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After 5-day search 23-year-old girl found dead in her car



► Tamar Bachalishvili went missing on Saturday.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

23-year-old Tamar Bachalishvili from Ponichala district of Tbilisi, who went missing on July 18th, has been found dead in her car in a forest of Tetrtskaro municipality of eastern Georgia earlier on 22nd of July. Bachalishvili was missing for several days, she left the house with her car on Saturday and had not returned since.

According to the relatives, the deceased has no relatives or friends in Tetrtskaro district. Therefore, they do not understand why 23-year-old Tamar Bachalishvili would go to the area.

The girl was found by a local shepherd in the forest and called the police. Witnesses told the media that the body was in the back-seat of the car. The family of Bachalishvili says that "suicide is ruled out, our daughter has been killed."

The body of the girl has been transported for autopsy. The family says that they will invite an independent expert to get involved in the investigation.

The mother of the deceased girl told Mtavari Arkhi earlier this week that she did not know where her daughter worked, while her father said his "daughter was frequently nervous and irritated due to her job."

"My daughter is in IT. She graduated from the faculty of cybertechnology (in France). She just told me that she received orders from Canada. She said it was an IT company she worked for, but she herself had not much information about it," the mother said, adding that the company allegedly had no office, but her daughter used to go to Vake, central Tbilisi, for job-related issues.

According to the father, yesterday, the law enforcers told him that they opened his daughter's computer, finding

that the girl "was facing a big problem." A few hours before the deceased was found, a statement was issued by the company about where Tamar worked. The statement said that the disappearance of the employee is inexplicable. It is also explained that a young woman who was a programmer by profession recently worked on creating an online system for company employees where employees could count working hours.

The company Bachalishvili worked for is IT company Zag which was created 5 years ago. Tamar Koberidze, the company director, told the media that they "are working exclusively for the US." "That is why we have no website or PR," Koberidze said. The company says that Bachalishvili joined their team in 2017 and requested dismissal last week.

Koberidze says that she was not surprised by Bachalishvili's decision as "it was hard for her to study and work si-

multaneously (Bachalishvili enrolled at Tbilisi State University French School of Informatics in 2016).

Zag Ltd denies the information to the media that there may be a connection between them and the so-called Troll Factory, however, its director says there has been talk of the existence of such a facility in the same building where the company has an office.

What was Tamar's second job, neither her Georgian employer nor her family specified, professional social network linkedin reveals that she worked with the Austrian IT company SPRYFLASH.

Tamar Bachalishvili's family lawyer Mikheil Ramishvili informed that letters, medicines and other personal items were seized from the car. He does not speak about the contents of the letters found in the girl's car. However, according to some media outlets, a letter which was found in the car, said - "There is money on the deposit, use it." As for medicines, Ramishvili reports, they were not psychotropic drugs. According to him, the deceased also had personal belongings in the car, including a mobile phone. Asked if there were any traces of another car on the spot, the lawyer said that all traces have been taken and everything is possible.

The lawyer does not rule out that the car may have been newly brought to the scene. The involvement of divers and helicopters in Tamar Bachalishvili's search was preceded by a protest by family members demanding that law enforcement make more efforts to find the missing person. Mtavari Arkhi reported on 21st of July that the family and relatives of Bachalishvili tried to block the road and held a rally in Kvemo Ponichala settlement, demanding more attention to the case. Father of Tamar Bachalishvili has accused police of being indifferent.



► Family and neighbors of missing Tamar Bachalishvili hold rally in Kvemo Ponichala.

EMC responds to the construction of a HPP in Imereti



► The cascade will include two HPP total capacity of which will exceed 430 megawatts.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Human Rights and Monitoring Center-EMC reacts to the upcoming protest against Namakhvan cascade, scheduled on July 22nd, in Kutaisi and shares a statement calling on the government not to let this project to be implemented without a full examination of its social, economical and ecological consequences.

Human Rights and Monitoring Center-EMC reacts to the upcoming protest against Namakhvan cascade, scheduled on July 22nd in Kutaisi, and shares a statement calling on the government not to let this project to be implemented without a full examination of its social, economical and ecological consequences.

According to the statement published on the official website of EMC, the construction of massive cascades of HPP is planned to be carried out in the valley of river Rioni. Regardless of the controversy around the Namakhvan Hydroelectric Power Plant, in February of 2020, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia made a positive environmental decision on the HPP.

According to EMC, if built, the cascade of Namakhvan HPP will be the largest energetic project in Georgia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The project includes building of two dams of 50 and 111 meters, therefore due to its massive scale, the potential impact and possible risks on the local social and natural environment are high. As the statement reads, an area of possible inundation incase of the HPP construction includes homes of 111 families who are now under the threat of dispossession. Influence areas also include up to 20 statues of cultural heritage, a couple of villages and over 10 archeological sites.

The statement notes that



► The caption: "Namakhvan HPP destroys us"

the experts of numerous fields consider the area as risky and inconvenient for such constructions.

According to EMC, Financial and economical aspects of the project are doubtful as well. The project provides guaranteed sales agreements, extended for 8 months and as EMC states the practice of guaranteed sales agreement has been criticised multiple times.

The statement also stresses

the COVID-19 factor as the post-crisis economical condition is yet uncertain and the current forecasts are vulnerable and superficial.

EMC suggests legal assessment which states that according to the constitution of Georgia and international conventions, society concerned should be engaged in every stage of decision-making regarding the issues of environmental and natural resource management.

The statement reads that firm standards of environmental decisions have been created by the renewed Environmental Assessment Code. Moreover, in accordance with the instructions of the EU, maximally transparent processes of environmental activities have been implemented. However, according to the statement, regardless of defining standards of the legislative framework, EMC notes that the rights of the people concerned were restricted during the public discussion held by the government of Georgia on December 20th of 2020, in the framework of administrative procedure about Namakhvani-Zhoneti HPP. In particular, a public discussion took place 50 km away from the very area of designing, in the building of the mayor of Tskaltubo Municipality and as EMC states, most of the public's relevant and critical questions were left unanswered.

"Abovementioned makes it clear that the involvement of the society has solely formal nature. The locals are not provided with proper information on possible positive or negative influences of the project and about the measures for its mitigation," reads the statement.

EMC states that the environmental decision contains a lot of important legal shortcomings since the government has not presented all the required documentation.

Human Rights and Monitoring Center calls on the government and the Ministry of Economics and Sustainable Development of Georgia to:

- Study the legitimacy of the environmental decision of Namakhvan HPP on the ground of alternative research.
- Suspend the process of building the HPP before the final decision is made.
- Elaborate systemic approach and strategy of renewable energy including the one of hydro-energetic development.
- Ensure the compliance with national and international legislation whilst planning the projects for HPP.
- eradicate the poor and intransparent practice of construction-planning and prearrangements with companies.
- Assure proper involvement of the persons concerned and the community under the influence of the HPP projects.
- Assure the protection of the people's rights influenced by the HPP projects.

THURSDAY JULY 23

Day Partly Cloudy High: 28°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 21°C

FRIDAY JULY 24

Day Partly Cloudy High: 29°C

Night Partly Cloudy Low: 21°C

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Support for Improvement of Healthcare System of Georgia through Provision of Medical Equipment

On July 22, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Georgia, Mr. UEHARA Tadaharu and Minister of Finance of Georgia, Mr. Ivane Matchvariani signed the Exchange of Notes between Japan and Georgia, for provision of medical equipment to Georgia.

The Government of Japan provided medical equipment equivalent to 300 million yen or 2.8 million US dollars. Specific types of equipment, including defibrillator and electrocardiograph, are under discussion and will be finally determined during the following consultations with the Government of Georgia.

The medical assistance by the Government of Japan is not temporary aid against COVID 19, but aims to use this unprecedented pandemic crisis in order to contribute to Georgia's medium and long term socio-economic development, including enhancement of medical system.

For over two decades, Japan has been offering support to Georgia, aiming towards sustainable development, to benefit ordinary people with no one left behind. For example, assistance for the development of infrastructure through projects such as "East-West Highway Improvement Project (Phase 1), and projects



related to environmental improvement, including the projects for introduction of clean energy by solar electricity generation system at Tbilisi international airport and Ilia state university (480,000,000 yen or 453 million dollars). Furthermore, Government of Japan has implemented

180 projects in the scheme of grassroots and human security grant projects (no less than 18 million dollars) for the past 20 years as well. All of these projects have been actively implemented and directed towards establishment of the state self-sustaining development mechanism in Georgia.



The Government of Japan intends to continue assistance and cooperation for the construction of resilient state through such projects as improvement of major sector-agriculture and development of education that is most important basis of state development.

The Government of Japan sincerely hopes that this project will contribute to additional enhancement of health and welfare system and much more Georgian people will be able to lead healthier lives.

(Embassy of Japan in Georgia)

Ban on regular flights extended until September 1st

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The ban on international regular flights was extended until September 1st. The Aviation Agency has already issued a relevant note. International tourism, which has been closed to Georgia since March, was due to open on the 1st of July, but the Georgian government has resumed regular flights until 1st of August, and has now postponed it for another month. The ruling team names the threat of coronavirus and 'caring for citizens' as the reason.

"The restriction provided by the note within the framework of preventing the spread of coronavirus has lasted from 21.07.20 and is valid until 31.08.20," writes the Civil Aviation Agency.

The restriction does not apply only to the 3 destinations that will be operated from Tbilisi International Airport in August at Charles de Gaulle Paris, Munich and Riga International Airports.

"We do this only with the countries with which traffic is unconditionally allowed and we have direct flights. Accordingly, in August, we will continue to extend the temporary ban on regular flights to all other destinations, but gradually increase the area of regular flights," the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Natia Turnava stated.

Lufthansa flies from Tbilisi to Munich twice a week. Company



► Regular air traffic between Tbilisi and Paris will be resumed on August 8th

practically already unveiled its flight schedule and tickets are on sale. Air France flies to Paris twice a week as well. Regular air traffic between the capitals of Georgia and France will resume on August 8th. "The leading French airline will operate flights twice a week, according to the following schedule: Paris (Charles de Gaulle Airport) - Tbilisi, every Wednesday and Saturday; Tbilisi-Paris (Charles de Gaulle Airport), every Thursday and Sunday," - said the Civil Aviation Agency. Regular flights will be operated by Airbus A320 and A321 aircraft.

As for Riga, negotiations are underway with Air Baltic - the Georgian government wants only one flight a week, to which Air

Baltic has not yet agreed.

Airzena will continue commercial charters. According to Turnava, it will have about 16 flights, slightly more than it had in July. Mostly, it will be Vienna and Amsterdam. In agreement with us, other commercial charters will also be allowed, providing quarantine spaces, the minister added.

As for the so-called Social charters, Tbilisi-Berlin-Tbilisi direction will be added to the announced 5 directions.

"This was a request of Georgian students who were going to fly to Germany with short-term employment programs. We have considered this to be the category where the state should use its



► "It will be unprofitable to fly twice or once a week for 'Ryanair' and 'Wizz Air,' as soon as we are ready, we will accept the directions offered by them," Turnava said.

subsidy resource and offer relatively affordable tickets. We have worked with the Department of Youth and in practice this flight will take place in the near future," said Turnava.

Low-budget companies, Wizzair and Ryanair are not allowed to fly by the government yet, because, according to Turnava, low-budget companies do not arrange one or two flights a week. She explained that Wizzair and Ryanair want to fly to more than a dozen destinations, for which, in her opinion, Georgia is not ready for now.

Georgia has been included in the list of countries to which the EU has opened its borders since the 1st of July, however, the

Georgian government will unconditionally allow only citizens of 5 EU countries. Citizens of Germany, France, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia can come to Georgia without any restrictions, however, Georgian citizens from the same countries must be quarantined for 2 weeks. The Council of the European Union has updated the list of countries to which the travel restrictions should be gradually lifted mid-July and the list still includes Georgia.

Georgia has reported 24 new cases on 22nd of July, taking the tally of total confirmed cases to 1073. In the meantime, 4 more patients have recovered, taking the number of recoveries to 907.