

# DAILY NEWS REPORT ON GEORGIA

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Date: **March 16, 2020**

## ❖ Occupied Regions

### 1. **Amiran Gamkrelidze – Government to provide assistance to locals residing across occupied regions in struggle against coronavirus**

Amiran Gamkrelidze, Head of the National Center for Diseases Control and Public Health said that the Georgian government is ready to provide assistance to locals residing across the occupied regions in struggle against the novel coronavirus.

According to Gamkrelidze there were no diagnostic means in occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and confirmation of the coronavirus in a laboratory was not possible.

An offer had already been made on part of the central government to locals living in occupied regions about readiness of assistance in diagnostics and medical treatment (1 TV.ge, March 14, 2020).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### 2. **Vladimir Putin Meets Tskhinvali Leader in Moscow**

On March 13, Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted the Kremlin-backed leader of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Anatoly Bibilov. According to the Russian President, the overall relations between Moscow and Tskhinvali are developing well, including their last year's trade turnover. "The investment program in the amount of [RUB] 4.2 billion (USD 57 million) has also been completed," noted Putin.

On his part, Bibilov thanked his benefactor for the meeting. He then noted that Tskhinvali has fulfilled almost 100% of its "investment program" back in 2018 and 2019, which is the outcome of their "close cooperation and good relations." (Civil.ge, March 13, 2020).

### 3. **Georgian citizen living in Athens contracted coronavirus**

A Georgian citizen living in Athens has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia stated. According to the ministry, the Georgian embassy and consulate in Athens are in constant contact with the patient. The Georgian citizen is receiving appropriate treatment and is under the supervision of doctors (IPN.ge, March 14, 2020).

## ❖ Internal Affairs

### 4. **Number of COVID-19 cases increases to 33 in Georgia**

Georgia has confirmed 3 new cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) bringing the total number of infected individuals to 33. The updated data is available at the new webpage – [www.stopcov.ge](http://www.stopcov.ge) – launched by the Government of Georgia (1 TV.ge, March 15, 2020).

### 5. **Foreign Minister holds video conference with heads of diplomatic missions abroad over coronavirus**

All embassies have been instructed about the services, advice and assistance they may provide to the citizens of Georgia wishing to return home from the European countries, - Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Davit Zalkaliani stated.

According to Minister Zalkaliani the main topic of the video conference was to assist Georgian citizens in the European countries, where international airlines suspended direct flights.

- Prime Minister instructed the Minister of Foreign Affairs to switch diplomatic missions to more active communication mode. The hotline number of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia is: +995 32 294 5050 (IPN.ge, March 15, 2020).

#### **6. First patient infected with coronavirus recovered in Georgia, according to WHO website**

The respective information has already been posted on the WHO website, which indicates that 1 person has been recovered in Georgia. According to the same website, Georgia has 29 people infected with coronavirus, one of which is in a relatively difficult condition (IPN.ge, March 15, 2020).

#### **7. Wizz Air suspends flights from Georgia to Austria, France, Germany and Spain in response to COVID-19**

Wizz Air has suspended all flights from Georgia to Austria, France, Germany and Spain. As the low-cost airline said in its statement the decision was made in response to COVID-19. Flights will be cancelled from March 13 until April 3 (1 TV.ge, March 15, 2020).

#### **8. Coronavirus – Government’s anti-crisis plan and commercial banks initiative**

The Government of Georgia resented the anti-crisis plan. According to the Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, all these measures will help to minimize the negative influence of the novel coronavirus on the country’s economy. The Government of Georgia made a decision to offer 4-month holidays on property and income taxes for hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, transport and tour companies (Rustavi2, March 13, 2020).

#### **9. Georgian gov't - As of March 16 the movement to and from Russia will be restricted**

In the wake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, from March 16 the movement to and from Russia will be restricted. By order of Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, Georgian PM’s Special Representative in Relations with Russia Zurab Abashidze and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Grigory Karasin discussed this issue on the phone. This decision would not apply to the citizens of the Russian Federation and Georgia who wish to return to their home country. The restrictions will not apply to freight traffic as well (1 TV.ge, March 15, 2020).

#### **10. Vice PM chairs a working group on food supply and price regulation**

Under the Prime Minister’s instruction, a working group on food supply and price regulation has been set up, chaired by Vice Prime Minister Maia Tskitishvili. The attendees noted that in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, food supply is not at risk.

Georgian Prime Minister met with managers of grocery stores and chains yesterday. As PM said the “government’s key goal is to make sure that citizens of this country encounter no deficit on groceries or other household consumption products.” (1TV.ge, March 15, 2020).

#### **11. President of Georgia – WHO Director-General gives high evaluation to Georgia’s reaction to coronavirus threat**

Salome Zurbishvili, President of Georgia held a telephone conversation with Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). According to the Presidential Administration, Zurbishvili introduced the WHO Head with the current situation in Georgia and measures undertaken in prevention of spread of the virus. WHO Director-General gave high evaluation to Georgia’s reaction to coronavirus threat and said that the organization would continue technical and expertise assistance to the country (1 TV.ge, March 14, 2020).

#### **12. Movement across Sarphi border checkpoint to be temporarily restricted**

Movement across Sarphi border checkpoint will be temporarily restricted upon the joint decision of Georgian and Turkish governments due to novel coronavirus spread fears. According to the Governmental Administration, the restrictions will not refer to transfer of goods and cargo. Air movement will continue in the usual regime as well as work of Vale and Kartsakhi checkpoints (1TV.ge, March 14, 2020).

#### **13. Evex to allocate 4 hospitals in case of mass spread of novel coronavirus**

Evex network of clinics and hospitals expresses full support to the government and will allocate 4 hospitals for infected patients in case of mass spread of the novel coronavirus in the country. The Evex team carries out works and observes the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO). All doctors underwent training in struggle against the novel coronavirus in accordance to WHO guidelines (1 TV.ge, March 14, 2020).

#### **14. Three Georgian citizens from Italy are transported to Batumi infectious hospitals**

Georgian citizens from Italy, three of them with high temperature are in the Republican Hospital quarantine zone. The other three are being transferred to the Batumi Infection Hospital. All six of them remain under the supervision of doctors (Rustavi2, March 13, 2020).

#### **15. 91 citizens from Italy are in quarantine in Tskaltubo**

91 citizens remain in isolation in Tskaltubo. They arrived from Italy three days ago and are undergoing a quarantine at the hotel. Their health is satisfactory, with no symptoms of the virus. Citizens will remain there for two weeks (Rustavi2, March 13, 2020).

#### **16. Cartu to allocate funds to combat coronavirus**

The Cartu Foundation is ready to allocate as much finances as necessary to protect the population from spread of the novel coronavirus. According to the statement of Cartu, Georgia and the whole world are facing common challenge and the Government actively works to protect the society.

The work of our Government is given positive evaluation by the World Health Organization. The foundation thanks all clinics and doctors for their efforts in prevention of spread of the virus (Rustavi2, March 13, 2020).

#### **17. Ministry of Internal Affairs calls on citizens to use electronic services**

Service Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Unified Service Center of the Patrol Police Department and the Department of Migration will take appropriate measures, with the aim to fully comply with recommendations and decisions adopted by the Inter-Agency Coordination Council of the Government of Georgia.

For the prevention of spreading the coronavirus, the MIA calls on citizens to use electronic services and visit the Service Agency, Unified Service Center and Department of Migration only in case of emergency (Rustavi2, March 13, 2020).

#### **18. TBC Bank offers three-month grace period on micro, small and medium loans**

- ✓ “With this decision and taking into consideration the current situation in the country, TBC Bank will make business lives of people easier”, - reads the statement of TBC Bank (Rustavi2, March 13, 2020).

#### **19. Archil Talakvadze met with the Members of the Monitoring Committee of PACE**

The Speaker of the Parliament Archil Talakvadze met with the Members of the Monitoring Committee of PACE - Member of the Committee, Titus Corlatean, Deputy to the Head of the Secretariat, Bas Klein and Head of the Council of Europe Office in Georgia, Cristian Urse.

The parties dwelt upon the current political processes and democratic reforms with the particular focus on the political dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition and the consensus on the electoral system.

Talakvadze emphasized the importance of cooperation with the Monitoring Committee and expressed gratitude for the unwavering support of PACE toward Georgia (Rustavi2, March 13, 2020).

#### **20. The Bank of Georgia offers 3-month grace period on loan payments**

The Bank of Georgia offers individuals a three-month grace period on loan payments. Such a decision they made in order to reduce the flow of people to the area to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Customers who have had monthly loan repayments can postpone them until May (Rustavi2, March 13, 2020).

#### **21. The National Bank encourages population to observe recommended hygiene norms when using cash**

The bank urges citizens of the country to fulfill the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health related to using cash and to wash their hands after

touching banknotes and coins.

It also urges people to use distant banking services instead of going to the banks. Also, the bank announced that its Money Museum located in Kvareli, eastern Georgia will be closed from tomorrow until April 1 (Rustavi2, March13, 2020).

#### **22. Nine people quarantined for violating self-isolation rules – the MIA**

Nine people were quarantined for violating the rules of self-isolation. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, new facts of violation of the rules of self-isolation had been detected (Rustavi2, March 13, 2020).

#### **23. Gigi Ugulava submits petition to the Georgian President on his release from prison**

Convict Gigi Ugulava, one of the leaders of European Georgia, has submitted a petition to the Georgian President, Salome Zurbishvili, requesting his release from prison (IPN.ge, March 14, 2020).

### **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

#### **24. The national currency depreciated against the USD and the Euro**

The national currency depreciated against the USD and the Euro. The National Bank of Georgia has set a new exchange rate, according to which, dollar price has become GEL 2.9942.

Starting with tomorrow, March, 14, 1 USD will cost GEL 2.9942, while the previous rate was GEL 2.9494.

As for the Euro, its exchange rate is GEL 3.3421, while the previous rate was GEL 3.3145 (Rustavi2, March 13, 2020).

### **❖ Sports and Culture**

#### **25. The Sukhishvili Georgian National Ballet stops world tour and returns to the homeland**

The Sukhishvili Georgian National Ballet stopped world tour and is going to return to the homeland.

According to their Facebook page, they had 37 concerts in Poland, Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine since February 1 (Rustavi2, March 12, 2020).

#### **26. Georgia-Russia rugby match to be held in empty stadium due to coronavirus**

The Georgian national rugby team will hold its final match against Russia within European Rugby Championship in empty stadium. As the Rugby Union of Georgia said the decision was made amid the new coronavirus fears. Those citizens, who have already bought tickets to attend the match, will receive their ticket money back (Rustavi2, March 12, 2020)

## Additional Information

**March 16, 2020**

### **OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.9942 GEL

1 GBP - 3.7736 GEL

100 RUB - 4.1028 GEL

1 EUR - 3.3421 GEL

1 TRY - 0.4765 GEL

100 JPY - 2.8178 GEL

### **25 day forecast**

**Monday**  
16 March



8° 19°

**Tuesday**  
17 March



8° 15°

**Wednesday**  
18 March



8° 18°

**Thursday**  
19 March



2° 9°

**Friday**  
20 March



2° 5°

- **Movie Events - English Sessions - [Tickets](#)**
- **Friends of Museum (Membership to access Georgian National Museums For free of charge after one payment) - [Membership](#)**
- **Marjanishvili Theatre – [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Rustaveli Theatre - [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Opera and Ballet – [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Concerts – [Events and Tickets](#)**
- **Sports – [Events and Tickets](#)**