

## Georgian Parliament Elects Shalva Papuashvili as Parliament Speaker



► Shalva Papuashvili is the third chairman of the parliament of the tenth convocation.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Georgian parliament has elected Shalva Papuashvili, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Education and Science, as the new Speaker of Parliament on Wednesday, replacing Kakha Kuchava in the post.

Kuchava resigned from the position on December 24 after serving in the post since April 27. A total of 88 MPs voted

in favor of Papuashvili's appointment, including opposition deputies, while one MP voted against. Papuashvili is the third chairman of the parliament of the tenth convocation.

In his address, Papuashvili pledged that as the chairman of Parliament, he will be the guarantor of the involvement and participation of the opposition elected by the people. He stressed that the role of the parliamentary opposition has

increased in an unprecedented manner, creating special conditions for business-like parliamentary discussion.

The Parliament Speaker also stressed that the main direction of the country's foreign policy is integration into NATO and the European Union, underscoring that the Georgian Dream party plans to apply for EU membership in 2024.

As Papuashvili noted, the agenda of the following three years includes various leg-

islative reforms, which, according to him, should play a crucial role in the country's legislative and institutional rapprochement with the European Union as well as in bringing the country's democratic development to a new level.

Papuashvili also stated that the country's national task is de-occupation and unification, stressing that this will be his main objective as the chairman of Parliament.



► Papuashvili pledges that he will be a 'guarantor of the involvement and participation of the opposition elected by the people'.

## Free Trade Negotiations commenced with the United Arab Emirates

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

On 29<sup>th</sup> of December, Georgia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed an agreement on starting free trade negotiation in the framework of Dubai Expo 2020. Georgian Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Natia Turnava has stated that free trade with the UAE will boost Georgian exports to that country and region.

Back in September Turnava held a meeting in the Ministry of Economy of the UAE, after which she announced that Georgia would be one of the first countries in the region to start negotiations on a free trade agreement with the United Arab Emirates UAE.

"It is important that the talks will start without a feasibility study, because given the trade and economic trends between the countries, it is clear that free trade will be beneficial for both of them", she then announced.

3 months later, the agreement has been signed and negotiations will take on, which are planned to continue next year as well. Parties expressed hope that the



► "Minister Turnava said that the UAE is the first country in the region to join the 46 countries with which Georgia already has a free trade agreement.

process will end successfully next year. Turnava stated that despite the pandemic, turnover between the countries is increasing, noting that 'interest is much higher.' According to her, these are agricultural products, fruits, vegetables, meat products, mineral waters and many other products that we can supply to the market for which there is great interest.

Recall that Georgia has a free trade regime with the European Union (EU), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, Turkey, China, and Hong Kong.

In addition, another agreement was signed between the Georgian Energy Development Fund and the United Arab Emirates State Fund "Masdar" to start the development of solar energy in Georgia. According to the agreement, the parties will carry out technical, commercial and financial activities for the further development of the solar power plant project.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.0899 | EURO - 3.5009 | GBP - 4.1559 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.1986 | SWISS FRANC - 3.3718 |

## Brachveli Says Council Is to Evaluate Saakashvili's New Diagnosis

By THE MESSENGER STAFF

Today, the representative of the Public Defender Saba Brachveli was in Gori hospital and besides Mikheil Saakashvili, he also met with his neurologist and representatives of the hospital administration.

According to Saba Brachveli, a new diagnosis for Mikheil Saakashvili was made on December 27. He did not comment on the diagnosis and said that the ombudsman's office wants its members to assess the patient's condition and make a conclusion

about the patient's needs.

"Regarding the new diagnosis, we want our doctors to evaluate this diagnosis. As well as medical materials, which unfortunately we have not been able to get acquainted with today. After that, our doctors will decide whether this diagnosis allows the patient to be transferred to another institution or not," said Saba Brachveli. Saakashvili himself told Brachveli that he did not feel well and asked for a meeting with additional specialists, including a neurologist. On the other hand,

Saakashvili's doctors say that the dynamics of his treatment are positive.

According to Brachveli, a new doctor has not been appointed for Mikheil Saakashvili so far, and currently, decisions on his treatment are made jointly by doctors of different profiles. Saba Brachveli also said that the Public Defender's Office was not allowed to access the patient's medical records today because he visited the hospital after 6 pm.

The doctor of the Public Defender's Council was not

allowed to visit Saakashvili yesterday. As Brachveli was explained at the hospital, the reason for this is the order issued on December 28 due to Covid regulations. However, the ombudsman's representative said that Saakashvili was placed in isolation in the hospital and that the order of the director of the institution needed to be further substantiated. The ombudsman also commented on a window in Saakashvili's room. According to him, the window is opaque and can be slightly opened.



## Free Trade Negotiations commenced with the United Arab Emirates

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The final decision on project funding will be made after the completion of the research phase (within 6 months of signing). For this purpose, Masdar has expressed interest in developing a solar power plant with a capacity of up to 100 MW in Georgia.

According to Turnava, Masdar is the largest state fund, a global leader in the field of renewable energy in our region, including the development of solar energy with very affordable electricity tariffs. Minister clarified that the same great interest has been expressed in projects by the Masdar Foundation for wind turbines built into the water, as well as floating solar power plants, and these are the latest technologies that will soon be introduced in Georgia as a result of this cooperation.

In recent months several visits of the Fund's delegation to Georgia have already taken place, specific locations for the project have been selected. Now a joint study is starting, where the Georgian Energy Development Fund will enter as a partner.

Within Expo 2020 in Dubai, Georgian delegation also held



► Economy Minister discussed Georgia's transport-logistical potential with DP World, including the Anaklia deep-water port project.

a meeting with the company DP World, which works in the field of logistics and transport. The meeting focused on the potential of Georgia as a regional leader in terms of logistics development, as well as specific projects, including the Anaklia deep-water port.

The representatives of DP World - one of the leading companies in the world in terms of terminal-port services, cargo shipping, and logistics expressed interest in getting acquainted in detail with the research conducted by the Georgian government on Anaklia, according to

which the Anaklia deep-water port project still maintains high business attractiveness.

Global, container-terminal operator with a high reputation, DP World operates 82 maritime terminals in 40 countries around the world, handling an average of 70 million containers a year. The

company also provides logistics and maritime services and operates free industrial zones. As of 2018, the company had revenue of \$ 8.5 billion.

"We hope that this company, as well as other potential investors, will be interested in entering Anaklia," Turnava said.

THURSDAY DECEMBER 30

Day Partly cloudy  
High: 10°C  
Night A few clouds  
Low: -1°C

FRIDAY DECEMBER 31

Day Partly cloudy  
High: 10°C  
Night Partly cloudy  
Low: -1°C

published by **The Messenger**

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# Mihaly Zichy Prize 2021 Awards Art Collector Ika Bokuchava



BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

On December 28, an art collector and art gallery owner Ika Bokuchava was awarded Zichy Prize. The award is named after the famous Hungarian artist Mihaly

Zichy, the author of 19<sup>th</sup> century iconic illustrations for the Georgian epic poem The Knight in the Panther's Skin.

At the presentation of the Zichy Award, Hungarian Ambassador to Georgia, H.E. Anna Maria Siko stressed that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during his stay in Georgia, Zichy became a painter and illustrator of Georgian ideas and Georgian life.

"The statue of Zichy standing in the 9<sup>th</sup> April Park proves that he is in the hearts of Tbilisi and Georgian people," the ambassador stressed.

She emphasized that art and culture

are one of the key aspects that unite Georgia and Hungary and 'create a special bond that echoes through decades and centuries.' The ambassador especially highlighted Bokuchava's contribution to strengthening the cultural ties between the two countries.

Ika Bokuchava, the award winner, praised the efforts of Zichy and expressed her great appreciation for his artwork. While talking about cultural ties between Georgia and Hungary, Bokuchava stressed that it is planned to open exhibitions of Hungarian and Georgian artists in Budapest and Tbilisi.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the request of Georgian noblemen Zichy painted 35 illustrations for the Georgian medieval epic poem. The publishing commission of the work of The Knight in the Panther's Skin chose 27 illustrations to be included in the publication. Zichy was so impressed by the poem that he refused to accept payment for his work and gave the illustrations to Georgian people as a gift.

According to the Embassy of Hungary, besides becoming an integrated part of Georgian literature, Zichy's artistic work was inspired by the years he spent in the country.



H.E. Anna Maria Siko and Ika Bokuchava







