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Health Minister: 'A week before Easter we will come up with a plan'

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Georgian PM meets WB Regional Director for the South Caucasus



11 detained for fraudulent misappropriation of ₾ 2 million belonging to international citizens

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BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

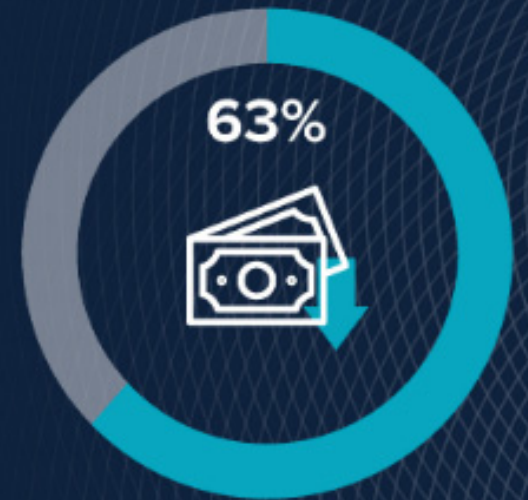
The International Republican Institute's (IRI) Center for Insights in Survey Research has released the result of the first nationwide poll conducted in Georgia after the 2020 Parliamentary elections. The survey focuses on public opinion concerning the economy, the

Citizens increasingly anxious over the economy, the pandemic, and recent political crisis, says IRI Regional Director for Eurasia Stephen Nix

GEORGIA POLL FEB 2021

Economic Anxiety

63% of Georgians state the economic situation of their household has worsened over the last year



IRI.ORG | @IRI_POLLS

IRI reports that the poll has revealed widespread economic concerns and decreased satisfaction with the government's response to COVID-19.

government's response to COVID-19, and the ongoing political crisis.

As the poll revealed, 76% of Georgian citizens think that in the past year, the economic situation has worsened either 'somewhat' (37%) or 'a lot' (39%). Only one percent describes the economic situation in their household as 'very good' and 26% as 'somewhat good', while 71% describe it as either 'somewhat bad' or 'very bad'.

The poll shows that the Georgian people consider unemployment as the major economic problem of the country. The cost of living and high prices are also regarded as one of the biggest challenges.

59% of the respondents said they are either 'somewhat' (44 percent) or 'very' (15 percent) satisfied with the government's overall response, which, as IRI reports, is a 20-point decrease since the June 2020 survey. Concerning the government's response to addressing the economic consequences of Covid-19, 45%, as opposed to 56% in the June 2020 poll, are satis-

fied with the government's efforts.

Speaking of the 2020 parliamentary elections, the majority (53%) said the elections were free, fair, and transparent, while 35% said they were either 'somewhat not' or 'definitely not' free, fair, and transparent.

The survey shows that 60 percent of citizens do not support the opposition's boycott.

According to the poll, the USA (69%) and the European Union (54%) are believed to be the most important partners for Georgia, while the vast majority (88%) think that Russia poses the most threat to the country.

"Over years of polling, Georgians have distinguished themselves by their consistent optimism...that now seems to be changing, with citizens increasingly anxious over the economy, the pandemic, and the country's recent political crisis," said IRI Regional Director for Eurasia Stephen Nix adding that Georgians want a functioning parliament reflecting their needs.

According to IRI, the survey was supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID).



"These findings send an important message to both the governing and opposition parties. Georgians want a functioning parliament that reflects their needs," said IRI Regional Director for Eurasia Stephen Nix.

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Health Minister: ‘A week before Easter we will come up with a plan’

Health Minister of Georgia Ekaterine Tikaradze stated yesterday that by the week leading to the Orthodox Easter, the government will come up with a plan on how to manage public health and welfare during the holidays:

“At this stage, we are working very hard, but the virus is spreading. Approximately a week before Easter we will have a much clearer understanding of the situation in the country, and we will have a plan of what to do next,” Tikaradze stated. She added that despite the growing number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Georgia, the ministry will do its best to manage the situation without having to impose further restrictions.

Tikaradze also addressed the recent arrival of the Chinese anti-coronavirus vaccine Sinopharm in Georgia. She said that the credibility and effectiveness of the vaccine are unquestionable:

“Over 40 million people have already been vaccinated with Sinopharm and, to this day, there are no questions raised about its efficacy.”

The minister noted that Georgia is waiting for the vaccine to receive official approval from the World Health Organization (WHO), and once approved, the vaccine may be available by April 15.

Head of the National Center for Disease Control Amiran Gamkrelidze noted that the reason why the number of confirmed cases in Georgia is currently surging is because of the slow pace of implementation of the nationwide vaccination plan, as well as people’s reluctance to wear masks:

“We need to accelerate the vaccination process. As of today, only 11,603 people have been vaccinated. We have an average of 1,000 vaccinations administered per day. Now it is a little over 1,000 vaccinations per day, but that’s not enough. At this point, we need at least 3,000 vaccinations a day,” Gamkrelidze explained.

The nationwide vaccination program in Georgia began on March 15, and it is currently conducted using AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines. The country has recently acquired doses of Sinopharm vaccines, but it will not be used until it receives official approval from the WHO.



Health Minister of Georgia Ekaterine Tikaradze



Weather

Tuesday, April 6

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 17°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 9°C

Wednesday, April 7

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 22°C

Night Clear
Low: 11°C

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By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Yesterday, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili met with World

Georgian PM meets WB Regional Director for the South Caucasus



World Bank Regional Director for the South Caucasus Sebastian Molineus and Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili



“I was very pleased to see the Government’s commitment to ongoing structural reforms in several key sectors, including agriculture, education, healthcare, human capital,” said the World Bank Regional Director for the South Caucasus after the meeting.

Bank Regional Director for the South Caucasus Sebastian Molineus. The key issues discussed at the meeting were the successful cooperation between Georgia and the World Bank, the WB’s support provided for Georgia through the pandemic, and current as well as upcoming projects. “We had a very good discussion around economic development and how to continue to advance Georgia’s economic reforms,” said Molineus after the meeting.

The conversation touched upon the World Bank’s assistance and immediate responses to the needs of Georgia during the Covid-19 pandemic. Molineus underscored the World Bank’s efforts to ensure that Georgian citizens remain safe from a potential third wave and stressed the need to accelerate the introduction of additional doses of Covid-19 vaccine to Georgia.

Gharibashvili thanked Molineus for the ‘effective and

productive cooperation that has benefited various sectors of the economy. WB has allocated funds for numerous projects, amounting to over \$2.7 billion.

As the PM remarked, the World Bank’s initiative to finance road projects and energy and agriculture sectors is crucial for the development of the country. According to Gharibashvili, the Georgian Government appreciates the current portfolio of the World Bank, which consists of 12 active in-

vestment and development projects totaling \$ 928 million.

The WB Regional Director for the South Caucasus said he was pleased to see the Government’s commitment to ongoing structural reforms in several key areas, including agriculture, education, healthcare, and human capital. According to Molineus, human capital is one of the main driving forces. He stressed that

the WB would support the Georgian government in this direction and would contribute to this process by providing appropriate diagnostic analysis and tools for its implementation.

The WB Regional Director for the South Caucasus congratulated Gharibashvili on his appointment as Prime Minister and wished him success.

11 detained for fraudulent misappropriation of 2 million belonging to international citizens



Georgian prosecutors have charged 10 Georgians and one Israeli citizen with embezzling large sums of money from foreign nationals, tampering with personal data, and money laundering.

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Georgian Prosecutor’s Office has charged 10 Georgian and one Israeli citizen with fraudulent embezzlement of large sums of money belonging to foreign nationals, tampering with personal data, and money laundering.



MIA has detained 11 individuals for helping embezzle €620,000 belonging to German, Austrian, Chinese, Dutch, and Norwegian citizens.

“Employees of the Prosecutor’s Office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in the framework of international cooperation with Eurojust, have uncovered a large-scale international scheme for fraudulent embezzlement of large sums of

money and money laundering.” The investigation established in the spring of 2019, an Israeli citizen formed an organized criminal group that was engaged in the fraudulent appropriation of funds belonging to foreign nationals interested in

cryptocurrency trading. The organizers gradually involved a number of individuals fluent in foreign languages in the illicit activities to illegally obtain personal data and systematically contacted potential victims and offered to purchase cryptocurrency by cashless payment. Members of the group registered them remotely on the relevant website, after which they purchased cryptocurrency in their name, which was later transferred to accounts available not to the victims but the accounts of the group members.

The members of the criminal group fraudulently misappropriated large sums of money belonging to numerous foreign citizens. As a result of active cooperation with Eurojust, dozens of affected EU citizens have already been identified, and the amount of damages set for this stage is 620,000 euros.

As reported by the prosecutor’s office, the investigation also revealed that some of the criminal group members managed to legalize their illegal income, in particular, they pur-

chased expensive vehicles and real estate, which were distrained. The amount of more than 2 million received as a result of criminal activities in the bank account of the head of the organized groups was found and frozen as well.

The lawyer for an Israeli citizen arrested on charges of fraudulent embezzlement says detainee George Simon Hoor is exercising his right to remain silent.

Malkhaz Alakaia, a lawyer for two Georgian citizens arrested on charges of embezzlement, says his clients have not pleaded guilty. According to him, there is no evidence in the case to prove that the detainees misappropriated the money. The Lawyer says that cryptocurrencies are not prohibited and that his clients provided only intellectual assistance in these matters.

The Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia charged 10 Georgian citizens and one Israeli citizen yesterday. The crime is punishable by nine to 12 years in prison.