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Head of Georgia's Central Election Commission resigns



► "I am certain that my decision will increase the opportunity of constructive relations between the political forces that will benefit the election administration, the upcoming election process and the whole country," announced the head of Georgia's Central Election Commission Tamar Zhvania.



► Tamar Zhvania was appointed on the post in 2013 and re-appointed for the second term in 2018.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The head of Georgia's Central Election Commission (CEC) Tamar Zhvania resigned on Wednesday, citing that her resignation would "allow political parties to elect a CEC chairperson based on the

updated Election Code." Per the amendments in the code, the new CEC head will be chosen by the parliament of Georgia after the nomination by the president of Georgia and not by the CEC itself.

Zhvania has held the post since 2013. She was elected as the CEC Chairperson

on December 24, 2018, for a second term. Although she could serve in the administration for more than two more years, Zhvania believes that the regulations adopted under Charles Michel's Agreement "have brought a new reality". "Therefore, the election of a new CEC chairperson

according to the new rule will be an additional contributing factor to a broad political consent," Zhvania noted.

Zhvania also said that her resignation would "increase the opportunity of constructive relations between the political forces that will benefit the election administration, the upcoming election process and the whole country."

She stressed that during her leadership the CEC organized six general and several midterm elections in the country, received 7 international awards and international recognition.

According to Zhvania, she is not going to become a political figure as her plans are related to working in an international organization.

According to the amendments in the Election Code, President Salome Zurbishvili has two days to name a new candidate for the post. The nominee must be appointed by 2/3 of votes in the Parliament.

Georgian opposition parties have accused Zhvania of fabricating the 2020 parliamentary elections, along with the ruling party, thus her resignation was among the key demands of the opposition. After several months of political deadlock in the country, the opposition, as well as the ruling party, signed a compromise paper proposed by the European Council President Charles Michel. The agreement includes the implementation of major electoral and judiciary reforms.

Government lifts nationwide curfew, mass vaccination to start in Georgia

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Curfew, which remained in force from 23:00 to 04:00, is being lifted throughout the country starting July 1st. The decision was made by the Inter-Agency Coordination Council on June 22. “We have high hopes that the epidemiological situation in the country will develop in a way that we will not need to impose any restrictions in the future,” said Chief of the Operational Staff of the Interagency Coordination Council Giorgi Gibradze.

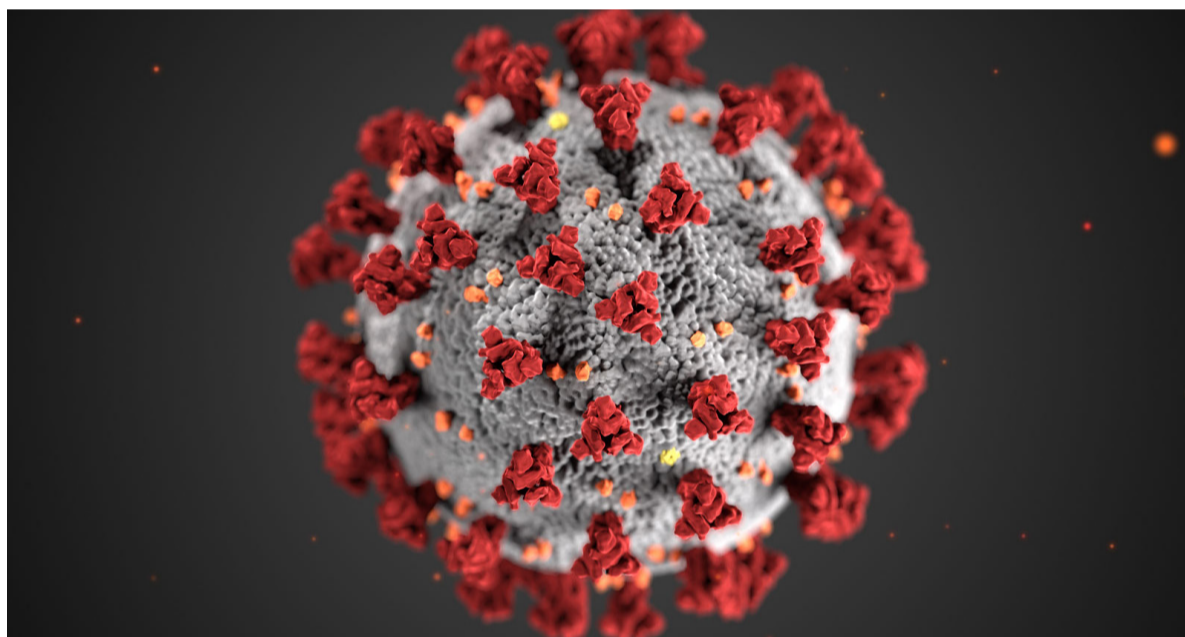
Restaurants and food facilities will remain open only until 00:00. Municipal transport will operate from 7 AM to 12 PM. Wearing a face mask outdoors is no longer mandatory in Georgia, however, the restriction remains in force at bus stops, in public transport and indoor spaces.

Yesterday, the Minister of Health Ekaterine Tikaradze announced the start of mass vaccination and noted that from July, Georgia is expecting more than a million doses of vaccine. As she noted, with the resources currently available in the country, it is possible to vaccinate 17,000 citizens daily. Tikaradze positively estimated the vaccination dynamic and expressed hope to vaccinate half a million citizens monthly for the next three months.

According to the minister, currently up to 200 clinics are involved in the vaccination process at this stage, with 281 vaccination crews, each capable of vaccinating 60 patients on an



► The restriction on movement from 9 p.m to 5 a.m was imposed on November 28, 2020, to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. In June, the curfew was shortened to between 23:00 and 4:00.



► Georgia plans to vaccinate half a million citizens monthly for the next three months.

8-hour schedule. According to Deputy Health Minister Tamar Gabunia, it is also planned to arrange additional outdoor spaces, where citizens will be able to get vaccinated under qualified medical supervision.

On Wednesday, Georgia reported 1 010 coronavirus cases, 603 recoveries, and 19 deaths. As of yesterday, there are a total of 366 078 confirmed cases, among them, 351 747 people recovered and 5 316 died. According to the official data, Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, recorded the highest number (677) of Covid-19 cases, followed by the Imereti region (83 cases) and the Kvemo Kartli region (65 cases). As of now, over 281 thousand citizens have been vaccinated across the country.

Protect the right to freedom of assembly at 2021 Pride Week in Tbilisi

This joint statement is issued by the United Nations system in Georgia, the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, the Embassies to Georgia of Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, and the Head of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia

In support of equality and human rights for everyone in Georgia, we express our solidarity with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) community and urge the Georgian authorities to secure the right to peaceful assembly for all people in Georgia without exception, and to enable these events to take place without participants having to fear becoming victims of hatred and violence.

The Constitution of Georgia guarantees everyone’s right to assemble publicly and to the freedom of expression. This includes the right of LGBTIQ+ people to

organize manifestations, public events, and their right to speak publicly about matters of their interest or concern. Georgia’s landmark Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination [The Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, (2014), retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3bcThhv>] of 2014 rests on the principle of equality as enshrined in the Constitution and prohibits all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

All States have a duty to facilitate and protect the exercise

of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. It includes a duty to facilitate assemblies at the organizers’ preferred location and to protect assembly organizers and participants from those who may seek to undermine their rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights affirm that no human right may be invoked to destroy another human right.

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified social and economic dividing lines, and deepened marginalization and invisibility

of many people in Georgia. Exercising the rights to freedom of assembly and of expression are essential in empowering people to overcome their exclusion from political, economic and social life. Public assemblies are at the heart of a functioning democracy. We reiterate our prior call on the Georgian state, political, civic and religious leaders to fight all forms of discrimination and prejudice, to take all possible measures to prevent violence and to instead embrace a respectful and compassionate public discourse.

We stand together for the right of everyone to live free and equal.

THURSDAY		JULY 1	
Day		Sunny	High: 34°C
Night		Partly cloudy	Low: 22°C
FRIDAY		JULY 2	
Day		Partly cloudy	High: 34°C
Night		Mostly cloudy	Low: 22°C

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Geostat: Georgian economy grew by 11.5% in 2021



► According to the finance minister, 25.8% in May indicates double-digit annual economic growth.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The resolution calls on the National Statistics Office (Geostat) released preliminary estimates on June 30. According to the data, Georgian economy grew by 25.8% in May. In 5 months, the growth rate of the Georgian economy of January-May is 11.5%. The main driver of such high growth was the economic growth of 44.8% in April and 25.8% in May.

Such a high growth rate observed in May is primarily due to the baseline effect of 2020. Due to severe economic constraints imposed by the pandemic in May last year, the economy shrank by 13.5% year-on-year. For comparison, in the first 5 months of 2020, instead of economic growth in Georgia, there was a 5.4% decline. However, in May of this year, the real GDP grew by 8.8% compared to May 2019.

As for the 5-month data, the calculation of the real economic growth rate shows that in the first 5 months of 2021, the size of Georgia's GDP has increased not only - compared to 2020, but also compared to 2019, and this increase is 6.1%.

According to Geostat's report, in May 2021, an upward trend compared to the corresponding period of the previous year was revealed in almost all sectors, while the most significant contributions to the GDP increase came from manufacturing, financial and insurance activities,

trade, real estate, hotels and restaurants, construction, transportation and warehousing.

The report shows that in May, the turnover of VAT-paying enterprises increased by 50.3% compared to the previous year and amounted to €8.2 billion. Economic growth was also positively impacted by exports that increased by 24.4%.

This 5 month figure might be more accurate in the future, as the report published by Geostat

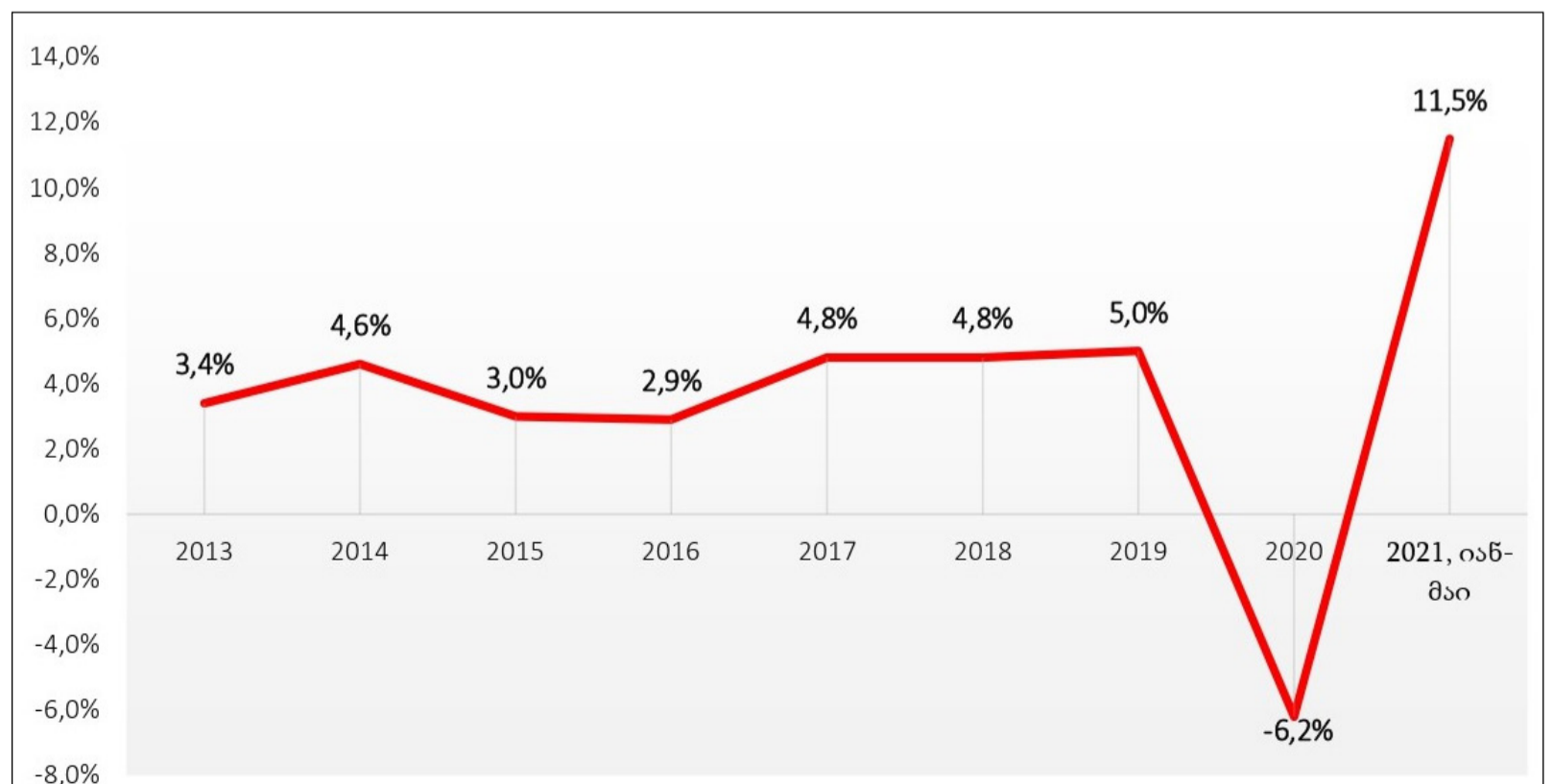
on June 30 is a pre-adjusted report for the second quarter of 2021 to be published in a few months. One of the main factors that could reduce the resulting 11.5% increase is the adjustment of the deflator and specific sector turnover rates. Nevertheless, it is likely that the fact that the volume of the economy measured at constant prices will exceed the 2019 rate will remain unchanged and in 2021, Georgia is likely to have higher-than-expected

economic growth. In early June, it became known that the Georgian government had raised its 2021 economic growth forecast to 6.5%. The World Bank also revised its forecast to 6%.

"The 25.8% growth recorded in May indicates that the dynamics of economic growth is moving towards a positive scenario, which implies double-digit annual economic growth," said Finance Minister Lasha Khutsishvili in his assessment

of economic growth in May. As he noted, it is important that the increase is observed compared to the same period in 2019.

Based on the economic activities recorded in May, the Ministry of Finance will revise the annual economic growth forecasts, which will already be reflected in the revised version of the draft budget, which will be submitted to the Parliament of Georgia for consideration in the near future.



► In 2020, the Georgian economy shrank by 6.2%. Photo: Forbes.ge

“Generation Equality for Georgia” Georgia makes new commitments to gender equality

Georgia joins the global movement Generation Equality and makes new commitments on strengthening gender equality. These commitments aim at strengthening gender equality by extended efforts against gender-based violence, increased participation of women in technology and innovation, and making women more active in the sector.

Representatives of the legislative and executive branches of government officially declared the commitments made on June 29, during an event initiated by the French Embassy in Georgia and the Georgian offices of UN Women and the UN

Population Fund. The event was attended by Ombudsman Nino Lomjaria as well.

The meeting preceded the Generation Equality Forum in Paris hosted by the President of France Emmanuel Macron between June 30 and July 2, which will be attended by the President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili.

According to the Ambassador of France to Georgia, Diego Colas, “the Generation Equality Forum puts equality between women and men, girls and boys on top of the Post-COVID reconstruction agenda. Between June 30 and July 2, it will gather many countries, international or-

ganizations, associations or private partners in Paris to make ambitious commitments and create targeted action coalitions. We are delighted at Georgia’s participation at the highest level and the significant contribution it makes to the success of the forum. This participation emphasizes the quality of common ideals between France, the EU, and Georgia.”

During the event, Ambassador Colas also announced the winner of the Human Rights Prize of the French embassy in Georgia 2021 - Grlzwave Association, for launching spots on sexual and reproductive health for young people in Georgia. It should be

mentioned that this year, the prize focuses on promoting universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, which is the global priority of the French Gov’t in the Generation Equality Initiative.

The Generation Equality movement was launched this year by the initiative of the UN. It is creating a new space in the fight for women’s rights and gender equality in a reality transformed by the challenges of COVID-19. The global initiative is based on the comprehensive document on the protection of women’s rights – the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.



H.E. Diego Colas



