

## OPINION & ANALYSIS

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BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

By the initiative of the Ministry of Health of Georgia, the innovative application STOP COVID has been created, aiming at the early detection and prevention of COVID-19.

According to the Ministry of Health, the STOP COVID application will allow us to prevent the spread of the virus by timely notifying contact persons.

The innovative application is available for iOS and Android users. To download the app, iOS users need to type STOP COVID in the App Store, and Android owners can download it from Google Play under the name NOVID20. Additional downloadable links are available on the website of the Ministry of Health [www.moh.gov.ge](http://www.moh.gov.ge) and also on the special website created by the government [www.stopcov.ge](http://www.stopcov.ge).

The app does not require registration after downloading and installing. Consequently, the user does not indicate personal information.

The agency explains that the app creates a unique ID for each user, through which it determines social contacts. All data is stored on the mobile phone, locally, using a powerful encoding system. Users have complete control over their data and can decide for themselves when and what information they want to disclose. The system pays special attention to compliance with European data protection legislation.

The ministry explains that the blue-tooth, GPS and other technologies are used to determine which smartphones

## STOP COVID application launched to establish contacts with infected



► The STOP COVID application allows users to find out if they have been in contact with a person infected with COVID-19.

have been in close proximity to each other. Information about the interaction between the users of the application - the date of contact, cases of a certain duration (more than 15 minutes) and distance (less than 2 meters), encrypted, stored locally, in the application of both users. If a person is confirmed to have COVID-19, those who have been in contact with s/he in the last few days will receive a warning, an instruction - to remain in self-isolation and to apply to the relevant authorities immediately.

According to the agency, the application was developed by an Austrian company and made available to the government of different countries without paying a license fee. The application was brought in full compliance with the Georgian reality and legislation. A similar model has

already been successfully implemented and used by a number of countries, including Japan, South Korea, Singapore and others.

Besides that, through the support of the government, companies started producing medical masks. According to the press service of the Prime Minister, the first 4 million medical masks of local production will be purchased by the Cartu Fund in order to supply the country's healthcare system and will be transferred to the state free of charge.

PM Giorgi Gakharia got acquainted with the process of starting the production together with Tikaradze and the Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Cartu Foundation Nikoloz Chkhetiani.

"The Georgian company has managed to bring a device that allows us to produce

a one-time medical kit that we and our doctors need," noted the PM, adding that the company Respirator will launch another line in the near future and will be able to produce about 250,000 disposable facemasks per day.

As the director of the company noted, despite the fact that the raw materials needed to make such personalities are in short supply in the world today, the company, with the support of the Georgian government and the diplomatic corps, was able to bring the relevant materials to Georgia.

Apart from presenting the new app, the Minister of Health of Georgia Ekaterine Tikaradze once again spoke of the importance of understanding the dangers posed by the Coronavirus, saying that in the current situation, everyone should share the responsibility, follow the rules and stay at home.

Given the upcoming Orthodox Easter Holiday and the higher rise of confirmed cases (30 more people infected on April 16, in total 259 active cases), officials call on people to stay at home.

Tikaradze stated that despite keeping the physical distance, significant danger remains, as parishioners will be in the temple within 9 hours and the best solution is to follow the recommendation of Health Ministry, which has been going on for more than 2 months on a daily basis and stay home as much as possible for the safety of 'themselves and church members.'

The head of the press service of the Patriarchate, Archpriest Andria Jagmaidze, said on April 15th that a decision has been made to allow the parishioners to visit churches before the commandant's hour 9 PM and leave the church after the service at 6 o'clock in the morning.

Amiran Gamkrelidze, the head of the National Center for Disease Control also addressed the public: "Don't go to church, do not gather, God will forgive us, because more Georgians will survive, believe me," he said, urging the public to pray at home.



► High-quality, three-layer medical masks are certified by the National Center for Disease Control and are fully compliant with international standards.

## Head of EU Delegation to Georgia on prison sentence of former Georgian Minister



► Photo: European Union

On 14 April, the Head of the EU Delegation to Georgia, Ambassador Carl Hartzell, met with EU Ambassadors to discuss the case of Georgia's former Defence Minister Irakli Okruashvili, who has been sentenced to five years in prison.

"The circumstances around Irakli Okruashvili's case are not conducive to building trust around the historic political agreement reached between all major political parties on 8 March and raises questions about the even-handedness of the follow-up to the events of 20 June 2019," said Ambassador Hartzell following the meeting.

According to Hartzell, the recent developments might increase the political polarisation in a crucial moment for the agreement's implementation.

The Head of the EU Delegation urged all sides to remain committed to the agreement.

(euneighbours.eu)

By ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

On March 1st, a 44-year-old man returned to Georgia from Italy, who is mentioned as patient #4. Patient #4, who is connected to the country's first large and high-profile cluster, traveled to Italy with friends and family. At that time, Italy had the highest number of confirmed cases at more than 1,500 infected.

A person who traveled with Patient #4 spread the virus at work. In 10 days, 12 infected people were found in the 'Italian cluster.' A disease cluster, is a group of similar cases observed at the same site at the same time. Almost a month after the return of the 4th patient and his group to Georgia, 30 new cases of infection were registered in one day in Georgia. Some of them, according to Amiran Gamkrelidze, director of the Center for Disease Control, are still connected to the Italian cluster.

Numerous countries that have been hit hard by the pandemic have reported common stories when social, cultural, or

## Cluster effect



► Easter to be celebrated despite the risk of spreading the virus.



► Infectious clusters spread in the country.

religious gatherings became one source of infection for hundreds of people. Such clusters play a key role in the global spread of the virus.

According to Amiran Gamkrelidze, at least 12 different clusters are registered in Georgia: Iran, Italy, Marneuli, National Bank, Kobuleti.

The Kobuleti cluster is connected to a woman from Batumi, who has been infected from an unknown source, who visited her parents and sister in one of the villages of Kobuleti for 10 days. As of April 15th, the Kobuleti cluster includes 29 people.

The National Bank of Georgia said on April 2nd that seven

employees tested positive for COVID-19 which was later called the National Bank cluster. On April 6th, Priest Giorgi Papava visited the Timi Clinic for analysis. Within five days, the new Coronavirus was confirmed to one of the clinic's doctors. This was later called the Priest's cluster.

The most important holiday in the Christian calendar, Easter, will cause mass gathering despite the high risk of the spread of the new coronavirus. The mass gathering of people in churches may create a much larger cluster, resulting in people transmitting the virus to others.

## Georgia: EU4Business project helps set up business clusters for better access to EU market

Up to 100 Georgian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are now in a better position to take advantage of the benefits of the free trade agreement between the EU and Georgia.

The EU-supported project 'SME Development and DCFTA in Georgia' has helped to establish three business clusters in the country and to lay the groundwork for two more, reaching out to 100 SMEs specialising in furniture, interior design, film production and post-production, ICT, apparel and honey production.

As a result of the 4-year project, these SMEs have

received access to leading international expertise to help them identify opportunities for capacity and product development, better competitiveness and integration with the European market.

Cluster member SMEs currently employ more than 1,400 staff members in Georgia.

(euneighbours.eu)



► Photo: European Union

FRIDAY		APRIL 17	
Day		Sunny	High: 20°C
Night		Low: 8°C	
SATURDAY		APRIL 18	
Day		Partly cloudy	High: 23°C
Night		Low: 10°C	

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## IMF reaches agreement with authorities in Georgia

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The mission of International Monetary Fund (IMF), led by Mercedes Vera-Martin, held talks with the Georgian authorities during the first 2 weeks of April on the completion of the 6th review of the program, supported by the 'extended financing mechanism.' Raising the funding of the program was also discussed. After the mission's 6th review the total disbursement will amount to \$ 450 million (155% of Georgia's quota), the head of IMF mission announced, emphasizing that on the basis of a productive discussion, an agreement was reached between the Georgian government and the IMF mission.

According to Vera-Martin the IMF team recommends increasing the total amount of IMF support by 130 percent of the quota (about \$ 375 million) to help fund health and macroeconomic stabilization measures to meet the COVID-19 pandemic needs and will mobilize the help of the international community.

Part of that amount, about \$ 200 million will be budgeted to help the country's government address the urgent medical and socio-economic needs. This part of the money will be made available to the country as soon as the program is reviewed by the Board of Executive Directors, approximately in the beginning of May.

Head of the IMF mission also announced that the National



► The head of the IMF mission in Georgia: "Thanks to reasonable macroeconomic policies, fiscal and foreign reserves growth, well-funded financial system and significant financial assistance from donors over the past years, Georgia is prepared to face this challenge."

Bank of Georgia (NBG) has carried out foreign exchange interventions to reduce exchange rate fluctuations and has taken decisive steps to ensure financial stability, the buffers of capital and liquidity have been released in time to support the economy.

She said that the implementation of structural reforms in the country will help maintain the potential for economic growth and rapid economic recovery. "The authorities must quickly enact a law on enterprises insolvency," Vera-Martin added, and pointed out that the basic pension indexation to approve the procedure will improve the real income of pensioners and reduce poverty among the elderly.

As Vera Martin noted, Georgia's economic prospects have deteriorated significantly due



► After the approval of the IMF Board of Executive Directors, about \$ 200 million will be immediately available for transfer to the Georgian budget.

to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to her, a 4% drop in real GDP is expected in 2020. In 2021, it is expected to grow by 3%. This time the uncertainty

surrounding the forecast is higher than under normal circumstances.

Head of the mission remarked that reducing trade,

halting tourism and reducing remittances will increase the current account deficit to 11% of GDP in 2020. Due to the increased caution of global investors, it is likely to reduce net private inflows and delay investments as well. The fiscal deficits will temporarily rise to 8½ % of GDP, as revenues are declining and spending is rising to contain the virus and reduce the social and economic impact of the pandemic.

As she noted, the COVID-19 pandemic has raised the need to finance the balance of payments by about \$ 1.6 billion by 2020-2021 and this need will be funded with the help of the IMF and other donors.

Giorgi Gakharia, the Prime Minister of Georgia announced this week that Georgia will be the first to agree on an updated extended program with the IMF, which is very important. PM emphasized that as a result of successful cooperation with international donor organizations, international aid of approximately \$ 3 billion will be available by the end of the year.

2020 will be the worst year for the global economy after the Great Depression, according to the IMF, which estimates that the global economy will shrink by 3 % as a result of the pandemic. According to the same forecast, growth of 5.8 % is expected in 2021. However, the prospect of growth is still vague and unpredictable.



### GOVERNMENT BANS VEHICLE MOVEMENT UNTIL APRIL 21ST

Prime Minister's spokesman Irakli Chikovani announced the government's decision at the briefing to ban vehicle movement, starting April 17th 12:00 p.m until April 2nd. According to him, the restriction does not apply to the cargo transportation and distribution. All grocery shops, pharmacies and delivery services will remain open.

Starting April 17th, wearing masks in closed spaces will be mandatory and the violation will be fined GEL 15 000.

"If each citizen, private sector, government, business, religious organizations, civil society, all of us does not follow rules and state emergency restrictions, it will become a basis of worsening the situation and we will have to impose more restrictions such as state-wide full

quarantine. We are strictly demanding you to show high responsibility," said Chikovani.

According to Irakli Chikovani, public health representatives expect a significant increase in the number of cases in the next 2-3 weeks.

"In total, according to today's data, we have 348 confirmed cases and the stage of active internal outbreak has started in the country. Public health officials expect a significant increase in cases of infection in the next 2-3 weeks. The government has taken timely measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19," said Chikovani.

As of April 17th, The number of COVID-19 cases is 348. 74 people have recovered and 3 people have died.

### AMIRAN GAMKRELIDZE URGES CITIZENS TO STAY HOME, AMID 'SERIOUS INTERNAL OUTBREAK' OF COVID-19

The director of the National Center for Disease Control Amiran Gamkrelidze announced that according to epidemiological researches, the internal outbreak has started in Georgia and the situation can become 'uncontrollable.'

Gamkrelidze once again calls on citizens to stay home, avoid gatherings and don't go to churches, amid some of the Patriarchate of Georgia representatives calling on citizens to attend the Easter Liturgy on Easter Sunday.

"Epidemiological researches indicate that internal outbreak has already started, which may become uncontrollable if we do not follow all the measures, all

the instructions or recommendations given by the Georgian government, the Ministry of Health, the National Center for Disease Control and every sensible person in Georgia. Today the only weapon to fight the infection is self-isolation, there is no vaccine yet and it will not be until about the end of the year. There is no etiotropic drug yet. We, the doctors, have high hopes that this drug will be available, but probably in the second half of the fall. Until then, there is only one weapon left, so that there is no mass outbreak in Georgia just like it is in rest of the world today," said Gamkrelidze.



# Konstantine Oldenburgsky - *Country of Liquid Sun*

Prince Konstantine Oldenburgsky was the great-grandson of the Emperor of Russia, Paul I, and the grandson of the beloved sister of the Emperor Alexander I, Ekaterina, Paul's daughter. It is known that Napoléon asked the Russian Emperor for Ekaterina's hand in marriage but Alexander I, due to certain political considerations, refused the famous French monarch in his request.

In 1882, Prince Konstantine Oldenburgsky married Agrapina Japaridze, famous for her beauty, and had five children with her. Their marriage occurred under rather strange circumstances. Japaridze was married and had two children. Her first husband was Tariel Dadiani, a representative of the famous family, but was already quite poor at that time and was known as great lover of gambling who squandered all of his property in playing cards. On one occasion, Prince Oldenburgsky happened to sit together with Prince Dadiani at a card table.

That day, Dadiani had lost such a large amount of money that he said in despair: "Even if I sell the whole of Tbilisi, I'll



► Konstantine Oldenburgsky and Agrafena Japaridze

still be in debt." Prince Oldenburgsky listened and then answered him calmly: "You don't need to sell Tbilisi, simply cede your wife to me forever and I'll give you the money. What do you think? How much does you Tbilisi cost?" Dadiani, astonished and delighted by solving the problem so easily, called his wife and told her: "I have just sold you" and indicated his decision to the Prince. Dadiani was even more astonished when he did not notice any nervousness on Agrapina's face. Suddenly, and without losing her composure, she slapped her husband's face without uttering a word, approached Prince, linked her arm through his and left the hall with him.

It is also astonishing that the family, which was created in such a way, in the end turned out to be quite solid and happy. Obviously, Prince Oldenburgsky made the court very angry by such a frivolous marriage and he lost his inheritance. Consequently, he and his descendants no longer had the right to hold the title of the Oldenburg Princes. This formality did not annoy the Prince greatly as he was quite rich and had a nice income. According to the Emperor's special resolution, another name was granted

to the Prince's descendants. Oldenburgsky was favoured and granted the opportunity to choose between the two names: Boz and Zarnekau. By chance, Oldenburgsky's friend, Giorgi Sharvashidze, was present and advised him thus: "If you are going to live in Georgia, you'd better choose Zarnekau." Oldenburgsky appreciated his advice, even more so when he later learned the meaning of the first word in Georgian (bozi is the Georgian word for prostitute). Agrapina, formerly Dadiani, and her children, therefore, received the title of Earl Zarnekau.

Despite the unacceptable marriage, Prince Oldenburgsky maintained his influence in the Emperor's court. This was proven by the fact that he, together with his wife, was invited to the most representational and famous fancy dress ball of the period of Nicholas II which was held in 1903. Only the most prominent and noble families of the Empire had the right to attend the ball in the status of a guest.

Prince Oldenburgsky's family lived in Gagra at their summer residence for most of the time. The Prince had built a palace of unique beauty and architecture near Gagripshi in a pine grove. The palace was looking over the sea and was surrounded by a decorative grove-park. The Prince built comfortable access roads to the palace and thereby earned the admiration and respect of the local population.

Entrepreneur Bibikov and Oldenburgsky opened factories in the Kutaisi province where, like those owned by Prince Murat, cognac was made using only the French technology. In 1902, Oldenburgsky bought Bibikov's factory and renewed spirit distillation and then opened a cognac depository in 1904.

Prince Konstantine Oldenburgsky died in 1906 in Nice, France, and was buried near St-Petersburg. After his death, his descendants continued his entrepreneurial activities.

After Georgia became a Soviet Republic, the children of Prince Oldenburgsky and Agrapina's left Georgia and emigrated. Agrapina, who was already an elderly woman at that time, did not want to leave her homeland and lived in Gagra until the end of her life. She used to go to the church, light candles and pray for the health of her six children, read prayers for the soul of her son who was shot down by Bolsheviks in 1918... Each day was spent like this until she herself passed away. Agrapina Japaridze-Dadiani-Zarnekau died in 1926. She was buried in Gagra.



► Agrafena Japaridze



► Art Palace in Tbilisi