

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

May 23-26

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Date: **May 27, 2019**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. **Abkhazia opposition calls off protest after reaching compromise with de facto authorities**

The opposition in breakaway Abkhazia ended their rally in front of parliament building in Sokhumi on Tuesday, after reaching a compromise with de facto authorities.

The sides have agreed to postpone the presidential elections to August 26. The de facto parliament earlier decided to hold elections in July, while the opposition had demanded to move it to fall and started rallying in front of parliament on Monday.

The date is of crucial significance, as the opposition leader and main opponent of de facto president Raul Khajimba is still in serious condition after suddenly falling ill in April. The opposition suspects he was poisoned (*DFWatch.ge, May 22, 2019*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

2. **Georgian Defence Ministry: 'in the future we only welcome US bases in Georgia**

Georgian Defence Minister Levan Izoria says that US-Georgia cooperation is at an all-time high, especially in the defence field, and "in the future we only welcome American bases in Georgia", he told Voice of America.

Voice of America asked Izoria a question during his US trip as to what he thought regarding the view of Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili, who believes that US bases should not be located in Georgia (*Agenda.ge, May 23, 2019*).

3. **Foreign Affairs Committee of US House of Representatives approves bipartisan bill supporting Georgia**

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives approved a bipartisan bill-Georgia's Support Act yesterday, which urges further support for Georgia in the defence field and proposes sanctions against the individuals who violated human rights in the two Georgian occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia).

The bill was presented in January 2019 by the co-chairs of Georgia's Friends Club in the US Congress Adam Kinzinger and Gerry Connolly (*Agenda.ge, May 23, 2019*).

4. **Chinese FM pays historic visit to Georgia to learn more about country's potential**

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has paid a historic visit to Georgia, the first official visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister to the country in 23 years, to learn more about the country's prospects and potential, the Georgian Foreign Ministry reported earlier today.

"The development of cooperation in the fields of trade, logistics and transport was on the top of the agenda," the Georgian Foreign Ministry says (*Agenda.ge, May 24, 2019*).

5. Chinese Foreign Minister Visits Tbilisi, Vows Support to Georgia

In his opening remarks ahead of the meeting, Wang Yi said China is ready to deepen its "traditionally friendly" relations with Georgia, adding that the visit would help the two countries explore new avenues for bilateral cooperation.

"Our firm position is that all countries are equal regardless of their size; we respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and other countries," the Minister was quoted as saying by the Georgian MFA. "We hope Georgia will create a favorable environment in its relations with neighboring countries, which will promote its development," he also noted, according to the MFA (*Civil.ge, May 24, 2019*).

6. Georgia celebrates Independence Day, 463 recruits take an oath

Today Georgians mark Independence Day, commemorating May 26, 1918 – the day when the Act of Independence was adopted, establishing the First Democratic Republic of Georgia. 463 recruits have taken their oaths today in Tbilisi, Zugdidi, Racha, Kartli and Dusheti (*Agenda.ge, May 26, 2019*).

7. Georgian Independence Day celebrated across the world – diaspora to perform Georgian anthem

The Independence Day of Georgia is being celebrated across the world with the involvement of the Georgian Foreign Ministry and diplomatic missions abroad.

The national anthem of Georgia will be performed by representatives of Georgian diplomatic missions and Diaspora in the capital cities at 17:10 Tbilisi time as the independence of Georgia was publicly announced at this time (*Agenda.ge, May 26, 2019*) (*Agenda.ge, May 26, 2019*).

8. Georgian PM: Azerbaijan suspends construction of road near Gareji monastery to avoid tension

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze has stated that Azerbaijan has suspended the construction of a road near the David Gareji monastery complex in Georgia's south-east, on the conditional border between Georgia and Azerbaijan 'to avoid complications' during the negotiations between the two countries to agree on the border.

Despite the fact Azerbaijan was constructing the road, actually, on its own controlled territory beyond the slope, the process has been suspended," Bakhtadze said.

He stated that the decision came after the meeting of the Georgian-Azerbaijani commission working on the border issue in Baku this week.

The commission agreed that its members, together with experts, would see the construction areas and study existing maps and other documents to bring the negotiation process to an end in a timely manner (*Agenda.ge, May 26, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

9. Miners on strike in Georgia's western town of Chiatura sew mouths in protest

Several of fifteen miners of the Georgian Manganese in Georgia's western town of Chiatura have sewn their mouths in protest as the company refuses to fulfil their demands regarding increased salaries.

The miners went on strike on May 15, demanding a 50 per cent increase in salaries, improved healthcare, working conditions and nutrition and banning the movement of the company's heavy vehicles in the town, polluting the environment (*Agenda.ge, May 23, 2019*).

10. 44 snakes caught in Tbilisi in April, May – figures not high

The Georgian Animal Monitoring Agency says that 44 snakes have been caught in Tbilisi between April 1 and May 17, which is not a high figure.

"Last year, in April, we caught 15 snakes, this year, in the same month, we caught 16. In general, May is the most active month in terms of snakes, as the weather becomes warmer and snakes come out. However, May this year is quite cold. In May 2018 we caught 140 snakes, while the figure this month stands at only 28," the agency reports (*Agenda.ge, May 24, 2019*).

11. Georgian neo-Nazi sentenced to three and a half years in jail for storing weapons

A notorious Georgian neo-Nazi was found guilty and sentenced to three and a half years in jail by a Tbilisi court on Friday.

Giorgi Chelidze, the head of self-described "fascist" group "Georgian (National) Unity", was convicted of illegally purchasing and storing firearms.

He was detained in September, 2018, and police said they found a cache containing 23 items of illegal ammunition, including bullets for Kalashnikov automatic rifles and machine guns, in his apartment. Giorgi Chelidze has insisted he is innocent.

The police started a criminal probe into the case after the group circulated a video apparently filmed by themselves in which Chelidze and several young men are seen shooting with Kalashnikov rifles in a forest (*Agenda.ge, May 25, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

12. PM says Georgia will become regional leader in medical services

"I believe Georgia will become a regional leader in providing medical services," Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze said at Tbilisi State Medical University where regional representation of International Association for Medical Education (AMEE) has opened.

PM Bakhtadze stated Georgia is becoming an international centre of medical education, which is an important step for its European integration (*Agenda.ge, May 23, 2019*).

13. PM on lari devaluation: "This is a short-term effect and will be regulated soon"

The Georgian national currency, the lari, has depreciated in value against the US dollar and the euro in recent days, with 1 USD costing 2.7799 GEL, while 1 EUR costs 3.0954 GEL.

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze says that “it seems this is a short-term effect and this will be regulated in the nearest future”.

Bakhtadze explained that the economies of the neighbouring countries of Georgia are influencing the lari exchange rate (*Agenda.ge, May 23, 2019*).

14. Anaklia Seaport will Become Useless Project if Railroad and Motorway are not Built in Time

“Based on today’s schedules, we can say definitely that Anaklia seaport will be able to receive big ships by 2021”, Anaklia City director general Keti Bochorishvili told Business Morning TV program.

“Everything follows the schedule and there no frustrations. Based on today’s schedule, we can say definitely that the seaport will be able to receive big ships by 2021, however, there are other details too and these details will be resolved after the May 21 meeting.

Railroad and motorway represent decisive factors. The seaport will become a useless project if they are not built in time. We will talk about everything and I am sure we will achieve agreement”, Bochorishvili noted (*CWB.ge, May 23, 2019*).

❖ Sports and Culture

15. Georgians sign petition, saying Georgian sumo wrestler Tochinoshin was unfairly treated

Georgians are signing an online petition, saying that coaches have made “a very unfair” decision today during the Sumo championship in Japan, declaring Japanese Asanoyama the winner when he “actually lost the game” in the fight against Tochinoshin [Georgian Levan Gorgadze] (*Agenda.ge, May 24, 2019*).

16. Georgian sumo wrestler Tochinoshin regains rank of Ozeki

The Georgian sumo wrestler Levan Gorgadze, known as Tochinoshin has regained the second-highest rank of sumo, Ozeki, after defeating Yokozuna Kakuryu at the sumo championship in Japan.

17. Canoer Zaza Nadiradze gets gold at world championship

Canoer Zaza Nadiradze has become the first athlete from Georgia to win the Canoe Sprint World Cup in the Polish city of Poznan. Nadiradze claimed his win in the 200-metre sprint race on Saturday, finishing with 39.191 seconds (*ITV, May 26, 2019*).








Additional Information

May 27, 2019

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.7802 GEL 1 GBP - 3.5275 GEL 100 RUB -4.3044 GEL
1 EUR - 3.1102 GEL 1 TRY - 0.4580 GEL 100 JPY - 2.5346 GEL

Thursday 2 May	Friday 3 May	Saturday 4 May	Sunday 5 May	Monday 6 May
				
12° 25°	13° 24°	11° 17°	11° 22°	13° 24°

-  **Movie Events - English Sessions - [Tickets](#)**
-  **Friends of Museum (Membership to access Georgian National Museums For free of charge after one payment) - [Membership](#)**
-  **Marjanishvili Theatre - [Events and Tickets](#)**
-  **Rustaveli Theatre - [Events and Tickets](#)**
-  **Opera and Ballet - [Events and Tickets](#)**
-  **Concerts - [Events and Tickets](#)**
-  **Sports - [Events and Tickets](#)**