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## Putin appoints a special representative for demarcation of state borders



Mikhail Petrakov was appointed to the position of a special representative of Russia's president

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

According to the Russian news Agency TASS, the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, has appointed a special representative for the demarcation of the state border of Russia with its neighbors. Mikhail Petrakov was

appointed at this position, who will also be appointed as special representative in a delegation to the multilateral talks with the Caspian Sea region.

The document reads that Mikhail Petrakov, a diplomat of the Russian Foreign Ministry, was appointed as a special representative of the President

of Russian Federation on the delamination and demarcation of the borders with the Commonwealth of Independent States, (CIS) and also with Georgia, Abkhazia, and so-called South Ossetia.

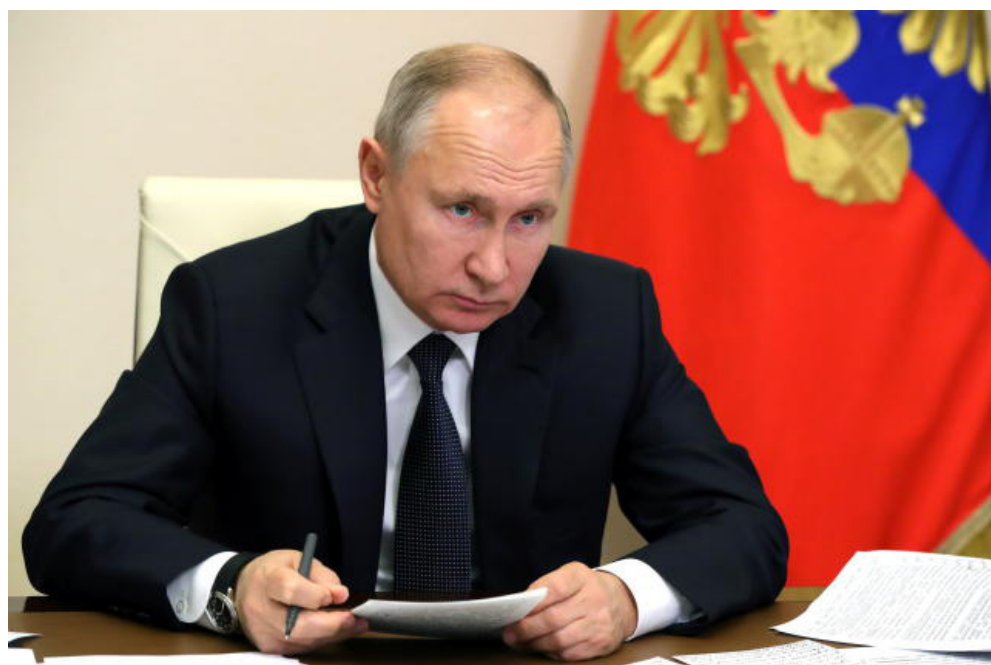
Mikhail Petrakov was born in 1959 and has been in the diplomatic service since 1982. At various times he served as Director of the First Department of CIS Affairs and Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic of South Africa. In September 2019, he

was appointed Director of the Situation and Crisis Center at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The total length of the Georgian border is 1970 km. Of this, 1655 km is land, including 723 km with Russia, 164 km with Armenia, 322 km with Azerbaijan, and 252 km with Turkey.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia says that this is another

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Experts are saying that all of the steps taken by Russia are part of 'their game', trying to scare the people of Georgia and the government as well



MFA once again said that Russia should fulfill the 2008 ceasefire agreement



# Festivities amidst the global pandemic: How did Georgia celebrate New Year this year?

By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

With only partial removal of the healthcare-related regulations imposed by the government earlier last year, Georgians were still able to make the most of the New Year celebrations and the temporary lifting of the 21.00 – 05.00 curfew.

The traditional New Year concert was held this year, however, to abide by the existing regulations and guidelines, it had no spectators attending, and was broadcasted live on TV instead. The concert stage in a form of a multi-story house was arranged at the Palace of State Ceremonies and hosted a gala concert, directed by Davit Doiashvili and Basa Potskhishvili, as well as the art director Tamar Potskhishvili and musical director Dato Evgenidze.

During his New Year address at the gala concert, Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze said that the year 2020 will go down in history as one of the hardest for both Georgia and the rest of the world. Mayor Kaladze added that Georgia has proven many times that it can overcome any hardship and rise from the ashes stronger than ever. Similarly, Prime Minister Gakharia underlined how Georgia was celebrating this beloved holiday in a very unusual way and applauded the collective responsi-

bility of the Georgian citizens who chose to celebrate the New Year modestly, in the closest family circles.

PM Gakharia congratulated Georgian citizens, both within the country and abroad, as well as Abkhazian and Ossetian brothers, and added that it is only in unity with them that Georgia can truly strive as a strong and successful country with a bright future ahead.

Yesterday, the shopping malls that were opened for the period of New Year and Christmas celebrations (December 24– January 2) are closed again and will only be offering their services remotely. Food, household chemicals, and hygiene, as well as animal supplies, remain open, and so do pharmacies, open-air agrarian markets, and veterinary clinics. The intercity public transports are still not available, and the effective curfew between 21.00 – 05.00 remains in place, except for Orthodox Christmas (January 7), when it will be temporarily lifted. The discussion on whether the new measures will be imposed, or whether the existing ones will be prolonged or lifted altogether, will not be held earlier than in 10 days, and the final decision will depend on the state of the epidemiological situation within the country.



## Putin appoints a special representative for demarcation of state borders

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aggressive step taken by the Russian federation towards full annexation of the occupied

### Weather

Monday, January 4

Day ☀ Clear  
High: 7°C  
Night 🌙 Clear  
Low: -1°C

Tuesday, January 5

Day ☀ Clear  
High: 6°C  
Night 🌧 Partly Cloudy  
Low: -2°C

regions of Georgia. MFA once again said that Russia should fulfill the 2008 ceasefire agreement and take back the steps that it has taken in the previous years. The press speaker of the MFA of Georgia, Mariam Narchemashvili said that as long as Russia occupies Georgian territories, there will

not be a chance of talking about the demarcation of the border.

Experts are saying that all of the steps taken by Russia are part of ‘their game’, trying to scare the people of Georgia and the government as well.

Georgia and many other members of the international

community including the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Germany, Ukraine, the EU, OSCE, and the UN have recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as occupied territories and have condemned the Russian military’s presence and actions there.

The Russia-Georgia War was fought between Georgia, Russia, and the Russian-backed self-proclaimed republics of so-called South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The war took place in August of 2008 following a period of worsening relations between the two countries.

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## ₾ 130 million earned from privatizing buildings, ₾ 95 million transferred to the state budget

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Georgian Minister of National Economy Natia Turnava has announced that over the last year a total of ₾ 130 million has been earned from the program of building privatization. This number is ₾ 12 million more than the 2019 figures. More than ₾ 95 million out of this year's earnings were transferred to the state budget.

The privatization is carried out under the 100 New Investment Offers to Business program introduced in 2019. According to the initiative, over 100 public buildings are offered for purchase to international businesses. An estimated initial cost of the selected buildings in 2019 was valued at ₾ 150 million, and ₾ 67 million this year. The buildings are offered for sale in a form of parallel auctions.

The legal issues, such as the valuation process, boundary specification, and property registration are handled before the day when the auction commences. Moreover, potential buyers can find detailed information about the buildings and non-agricultural land lots on the National Agency of State Property. Moreover, the website lists the recommendations on the



Natia Turnava

building's purposing. In 2019, the majority of buildings were to be used as industrial or storage units, and other purposing included hotels, hunting and fishing facilities, hotels, sports infrastructure, as well as medical and educational institutions.

In 2020, the starting value of all the buildings that were sold was ₾ 67 million, and the total earnings were estimated at ₾ 84 million. According to Turnava, the privatization of the building program has contributed to the country's national economy, which has suffered significant damages as a result of the reduced business activity and the outbreak of a global pandemic in 2020. Prime Minister Gakharia stated that the government should consider privatization of the state-owned companies except for the strategic ones. PM Gakharia added that the companies that should be considered are the ones that can no longer be improved by the government and are merely a burden on the state budget. According to the PM, for the Georgian economy to strive, it is necessary to involve all of the state-owned assets in the process of its development.

## Paata Imnadze: the new strain has not been confirmed in two cases, one case is under investigation



On December 21, a mandatory quarantine was imposed on persons entering Georgia from the UK

BY NIKA GANTSEMLIDZE

Paata Imnadze, Deputy Director of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, says that research on the new strain of Coronavirus has been completed in two cases and has not been confirmed, while in one case, it is ongoing. He spoke about it with the Public Broadcaster.

"There were some suspicious cases of the new strain of Covid-19 and the research was underway. We were able to finish the research of two cases, out of which,

none were confirmed as a new strain. One of the cases is still being reviewed, and we will have the results soon. The new strain has spread in many countries and although it is not more severe, it is spreading at a higher speed," said Imnadze.

On December 14, a new variant of Coronavirus was detected in England. Health officials say the new coronavirus strain is 70% more contagious, but it has not been proven whether it is more lethal. Several countries have suspended air traffic to Britain due to a coronavirus mutation, including France.

On December 21, a mandatory quarantine was imposed on persons entering Georgia from the UK or who have visited the UK in the last two weeks.

As for the regular Covid-19 cases, the daily number of them has decreased in Georgia. However, the First Deputy Minister of Health of Georgia Tamar Gabunia said that the numbers of the Covid-19 cases in Georgia have decreased because fewer people are tested.

She said that there might be an increase in the coming weeks. She noted that the positive cases are still around 11% of the taken tests. "Our goal is to

take down the number to 5%, this is when we will be able to say that the numbers are decreasing," added Gabunia.

As of January 3, 417 new cases of Coronavirus were confirmed in Georgia, with 2469 recoveries and 31 deaths. In total, 228,169 cases were reported in the country since the beginning of the pandemic. Out of these, 220,442 people have already recovered.

The most cases were reported in October and November when the number of daily reported cases were between 3,000 to 5,000. In total, 2603 people have died because of Covid-19 in Georgia.



In total, 228,169 cases were reported in the country since the beginning of the pandemic