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Barbados Now Has 14 Confirmed Cases of the Coronavirus

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BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Mar 21, CMC – Barbados became the second Caribbean Community (CARICOM) country on Saturday to announce a significant increase in the number of persons testing positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) and appealed to nationals not to panic but follow the guidelines being outlined by health officials.

Health and Wellness Minister, retired Lt. Col Jeffrey Bostic said that the island now had 14 positive cases of the virus up from six on Friday and that seven of the new cases were as a result of contact tracing. The other person who tested positive is a visitor.

Earlier, Trinidad and Tobago Health Minister Terrence Deyalsingh said the number of people who have tested positive for the virus jumped to 49 after confirming that 40 of the 68 persons who had

been placed in quarantine after undertaking a cruise ship tour had tested positive for the virus.

Bostic said he was urging Barbadians to have the confidence in the health care system, noting “the sector is strong, it is good, we have people who can get the job done.

“I will say to Barbadians that naturally the numbers will continue to rise, but that is primarily because of the work that has to be done and is being done by public health officials to ensure that we get all of those persons who might have had direct contact with confirmed cases...so that we can manage the situation.

He reiterated that once the health authorities are able to implement the various measures, the figures will rise a bit “and the time will come when we will be able to contain the situation and that is the level we are at now.

‘I can say to Barbadians to remain calm, follow the instructions of public health officials and the PSA’s (public service announcements) by the ministry, the Government Information Service and other reputable organisations and to join us in this effort by doing exactly what we ask you to do....”

Acting chief medical officer Dr Anton Best said the new cases comprised nine women and five men and have been characterised by in-country transmission.

“A number of the cases that have tested positive have no travel history and are associated with cases that have been imported”.

Health officials said that as a result, Barbados has moved into stage two of its preparedness plans for the virus that has been blamed for the deaths of more than 8,000 people worldwide, since it was first detected in China last December.

COVID-19 Communication Czar, Richard Carter, told reporters that stage two means that Barbados “now moves beyond the simple guidance that we have issued in relation to gatherings and the recommendation now coming from the government of Barbados and the health officials is that we limit the gathering of persons to no more than 25 persons.

“This is recreational gatherings and gatherings in relation to non-essential services. The expectation of the government of Barbados obviously is that there are essential services that will still need to continue, people who will still need to go to work, people will still need to conduct the businesses that are related to delivering essential services to the people of Barbados”.

The Health and Wellness Minister said that Barbados would be seeking support even from health professionals in the private sector as well as retired health personnel.

‘We are not taking any chances and we will be calling on all Barbadians who can play a part in terms of assisting us with the continuation of health care services in this country...we are utilising and calling on all Barbadians who are willing to volunteer their services to us because we do not know exactly how far this will go and we intend to be able to cover all eventualities,” Bostic added.