

Amiran Gamkrelidze speaks about COVID-19 and today's situation in the country

The Head of the Center for Disease Control Amiran Gamkrelidze talks about COVID-19 and the struggles the country is dealing with at the Government Administration.

BY ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

As the head of the Center for Disease Control Amiran Gamkrelidze stated at a press conference at the Government's Administration, the epidemic in the world is in a warming phase and won't end 'in a couple of months.' As he stated after the meeting of the Interagency Coordination Council, the country is facing a relatively difficult late autumn and winter.

"We all have to go through this together, with the right prevention mechanisms and management. We have said many times that nothing defends better than a mask. We have to keep our distance. Despite this, there are still gatherings after 20:00 PM in Mtskheta. We are playing with fire. If we follow all these rules, we will get rid of this epidemic with relatively less loss," stated Gamkrelidze.

Despite the recent increase in the num-

ber of infected people, the total number of active cases in Georgia is not as large as in many European countries.

Gamkrelidze also spoke about the flu vaccine. According to him, the rate of absorption of the first batch of flu vaccine is low. Accordingly, 25 thousand vaccines have already been received, which are distributed in clinics.

"The flu vaccine is not mandatory in any country. This is for reference only. If this is possible, we all recommend flu vaccination, but we must keep in mind that flu vaccination is not as effective as measles, polio, tetanus vaccination. You may be vaccinated, but it still develops. Its protection capacity is in the range of 60-75%."

The largest group of these confirmed cases, these are 581 symptomatic patients and contacts. On October 19th, 1,186 new cases and 7 deaths were reported.



Amiran Gamkrelidze

Politics

CEC: Hospitalized and isolated citizens will be able to vote

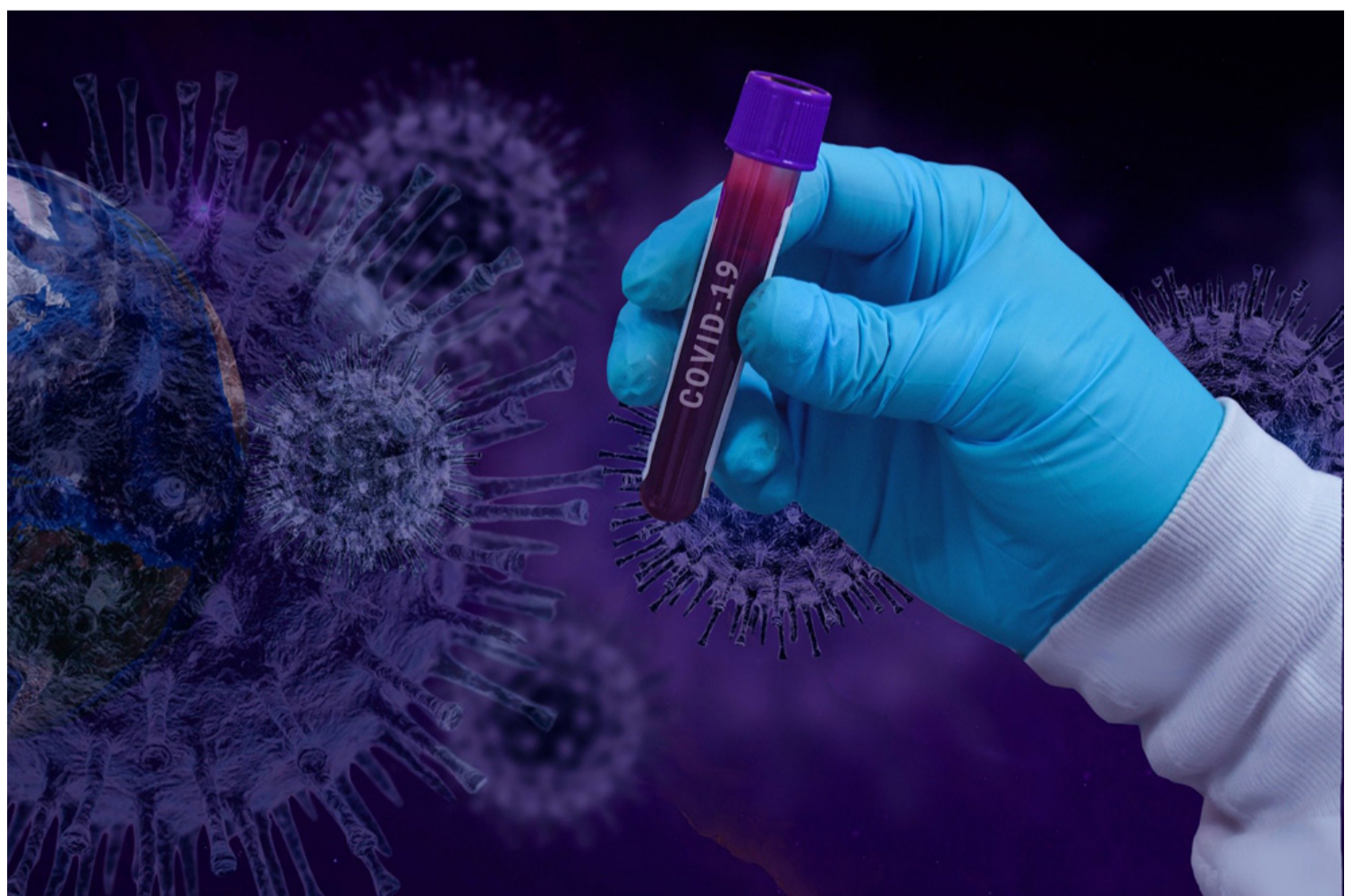
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Economics

New video channel for businesses: ICC and Caucasian Journal present EURICA



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CEC: Hospitalized and isolated citizens will be able to vote



“For the safety of the process, the special groups and polling stations will have no contact with ordinary ones.”

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

According to the decision of the Central Election Commission of Georgia (CEC), all COVID patients as well as ones in isolation will be able to vote on Election Day on October 31st. CEC created a special working group, which will ensure the

delivery of ballot boxes to electors who are quarantined or hospitalized.

According to the statement published by the commission, a special working group, created at the initiative of the CEC, held meetings in this regard and reviewed the preventive measures and sanitary-hygiene rules that

must be observed during this process. The special group consists of the representatives of election administration, political parties, civil society, and international organizations.

The statement reads that CEC offers the voters who are in hospitals or in quarantine to participate in the election through the service provided by the special groups, which have the functions of an election commission. In particular, within the jurisdiction of the District Election Commission in municipalities, CEC will create at least one polling station which will be staffed with special groups.

The special group members will ensure the delivery of ballot boxes to the hospitalized and quarantined voters. CEC informs that self-isolated voters, whose data are officially recorded in the database of the relevant institutions, will also be able to use the service of mobile ballot box based upon their request.

CEC remarks that their offer about establishing separate polling stations for inpatients and

isolated voters and providing them with mobile ballot boxes through special groups ensures maximum health safety. As the statement reads, every member of the special group will be properly equipped with disposable robes, masks, gloves, protective shields, and sanitary-hygiene products.

For the safety of the process, the special groups and polling stations will have no contact with

ordinary ones. According to the commission, the votes from the mobile ballot box will be counted in specially created polling stations.

CEC notes that according to the law, observers, media and representatives of election entities will be able to follow the mobile ballot box and observe the process of voting as well as vote counting.



Observers, media, and representatives of election entities will be able to follow the mobile ballot box and observe the process of voting as well as vote counting.

NGOs respond to worsened epidemiological situation in Tskhinvali region

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian NGOs published a statement responding to the worsened epidemiological situation in the Tskhinvali region. Tskhinvali reported 57 cases of COVID-19 in just one day. They call on the government of Georgia to immediately strengthen negotiations with the de facto regime of Tskhinvali and use international political mechanisms to promptly restore freedom of movement and increase access to medical services.

According to the statement, the epidemiological situation in the Tskhinvali region has deteriorated, the number of infected people has increased and there are no more beds available in the Tskhinvali Hospital for infectious Diseases. According to the NGOs, hospitals of Tskhinvali experience a shortage of medi-



NGOs demand prompt restoration of freedom of movement in the Tskhinvali region.

cine and medical equipment, as well as medical staff whose number is insufficient to manage increased coronavirus cases. Considering the current situation, the de facto government has decided to modify children's hospital into COVID hospital. The statement reads that according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), regardless of restriction on movement, on the ground of de facto authority's consent, they still

manage to transport patients to Tbilisi. As the representative of ICRC stated, since January 2020, they have managed to transport 60 patients to Tbilisi.

However, the statement mentions that the transportation of patients from Akhagori to Tbilisi still presents a problem. On October 15th, another person, a Russian language teacher Vera Kotolova died since she was unable to receive timely care neither at Akhagori nor

Tskhinvali hospitals.

“De facto authority did not allow the patient to be transferred to Tbilisi and nor the relatives are allowed to attend the funeral. As it seems, the so-called government of Tskhinvali makes selective and corrupt decisions respecting the permission on movement. Unlawful and discriminative restriction on freedom of movement has resulted in the deaths of up to 20 individuals. Locals have been living in isolation and social crisis for more than a year. Restoration of freedom of movement in the village is requested by both Georgian and Ossetian people,” read the statement.

The NGOs call on the government of Georgia to: Conduct in-

tensive negotiations with the de facto government of Tskhinvali region; allocate necessary medical resources to treat patients transported from Tskhinvali, including COVID patients; establish communication lines with a medical staff of Tskhinvali region to share the experience of managing and treating the infection; cooperate with international partners to mobilize medicines and additional medical equipment.

The statement is signed by Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center – EMC, Human Rights Center (HRC), Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), Democracy Research Institute (DRI).



A few days ago, the so-called President of the Russia-occupied Tskhinvali region of Georgia Anatoli Bibilov tested positive for COVID-19.

Weather

Tuesday, October 20

Day Partly Cloudy High: 24°C
Night Rain Low: 13°C

Wednesday, October 21

Day Partly Cloudy High: 20°C
Night Partly Cloudy Low: 12°C

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New video channel for businesses: ICC and Caucasian Journal present EURICA



Fady ASLY, Chairman of ICC Georgia: “We are introducing EURICA to offer a unique investment promotion toolset not just to ICC members, but to all companies with sound, well-prepared investment projects.”

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Georgia set up the first Eurasia Investment Channel for worldwide promotion of best investment projects. EURICA ((Eurasia Investment Channel and Analytics) will select the best investment projects and produce its own videos for them, to offer maximum promotion through international news distribution channels. The Messenger is offering an interview with the chairman of the ICC, Fady Asly, discussing what EURICA has to offer.

Emphasizing the importance of business development in our country, especially given the global crisis caused by the pandemic, I would like to ask how was the idea of creating EURICA born?

- The idea of the project came to our partner, Alexander Kaffka, editor-

in-chief of Caucasian Journal, who approached me and asked for my opinion about this idea. Usually, I'm reluctant about people coming with their projects and ideas, because in most of them I don't see any benefit, but this was a fantastic idea. I realized how important

it would be for Georgia and, as a matter of fact, we turned this idea into reality.

Caucasian Journal is a multilingual online media platform launched in 2019 for impartial constructive dialogue on civil society, democracy, corporate social responsibility and other significant issues relevant to the South Caucasian region.

What are the main goals of this project?

- Firstly, the main goal of EURICA is to secure investors for companies who are looking for foreign investors - serious companies, with good morality and ethics, that have history, are known and credible. I am the anchor of the YouTube channel and since EURICA is established by the ICC I along with Channel Georgia Consulting, a major consulting firm covering East and Central Asia, South Caucasus and Eastern Europe, and with the Caucasian Journal, we cannot endorse anybody. We must be sure that whoever we discuss the investment plans with is credible, because whenever we present to the international chamber of commerce, we give credibility to the entity.

We are also happy to cooperate with the leisure companies who would like to promote themselves internationally.

We focus a lot on start-ups - young people with very good ideas who are looking for mentors or investors; we interview them, discuss their business plans and make sure that the video goes to the international bodies that do have such cases.

Business ethics is very important to us - work ethic, no harassment, no nepotism, no sexism. These are the areas that we will be covering. We send these youtube episodes to the ICC network internationally - the largest business organisation in the world, present in 130 countries, and we ask them to send this 'video business card,' as I call it, to appropriate businesses in the corresponding sector.

What are the expectations of tangible results and how do you mea-

sure them?

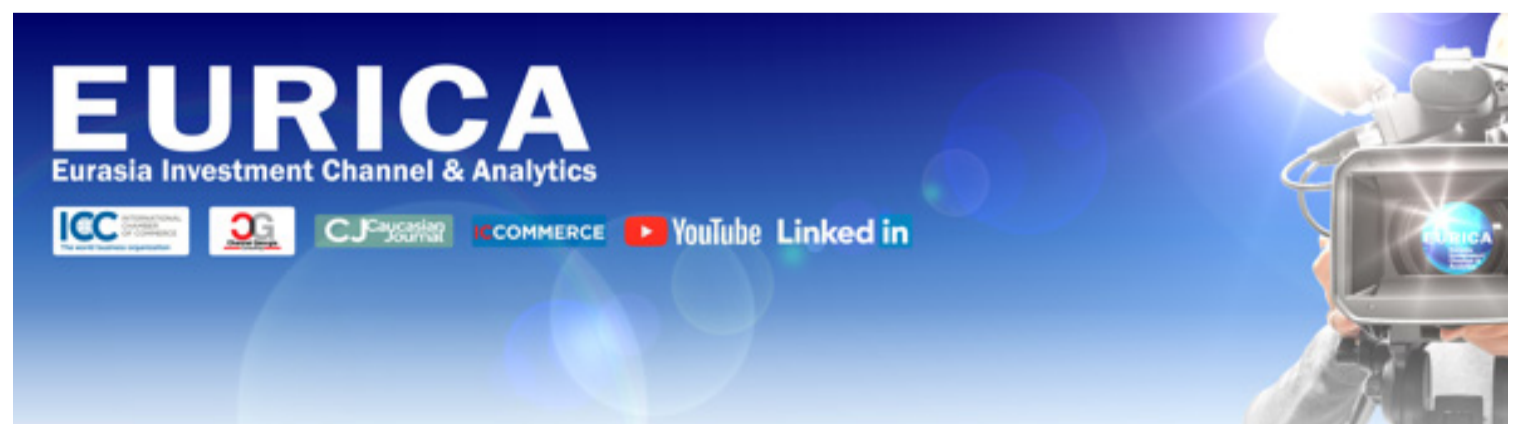
We already have video for a major company that's looking for the partners for the seamand factory and we have already identified three partners, international ones, with whom we're discussing at this stage. This is how we measure, if the company was able to get the exposure that they need, this is successful for us.

Given the challenges that Covid-19 has brought to the whole world, most of the businesses have switched to online platforms, working remotely. Though for some this is portrayed as backstep, it shouldn't be the case for EURICA; Furthermore, such a situation can be very beneficial and cost-effective. How has it been working out?

- Now is a really good time to do it, since everyone is going online, so it couldn't have been better timing than now. Now, for example we are in talks with ExpoGeorgia, because they are facing a difficulty, when it comes to Georgian companies, that usually had exhibitions at ExpoGeorgia and were looking for foreign partners to come and visit Georgia, as it used to be. Now the trend is to go online for this, that's why it is the perfect time - people can have access to specific information without the need for a physical visit. For example, instead of businessman coming here to visit Zedazeni group, through the video that we prepared for Zedazeni, all the information that they would have gotten by the visit here is available in the video, they have answers for the questions that they would have asked, by just staying in their offices, without the need to move.

Why should a company contact EURICA if they want to do business in Georgia in the region?

- Usually, it's Georgian companies who contact us, although EURICA is not for Georgia only. We are starting now in Georgia, but we will be covering the Caucasian countries and Central Asia as well. At this stage it's more local companies, because they either want to promote themselves or are looking for investors.



EURICA offers production of videos and publication through its own channels in YouTube, LinkedIn and other electronic and printed mass media and social networks, as well as direct promotion to interested investors through ICC global network.