

Address to the Nation by Acting Prime Minister Hon Santia Bradshaw

01 April 2020

Fellow Barbadians, residents and visitors....good evening.

First, let me take this opportunity, to share with you the good news, that Prime Minister Hon. Mia Amor Mottley, is on the road to recovery, and sends her warmest regards and very best wishes, to all Barbadians, at home and abroad.

Prime Minister Mottley actually participated in a combined virtual meeting of the Covid-19 Cabinet sub-committee and the Health Emergency Operations Committee earlier today, and stands fully behind, and in support of the measures I am about to outline, in furtherance of our determination to fight and contain the spread of the novel Coronavirus in Barbados.

My dear people...We have a problem! This Coronavirus is not playing! It is taking lives, by the thousands. Tonight, as we thank Almighty God for sparing lives, so far here in Barbados, we know that mighty nations are reeling under the weight of the impact of this disease on their populations.

Previously we saw seemingly abstract numbers in Asia, in Europe and in North America. But in recent times, we all know of a relative or friend, or relative of a friend, who succumbed to this disease. Among the near 46 000++ that have died worldwide from complications associated with this disease, most of us now know of someone who knows someone who has been taken by this mighty pandemic. In New York City alone, where thousands of Barbadians reside, we have already lost at least five of our citizens

to this disease. I take this opportunity to extend to relatives and friends of the departed, our sincere condolences.

My friends, this disease is not stopping. As I speak to you tonight, the great State of Florida in the United States is going on lock down. Small nations such as Barbados, have now to fend for themselves. There is no sister nation to turn to, because all around us, is on lock down. From Trinidad and Tobago in the south to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia next door, up to Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda further north, they are all tonight on lock down, or headed swiftly to that point.

We therefore need to formulate a plan of survival for Barbados!

In his briefing to me this afternoon, the Chief Medical Officer has advised that the number of positive test results in Barbados has now risen to 45, based on a total of 382 tests conducted in the country. Just to remind you, there were 34 positive test results in Monday's update. So in just the last two days alone, we have recorded a whopping 11 new cases!

Barbadians!!! 45 is too high a number! But our fear is that it will not end there. The prognosis, on our current trajectory, if we do not change course, as a nation, is for this number to continue to rise at an accelerated rate, over the course of the next few weeks.

The Government of Barbados, the health services of Barbados, the social partners in Barbados...will not allow this to happen!

I met earlier today with the social partners of Barbados. I spoke as well to the Leader of the Opposition and to the President of the Democratic Labour Party. We are all agreed, the situation warrants firm action.

Workers and their representatives, employers and their representatives, Churches, NGOs and the business and commercial sectors of Barbados, are at one with the Government, in its resolve to do whatever is necessary to stem the rate of spread of the coronavirus pandemic in this country.

My dear people, we are fortunate as a nation to have such a mature corps of leaders, who first love and care for this country, but who also are concerned about and committed to the preservation of lives and a containment of sickness and social dislocation in our society.

No business likes to close its doors and no worker prefers to stay at home. But the situation that confronts us in this country today, warrants the drastic action that is about to be taken.

When we profile the 45 positive test results already recorded, we see some developing trends that are of major worry.

But first, let us put this all in perspective.

Ever since the identification of the first case of coronavirus disease, now known as COVID-19 in Wuhan, China on 30th December 2019, we have witnessed a progression

of the disease to an epidemic; a pandemic; and now to such a tsunami of cases, that it even begins to stretch the definition of what we would ordinarily label as a pandemic.

Indeed, as of 5 pm today, the number of COVID-19 cases globally stood at 928,000 with more than 46,000 deaths. COVID-19 is now affecting 203 countries and territories around the world - meaning that there is now no region and indeed virtually no country in the world that has not registered cases.

Barbados identified its first case of COVID-19 on March 16 this year and since then we have witnessed an almost daily increase in the number of cases. As of yesterday, March 31st, we have done 382 laboratory tests for COVID-19 of which 45 have been positive.

The majority of new cases have been identified as imported - persons residing in Barbados who have recently travelled abroad and returned. Our contact tracing efforts have identified the other cases. We are however extremely concerned by the fact that some of the more recent cases are gravely ill.

This now places us in completely different territory, with the clear and present danger of widespread community transmission such as we have seen in many parts of the world.

Less than one week ago, on Thursday 26 March the Prime Minister of Barbados Hon Mia Amor Mottley addressed you on the state of the COVID-19 response in Barbados announcing that the country had registered 24 cases and that the Cabinet of Barbados had agreed to an immediate declaration of Stage 3 of the National Pandemic Response Plan. On Friday 27 March the Parliament of Barbados passed an amendment to the Emergency Management Act and the Government announced a number of restrictions including:

- the restriction of public and private sector activity to a number of clearly identified essential services;

- a restriction on the hours of operation for public and private sector agencies;
- the imposition of a curfew period from 8.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m.;
- and an appeal to Barbadians to restrict movement outside of their homes to the absolute minimum required to meet essential needs and to observe the now-familiar basics of physical distancing when they do so.

These measures were all intended to reduce the amount of person-to-person contact and exposure of the population and so reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19. They were designed to protect us all. And while we have been heartened by the response of the majority of Barbadians to these restrictions, we have also witnessed a significant number who have ignored them and have continued to put themselves, their families and the entire country at risk. And this reckless and irresponsible behaviour has continued in spite of the warnings from the COVID-19 Czar on Monday, that the Government of Barbados was prepared to further extend and strengthen the restrictions should this behaviour continue.

For the sake of all Barbadians. For the sake of all who have made this island their home whether temporarily or permanently; for the sake of our beloved country, we cannot and will not tolerate this. We have received the sad news of Barbadians abroad who have died from COVID-19 - people that many of us know and love; we have seen countries brought to their knees by this disease and pushed into making terrible choices about who gets admitted to critical care and who doesn't; who gets that last ventilator and who doesn't; choices about who lives and who dies.

We have benefited from consultation with epidemiologists and public health specialists at the University of the West Indies who have produced models showing the likely progression of COVID-19 in Barbados across a range of scenarios ranging from full compliance to limited compliance with restrictions on movement. We do not like what those models tell us regarding the extent of sickness and death that is likely, in light of the behaviour we are seeing across this country. We have throughout the course of our response been guided by the excellent public health specialists in the Ministry of Health

and Wellness to whom the country owes an immense debt of gratitude and they are also concerned that we are fast approaching the point where the pressure of cases of COVID-19 will begin to outstrip our capacity to identify, trace and treat.

We have seen the future of what this disease will bring for countries that fail to prepare; that fail to observe public health discipline; that fail to take tough measures when the window to take these measures remains open and that future is calamitous. We are absolute in our resolve that this must not and will not be the future for Barbados. Our responsibility as a government is to protect the health and well-being of all Barbadians and we will discharge that responsibility without fear or favour.

Against this background, and after consultation with key stakeholders, the Government has decided to implement the following additional measures under the Emergency Management Act:

- With immediate effect, a mandatory 14 day quarantine in a government facility will be placed on **all** persons entering Barbados, irrespective of port of origin or port of entry;
- With effect from the 3rd day of April 2020 until midnight on the 14th day of April 2020 every non-essential service shall remain closed, except the following which may open only between the hours specified:
 - a. abattoirs, butchers' shops and fish markets between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
 - b. bakeries between 6:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
 - c. farms between 5:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
 - d. pharmaceutical manufacturers, manufacturers of juices, soft drinks and dairy products, food processors and food distributors between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
 - e. banks and credit unions only for the purpose of supporting the automatic teller machines
 - f. cleaning services between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

g. fuel manufacturers, fuel storage facilities and fuel distributors between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

h. pharmacies, wholesale and retail grocery stores, mini-marts and village shops between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

i. gasoline stations between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

j. delivery services relating to groceries and medical supplies between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

k. hotels, villas & other rental accommodation, excluding gaming rooms, spas, gyms and discotheques and restaurants, only for take-away service and room service.

l. Sugar Factories for the entire day.

m. Private veterinary services as needed.

- With effect from 6.00 p.m. on Friday, 3rd April all government ministries, departments and statutory corporations will be closed until 6.00 a.m. on 15th April - the end of the current period of restriction. The only exception to this order will be those public services designated as essential services which shall open between 9.00 a.m and 6.00 p.m and only employees designated as essential may go to the office. All other staff shall remain at home. A full list of these Ministries, departments and statutory corporations will be published by the Government Information Service.
- The owner and operator of every business establishment shall restrict the number of persons within or outside that establishment at any one time in order to ensure that a distance of at least six feet is maintained between every person.
- Places of religious worship may open only for (a) the conduct of funeral services and weddings; and (b) the streaming of religious services at which only three persons including the officiant may be present.

No person shall host or attend:

- a) A private party;
 - b) A recreational or competitive sporting event;
 - c) A wedding other than the bride, bridegroom, official witnesses and the marriage officer
 - d) A banquet, ball or reception;
 - e) Any social event;
 - f) A meeting of a fraternal society, private or social club or civic association or organisation;
- No person shall transmit video or audio of, or in any way make known to the public the identify of any person in a quarantine or isolation station;
 - No person shall visit a prison or a Government Industrial School;
 - Private businesses and offices may only continue their operations where the employees can work exclusively from home;
 - All beaches and parks shall be closed;
 - No more than ten mourners, one officiant and the funeral director and the necessary staff shall attend a funeral;
 - No more than one person at any time shall visit a patient in a hospital, nursing home, maternity home or facility for the treatment of persons with an addiction or a dependency on drugs or substances;
 - No person shall leave his residence except:
 - a) to purchase food or medicine;
 - b) To seek medical or dental attention; t
 - c) To do banking business;
 - d) To work in an essential service or in a business that is exempt from this Directive
 - No group, exceeding 3 persons, who are not members of the same household shall remain outdoors unless they are within the curtilage of their residence.

- Notwithstanding paragraph 14, no more than 5 members of the same household shall remain out doors as a group, except in the curtilage of their residence.
- The sale of intoxicating liquor is hereby prohibited.
- A person who contravenes this Directive without reasonable explanation, is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$50, 000 or to imprisonment for a term of one year or to both pursuant to paragraph 15(1) of the Emergency Management (COVID-19) Order, 2020.

Fellow Barbadians, friends and well wishers, the Government of Barbados has not taken these measures lightly. Throughout our COVID-19 response we have adopted an inclusive and consultative approach characterised by engagement with the social partnership and dialogue with the public of Barbados. We know that the measures that we have had to implement to tackle COVID-19 have affected the livelihoods and the way of life of many Barbadians. We know this is painful for many and we have done our best as a government to limit the pain and cushion the impact particularly on those who are most vulnerable and most exposed in our society.

But we also know that these measures are necessary. We know that Barbados, like many other countries in the world, stands on the precipice of irreparable damage to the way of life as we have come to know and cherish it and we will do all in our power to pull the country back from that precipice.

I therefore call on all Barbadians to join in this national effort to turn back the tide of COVID-19; to protect our way of life and our heritage; and to help us shepherd this country back to a place where, in the words of our National Anthem “greater will our nation grow, in strength and unity.

I am telling you my friends, this Covid-19 is no joke! It is not playing!! We all know that it has killed almost 50 000 persons so far, and included in these, are Barbadians living

abroad. Barbados has not been spared the wrath of Covid-19 and we are not immune to deaths from Covid-19.

I urge each and everyone of you to heed the warnings. Stay off the streets, Stay in your homes. Practice good hygiene. Look out for the elderly and persons with pre-existing underlying conditions. Let us be our brother's keeper.

During this period of heightened measures of "lock down" as some may call it, we expect that supplies for some may run low. We know it will be tough on some families. But we have got to stay on lock down, so health officials can get a handle on this problem. We need for everyone to stay still, so we know exactly where the virus is and who should be treated for it. If no one new enters the country and each of us remains in our home and neighborhood, then health officials can better identify, access and act upon emerging cases.

By the end of this 15 day period, we should be in a better position to gauge and know the extent of the spread of the disease, so we can put appropriate measures in place to have it managed and contained. 15 days is truly the minimum time that is required for existing, undetected cases in Barbados to present themselves. If, as we would hope, there is minimal movement, then by April 15th we should all be in a position to know where we each stand in relation to this virus.

I appeal to all within the hearing of my voice to cooperate with the authorities and let us together combat and overcome this threat to our very survival.

We need each and every Barbadian in this mission to keep our country and our people safe.

May God continue to Bless and protect us all. May God truly Bless this beautiful island, Barbados.

Good Night.