

OPINION & ANALYSIS

De facto government declares the remains found near Tskhinvali practically identified



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Georgian government postpones hosting tourists from Israel



► Georgia will host tourists from July 1st.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

In May, The Prime Minister of Georgia announced that the negotiations were being conducted with a couple of countries in terms of creating a safe corridor for tourism, and one of the first countries Georgia was supposed to receive the tourists from was believed to be Israel. As the PM stated, 'the agreement was reached and signed,' however, deterioration of the epidemiological situation in Israel hinders the implementation of the bilateral tourism between Georgia and Israel.

In May, the epidemiological situation in Israel significantly improved, however in the last two weeks the cases of coronavirus infection have increased. 1197 new cases have been detected since June 1st and according to the recent data(June 10th), there are a total of 18 268 cases and 299 deaths.

On June 9th, the representatives of relevant authorities held a meeting with the PM, Gakharia, where the criteria for renewing international



► The Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia.

tourism were discussed. According to the press service of the government's administration "even though the agreement was reached with Israel as one of the prioritised countries, due to worsening its epidemiological situation, the opportunity of opening tourism instantaneously has been delayed."

As the PM said, the colleagues from the countries where the condition has deteriorated infection-wise, have asked the Georgian government to wait for them for a while regarding the interests of Georgia in terms of safety.

"It is the well-being of Georgia's citizens that matters the most and under no circumstances will the government pose a risk to it by receiving tourists from countries that have severe epidemiological situations," Gakharia noted.

The government of Georgia plans to open inner tourism from June 15th and internationally from July 1st. According to several MPs, with the current global pandemic, inner tourism is considerably prioritised.

De facto government declares the remains found near Tskhinvali practically identified



► The three bodies were found in the occupied region of Tskhinvali, near village Tbeti. Photo: RFE/RL

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Authorities in the occupied Tskhinvali region say three bodies found near the village of Tbeti may have belonged to two Dagestanis and a Tskhinvali resident who went missing 16 years ago.

A local farmer discovered the bodies near the village of Tbeti in Tskhinvali region on 8th of June while cultivating the land and appealed to law enforcement.

Although genetic analysis has not yet been performed, the so-called prosecutor of the de facto South Ossetia, Uruzmag Jagaev, is convinced that the remains of the missing Dagestanis and Tskhinvali residents have been traced.

“We are convinced that these corpses belong to the people who went missing on January 12, 2004 in the Java district. 2 of them are Dagestanis, born in 1972 and 1960.

The 3rd is Ossetian, surnamed Margiev, born in 1985,” Uruzmag Jagayev told Tskhinvali TV.

According to him, there are remnants of clothes in the criminal case, which gives grounds to claim that these people were in the tomb: “There are other individual signs, according to which, even without DNA analysis, we conclude that these are exactly the people.”

In the last two days, the de facto prosecutor’s office has been reporting that the tomb found near the lake has been in use for more than 10 years, and traces of violence can be seen on the remains.

According to the available information, a robbery attack was carried out on Dagestanis, who were the drivers of the trucks and resident of Tskhinvali who accompanied them in 2004. Radio Liberty Project Caucasus Real was told by a source in the South Ossetian militia that two local residents were arrested shortly after the disappearance, but the suspects were released due to lack of evidence.

Following the spread of

information about the discovery of a tomb near the village of Tbeti, the families of those missing during the hostilities demanded the involvement of the Georgian authorities and competent experts in the process of identifying the remains found in the occupied territories.

The search for the missing continues under the auspices of the International Committee

of the Red Cross. The organization has already launched an investigation.

“Our interest is in this issue, and if it is established that these remains may be related to the August 2008 conflict, or to the conflict of the 1990s, we will naturally try to make it a subject of three-way discussion. We have also started a media analysis and we will raise this issue within the

framework of the confidential dialogue, if there is at least a hint that it may be related to any conflict,” Maia Kardava, head of the Red Cross’s communications department commented.

Representatives of the Tskhinvali office of the International Organization meet with the representatives of the de facto government to find out the details.



► The families of those missing during the hostilities demanded the involvement of the Georgian authorities and competent experts in the process of identifying the remains found in the occupied territories.

THURSDAY JUNE 11

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 34°C

Night Mostly cloudy

Low: 20°C

FRIDAY JUNE 12

Day Sunny

High: 33°C

Night Cloudy

Low: 18°C

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Oil prices on the Georgian market



საქართველოს ბიზნეს ასოციაცია
BUSINESS ASSOCIATION OF GEORGIA

► The Georgian Business Association hopes that the situation caused by the recent decline in fuel prices will have a positive impact on a number of industries.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Georgian Competition Agency has published a review of the oil retail market. The document talks about the terms during which the price changes in the international market will affect the Georgian market. The Competition Agency's review shows that it takes an average of 2-5 weeks for global changes to take place in the Georgian market.

The time interval of reflection - the change in the price of the plate is reflected in the average retail price of fuel in the country in the interval of 2-5 weeks. This depends on the company's stock before the change in the price of the plate. "Even in the case of maritime transport, imports into the country are carried out on average twice a month," the report said.

The document also shows that the competitive situation in the oil retail and wholesale markets has improved in recent years, which is due to the increase in the number of players.

Since 2013, in terms of imports of gasoline and diesel, as well as wholesale and retail sales, the number of operating economic agents has increased, the market concentration index has decreased, which is an indicator of the improvement of the competitive environment; In 2012, 8 economic agents were represented at the market import level, the number of which increased to 63 in 2019.

The total share of the 5 major economic agents operating in the market as of 2019 is 60%, while the total share of other companies is within 40%.

The decline in oil prices on the international market has

been reflected in the prices of petroleum products sold at gas stations in Georgia, according to a statement issued by the Georgian Business Association.

As explained in the Association, the trend of strengthening the GEL in recent days has had an even more positive impact on the formation of different types of fuel prices.

Since the beginning of April,

the price of gasoline and diesel at gas stations has been steadily declining, and the amplitude of the decline is about 70-80 tetri.

"At the same time, customers of large branded companies, both individuals and legal entities, have the opportunity to take advantage of various discount systems, through which customers receive an additional 15-25 tetri per liter of fuel,"

said the association. However, as suggested by the Business Association, although oil prices have been rising in the international market for the past 2 weeks, prices at Georgian gas stations will remain around the current level if the current international market conjuncture and the Lari exchange rate continue to strengthen and stabilize.



► At the beginning of 2015, there were about 960 petrol stations in the market, and in 2019 their number was 1210.

The Public Defender of Georgia publishes the report regarding the conditions in Penitentiary Establishment No 17, on the background of COVID-19

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

In regard to the Coronavirus pandemic, on April 30th, 2020, as well as on May 1st and 7th, the Public Defender and members of the Special Preventive Group paid a visit to Penitentiary Establishment No 17. As the monitoring revealed, the biggest challenge in terms of spreading COVID-19 is the size of the establishment and crowded cells.

According to the report published by the Public Defender, in the majority of the cells, inmates are not provided with 4 sq.m. of personal space as required by law.

"It is impossible to keep physical distancing or to properly protect sanitary conditions in the cells. Thus, in the context of the pandemic, it has become even more urgent to implement the recommendation made by the Public Defender years ago and endorsed by the Ministry of Justice on transformation



► Penitentiary Establishment No 17

of large institutions into small ones," the statement reads.

The Public Defender pays attention to limiting the volume of medical services and diminishing the number of medical staff in the establishment, due to the

introduction of special conditions and doubts that these circumstances might have a negative impact on timely and adequate provision of medical care.

The Ombudsman believes that the reduction of the number

of prisoners in the establishment will ensure a higher degree of protection against the novel Coronavirus. In addition, according to the statement, further effective measures should be taken in order to control the infection in the establishments, which would help protect the rights of prisoners, reduce the workload of employees and facilitate the normal functioning of the establishment.

Based on the results of monitoring, in general, the Special Preventive Group positively estimates the cautious shown by the Special Penitentiary Service and the measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the fact that no cases of novel coronavirus have been detected, as well.

The Public Defender highlights the dedication of the employees, who have not left the facility in order to prevent the spread of the virus and continue to perform their duties under the conditions of complete isolation.

As the statement reads, the



► The Public Defender of Georgia

Public Defender's Office continued to monitor the closed institution during the crisis, by observing all safety measures, which has been praised in the textbook published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and the Association for the Prevention of Torture.

With the purpose of preventing the spread of the virus, special conditions were enforced in the penitentiary system since March 5th. Inmates are suspended from receiving visitors or leaving the penitentiary establishment due to particular personal circumstances.