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## Ukrainian citizen dies at Dariali gorge

By Gvantsa Gabekhadze

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One person has died as a result of the disaster and seven are believed to be lost after the landslide at Dariali gorge on May 17. Although the rescue service assisted the citizen of Ukraine and took him by helicopter to the hospital, he did not survive.

The major accident happened early on May 17 near Gveleti village, 20km away from where the Dariali

Hydro Power Plant (HPP) is currently being built in northern Georgia, near the Russian border.

Sixteen drivers – all foreign citizens – have been relocated to the Vladikavkaz border following the landslide. The landslide caused damming of the Tergi River, destroyed the road and suspended gas transfer to Armenia. It is believed that one million cubic meters of land mass fell into the river during the landslide.

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili expressed his condolences over the Ukrainian citizen's death to his family, stressing that the Georgian government is doing its best to tackle the natural disaster.

"The headquarters has been working on the site for 24 hours. Our offices are working hard and they continue to risk their lives while providing rescue and all the necessary operations as there is still a danger that the disaster will repeat," the PM said, thanking them personally and on behalf of the government of Georgia.

Gharibashvili also thanked the Russian side for offering technical support. "In a difficult situation they promptly expressed their readiness for cooperation and support," Gharibashvili stated.

According to the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, intensive movement of ice layers caused the disaster in Dariali Gorge.

The Ministry claims that as per the estimations of experts, the tragedy was a result of intensive movement of the Devdoraki glacier located at the 5,047 meter-high peak.

"In the Kazbegi municipality, as a result of the activation of the historic glacial mudflow, a landslide came down and blocked the Tergi valley that cut-off the Russian-Georgian border section," the ministry stated. According to the official statements, experts do not consider external factors to be the cause of the disaster. The surveys will be soon released.

However, there are speculations as well, especially from Green Alternative NGO that the landslide was caused due to the construction work being done in the area, as the building of the HPP was launched without the proper research of the territory.

Deputy Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaniani admitted that if it is necessary, Georgia will address partner states for technical assistance in terms of the disaster.