

## **Information on the work done by the Government of Azerbaijan and the Confederation of Trade Unions of Azerbaijan in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic**

The new corona virus, dubbed COVID-19, is spreading around the world. The scale and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic certainly reaches a level of threat to public health that can justify the restriction of certain rights and freedoms, as in the case of restrictions on freedom of movement due to quarantine or isolation.

In order to limit this disease and prevent its spread in Azerbaijan, practical steps have been taken from the very first days. Early preventive measures in the country date back to January 23, 2020, when the State Customs Committee intensified border checks due to the deadly Chinese virus, which includes thermometry, a medical examination, a visual examination, thermal imagers, and other diagnostic methods for responding to the spread of infection.

On January 24, there was created an Operational Headquarter under the Cabinet of Ministers. It works around the clock, manages the activities of all government agencies, monitors and coordinates all work related to the disease. As part of a new format of cooperation, there were invited to the country the specialists and have been began working with the World Health Organization. Complied with their recommendations. WHO representatives have visited Azerbaijan in March in order to familiarize with the situation, noted that the country's leadership was taking very important and effective measures to prevent the disease.

From March 14, there were introduced special rules of conduct. Citizens are informed regularly and fully about the disease, its spread and its consequences. The most favorable conditions have been created for quarantine; citizens who returned from other countries are accommodated in 4-5-star hotels, the Athletes

Village, in hotels, recreation areas of Lankaran, Lerik, Nabran, and Baku. If at the beginning of March there was planned to fight this infection in amount of 10 million manat, then after that, another 20 million manat was allocated from the Presidential Reserve Fund to make the fight against this disease more effective, and for the material support for doctors serving patients with corona virus. There has been established The Corona Virus Support Fund. In April, President Ilham Aliyev signed a decree on the allocation of funds for the purchase of medical equipment and other medical devices within the framework of the measures taken in the Republic of Azerbaijan in the field of public health against the pandemic of the coronary virus. From the reserve fund of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan provided for in the state budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2020, 97 million manat was allocated to the State Agency for Mandatory Medical Insurance.

Azerbaijan ranks 30th in the world in the number of tests conducted and 40th in the number of tests per million population. Currently, patients infected with the corona virus are being treated in more than 20 public hospitals. The other day, a hospital consisting of 575 beds was transferred to the disposal of ill people. In March this year, in three cities of Azerbaijan, new hospitals for patients with the corona virus were commissioned. In the short term, it is planned to build six state and four private hospitals and put into operation these modern modular hospitals with 200 beds each. At a time when significant financial resources are required to fight the corona virus, the country's leadership increased the salary of doctors serving patients with the corona virus by 3, 4, and 5 times, in fact.

In a short time, state structures secured the delivery from Turkey to Azerbaijan and the installation of modern equipment and raw materials for the production of masks. On April 6, the enterprise created by Baku Textile Factory LLC was commissioned in the Sumgait Chemical Industrial Park. The manufacturer, through the Entrepreneurship Development Fund of the Ministry of Economy, was provided with a soft loan in the amount of 1.2 million manat. Investment costs for the

establishment of the enterprise amount to 3.9 million manat. There were created more than 30 new jobs in company. The production process is three-shift. Using raw materials that comply with ISO international standards, the company initially produces 120 thousand medical masks every day at the initial stage. After packing the masks, they are additionally sterilized using special equipment. In the coming days, another production line will be launched, at the second stage daily production will reach 200-250 thousand medical masks. The company's products are primarily aimed at meeting the needs of the local market. Special boxes for packaging medical masks are also locally produced. They are made at the enterprise, which is a resident of the Balakhani industrial park. Currently, six companies produce disinfectant products.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan adopted a resolution on regulating the working regime in Azerbaijan in a special quarantine period. In order to prevent the spread of the corona virus infection, the special quarantine regime declared on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan (March 31 - April 20, April 20-May 4).

There was created a list of government bodies and structures whose managers and, if necessary, employees are involved in the work. The procedure for attracting employees to work by a limited number and providing them with additional days off during the year instead of days of attraction; preservation of wages of employees not involved in work in government bodies and structures; providing work for employees not involved in work in their homes, as well as in the form of telecommuting (at a distance) or teleworking and other issues are also included in this list.

In order to prevent the spread of the corona virus, special regimes have been introduced in the country in the fields of trade, tourism, public catering, and other areas, and social isolation has been ensured. Limited communication with many countries, or completely discontinued. Flights were canceled, practical steps were

taken to close the borders, the issuance of electronic visas was suspended, people from countries with a wide spread of the disease were not allowed to enter Azerbaijan. Closed schools, kindergartens, universities. Restrictive rules came into force, a quarantine regime introduced. Numerous citizens who returned from abroad quarantined.

The importance of measures to protect against infection is explained to the public. WHO proposals to this day are an integral part of ongoing fundamental measures, such as, increasing coordination between government agencies; social remoteness; suspension of public meetings; compliance of government agencies with the new conditions for testing, isolation and quarantine; providing appropriate resources to medical structures and workers in the forefront; public awareness of the severity of the disease; clarification of the importance of hand hygiene, etiquette for coughing and social remoteness; isolation of all suspected; providing economic assistance to those most affected by the pandemic; strengthening interstate solidarity; promptly informing WHO of cases of infection and control measures and etc. Citizens are provided with the opportunity to combine the performance of labor duties, such as caring for children, the sick, and the elderly and, of course, for themselves.

Azerbaijan is one of the rare countries that provide targeted social assistance. Citizens who still cannot raise their material capabilities to the proper level receive support from the state. At the same time, in the coming period, the employment program itself will gain a wide scope, and the state will provide citizens who are still living in a constrained financial situation with various means and assets.

Very much attention is paid to this area, large funds are allocated. As part of measures for social protection the population from the corona virus, 394 million manat (\$ 231.8 million) was allocated. These funds will be allocated for 10 measures in four directions, which will cover 1.9 million people. Sources of

financing are: 100 million manat will be allocated from the state budget, 203 million manat from the State Social Security Fund and 91 million manat from the Unemployment Insurance Fund. One of the key components of these measures will be one-time payments in April-May to the unemployed of 190 manat. In this regard, 70 million manat was allocated initially; 200 thousand people should have received this assistance. Today, these figures are increasing three times.

Over the past month, 84 thousand labor contracts have been noted in the Ministry of Labor system. Having learned that the state will support entrepreneurs, employers decided to draw up employment contracts with their employees and thereby receive assistance from the state. Measures are being taken to create 90 thousand paid public works, to maintain wages and maintain employment for more than 900,000 workers in the public sector and 690,000 workers in the non-oil sector, to increase monthly electricity consumption over two months, singeing the training of 17,000 students from low-income families for the state budget account, the pardon of many prisoners in connection with the corona virus, the provision of tax benefits and financial support to entrepreneurs.

**Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation** hold a meeting of Executive Committee On March 20, in connection with the pandemic. At the meeting, it was decided to support the decisive steps of President Ilham Aliyev in preventing the spread of the corona infection (COVID-19), announced by the World Health Organization as a global pandemic, and to evaluate the urgent measures being taken. It was noted that members of trade union organizations also highly appreciate the creation, by order of the head of state of March 19, of the Fund for Support to Combat the Corona Virus.

On March 23, the chairman of the Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation, Member of Parliament Sattar Mokhbaliev held a meeting with members and leaders of subordinate organizations. The chairman informed the meeting participants about

measures carried out under the leadership of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to prevent the spread of the coronary virus infection in our country.

The chairman of the ATUC noted that in accordance with the order of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the working group was approved under the leadership of the Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Population Sakhil Babayev, for preparing relevant proposals to address employment and social problems that could lead to the alleged negative impact of the corona pandemic on the country's economy.

We also participate in the working group as a confederation of trade unions of Azerbaijan. Our main task is to prevent unjustified reduction in the number of employees by employers in this situation. In this regard, on behalf of the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers) and the ATUC, a special notice was sent to employers. The report notes that our state, which pursues an active policy in the field of sustainable development of national entrepreneurship, and in the current conditions, provides support to each entrepreneur. "At the same time, it is brought to the attention of employers that, in order to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on the business environment, entrepreneurs will be supported, at the same time, serious measures will be taken in accordance with legislation regarding employers that allow unjustified dismissal, reduction of employees, abusing existing conditions. "

At the meeting, created a management group (operational headquarters) to coordinate preventive measures, systematically collect information about the work done and organize educational work.

The trade unions of Azerbaijan have directed more than 1 million manat to support the fight against the corona virus and other urgent measures implemented by the state. In general, about 600 thousand manats from joint deductions of all branch trade unions addressed to 10744 low-income families, elderly people, as well as needy members of the union for material and food assistance. Mobile groups of trade-union organizations carrying out this activity distributed protective means worth 100,000 AZN to their union members. Following, the 250,000 manats transferred by the unions to the Fund fight the virus, trade union workers also showed activity, donations of which totaled 352.5 thousand manats. For the support of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic 100 000 manats were allocated. More than 1,500 sets of various food items distributed to low-income families on the part of trade union activists and volunteers in Goranboy, Tyartyar and Agdam regions, in conjunction with the Regional Development project under the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. Such material and moral assistance is continuing nowadays also.

During the special quarantine regime, announced for preventing the spread of COVID-19 infections in our country, programs to support single people over 65 years and low-income families are continuing.

As part of the events with the corona virus pandemic under the ATUC created a special SMS-information system for the establishment of operational communication with colleagues. The system is equipped with a special service channel. The decisions taken by the trade unions, the work ordered are immediately transferred to the mobile phones of the needy persons. This is one of the principles of the removal of special quarantine conditions.

The main purpose of the activities carried out, is not to allow the spread of this virus in the country. We hope that soon our whole world will survive from this problem, and we, as trade unions, are always ready to contribute to this goal.