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Restrictions were adopted on November 28

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Georgia receives first doses of AstraZeneca vaccine



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

On Saturday, March 13, 43,200 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines arrived in Georgia. UNICEF, which supported the Georgian government in procuring the vaccines announced on its Twitter page that the plane carrying the first doses of anti-coronavirus vaccines landed in Tbilisi airport. According to UNICEF's report, the

vaccination program in Georgia will start on Monday, March 15, and the first doses will be administered to the priority groups including medical workers:

"Vaccines will be distributed by the Government to all districts over the weekend and vaccinations are scheduled to start on 15 March. Administration of the vaccines will be based on the priority groups identified by the Government,

with medical workers among the priority group. The 43,200 doses will be fully utilized for the first dose. This decision was taken based on the information that the next delivery of 86,400 doses will take place in April and the recommended interval between the injections is 8 to 12 weeks", the UNICEF report reads.

On top of that, the report notes that Georgia is about to receive another 129,

600 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine in the coming weeks. Furthermore, the Georgian government has already asked the UNICEF to facilitate its procurement of the Pfizer vaccines:

"UNICEF, along with other partners such as WHO and GAVI, is delighted to support the Government of Georgia in COVID-19 vaccine procurement." - Amy Clancy.

The EU ambassador to Georgia, Carl Hartzel, also congratulated Georgia on the arrival of the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine:

"Although I am currently in the middle of working intensively with Christian Danielsson on the process of political mediations, I would like to congratulate Georgia on receiving 43,200 doses of vaccine via the COVAX platform. I am also very proud of the fact that the EU and the WHO support the Georgian government using training, advice, and logistics to ensure the fastest and the most effective delivery of the vaccines to those who need it the most", ambassador Hartzel said.

Upon the arrival of the first batch of AstraZeneca vaccines, President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili tweeted:

"This is what 'light at the end of the tunnel' looks like. Thank you to our international partners who made this possible. We still have a long road ahead but the world is stronger together and will overcome this crisis through solidarity."



European Union mediator holds a series of meetings with political parties in Georgia

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

The EU-appointed mediator, Christian Danielsson, began a series of meetings with Georgian political parties, both the ruling Georgian Dream party and members of the opposition. Upon his arrival to Georgia, Danielsson told the press that the main topics for the upcoming negotiations would revolve around the issue of political prisoners, politicized justice, and electoral reform:

“Electoral reform, politicized justice – those are the issues that we should be considering closely, the issues that will become the [primary] topics of the upcoming negotiations. In the days to come, we are ready to work on resolving those issues,” Danielsson said.

Christian Danielsson has already held a meeting with the opposition United National Movement party, whose leader, Nika Melia, currently remains in detention on charges of repeatedly refusing to post his bail, as well as violating the conditions of his bail. Danielsson has also met with the ruling Georgian Dream party, as well as other opposition parties that won the seats in Parliament during the October 2020 elections: Strategy Aghmashenebeli, Girchi, Alliance of Patriots, European Georgia, Citizens, Patri-

ots, and Lelo parties. The European Union delegation to Georgia also reported that Danielsson has already met with PM Irakli Garibashvili and President Salome Zurbashvili.

Leader of the Strategy Aghmashenebeli opposition party Giorgi Vashadze later explained that the meeting was rather introductory, and an opportunity for parties to outline their positions amidst the ongoing crisis. Vashadze did, however, mention that the issue of political prisoners as well as the holding of early elections did remain the main priority of the meetings.

Similarly, the Girchi party mentioned that during the meetings, the release of the political prisoners was discussed as a ‘pre-condition’ for solving the ongoing crisis among the political parties.

Speaker of the Georgian Parliament and a member of the ruling Georgian Dream party, Archil Talakvadze, has also commented on the possible beginning of the negotiations, marked by the arrival of Christian Danielsson. He said that Georgian Dream is ready to agree with the country’s opposition bloc, should the conditions of such an agreement be just:

“I would like to tell you that Georgian Dream is ready to agree if the terms of such an agreement are just... We value



Weather

Monday, March 15

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 9°C
Night Light Rain
Low: 3°C

Tuesday, March 16

Day Light Snow
High: 10°C
Night Light Rain
Low: 4°C

the position of our allies and, of course, we would like to come to an agreement that will be able to guarantee a stable, long-term political cooperation in our country,” Talakvadze said.

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Protesters in Kutaisi demand the resignation of Economy Minister



Environmental activists, the local population, and others gathered in Kutaisi for the second time to protest the construction of Namakhvani HPP

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

A group of activists gathered in Kutaisi to protest the construction of the Namakhvani HPP, a huge cascade of Hydro Power Plant that is planned to be built in the Rioni gorge. During the rally, activists demanded the resignation of the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, Natia Turnava.



Activists called on Natia Turnava to resign

According to Varlam Goletiani, an activist who opposes the construction of the HPP, a moratorium should be declared in the energy sector and discussions should begin to define the legislation, in which the interest of the population will be reflected.

Goletiani also noted that the activists will remain in Kutaisi during the night as well. Locals in the region have been opposing the construction of Namakhvani HPP for more than four months. They demand the company to leave the gorge and halt the constructions. The protesters are supported by several NGOs.

The construction of the Namakhvani HPP cascade is planned on the Rioni River, which includes two HPPs, Kvemo and Zemo Namakhvani HPPs. Both HPPs together should have a capacity of 433 MW. The project is worth \$ 850 million, and the cascade is scheduled to be operational in 2025-2026. The project is implemented by the Turkish company Enka.

According to the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center, EMC, the agreement about Namakhvani gives up significant state interest in favor of a private company. The company also says that the project will not contribute to the energy security of the country, as indicated by the government, and it will imply heavy and indefinite fiscal burdens on the country's budget.

EMC's statement reads that the company is using Georgia's natural resources free of charge and does not undertake to sell energy on the domestic market, which overturns the arguments of the country's energy security or even economic benefits.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has made a statement regarding the large-scale protest against the construction of the Namakhvani HPP in Kutaisi, according to which, police forces were mobilized on the spot to protect public order and security.

On March 12, Turnava said that construction of the dam and reservoir would not begin until the existing studies were verified.

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

According to the decision of the Inter-Agency Coordination Council, further restrictions will be lifted in Georgia starting from today, March 15.

According to the decision announced by the Inter-Agency council, universities in the country will have the ability to continue classes offline, gyms will also be able to reopen, and the theaters and sports clubs will be allowed to resume rehearsals.

Because of the harsh epidemiological situation, the government of the country adopted strict restrictions on November 28.

From March 1, museums and libraries have resumed operations in Georgia, Batumi restaurants have started accepting customers indoors (except weekends), conferences and training are allowed, and kindergartens are open.

Health experts say that officials will have to focus on the ongoing events in the

country and make sure to analyze the effect of lifting the restrictions.

One restriction that remains unchanged in the country is

the curfew. The Minister of Health of Georgia Ekaterine Tikaradze said that 'we do not have the luxury' to lift the restriction on the curfew. She

said that already, the number of daily reported cases is increasing slightly, and lifting this restriction might have further influence.

Over the weekend, 612 new cases of the Covid-19 were reported in the country. In total, there has been a total of 274,989 Covid-19 cases reported in Georgia. Out of these, 268,237 have recovered.

The first case of the virus was reported in the country on November 26, 2020.

More restrictions to be lifted in Georgia beginning today



Universities in the country will have the ability to continue classes offline



The first case of the Covid-19 was reported in the country on November 26, 2020