia

Georgia received its first batch of the vaccine on March 13.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.4548; Euro - 4.1727; GBP - 4.8070; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.6121; Swiss Franc - 3.7811

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Right-wing businessman Vasadze announces he's entering politics

Ultrationalist businessman Levan Vasadze intends to enter politics. He recently founded the civic movement 'Unity, Essence, Hope' which will later develop into a political party. According to him, it was a difficult decision, but, as he emphasized at the conference, against the background of the permanent political, cultural, social and ideological crises, the signing of the EU-mediated 'Danielsson's Document' by Georgian political parties was 'the last straw' for him.

Vasadze thinks that besides the harsh decision of releasing criminals from prison in violation of the law, this agreement grossly violated and reduced our country's sovereignty.

"Limited, oppressed, fragile and small sovereignty is almost non-existent for the simple reason that our state can no longer decide for itself how the CEC will work and how to count the votes, how anti-corruption institutions and structures work within themselves. These are key, fundamental issues for the sovereignty of any three states."

According to Vasadze, last year, he said that 'unpromising and harmful political reform' would deepen the political crisis and that the parliamentary elections would not produce the desired result of stabilizing the country. He underlines that the



Businessman Vasadze, 51, has not yet announced his plans for this year's municipal elections.

population's social and economic hardships are worsening even further. Vasadze does not consider the pandemic as the main reason for this situation. He once again mentioned 'destructive political reforms', as a result of which, in his estimation, the orderly system of government decision-making in the country is broken.

In his speech, Vasadze called for 'fundamentally' changing the Georgian political system, citing the switch to a parliamentary system and the diminished powers of the Georgian President as "she's the key reason behind the country's decline."

Vasadze made a political

statement at the Tbilisi Marriott and presented his plan as well. The presentation of the public movement will be held on May 16 in Tbilisi. According to its leader, 'broad agenda' will be set for the gathering of members of the movement, before which, he will hold meetings with supporters around the country.

The leader of the political party Citizens MP Aleko Elisashvili stated that Vasadze 'is a Russian spy'. And I would be happy for such people to have little support in Georgia."

According to the member of the parliamentary majority, Mikheil Sarjveladze, it's difficult



to assess Vasadze's chances in politics, however, Sarjveladze recalled that his statements often featured radical forms that were incompatible with human rights values. As for the EU-brokered deal, the MP commented that 'European future is the only way for Georgia'.

Reportedly enjoying friendly relations with Russian Eurasianist ideologue Alexander Dugin, Vasadze himself has been called one of the chief ideologues of Georgian nativism. The influential figure in Georgia's far-right and ultra-conservative groups is known for his ultranationalist, xenophobic, homopho-

bic and pro-Russian sentiments.

His name is associated with organizing several homophobic rallies. The businessman announced the formation of vigilante patrols against 'gay propaganda' in June 2019, when he spearheaded an anti-LGBT rally. The statement led to a criminal investigation for forming, leading, participating, or aiding 'illegal groupings'. "Vasadze was also at the forefront of another anti-LGBT protest in November 2019, when hate groups descended upon a Tbilisi cinema to disrupt the premiere of a queer Georgian-Swedish film 'And Then We Danced'.

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

Additional doses of AstraZeneca vaccine arrive in Georgia

Yesterday morning, Georgia received 43200 additional doses of the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine for people who have already received the first dose of AstraZeneca. The registration for the second dose of the vaccine started on May 5 through a special online portal. The vaccination will begin on May 10.

Vaccination using AstraZeneca started in Georgia on March 15, and, from April 5, people over 55 were able to get jabbed. The first 43200 doses of the vaccine arrived in Georgia on March 13.

According to Amiran Gamkrelidze, the director of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, 25,500 people have already received the vaccine, and about 10,000 are registered to receive their first dose.

Today, Georgia is using three

vaccines, Pfizer, AstraZeneca, and Sinopharm. Starting May 4, registration for the Sinopharm vaccine is open for everyone above 18. According to the official numbers, as of May 5, 47,949 people have already received the vaccine, out of which, more than 7000 people have received both

doses. According to Gamkrelidze, the interval between the two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine is 4-12 weeks.

Gamkrelidze said that people can start receiving their second dose of the vaccine after 4 weeks, however, it is recommended to

do so after 8-12 weeks. He also added that "no one will be left without the second dose."

As for Covid-19 cases, they are increasing very fast in the country. A few days ago, Georgia reported over 2000 Covid-19 cases in 23 hours. On May 6, 1806 new cases and 20 deaths

were reported. In total, Georgia has recorded as many as 317,719 Covid-19 cases, out of which, 297,676 have recovered and 4227 have died. Most cases are reported in Tbilisi. At the moment, there are 15,790 active Covid-19 cases in the country.



The country has already administered about 25,000 AstraZeneca vaccines, additional 10,000 people are registered for the first dose



Registration for the second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine has already started.

Weather

Friday, May 7

Day Overcast

High: 22°C

Night Clear

Low: 11°C

Saturday, May 8

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 24°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 13°C

published by

The Messenger

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