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COVID-19 UPDATE BY MINISTER FOR HEALTH, SOCIAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS, HON. NICKOLAS STEELE.

Fellow Citizens, Good evening.

I am Nickolas Steele, Grenada's Minister of Health.

TODAY, FRIDAY, APRIL 3rd, 2020, I announce that two more laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 on mainland Grenada, have been diagnosed.

This brings the total confirmed cases of COVID-19 to twelve; however, there are only 11 cases here on Island, since one left.

The first new individual is a 73 year old male, who had arrived in Grenada from the United Kingdom with his wife, who is one of those that previously tested positive for the virus. The couple had sat within the six feet radius of our first case on that March 16th UK flight. The husband became symptomatic on March 31st and was tested on April 1st. He has been quarantined since his wife was tested and is being monitored closely.

The second individual is a 70-year-old male Taxi Driver, who had interacted with a previously diagnosed case before that case was tested. He was found on March 27th through contact tracing by Health Officials and placed under quarantine. He started exhibiting symptoms consistent with those of COVID-19, and was subsequently tested on April 1st.

I want to reassure that Health care officials have been aggressively engaged in contact tracing, especially of individuals who arrived in Grenada during the March 16th to 22nd period.

We have found that most of our cases so far, arrived in Grenada, or are linked to someone who arrived in Grenada, during that period. The pattern is similar in several other countries throughout the region.

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Both cases announced today, are stable and exhibiting mild to moderate symptoms.

However, I must add that two of the previously announced cases are now in the ICU, having developed complications from pneumonia. They are in stable condition.

In terms of testing, 45 people in total have been tested. Twelve people have tested positive to date; and there are 4 results pending.

All cases have been reported to the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization.

I have constantly stated that our Health Care team is sparing no effort in ascertaining the possibility of community spread here in the State of Grenada because while all cases so far, have been imported or import-related, several of those have had significant movement in the community, and we are following up with every possible contact.

We continue to rigorously enforce and enhance quarantine and isolation measures. Several entire households are presently under quarantine, and the RGPF has increased their surveillance mechanisms to rigidly ensure that people are observing the rules.

We are assured that all individuals currently under quarantine are being closely monitored and are fully compliant.

I remind that any individual who attempts to, or breaches the Quarantine Act, will be forcibly quarantined in public facilities, which we have already secured around the Tri-Island State. Furthermore, anyone who fails to comply is subject to a \$10,000 fine and six months imprisonment. This includes anyone who visits someone who is under quarantine.

Fellow citizens, public trust is crucial in our efforts to beat this disease. So, is public co-operation.

I cannot say it enough, the curfew is in place for a reason: To help us to curb the spread of this deadly disease and save lives.

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While we have allowed limited grocery shopping and other access to services, we continue to see serious breaches of social distancing, and the curfew, in general.

While Law Enforcement has been quite active and have made several arrests so far, the lawbreaking is enough to infect an entire nation, and possibly cost lives.

Every time you allow someone into your vehicle; every time you leave your house; every time you allow someone into your home; your life is in danger. Our lives are all in danger.

Every time you stand in a line at the grocery store, and do not comply with the six-foot social distancing guideline, your life is in danger.

Please remember, anyone can have and spread the disease, even if they do not have any visible symptoms.

A significant percentage of people carrying the disease in the world, do not show any symptoms, but they can still spread the disease. They can still kill you, and me.

So, the next time you crowd the lines at the grocery store, look at the guy in front of you; look at the lady behind you. It is very likely that one, or both, can have the disease and are in the process of transmitting to you and others.

It is also highly likely that you are the one with the disease but are not exhibiting symptoms, and you can pass it to others every time you are exposed to them. You might be responsible for taking someone's life. Think about that, the next time you break the curfew to get a drink, or go out to get some potatoes.

Fellow citizens, while health officials remain vigilant, we continue to ask you to work with us, and more specifically, to do your part to help us contain the spread of this deadly virus.

We urge the public to report to, or inform the Ministry of Health or nearest health facility, of any individual displaying acute respiratory symptoms.

If you believe you are exhibiting symptoms of the virus, do not leave your house. Do not take public transportation. Do not go into any hospital or medical facility.

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Call the health hotline at 538 4787 or 458 4787.

As the Minister of Health, I am compelled, once again, to remind that the entire population must continue to observe the practices and precautions necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, here in the State of Grenada.

A State of Emergency is in place to safeguard the population. This is a public health and safety emergency. Failure to comply with those measures is potentially fatal to the general population and is being enforced to the fullest extent of the law.

Please observe the curfew. Stay home, unless there's a medical or food emergency, or you are an essential worker.

Every time our men and women in uniform are called out to enforce social compliance, those who break the law are putting the lives of the armed forces and medical personnel at further risks.

I again urge you to wash your hands frequently; practice proper cough and sneeze hygiene; do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands. It is extremely critical that you also maintain social distancing of at least six feet. I cannot stress that enough.

In recent days, due to the developing data on the virus, experts are increasingly urging everyone to wear masks when out in public, if possible.

Masks and other Personal Protective Equipment are constantly being sourced and provided to all frontline workers, to limit their exposure to the virus.

In closing, I cannot thank enough, all our frontline workers, including our medical professionals and the Royal Grenada Police Force, for their selfless service in helping to protect Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, from this deadly disease.

I also must thank the artistes, other public figures, media personnel, private entities and other volunteers, who continue to lend their voices and their influence to help sensitize the population and help enforce compliance.

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I thank our citizens in the diaspora, who are constantly sharing information from their respective cities around the world, especially areas hardest hit by the virus. They are sharing the information to help us to see how deadly our actions can be if we do not comply with guidelines. I thank them for this service in helping to preserve the future of this Nation.

I also extend a hand in solidarity to all our diaspora citizens in areas hit by the virus, and I urge you to stay as safe as possible; in the same way that I remind our citizens here at home.

Finally, I thank those of you who are complying with the guidelines, rules and regulations shared by authorities. You are our only hope of beating COVID-19.

Help us to hold each other accountable. Help us to save your life. Help to save ours. Help your country to win the battle against this deadly virus.

I thank you.

Nickolas T C Steele

Minister for Health, Social Security and International Business.