

## 3 individuals sew their mouths shut in protest against Georgian Manganese mine



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Three residents of Shukruti village in Chiatura of Imereti region of Western Georgia sewed their mouths shut to protest against the environmental damage caused by the Georgian Manganese mine, which produces and exports ferroalloys and manganese ore.

Marking the 85<sup>th</sup> day of protests against the Georgian Manganese, residents of the Shukruti village demand that the company compensates for the damage it has caused. The company's official position revolves around the claim that the damage was caused during the Soviet period and was already compensated back then. One of the residents of the Shukruti village Jano Labadze said in an interview with the Georgian service of Radio Liberty/ Radio Free Europe that are currently 280 families living in the village and some of their houses have already been damaged to the uninhabitable

condition.

Vladimer Saladze, a representative of Georgian Manganese Ltd, stated that the radical demands of the protesters are hindering the process of negotiations:

"The company is trying to negotiate with the locals. As for this particular case, it is a truly extraordinary situation. Of the three individuals who arranged the action, the property of two has been assessed by a private auditor and the amount exceeds the market value. It is unclear to us why these individuals did not agree to the compensation. As for the third person, the family is an eco-migrant

and was satisfied with the house in 2018, therefore, their radical position is unclear, we are left with the impression that the processes are managed by certain groups."

Protesters in Chiatura believe that as a result of improper factory processing and extraction, the river Kvirila, air, and drinking water are polluted and the soil in the nearby areas becomes useless. Besides, the activists claim that the activity of the mine causes landslides and damages to the roads and houses located in its vicinity.

### Politics

People over 45 to be eligible for AstraZeneca



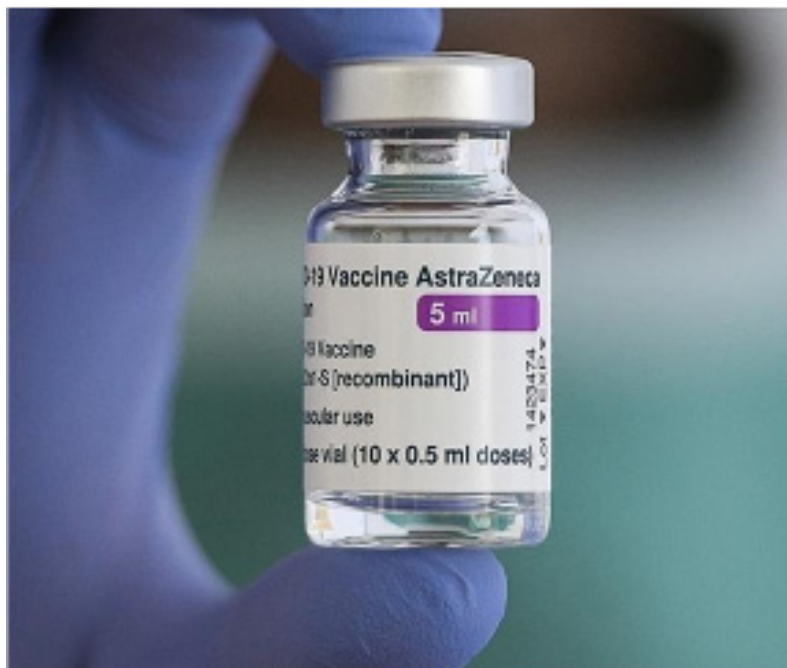
Death of Kazakh citizen raises suspicions of a possible sex trafficking network operating in Georgia

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# People over 45 to be eligible for AstraZeneca



Other than the online platform, registration for vaccines is possible via the hotline 15 22.

According to Gamkrelidze, the rate of those who regularly wear facemasks has increased to 76%.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI  
 Deputy Minister of Health Tamar Gabunia says that Georgia is now at the peak stage of the coronavirus epidemic. "The average rate ranges from 1,500 to 2,000. To some extent, it is good that there is no drastic growth. Based on international modelling, we can say that we are already in the peak period of the third wave, which is expected to last for two weeks," Gabunia said. At this stage, up to 6000 beds are mobilized in the country, more than 2800 of them in Tbilisi.

Since the detection of the first case of coronavirus in Georgia, 324,256 laboratory-confirmed cases of the virus have been detected, out of which 4,336 people have died. According to stopcov.ge, 1788 cases of coronavirus were detected in the last 24 hours and 31 people have died. The positive daily indicator is 5.76%. As for the vaccination, according to the head of the National Center for Disease Control Amiran Gamkrelidze, the demand for vaccines exceeds the country's supply. Gamkrelidze added that 358 thousand doses

of vaccine will be available in the country by the end of June. According to him, up to 67-68 thousand doses have already been used. "To date, 161 brigades are deployed to 100 hospitals, but some brigades in the districts do not work on a daily basis. We want to increase this and switch to a 7-day work schedule and have 300 brigades by the end of June," announced the NCDC head, noting that the capacity of each brigade is 42-50 per day, thus in July, the number of vaccines per day will be up to 15 000. After the meeting of the Im-

munization Council it was also announced that the age of vaccination with AstraZeneca in Georgia has been reduced to 45 years and registration will open for them on May 12 at 20:00. As Gabunia informed, the registration for the second dose of Sinopharm will open at the same time and the vaccination process will start on May 25. For full vaccination, two doses should be taken at 21-28 day intervals. Doses of Chinese coronavirus vaccine Sinopharm in Georgia are virtually exhausted, and the remaining doses will be used by strategic groups. 100 thousand

doses of vaccine imported into the country was enough for 50 thousand people. A large bunch of the Sinopharm vaccine, about 40,000 doses, has already been used or booked, and 10,000 doses will be used by strategic groups, such as the police and penitentiary systems as well as the media and the tourism sector. As of now, vacant places for vaccination with Sinopharm are left in only three regions: Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti and Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Recall that following an evaluation by experts from the Strategic Advisory Group (SAGE), the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the use of the Chinese vaccine Sinopharm in people aged 18+.

Besides, the Immunization Council supported the launch of vaccination with Sinovac before the approval of the WHO. 100,000 doses of Sinovac were gifted by China.

Starting May 13, the regulations on the functioning of all institutions and public transport will be lifted, educational and training institutions will resume their normal work, as well as the movement of municipal transport will be allowed.

At this stage, the restriction on movement during the night hours from 21:00 to 05:00 remains in force. Gabunia says that the issue of transferring the curfew time will be discussed only after the virus rate in the country is no longer at its peak. The curfew has been in force since November 28, fine is ₾ 2000.

# Death of Kazakh citizen raises suspicions of a possible sex trafficking network operating in Georgia

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM  
 On May 6, Georgian prosecutor's office has detained a suspect in the case of a suicide of a 26-year-old citizen of Kazakhstan Asel Aytpayeva. 57 year-old male named Besik Tordua is currently under investigation on charges of rape and bringing to the suicide of Asel Aytpayeva. The prosecution demanded that the suspect remains in pre-trial detention, and, since he was not represented by

a lawyer in court, the defense did not appeal to the court's ruling. It is now being reported that Asel Aytpayeva arrived in Georgia in April in order to work at a Georgian-Kazakh car company, where she, allegedly, met Besik Tordua. Asel was sexually, psychologically, and physically abused, and, shortly before jumping out of the window of the 8th floor, managed to record the abuse in an audio message and sent it to her friends. Georgian Rustavi2 TV Channel released a fragment of the recording with the conversation between Asel and an unknown man who verbally abuses her, admits that he raped her, and says that if she wants to throw herself out of the

window, she should do so. The mother of the deceased believes that her daughter did not commit suicide but was murdered. Meanwhile, the leader of the Sapari women's rights organization, Baia Patariaia believes that a network of sex traffickers could be responsible for this tragic case: "The investigation must pay attention to all the details and find out whether the accused was sexually exploiting the girl. In the short recording I heard, this man really comes across as a trafficker." The trial is expected to continue on June 23; the suspect may face 8-10 years in prison.



## Weather

Wednesday, May 12

Day ☀️ Clear  
 High: 25°C  
 Night 🌙 Clear  
 Low: 12°C

Thursday, May 13

Day ☀️ Clear  
 High: 28°C  
 Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy  
 Low: 16°C

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