

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Government of Georgia Lifts Green Passport Requirement

National Center for Disease Control has reported 24,201 new cases of coronavirus infection in the last 24 hours. Among them was the Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili, who was confirmed with the 'Omicron' strain of the coronavirus within the framework of planned testing. It was reported that PM is fully vaccinated, is feeling well, and continues to work remotely.

In the last 24 hours, 10,732 have recovered and 36 people have died. As for the positive rate, as of January 31, the daily rate of positive cases is 28.41%, for the last 14 days - 21.96% and for 7 days - 24.96%.

Meanwhile, the government made a decision to cancel the obligation of requiring a 'green passport', which was enforced from December 1.

As for traveling, all accounting systems remain in place and those who need a 'green passport' to travel abroad will still be able to use this system.

Chief of Operations at the Interagency Coordination Council Giorgi Ghibradze explained the council, decided to cancel the obligation of presenting the green pass due to the less severity of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, citing the "fully manageable" situation with confirmed virus cases.

According to the Deputy Minister of Health Tamar Gabunia, the abolition of the 'green passport' is related to the peculiarities of the 'Omicron' strain. Gabunia explains that in the face of a high risk of re-infection, the 'green passport' will no longer be as important as it used to be, so the government will abolish its mandatory requirement.

"It does not guarantee that a person will be safe when they enter any business environment as it was with Green Passports. As for the vaccination, it is not complete protection against infection, it protects from hospitalization and complications. Thus, the most powerful factor here comes out daily PCR-testing, which is practically impossible." Gabunia



PM Gharibashvili tested positive for the omicron variant of Covid-19. The head of the government tested positive for coronavirus previously in April last year.

explained.

She also noted almost 35% of beds prepared for virus contingency in hospitals across the country are still available, adding the number of patients in resuscitation care is decreasing.

According to Deputy Minister, the requirements for 'green passports' have al-

ready been changed by many countries after the appearance of the 'Omicron' strain. However, given the changing epidemiological situation in the future, Gabunia does not rule out that the decision on the 'green passport' may change.

She also informed that education in schools will not be transferred to full dis-

tance mode and the existing, hybrid format will be maintained, meaning that online schooling will be optional.

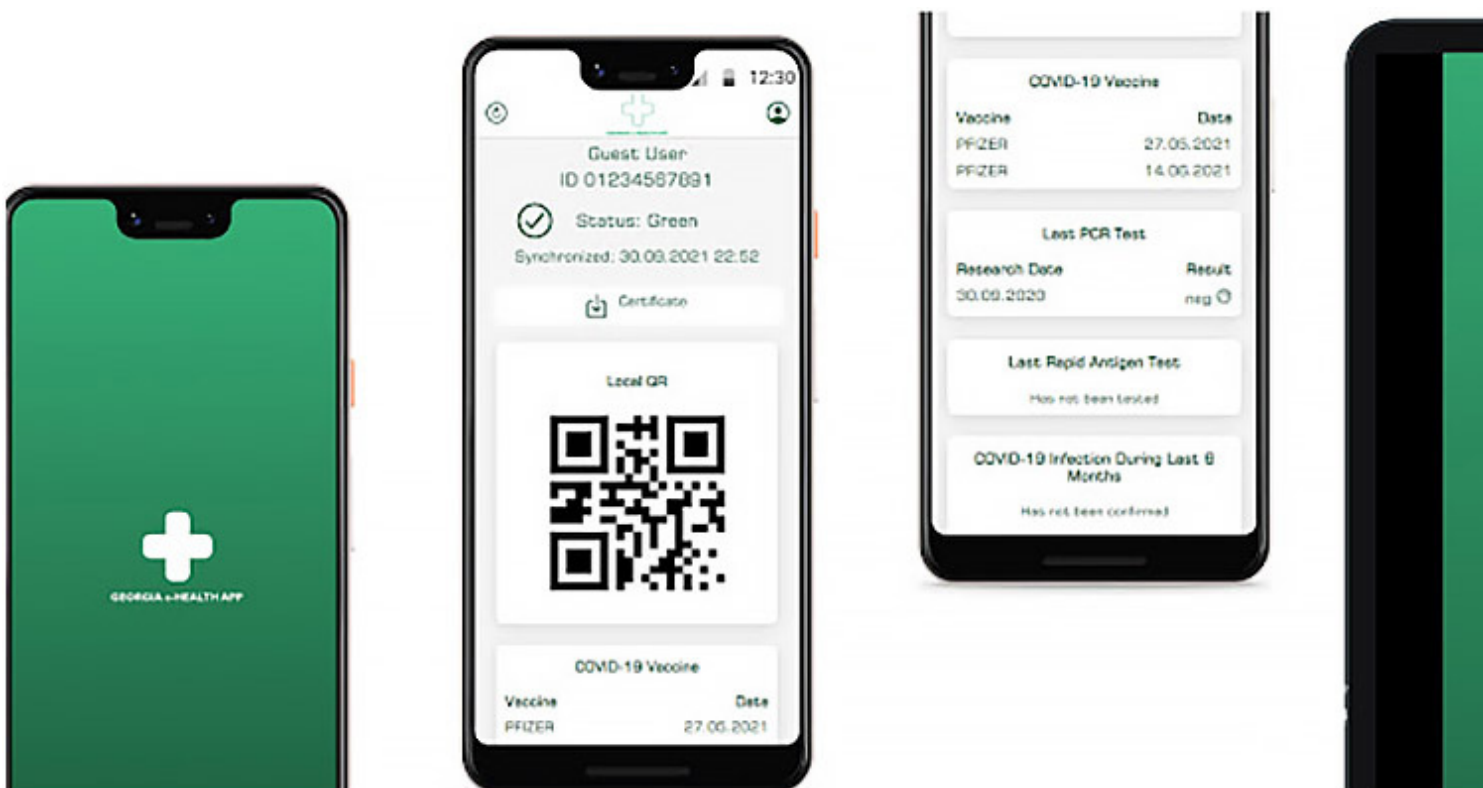
Recall that a total of 1,754 cases of the Omicron variant has been confirmed in the country as of February 1. Overall, 1,221,340 people have been fully vaccinated in Georgia amounting to 42.5% of the country's adult population.

According to Amiran Gamkrelidze, Director of the National Center for Diseases, 95% of the cases are already Omicron strains, adding that out of the laboratory-confirmed cases, several fatal cases were reported.

"All indicators of epidemiology, such as positivity, incidence, reproduction index, have increased, but so far the number of severe cases in clinics and the load on both intensive care and resuscitation, as well as in the hospital sector is not increasing. The main workload is on the laboratory sector," he said.

Tbilisi Infectious Diseases Hospital, Tengiz Tsertsvadze informed that Georgia will be one of the first to receive anti-coronavirus tablets, since "we have been lobbying for this medicine for a long time and contract has already been signed."

"If used in patients staying at home, it will be distributed free of charge, but it requires logistics. The U.S. announced that this tablet reduces aggravation and mortality by 87%. When we have this tablet formula and plus Remdesivir, which we still have, there is great hope that both severe cases and deaths will be drastically reduced," Tsertsvadze said.



Covid-19 green passes came into force in Georgia on December 1, 2021, obliging the public to present proof of vaccination, testing, or recovery from Covid-19 when entering certain establishments.

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.0451; Euro - 3.4282; GBP - 4.1112; 100 Russian Ruble - 3.9634; Swiss Franc - 3.3006

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgian Parliament Adopts Resolution in Support of Ukraine

Georgian Parliament adopted the resolution in support of Ukraine initiated by the ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party with 74 votes pro and none against. The draft resolution was not signed by any opposition parties as Russian Federation is not mentioned in any of the points of the document. Opposition parties believe that the Russian Federation must be mentioned as an aggressor for the text to be considered valid.

The Georgian Dream refused to mention a possible "Russian military aggression" in the draft, arguing the document was free of "provocative rhetoric." The opposition parties assessed GD's approach as a non-irritation policy toward Moscow and, therefore, refused to support the document.

According to the leader of the Republican Party Khatuna Samnidze, the opposition will not initiate an alternative reso-

lution, because it is a matter of principle for them to ensure that the resolution has universal support. According to her, the presented text does not reflect either the position of the Georgian people or the position of the country.

one of the leaders of Lelo, Badri Japaridze said at the plenary session of the parliament that the correct resolution of the parliament will be the one where it would be mentioned that the source of the danger of escalation and hostilities is the Russian Federation. He also recalled the request made by the Verkhovna Rada, where Georgia is directly asked to condemn Russia's actions against Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Before adopting the document, Khatia Dekanoidze, chairwoman of the United National Movement faction, proposed to the ruling team to agree on the resolution text first, noting that when it comes to the dignity and security of Georgia, it is important that the Parliament adopts a joint text.

EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell has welcomed the resolution in support of Ukraine, however, noted that formulation of the resolution text is a complex issue' and expressed hope that in the end, the draft resolution would have broad support among the Georgian lawmakers.

The resolution prepared by the Georgian Dream expresses concern over the possible military escalation in Ukraine and condemns any intention that may be directed against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a sovereign state.

"The Georgian Parliament declares that joining NATO is a sovereign right of the state and any attempt to restrict it by military-political means is categorically unacceptable. The Parliament believes that the prevention of war in Ukraine should be a major concern for the international community," the resolution reads.



Opposition politicians refused to sign the draft citing that the text does not mention Russia as the aggressor country.



"Georgia condemns any intention that may be directed against the territorial integrity of the sovereign state, which poses a new threat not only to Ukraine but to regional peace and security," the resolution reads.

January 31, 2022, Tbilisi - The WHO and the European Union handed over 180 oxygen concentrators, 2 000 pulse oximeters and other medical equipment to the Ministry of IDPs from Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. The equipment will be used to outfit rural medical facilities to help citizens all over the country have better access to healthcare.

The concentrators and oximeters were symbolically handed over today to the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia today, by Carl Hartzell, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia and Silviu Domete, WHO Representative and Head of Country Office in Georgia.

Carl Hartzell, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia

EU and WHO hand over equipment to help medical facilities fight COVID-19

stated, "While handover ceremonies may have become routine, there is nothing routine about people struggling to breathe or not having access to proper healthcare. Together with our partners in the WHO and the Government of Georgia, we continue working to make sure that citizens all over Georgia receive improved access to healthcare and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the rest of Team Europe, we remain committed to stand by Georgia during this difficult time."

"We have been living with the coronavirus pandemic for two years now, and WHO thanks the EU for its constant and steady support throughout. Together, we have delivered critical supplies, trained healthcare workers, provided health guidance and tackled misinformation. The challenge ahead of us now is to strengthen the health sys-

tem - particularly primary health care - so that everyone can access services regardless of where they live." - says Silviu Domete, WHO Representative and Head of Country Office in Georgia.

The supplies were purchased through a large-scale EU-UN action to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in the country, by bolstering rural healthcare facilities. At a later stage, the initiative will also provide village ambulatory units with telemedicine equipment to improve access to health care.

The donation is a part of broader assistance from the European Union and WHO, to support Georgia's response to COVID-19. So far, this has included a provision of vital medical equipment, technical expertise and training of health care workers.

In the long-term, the EU and

UN support under this project will help build a more resilient primary health care system with telemedicine capacities increasing equitable access to healthcare services accelerating Georgia's progress towards Universal Health Coverage.

About the project

The project, "Minimizing the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in Georgia through telemedicine and digital health solutions," aims to harness the potential of digital tools for advancing telehealth services and promoting health in Georgia. This assistance is an integral part of the EU's and UN's support to the COVID-19 response in the country, as well as ongoing WHO technical assistance under the UHC-Partnership to support the commitment of national authorities to primary health care reform and the advancement of UHC in Georgia.

The project is implemented by four UN partners (WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS) under WHO leadership, bringing their respective areas of expertise and added-value to contribute to the overall action's objective to minimize the COVID-19 pandemic's negative impact on people's health and the health system through quality telehealth and telemedicine services and to build back better by supporting a sustainable and resilient recovery in Georgia after the COVID-19 pandemic.

This assistance is part of a wider support package provided by the EU and Team Europe consisting of GEL 1.5 billion of new and reallocated assistance to help Georgia address the COVID-19 pandemic, including support to vulnerable groups and economic recovery. That is one of the highest levels of EU assistance per capita to any country in the world and demonstrates the EU's strong solidarity with Georgia at this time of unprecedented crisis.

Weather

Wednesday, February 2

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 13°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 1°C

Thursday, February 3

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 15°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 3°C

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