

Politics

Georgia to receive coronavirus vaccines in March instead of February, gov't considers easing COVID-19 restrictions



FULL STORY ON Page 2

Economics

After Germany, Georgia negotiates with France, Greece, Israel on seasonal employment

FULL STORY ON Page 3

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

On Monday, February 22, PM Irakli Garibashvili addressed the ruling Georgian Dream party and outlined the main priorities that the new government should focus on within the first 100 days in office. Among others, Garibashvili named the need for "restoring order" in the country, launching the anti-coronavirus vaccination program, and drafting an "ambitious" 10-year plan for the country's development.

In his address to the Parliament, Garibashvili said that over the past 30 years "a number of mistakes have been made."

"Previous years will remain to be a part of our lives and a part of our country's history. They have been marked by many positive events and achievements, as well as valuable experience we managed to gain. However, a number of mistakes have been made, and we are witnessing the results of such mistakes today," said Garibashvili.

The PM also mentioned that the government is ready to resume dialogue with the "healthy" part of the opposition but not with "its criminal members." He added that Nika Melia, UNM's chairman would not escape justice as the court found him guilty in the Cartu Bank case.

Garibashvili also stated that the government should take full responsibility for the restoration of the local businesses and the provision of the workplaces.

"The government plays a crucial role in boosting the national economy, and in supporting the local businesses, especially amidst the crisis caused by the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic," said Garibashvili and promised to get "person-

ally involved" in any decision related to helping the business sector survive.

Garibashvili stated that the government is planning to lift some of the restrictions this week, while the vaccination is expected to begin in early March. He also reinstated the government's plan

to vaccinate 60% of the Georgian population by the end of 2021.

Garibashvili was nominated to take on the post of the country's Prime Minister after former PM Giorgi Gakharia announced his resignation last week. Gakharia explained that his decision was

caused by the inability to find common ground with other members of the ruling Georgian Dream party regarding the arrest of Nika Melia, Chairman of the opposition United National Movement party.

New PM Garibashvili addresses Georgian Dream, outlines new governments' priorities



Georgia to receive coronavirus vaccines in March instead of February, gov't considers easing COVID-19 restrictions



According to Health Minister candidate Ekaterine Tikaradze, Georgia will be the first country in the region to receive high-quality vaccines.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgia will receive the first doses of the Covid-19 vaccine in early March instead of February. As the Deputy Minister of Health Tamar Gabunia stated at the briefing on Monday, exact dates of securing the vaccine will be set this week. It was also noted yesterday that the government considers easing the remaining Covid-19 restrictions.

According to Gabunia, negotiations are underway with UNICEF to determine when the vaccine will arrive in the country. As she noted, Georgia may receive AstraZeneca vaccine (150,000 doses) first instead of

the Pfizer vaccine. The Deputy Health Minister also mentioned the ongoing discussions over receiving the Nova Wax as well as Johnson and Johnson vaccines.

According to the Head of Infectious Diseases and AIDS Centre Tengiz Tsertsvadze, the slight delay in the introduction of the vaccine in the country "is not a tragedy," as long as the vaccination plan is executed as well as planned and promised. Tsertsvadze noted that the country has already selected hospitals where vaccination will be implemented. Initially, the first doses of the Covid-19 vaccine will be available for medical sector workers and elderly people. The

Georgian government plans to vaccinate 60% (approximately 1.7 million people) of the population this year.

As noted at the briefing yesterday, given the current stable epidemic situation in Georgia, the government considers further easing the restrictions.

The public demand for lifting restrictions is high. Starting February 8, restaurants have been allowed to provide their service only in open areas, however, according to Shota Burjanadze, the founder of the Georgia Restaurant Association, out of the food facilities that can open despite the financial crisis, only

10% have open space. Business sector representatives have addressed the government several times requesting to open ski resorts, allow restaurants and food facilities to operate indoors, and remove weekend work restrictions. Businesses also demand the nationwide curfew to start at 23:00 instead of 21:00.

Yesterday, Georgia reported 147 new cases of coronavirus, 607 recoveries, and 12 deaths. Georgia has had a total of 268,502 confirmed cases since February 2020. 262,244 of the 268,502 individuals have recovered, unfortunately, 3,447 others have died.



As Shota Burjanadze, the founder of the Georgia Restaurant Association stated, due to the difficult financial situation, only 700 out of 10,000 food facilities can be opened.



Photo: European Union

Weather

Tuesday, February 23

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 8°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 3°C

Wednesday, February 24

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 5°C

Night Snow Showers
Low: -7°C

'Georgia's 1921 Constitution firmly placed the country within the wider European family': EU statement on 100th anniversary of Georgia's first Constitution

the Georgian people, said a statement issued by the European Union Delegation to Georgia on 21 February together with the EU Heads of Missions on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Georgia's first Constitution.

"Georgia's first Constitution firmly placed this country within the wider European family of values, cherishing the principles of democratic governance, the respect for human rights, the upholding of the rule of law and the defence of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of as-

sembly, freedom of speech and printed media," the statement said.

The EU Delegation to Georgia reminds that this Constitution, in many respects, was ahead of its time. It introduced universal suffrage for a proportional system of elections to be enjoyed by men and women equally, abolished capital punishment and provided for political asylum and the protection of national minorities. It also codified socio-economic rights and a strict framework for the conduct of justice.

"This commitment to a progressive democracy has set important benchmarks for the modern Georgian state – benchmarks that remain highly relevant to this day," the statement said. "Georgia's ambition to build a thriving, inclusive, pluralistic democracy is anchored in this historical Constitution."

The EU Delegation and the EU Heads of Mission reaffirmed the European Union's commitment to supporting Georgia on its path towards a strong democracy.

published by

The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze
Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Natalia Kochiashvili
Executive Editor

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.3084; Euro - 4.0138; GBP - 4.6410; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.4335; Swiss Franc - 3.6813

After Germany, Georgia negotiates with France, Greece, Israel on seasonal employment

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Health Minister candidate Ekaterine Tikaradze has announced that Georgia is negotiating with France, Greece, and Israel on seasonal employment. According to her, the state is working on promoting employment in local sectors as well as temporary legal employment of Georgian citizens abroad.

Tikaradze has stated that apart from France, Greece, and Israel, negotiations regarding circular migration are also underway with Cyprus. A similar agreement has already been reached with Germany, which allows Georgian citizens to find legal employment in the country's agriculture sector for a maximum of 90 days. Tikaradze stressed that seasonal employment is one of the pilot projects for Germany and Georgia is the first country to sign this agreement. According to her, after negotiations with Germany, several European countries expressed interest towards Georgia in this direction.

The Health Minister candidate stressed that providing legal temporary employment opportunities for Georgian citizens abroad is one of the key priorities of the govern-



Health Minister candidate Ekaterine Tikaradze stressed that providing legal temporary employment opportunities for Georgian citizens abroad is one of the key priorities of the government



Registration for the legal employment program started on February 15 and so far, 86 395 Georgian citizens have expressed the desire to work in Germany.

ment. According to her, illegal emigration, which is a tough issue for both Georgia and EU member states, is significantly regulated by the existing agreement on circular migration between the two countries (Germany and Georgia).

"The agreement brings closer the countries which share labor market experience with each-other in line with the law... we have given our citizens an opportunity to be temporarily employed in EU member states, where they will receive decent wages and work in a healthy environment," Tikaradze stated.

Tikaradze also pointed out that besides economic interests, many Georgian citizens will gain significant experience and learn about the system established in European countries. After returning to Georgia, they will be able to contribute to the further development of Georgian agriculture.

The seasonal employment program was supposed to start in 2020, though was temporarily delayed due to the global pandemic. Registration for the legal employment program in Germany started on February 15 and so far, 86 395 Georgian citizens have expressed the desire to work in Germany.

EU announces additional €500 million for COVAX Facility to secure access to COVID-19 vaccines in low and middle-income countries, including Eastern partners

On 19 February, the European Union announced an additional €500 million for the COVAX Facility, doubling its contribution to date for the global initiative that is leading efforts to secure fair and equitable access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines in low and middle-income countries. This new pledge brings the European Union closer to achieving COVAX's target to deliver 1.3 billion doses for 92 low and middle income countries, including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, by the end of 2021. Team Europe is one of the lead contributors to COVAX with over €2.2 billion, including another €900 million pledged last week by Germany.

"Last year, as part of our Coronavirus Global Response, we committed to ensuring universal access to vaccines everywhere on Earth, for everyone who would need them. COVAX is best placed to help us reach this goal," said President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, announcing the new contribution at the G7 virtual leaders' meeting. "This is why we decided to double the European Commission's contribution to COVAX, to €1 billion. With this new financial boost, we want to make sure vac-

cines are soon delivered to low and middle-income countries. Because we will only be safe if the whole world is safe."

The contribution is composed of a new €300 million EU grant and €200 million in guarantees by the European Fund for Sustainable Development plus (EFSD+) that will back a loan by the European Investment Bank (EIB). This is subject to the adoption of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) by the Council and the European Parliament. The EIB loan to be guaranteed by EFSD+ is subject to the approval of the EIB's Board of Directors. These funds will complement a previous €100 million grant and €400 million in guarantees from the EU budget.

To date, a total of 191 countries participate in the COVAX Facility, 92 of them low and middle-income economies eligible to get access to COVID-19 vaccines through Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC).

The COVAX Facility aims to purchase 2 billion doses by the end of 2021, including at least 1.3 billion doses for low and middle-income countries. It will help to develop a diversified portfolio of vaccines,



Photo: European Union

negotiated with different suppliers, and covering different scientific technologies, delivery times and prices. Vaccines will be procured and delivered to countries by the UNICEF Supply Division and the PAHO's Revolving Fund for Access to Vaccines.

Since 4 May 2020, the European Commission together with its partners has helped to raised almost €16 billion under

the Coronavirus Global Response, the global action in support of universal access to tests, treatments and vaccines against coronavirus and for the global recovery. Team Europe's contribution was as follows: EU Member States (€3.1 billion), European Commission (over €1.4 billion) and EIB (almost €2 billion pledged in May and €4.9 billion pledged in June).