

## Georgian weightlifter Lasha Talakhadze breaks world record, wins gold at Tokyo Olympics



► Lasha Talakhadze, a Georgian weightlifter, broke his own as well as Olympic and world records.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Lasha Talakhadze, a Georgian weightlifter has won the second gold medal at the Tokyo Olympic Games, becoming the first two-time Olympic champion in the history of independent Georgia. Breaking his previous record, Talakhadze also set a new world record in the super-heavyweight, +109-kilogram category. He lifted 223 kilograms in the snatch and 265 in the clean and jerk for a total of a world record-breaking 488 kg.

Prior to setting the new record, Talakhadze successfully attempted lifting 208 and 215 kg weights in a snatch at the Olympics yesterday. His coach Giorgi Asanidze, who is also an Olympic gold winner of 2004, initially decided to order 221 kg for the third approach, however, just before the attempt, Asanidze changed the decision and ordered a 223 kg weight to break Talakhadze's own previous re-

cord of 222 kg. Talakhadze successfully snatched 223 kilograms, thus adding another gold medal to the one won at the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic Games in the same weight category.

Georgian athlete's victory brought the seventh medal (2 gold, 4 silver and 1 bronze) to the Georgian delegation at the ongoing Olympics. Georgian judokas were able to claim 4 medals. Lasha Bekauri won the first gold medal after defeating Germany's Eduard Trippel in the men's 90kg category, while Vazha Margvelashvili, Lasha Shavdatuashvili and Guram Tushishvili won silver medals.

Another medal was claimed by Georgian-Ukrainian weightlifter Anton Plesnoy, who managed to win the bronze medal despite the injury. Iakob Kajaia won a silver medal in Greco-Roman wrestling.

Talakhadze is a 5-time European champion, 4-time World Champion, and already a 2-time Olympic Champion.



► In total, Talakhadze set three world records, the first world record by snatching 223 kg, second by lifting 265kg in the clean and jerk, resulting in a world record total of 488kg.



# President Zurabishvili reproves ruling party over quitting EU-brokered agreement

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The annulment of the April 19 agreement mediated by the President of Council of Europe by the ruling party was assessed by the President of Georgia Salome Zurabishvili at a briefing held at the Orbeliani Palace. The President openly stated that she did not agree with the representatives of the Georgian Dream. In a lengthy speech, delivered amid intensifying election campaigns from parties and accompanying rhetoric as well as sharply increased rates of confirmed Covid-19 cases in the country, president appealed to common citizens as well as political forces about a critical point for the society.

“To be respected, and I am deeply convinced that Georgia deserves it through its past, we must respect ourselves and our word,” she said.

The President stressed the importance of EU participation in the process:

“I consider and even told the representatives of the ruling party that the process of preparing the document was extremely positive, because the involvement of the President of the European Council and today one of the main political figures in the processes of Georgia, the Caucasus and the EU's neighborhood is very important. This is a bridge between us and Europe. We must understand it, appreciate it, use it and take care of it.”

As Zurabishvili notes, she can not take responsibility for the cancellation of the document nor the certain elements of the document, which were agreed between the parties and can not be annulled.

“However, the post-factum ‘discovery’ that it turns out we gave up something unacceptable and that might harm the country, is incomprehensible. In my experience, red lines are crossed before signing. I believe that the process behind this document, the goals that this document pursues and the principles on which this document is based on are not exhaustive and represent the path that this country must go through and that I support,” she stated.



► Raising the question of maintaining allies in the ‘current reality in our region and the world’, Zurabishvili warned against urges for independence turning into ‘isolationism’, which would be exploited by ‘those who have a constant desire for expansion and your subjugation.’



► President has confirmed October 2 as the date of local self-government elections of Georgia. Parliament elected Giorgi Kalandarishvili as the new chair of the Central Election Commission for a 6-month term.

The president also spoke of ‘the responsible attitude of the parties that entered Parliament based on this agreement’ - meaning the opposition that had left the lawmaking body after the October 2020 parliamentary elections with claims of fraud - adding the agreement had shifted political processes from the street protests and back into the parliament.

She disagreed with the ruling party's assessment that polarization has not been reduced, which explains the cancellation of the document. Zurabish-

vili stressed that the document lived up to the expectations, as the political crisis is over, a multi-party Parliament has been formed and the political process has shifted from the street to Parliament. She also hailed the new election code adopted as per the deal and expressed hopes that the agreement will hold on lowering the election threshold. According to her, the document reduces polarization, weakens it and this process will continue despite everything. “This is the only way to strengthen the stability

and independence chosen by the society of our country.”

She also emphasized that patriotism extends to political viewpoints, and that politicians should avoid engaging in a ‘campaign of deliberate undermining’ of the nation to achieve the party's goals.

The president stated that the upcoming municipal vote across Georgia, confirmed by her for October 2 will need to prove ‘exemplary’ without accompanying violent acts and rhetoric, abuse of personal data for discrediting opponents or interference with the media.

Skeptics of vaccination should examine “conduct (that) is not a question of personal choice nor of freedom of speech,” Zurabishvili said, adding that ‘true patriotism’ would be found in ‘courage’ for vaccination and ‘a feeling of duty as members of society.’

Recall that on July 28, the Georgian Dream annulled the April 19 agreement with part of the opposition initiated by European Council President Charles Michel. The ruling party explained the decision by saying that the main goal of the agreement was to reduce polarization and radicalization, which failed and vice versa, and that the main opposition party, the National Movement, did not join the agreement.

## THE NEWS IN BRIEF

PREPARED BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

### Media: Refusal of Gharibashvili's visit is a coordinated decision of the Baltic states

Government sources from Lietuva, Latvia and Estonia confirm that the Georgian Prime Minister has been refused a visit to the Baltic states.

The reason is the events of July 5 and the annulment of the Charles Michel agreement by the Georgian Dream.

The information was originally published on August 3 and August 4 in Vilnius.

‘15 Minutes’ writes that according to government sources, for Irakli Gharibashvili to refuse the visit is a coordinated decision of the parliaments and governments of the three countries, as Georgia has shown no desire to punish those who attacked LGBTQ activists and journalists on July 5.

“The Georgian government has been criticized for its passivity in investigating organized attacks. The Baltic governments seem to have paid attention to this. According to sources, in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the decision to refuse Garibashvili diplomatically was coordinated at both parliamentary and government levels.”

### Sokhumi says that the early release Bebuia will not be considered

The de facto Foreign Ministry of occupied Abkhazia says the early release of detainee Irakli Bebuia is not being considered. Sokhumi responded to the statement of the Minister of Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Tea Akhvlediani.

Irakli Bebuia was arrested on charges of burning the flag of the occupation regime in Abkhazia. He was sentenced to 9 years in prison and fined 10 thousand rubles.

Presenting a 10-year action plan a few days ago, Tea Akhvlediani expressed hope that the issue of releasing Irakli Bebuia and Genadi Bestaev, who are illegally detained, would be resolved in the near future in the same humanitarian context as in the case of Zaza Gakheladze.

**THURSDAY AUGUST 5**

Day ☀️ Mainly sunny  
High: 37°C

Night 🌙 Clear skies  
Low: 21°C

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**FRIDAY AUGUST 6**

Day ☀️ Mainly sunny  
High: 37°C

Night 🌙 Clear skies  
Low: 22°C

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# Belgium to donate doses of COVID-19 vaccine to Georgia



► Georgia will receive 86,400 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine from Belgium through the Covax platform.

► As of yesterday, 542,639 people got coronavirus jabs.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Belgium will donate doses of AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine to Georgia by the end of 2021, the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday. According to the ministry, 4 million doses will be redirected to third countries through various mechanisms, including the Covax platform, with the help of UNICEF and GAVI. Belgium prioritises donating the vaccines to the countries of the Western Balkans, the Eastern Neighbour-

hood and Southern Europe, as well as to Africa based on the health situation and the vaccination capacity of the countries. At first, 168,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines will be sent to Ukraine followed by 225,600 doses intended for Kosovo, Armenia and Georgia. As said by Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani, Georgia will receive 86,400 doses. "This donation is an example of our European cooperation to defeat this pandemic and accelerate global vaccination," said Belgian Minister of Development Coop-

eration and Major Cities Policy, Meryame Kitir. Currently, vaccination in Georgia is available with Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Chinese Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines. According to the First Deputy Minister of Health Tamar Gabunia, up to 3,000 people did not show up for the booked vaccinations. She explained that an inquiry is underway to determine whether it was an intervention of anti-vaxxers or the spontaneous action of the citizens. On Wednesday, Georgian

Health Minister Ekaterine Tikaradze and French Ambassador Diego Colas observed the vaccination of foreign citizens living in Georgia. French Ambassador to Georgia Diego Colas has thanked the Georgian government for including foreigners in the vaccination process. "This is the right decision. I think the vaccination process in Georgia is effectively managed," Ambassador Colas remarked. According to the assessments of immunologists, the Covid-19 Delta strain will become dominant in Georgia from the

end of August. "Management of the pandemic under the given daily number of coronavirus cases is critical while the majority of the population refuses to vaccinate... the situation is tragic," said allergist-immunologist Bidzina Kulumbegov. On Wednesday, Georgia reported 4,233 coronavirus cases, 1,934 recoveries, and 38 deaths. Currently, 36,102 individuals remain infected with Covid-19 in the country. As of yesterday, 542,639 people got coronavirus jabs.

## USAID Officially Launches New Program to Engage Private Sector in Developing the Skills of Local Workforce, Reducing Unemployment

Tbilisi, Georgia, August 4, 2021 - USAID/Georgia Mission Director Peter Wiebler joined Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia Tamar Kitiashvili to officially launch the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program, a new, \$24 million program that will partner with the private sector to create effective skills training programs that reduce unemployment and contribute to sustainable economic growth. Following opening remarks, the event included a panel discussion with experts, industry leaders, and private sector actors, who discussed how the private sector can contribute to effective industry-relevant skills development programs that provide job seekers with the skills they need to obtain high-value employment. The USAID-funded Industry-led Skills Development Program is a five-year initiative designed to create pathways between skills training and high-value employment opportunities, reducing unemployment and catalyzing sustainable economic growth across Georgia. Implemented by the International Executive Service Corps (IESC), the Program will work to incentivize businesses



in high growth industries to systematically engage in innovative skills development, and skills training providers to implement high quality training programs aligned with labor market demand and extend access to their offerings throughout Georgia. Training programs will target underrepresented members of society, including residents of rural communities, women, and ethnic minorities. USAID Mission Director Peter Wiebler: "Through this initiative, we will empower Georgians to

not only find employment, but to thrive in a dynamic economy. At the same time, we will transform how we work with businesses and industry groups, partnering to establish new programs that connect Georgian workers with today and tomorrow's job opportunities, and Georgia's businesses with the highly-skilled candidates they need." Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia Tamar Kitiashvili: "The broader private sector engagement is of critical importance at the current stage

of the vocational education system development, especially with regard to strengthening sector policies across country's economy. The new USAID Program will accelerate the ongoing process with an aim to ultimately create vocational education system steered by public-private partnership. In parallel, the objective should be establishing the international standards across the qualifications offered in Georgia". The Program anticipates benefitting 4,800 individuals

who will complete workforce programs, with over 3,800 receiving new or better employment. The Program will ensure 35% of trainees are from rural areas and ethnic minorities and at least 45% are women. The Program will incentivize 30 businesses to develop long-term partnerships with training providers and leave behind a network of training providers with scalable and replicable partnership models for private sector engagement in skills development.