

Lithuania to gift Georgia 15,000 doses of vaccines



By VERONIKA MALINBOYM

Earlier last week, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Gabrielius Landsbergis announced that the country will gift Georgia 15,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines:

"As good as our word: Lithuanian gov-

ernment just confirmed 200,000 vaccines to EaP countries. Starting with Ukraine- 100,000 vaccines, Georgia – 15,000 and Moldova – 11,000. Small step by LTU, hopefully our partners in Europe will join in solidarity with many more!" Gabrielius Landsbergis posted on his official Twitter page.

Foreign Minister of Georgia, Davaid Zalkaliani, thanked his Lithuanian colleague by saying "a huge thank you to our true friend & firm supporter – Lithuania for their cooperation during COVID-19 pandemic and 15,000 vaccines that are to be sent to Georgia. We continue working with our partners on additional vaccine doses. Solidarity is pivotal in such complicated times."

Four vaccines are currently being used in Georgia – German-American Pfizer, British AstraZeneca, and Chinese Sinovac and Sinopharm, which has recently received an official approval of the World Health Organization (WHO) for emergency use. Georgian Minister of Economy, Natia Turnava, has announced recently that the country is developing COVID passports for all citizens, which, in the future, will be used for both travelling purposes and in cases of medical emergencies. According to Turnava, passports will contain the information about the individual's COVID status and the vaccines that they have received. Turnava added that the country's Coordination Council will hold another meeting in the nearest future in order to once again assess the epidemiological situation in the country and discuss the possibility of easing some of the existing pandemic-induced restrictions.

As of May 16, Georgia has reported 968 new cases of COVID-19, as well as 908

recoveries and 16 deaths. The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Georgia since February 2020 has now reached 330,375, of which 308,821 people have

recovered and 4,442 have died. As of today, a total of 17,086 individuals remain infected with COVID-19 in Georgia.



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ISFED published the statement on May 15

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ISFED assess structural changes in CEC as 'rushed'



ISFED

საერთაშორისო არჩევნებისა და დემოკრატიის საერთაშორისო საზოგადოება

The statement published by ISFED claims that the process of structural reorganization in the CEC in 2021 is not properly substantiated

By NIKA GANTSEMLIDZE

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, ISFED, has published a statement regarding the ongoing structural changes in the Central Election Commission. According to ISFED, the changes in CEC are rushed.

The statement published by ISFED claims that the process of structural reorganization in the CEC in 2021 is not properly substantiated and shows the feeling that the reorganization is rushed.

ISFED discusses the reorganization process chronologically and claims that on March 4, the process started on the basis of the chairman's order and the goal is to increase the flexibility and efficiency of the CEC.

As ISFED claims, although the ongoing reorganization at the CEC is not aimed at limiting the

staff numbers, the process is still noteworthy as it provided for the creation of new structural units on the one hand, and redistribution of human resources on the other hand.

According to the changes made on March 4, there should have been 11 departments in CEC, and in two months, because of reorganization, other changes were adopted, which reduced the number of departments from 11 to 8.

The ISFED also noted that the remuneration and budget of the CEC leaders, members, and staff members list, changed twice in the same period.

Meanwhile, on May 14, with the amendments to the regulations, new positions were added to the list of CEC staff positions, which will guide the relevant direction of the election process - Data Management Manager,



ISFED claims that the process ended up in the creation of new structural units and redistribution of human resources

Voters List Formation Manager, and Election Registration Manager. An information processing specialist has also been added to the list of positions. However, their specific functions are not yet clear.

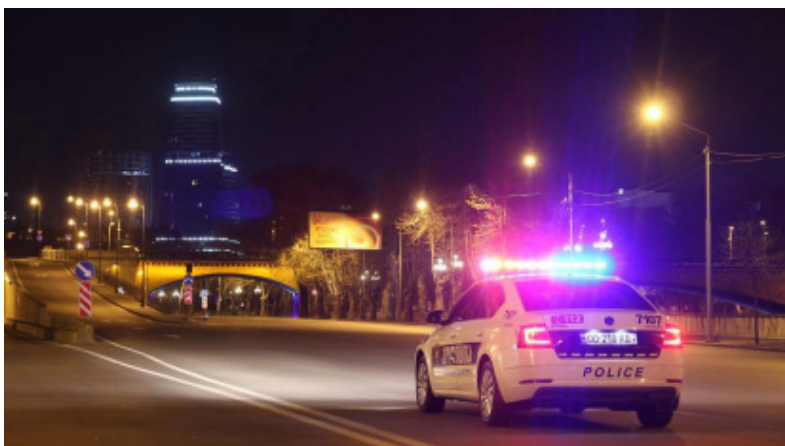
ISFED said that they were interested in the ongoing reorganization of the CEC office from

the very beginning and requested information from the agency to investigate the need and legal grounds, as well as the issue of personnel changes.

However, according to ISFED, the response received from the election administration did not contain complete information on the issues raised and was limited to general wording.

Fair Elections refers to the Civil Service Law and says that reorganization is a systematic process in the interests of a particular institution to ensure systemic governance that partially or substantially alters the institutional arrangement of the institution.

Over 20,000 people signed a petition against curfew



The country adopted curfew near the end of November 2020

By NIKA GANTSEMLIDZE

A special petition addressed to the government of Georgia has already more than 20,000 signatures. The petition demands the abolition of the curfew.

The organizers of the petition claim that in the conditions of restricted movement, the main condition for halt the spread of the virus, keeping the distance, is becoming impossible. The petition has been going on for just a few days.

Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Natia Turnava noted that the issue will be discussed according to the epidemiological situation in the country.

"In the framework of the co-

ordination council, we are constantly saying that once we see that we are over the third wave and the cases are dropping, we will start lifting the restrictions, this includes the curfew," noted the minister.

As for Minister of Health Ekaterine Tikaradze has noted many times that Georgia 'can't afford' lifting this particular restriction.

There have been many protests regarding the curfew over the last few months in the country. Recently, activists and the members of the movement 'For Georgia' protested the curfew in Batumi. For two nights, they have been gathering and walking in the Boulevard with signs calling on the government to lift the restriction on movement at night.

The curfew was adopted in Georgia near the end of November 2020, when the number of Covid-19 cases was increasing drastically. The country was reporting daily cases of 3,000-5,000. In addition to the curfew, there were many other restrictions in the country, many of

which have already been lifted in the country.

Over the past 6 months, the curfew was fully lifted only two times and partially lifted once. The curfew was not in place during New Year's Eve and on Christmas. As for Easter, the curfew was in place from 11 pm to 4 am.

Some experts are saying that

the curfew will affect the tourist season if not lifted. Recently, one tourist guide talked with GME, claiming that several tourists decided to not visit Georgia because of the restriction.

The curfew was adopted in Georgia over six months ago. According to the curfew, it is forbidden to go outside from 21:00 to 5:00 and everyone violating the curfew will be fined.



It is forbidden to go outside from 21:00 to 5:00

Weather

Monday, May 17

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 29°C

Night Mostly Cloudy

Low: 14°C

Tuesday, May 18

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 26°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 14°C

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Georgian NGO condemns attack on LGBTQ+ activists in Tbilisi, calls on Interior Ministry to persecute perpetrators



BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

The Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI) strongly condemned an attack on the LGBTQ+ activists and demanded Ministry of Interior to launch an immediate investigation and persecute those responsible for the incident. The attack took place on May 15, in Dedaena park in Tbilisi, where the LGBTQ activists installed a cabin with an inscription “Welcome to the closet.” It has been reported that Guram Palavandishvili, leader of the violent homophobic group, entered the cabin and damaged it from

the inside, and verbally assaulted the activists. The police arrived at the place of the incident 10 minutes later, and removed Palavandishvili from the location, however, did not arrest him. Several Palavandishvili’s supporters carrying homophobic banners remained at the location, however, were denied entry into the activists’ installation by the law enforcement agents who also remained at the spot.

The installation at the Dedaena Park marked the celebration of the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. Earlier last

week, Georgian Ministry of Interior issued a statement in which it promised to guarantee public safety and freedom of expression during the May 15-20 celebrations:

“According to the information provided to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, various events will take place in public places of Tbilisi on May 15-20 in connection with the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. [...] The police ensures the protection of public safety and order, as well as the freedom of expression of each individual, which should not exceed the limits allowed by the law. Any other action, which may endanger the safety of citizens and their

health, will be adequately responded by the police”, the official statement reads.

In response to the May 15 attack, GDI issued its own statement claiming that the Interior Ministry should respond harshly to both the incident at Dedaena Park and any other incidents of such a nature:

“...It is extremely important for the Georgian government to show political will and fight crimes /offenses committed on the grounds of homophobia, while at the same time giving LGBTQ activists the opportunity to fully enjoy the freedom of assembly and demonstration,” the NGO stated.

Ambassador of Japan to Georgia Imamura Akira makes the first visit to Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region

Last week Ambassador of Japan to Georgia H.E. IMAMURA Akira visited Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region. During the visit, the Ambassador opened the “Project for Provision of Agricultural Laboratory Equipment in Zugdidi Municipality”, funded within the Grassroots Human Security Grant Program (GGP) of the Embassy of Japan. Within this project, the agricultural centre in Zugdidi was provided with 69’500 USD worth of agricultural laboratory equipment, which will ensure laboratory examinations and provide quality certificates, for enabling

more competitiveness of local farmers and for promotion of food safety in Georgia.

The Ambassador visited the so-called crossing point on the Enguri Bridge alongside the Governor of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region, Malkhaz Toria, and representatives of the local self-government and reaffirmed Japanese support for Georgia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty within internationally recognized borders.

During the trip, the Ambassador also visited IDP settlement in Potskho Etseri. Together with the Governor of Samegrelo-

Zemo Svaneti Region, Malkhaz Toria, the Head of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, Ruslan Abashidze, and Tsalenjikha Municipality Mayor, Besik Partsvania, he heard from locals about the problems and challenges in the settlement and region. Importantly, locals noted the socio-economic situation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ambassador Imamura once again expressed his willingness to continue Japanese support to conflict-affected communities in Georgia. The Ambassador also visited Enguri Dam that is lo-

cated near the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL).

One of the highlights of the Ambassador’s trip was a visit to the Zugdidi Botanical Garden and Dadiani Palace which boasts an exceptional collection of materials representing the cultures of Ancient Greece and Colchis, the Chitin of Holy Mother of God and the bronze mask of Napoleon I, which there are only 4 copies in the world. It should be noted that renovation of the exhibition halls of Dadiani Palace was funded by the Government of Japan in 2010.

