

## Deputy Minister says trailer loaded with TNT or other things did not cross the border

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Deputy Minister of Finance Giorgi Kakauridze responded to the information spread by the Russian media that the vehicle which exploded on the Crimean bridge, passed through the territory of Georgia. The Deputy Minister denied that such a trailer passed Georgian territory.

"Neither a trailer loaded with TNT nor other explosives crossed the customs border - if this is speculation, the relevant services must answer, I tell you that there was no such case" he said.

According to Kakauridze, he is not obliged to answer the accusations of the occupier, behind which there are no arguments.

"All our international partners know very well how the customs services work in the control part, including both the EU and the USA. We have constant cooperation with them, especially the customs service. As for the accusations, in some cases from politicians, in some cases from the special services, certain accusations are heard, behind which there is no justification. Someone can always accuse someone of something, and if there's no argument behind it, it's just a word thrown around with nothing behind it. Neither the trailer nor the wagon loaded with TNT or other explosives crossed the customs border. I have no obligation to justify myself to anyone. If someone argues that he crossed the bor-



der of Georgia, in that case the investigation will be started and the responsible persons will be held.

Do I have to defend myself against the accusation of the occupying country?! Do you think so? If this is speculation, it should be answered by the relevant services. I am telling you that there

was no such case, if the rest is speculation, who is doing it, how it is done, the relevant services will comment and I do not have the competence to speak for them, I do not have the authority to do so either. It is not my responsibility and it is not my competence to comment on the part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is

not right for me and I will not do it", said Kakauridze.

According to the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Alexander Darakhvelidze, transit and non-transit cargoes pass customs control in Georgia and no suspicious facts have been observed.

The Russian Federal Security

Service announced that 12 accomplices in the Crimean bridge bombing have been identified, 2 of them are Georgian citizens. The agency also stated that "the Intelligence Division of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, its head Kirill Budanov, employees and agents are behind the terrorist attack."

## Mayor of Tsalenjikha says his personal car was set on fire late at night



BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

According to the mayor of Tsalenjikha, Gia Kharchilava, his personal car was set on fire near the house late at night.

"The incident happened at around 03:30. My personal car was burnt. The car was 100% intact. An examination was carried out, the police came soon and the investigation began," Kharchilava told Interpressnews.

At the Tsalenjikha City Hall, they say the burning of the car is connected to the Mayor's political activities.

Deputy Mayor Tamar Belkania said there are signs that the car was deliberately filled with fuel.

"The incident happened late at night. He parked the car in front of the house and when they got out, it was already on fire. It is completely burnt. We associate the incident with his activities. He is not an obedient mayor", said Tamar Belkania.

The deputy mayor of

Tsalenjikha, urges the law enforcement officers to immediately investigate the burning of the car and calls on embassies to get involved in the investigation.

"They burned the mayor's personal car late at night. It happened in front of his house, where his family, an elderly parent, is staying. I call on the law enforcement authorities to immediately investigate the fact. Also, I call upon the diplomatic corps, the embassies, to get involved in this investigation, in which public interest is high. We want to achieve a safe environment, where people feel safe and perform their duties", said Tamar Belkania.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs started an investigation into the incident under Article 187, which means damage to someone else's property.

According to the mayor himself, he said that his car was burned deliberately.

CONTINUED ON Page 2

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7859; Euro - 2.7057; GBP - 3.0840; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.3333; Swiss Franc - 2.7985

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

# How to identify an oligarch

A controversy began in Georgian politics regarding the “de-oligarchization law” presented by the ruling party. It says what the “Georgian Dream” has been talking about for a long time - Bidzina Ivanishvili is not an oligarch and “de-oligarchization” does not apply to him.

The opposition is going to present an alternative bill, according to which “deolegarchization” means “debedinization”.

“Georgian Dream” gained an advantage in the current controversy regarding the de-oligarchization law, as it was the first to present the relevant draft law and plans to start the discussion in the parliament, while the opposition was late, as they could not agree on a number of issues during the development of the alternative draft law.

The US ambassador’s statement that the law of another country cannot be directly copied and that local specifics should be taken into account, caused the indignation of the first members of “Georgian Dream”, because they saw in this statement the

actual support of the opposition.

According to the representatives of “Georgian Dream”, in order to consider a specific person as an oligarch, all the criteria that are in the similar law of Ukraine were written down in the project: 1. Influence on the media; 2. Impact on political and public life; 3. Monopolistic activity; 4. Owning a specific amount of money (say, \$85 million).

If any person meets three of these four criteria, he is considered an oligarch. Unlike the law of Ukraine, where recognition of a person as an oligarch is the job of the president, in Georgia it will be done by the chairman of the parliament.

Representatives of “Georgian Dream” state in advance that Bidzina Ivanishvili does not meet the criteria established in the law: according to them, Ivanishvili does not influence the media, does not interfere in politics and is engaged in charity work.

Instead, “Georgian Dream” found many oligarchs in the ranks of the opposition. Accord-

ing to them, Kezerashvili, leaders of “Lelo” and other representatives of the opposition perform all three components first.

For the opposition, the said bill of “Georgian Dream” is unacceptable, as it was already said, they continued to work on their own bill, but they have already defined two criteria for finding an oligarch:

1. Possession of a large amount of money and 2. The fact that persons related to such a person hold high positions in the government.

Whoever the rich financiers of the opposition are, the richest person in Georgia is Bidzina Ivanishvili. As of October 2, 2022, this person is on the 400th place in the ranking of billionaires by “Bloomberg”. His fortune is estimated at 5.45 billion dollars, and compared to the same period in 2021, it has decreased by 600 million dollars.

The opposition does not agree with the criteria of “Georgian Dream” and considers them unacceptable. According to the

statement of the opposition, an oligarch is not just a rich person or even a person who influences politics, but only a person who has the levers of influence on the government should be considered an oligarch.

The “opposition” oligarchs found by the “Georgian Dream” cannot be considered as such, because they have no influence on the ruling “Georgian Dream”. Those close to Bidzina Ivanishvili or her former employees are in this party and in state positions.

“Georgian Dream” has prepared a draft law on de-oligarchization, but now it must be discussed in the parliament. The main part of the remaining oppositionists in the parliament (if we do not count the “European socialists”) have a negative attitude towards this draft law.

According to the representatives of the opposition, “Georgian Dream” can take advantage of the majority at its disposal, adopt its own developed law and repress some representatives of

the opposition who meet the “three criteria” on the charge of “de-oligarchization”.

“Georgian Dream” will have the opportunity to hold a discussion with the representatives of the West, if they resent the Georgian law. After all, the Georgian law is only similar to Ukraine, which is approved by the West.

However, this development of events will cause discontent in the West as well, so it is possible that the matter will not come before the adoption of the law. The representatives of “Georgian Dream” have already announced that they will not accept the presented bill on de-oligarchization without the consent of the opposition.

In such a case, the de-oligarchization law stipulated by the 12 demands of the European Union should not be adopted and its non-acceptance should be blamed on the opposition. Before the consideration of the draft law in the parliament or during the consideration period, it is important for the opposition to fix an alternative draft law, which will give their criticism a more positive character.

## The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

### EU will not accept citizens with Russian documents issued in occupied regions



EU ambassadors have agreed that EU countries will not accept persons with Russian travel documents issued in the occupied regions of Georgia and Ukraine.

According to the European Union, this decision is a response to Russia’s reckless and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, the issuance of Russian international passports to residents of regions occupied by Russia; On Russia’s unilateral decision regarding the recognition of the independence of the separatist territories of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

“Russian travel documents issued in the regions occupied by Russia in Ukraine or in the separatist territories of Georgia are not accepted for obtaining a visa or for crossing the borders of the Schengen zone,” the statement said.

According to the EU statement, Russian travel documents issued in the occupied regions are no longer recognized or are in the process of being recognized by EU member states.

According to them, this decision is aimed at establishing a common approach, ensuring proper functioning of borders and a common visa policy, protecting the security of EU member states.

According to the statement of the European Union, based on this mandate, the Czech Republic, the country holding the presidency of the European Union, is ready to start discussions with the European Parliament.

### Russian Federal Security Service says 2 Georgians were ‘organizers’ of explosion of Crimea bridge

The Russian Federal Security

Service released information that 12 accomplices in the Crimean bridge bombing have been ‘identified’ and according to them, two of them are Georgian citizens. The agency also stated that “the Intelligence Division of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, its head Kirill Budanov, employees and agents are behind the terrorist attack.” The government agency TASS published the statement of the Federal Security Service.



The Security Service press service told the publication that “the explosives were brought to the Crimean bridge from Odessa via Bulgaria, Georgia and Armenia”.

The agency wrote based on FSB data that the explosive device was disguised in rolls, constructed of polyethylene, and weighed 22,770 kilograms. According to the agency, the cargo was sent from Odessa port to Bulgaria at the beginning of August.

## Mayor of Tsalenjikha says his personal car was set on fire late at night

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

According to Gia Kharchilava, due to the fact that Tsalenjikha is the only opposition municipality that implements reforms and encrypts anti-corruption schemes, it has become unique from the system, and this made someone very angry.

According to Kharchilava, the car was 100% in order and therefore it excludes self-ignition.

“I think about the fact that the opposition, the only municipality in Tsalenjikha, which implements reforms, discloses anti-corruption schemes, and Tsalenjikha did not become a handful, it became unique from the system, and this made someone very angry. I don’t jump to conclusions, but this is the picture you see. We live in Russia, we are directly a guberniya of the systemized empire of Moscow.”

It is very natural, the criminal methods existing in Russia are probably embedded here as well. Everything is clear to me, but I will be more adventurous in reforms, in everything for which the people elected me”, said Gia Kharchilava.

Opposition leaders have re-

sponded to this incident and majority of them think it was done deliberately to intimidate the Mayor.

According to the leader of “Lelo” Mamuka Khazaradze, the purpose of burning the car of the mayor of Tsalenjikha, is to intimidate Kharchilava.

“Today, the car of the mayor of Tsalenjikha, Gia Kharchilava, was burned in front of his house. The goal is to intimidate him, nothing will come of it! Reforms will continue! “Tsalenjikha will be a successful model of coalition management,” Mamuka Khazaradze wrote.

“There were a number of threats against Kharchilava - burning his car is an attempt to intimidate Gia Kharchilava.” United National Movement” deputy Ana Tsitlidze said at a briefing held in the parliament.

According to her, in the near future, Gia Kharchilava was planning to expose the corrupt deals of “Georgian Dream”, had planned briefings on this topic and had materials ready to hand over to the prosecutor’s office, “which makes the fact of the explosion of her car even more suspicious”.

## Weather

Thursday, October 13

Day Mostly Cloudy  
High: 18°C

Night Overcast  
Low: 13°C

Friday, October 14

Day Light Rain  
High: 19°C

Night Overcast  
Low: 13°C

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