

## Georgia Deserved EU Membership Candidate Status Through its 30-year Struggle for Democracy, PM Garibashvili Says

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili announced on Monday that the ruling Georgian Dream party "has done the most" in 30 years, be it signing an Association Agreement, Free Trade Agreement, Visa-Free Regime, or application for EU membership. According to him, Georgia has deserved European Union membership candidate status through its 30-year "struggle for democracy" and reforms implemented by the Government over the past nine years.

"No country is ideal, not even one European state is ideal. The progress we have achieved is in black and white, there is such a sharp difference between what we have taken charge of and what results we have achieved during these 9 years," Garibashvili stated.

The PM stated that the Georgian Dream party wrote in the Constitution in 2017 that Georgia's foreign policy course is Euro-Atlantic, stressing that the ruling party brought real tangible results to the country in this direction.

"Today they say that if we do not get the EU candidate status, the government will be accountable – in no case. The government has done its best, the rest



According to Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, the ruling party has brought real tangible results to the country in the European integration direction.



The Prime Minister signed Georgia's EU membership application on March 3.

is a working process," Garibashvili stated, adding that the government would be committed to continuing democratic reforms in the country.

He stressed the symbolic significance of the formal EU membership application, signed on March 3, as the 'climax' of the achievements of his Government towards EU integration.

According to Garibashvili, Georgia was "not asking for anything special and undeserved" regarding the membership candidate status, adding that if the European Commission's decision on the country's membership application turned out to be "unfair", the Government would "explain to the people in detail the main reasons" behind it.

"They say that Ukraine is at war and that is why it should be given status. If granting the status is determined by war, we do not want war, friends, we demand the deserved status that the Georgian people have earned," the government head stated.

# Statue of Hippopotamus Begi, Symbol of June 13 Unveiled in Mziuri



Begi was seen strolling the streets of the capital city following its escape as the Zoo was entirely flooded during the night of June 13, 2015



sculptor Erekle Tsuladze, “the stainless steel monument has been produced using modern technology”, and comes following a competition for a sketch of the sculpture, dedicated to the events of June 13, 2015. The competition was announced in 2019 and was open to both Georgian and foreign authors or a group of authors could participate in it with the status of a natural or legal person.

The flash flood turned into the city’s worst human and infrastructure disaster in decades, claiming lives of 21 Tbilisi citizens as well as numerous animals from the downtown Zoo, which lost half of its animal population.

The winning sketch was selected by a 12-member commission set up by the City Hall, which included representatives of the art sphere, and commemorates the hippopotamus that gained recognition from photographs of the flood published by international media.

Kaladze, together with the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili and the Chairman of the City Council Giorgi Tkemaladze attended the funeral of the victims of the June 13 disaster on Chabua Amirejibi Highway and laid a wreath at the memorial. Officials expressed their condolences to the families of the victims, emphasizing that June 13, 2015 was the hardest morning for the capital.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

A sculpture of hippopotamus Begi, who escaped the Tbilisi Zoo during the June 13, 2015 flood in the capital, was unveiled by Tbilisi City Hall yesterday in Mziuri Park, a recreational area in the city center of

the capital. The event was attended by the Mayor of the capital Kakha Kaladze.

“Today is partly pleasant, because a statue of a behemoth was unveiled, who was walking in the city on a difficult day, standing on his knees in a city that was unhappy. We decided

to place this statue in Mziuri Park. I wish there to be always a lot of joy, happiness, and success around this statue. To have total strength for the people living in this city and every citizen of our country.” Kaladze said.

According to the Tbilisi City Hall, commissioned by Georgian

# IDS BORJOMI International Transfers 7.73% Stake to Government of Georgia Free of Charge

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

IDS BORJOMI International has released a statement stating that the company intends to transfer a 7.73% stake to the Georgian government free of charge after the official acceptance of the offer by the government.

As a result of the agreement the controlling shareholder will no longer have the controlling function of IDS BORJOMI International; The shareholder representation on the Board of Directors of IDS BORJOMI International will be reduced from 8 to 2 members; The Chairman of the Board of Directors of IDS BORJOMI International will be a representative of the Government of Georgia.

“In this difficult situation, this decision allows the company to continue its long-term develop-

ment,” said Elkhan Alnazarov, a member of the Board of Directors of IDS BORJOMI International, thanking the government of Georgia for supporting the agreement.

On the June 13 sitting of the government, the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili said that the negotiations are over.

“Our state will become the co-owner of the Borjomi factory, our national wealth and pride,” Gharibashvili said.

According to him, this deal was concluded in full compliance with the norms of international law.

According to the Minister of Economy Levan Davitashvili, with the new scheme of transfer of 7.73% share to the Government of Georgia by IDS Borjomi International and the distribution of shares among shareholders, the Georgian government will be able to establish full control over the management of the company Borjomi.

According to him, the state was working for Borjomi to be able to function fully, and this was confirmed by their creditor

banks. As a result, the company will be able to make international transfers smoothly.

Under the agreement reached, the shares of the same IDS Borjomi International of RISSA INVESTMENTS LIMITED are distributed as follows:

Erasmony Limited - 49.99%; Black Waters Limited - 38.48%; Former employee and various shareholders - 3.79%; State of Georgia - 7.73%.

The PM promises to solve all the problems of the employees of the Borjomi factories.

As for the striking employees of the Borjomi bottling plants, they were watching the statement of the Prime Minister of Georgia live. According to Giorgi Diasamidze, the head of their labor union, the demands of the strikers remain in force.

“It is the 14th day of the strike, these people have not been paid for 2 months. The issue raised at the government session regarding the state being involved in the processes and that negotiations will be held involving the Minister of Economy and the Minister of

Health, we appreciate this decision, however the strike will continue in the same form.” Diasamidze said expecting the negotiation process to be constructive and 2 months’ salaries to be paid.

At the same time, moving the protest rallies to Tbilisi is no longer part of their plan at this stage. However, the reinstatement of the 50 fired people remains unconditional.

Borjomi controlling stake has been owned by Alfa Group since 2013, the founder of which is a sanctioned Russian billionaire, businessman Mikhail Friedman. Both bottling plants at

Borjomi have been suspended from working since April 29 due to sanctions imposed on Russia.

The strike by factory workers began on May 31. Their requirements are: Immediate reinstatement of 50 dismissed people; Return to old contracts and increase salaries by 25%, as well as the dismissal of individuals noticed in coercion, pressure, and blackmail; Transition from term contracts to perpetual contracts; Concluding a collective agreement.



## Weather

Tuesday, June 14

Day T-storm High: 27°C

Night T-storm Low: 17°C

Wednesday, June 15

Day T-storm High: 27°C

Night Mostly Cloudy Low: 18°C

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