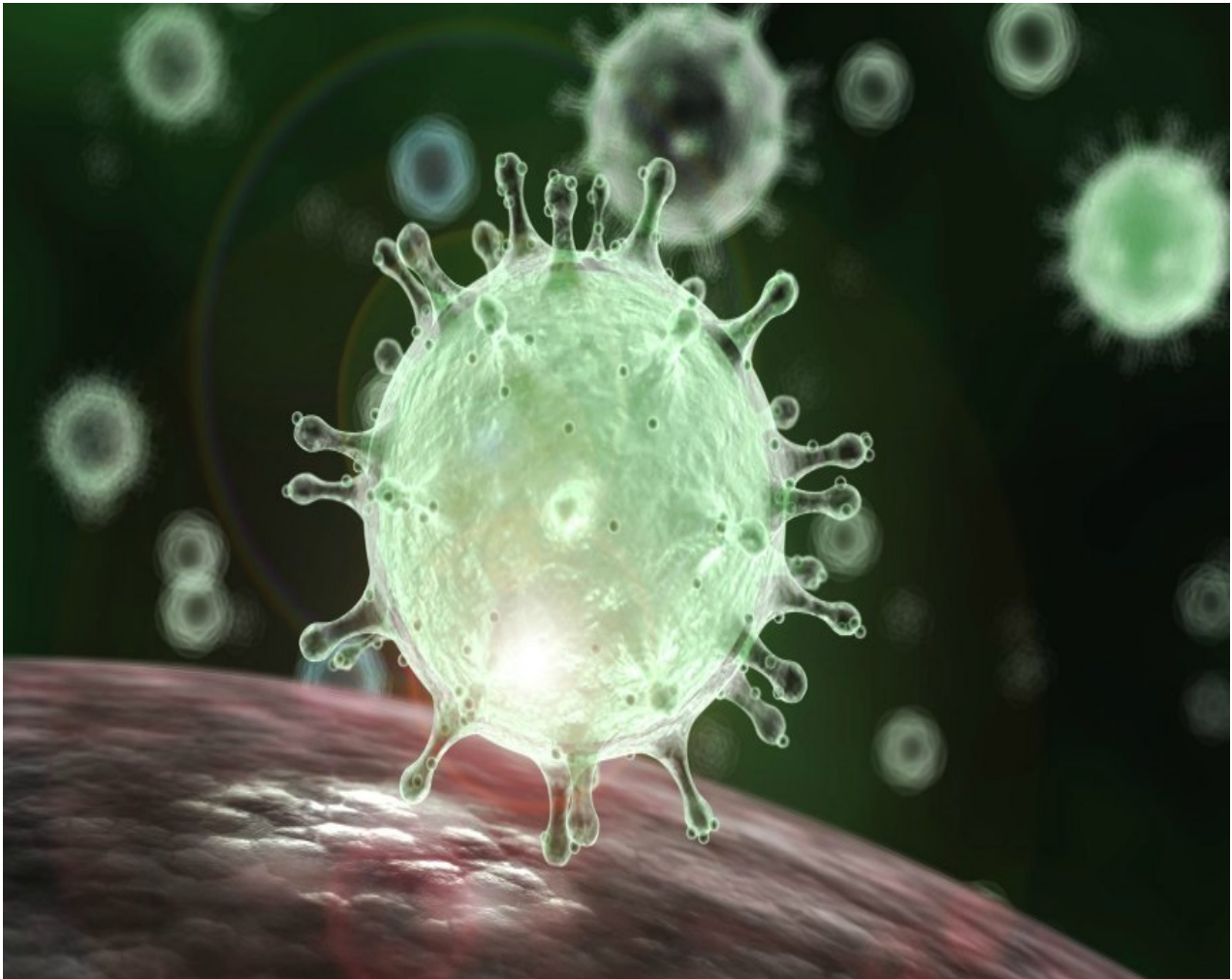


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Jamaica Confirms First Case of Coronavirus

Coronavirus / **Published On March 10, 2020 02:40 PM /**

Staff Consortium **March 10, 2020**



KINGSTON, Jamaica, CMC – Jamaica has recorded its first case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) after a female born British citizen arrived here earlier this month, Health Minister Dr. Christopher Tufton announced Tuesday.

He told a news conference that the unidentified female patient had returned from the United Kingdom on March 4 and had been in isolation since Monday after showing respiratory symptoms.

“The person is Jamaican but has UK citizenship,” Tufton said, advising persons to exercise control over the propensity “to seek out to further inquire, or worse to be overly assertive in whatever way, shape or form around an affected individuals or home

environment.

"I don't want persons to be intimidated or abused in any way shape or form because they are unfortunate to have had the virus, not to mention other persons who are not affected but are from a similar home or family environment," Tufton told reporters, adding "it is very important that I ask the public to exercise some care, we are all in this thing together and no matter how much we try we are not going to eliminate through aggression or otherwise the existence or the threat that is represented here with this virus".

He said while he would not divulge particulars about the person who is living on the borders of St. Thomas and St. Andrews, south east of here, Jamaicans should note that the case is n imported case. The person is expected to make a full recovery.

Tufton said Cabinet had taken a decision last evening with the Ministry of Education as it relates to the Penn Relays in the United States in which Jamaica has traditionally participated "and schools by now should have been advised the government is taking a position to not participate in the Penn Relays this year because that travel and the location could involve levels of risk that we would like to discourage".

H said as it relates to the local Boys and Girls Championships, a meeting has been scheduled involving various stakeholders, including the sponsor, the organisers and the Ministries of Sports and Education.

"We anticipate that a decision will be taken and that decision will be within 24 hours," he said, adding "needless to say the fact that we now have an imported case it alleviates the concerns as it relates to public gathering and that could be applied to all major public gatherings for the time being".

Tudton defended the measures put in place to screen people arriving after it was disclosed that it took at least nine days before she came forward.

"The country from where the person travelled, the UK, I think this person enjoys dual citizenship, they are Jamaican but with a UK citizenship....but the person travelled, they would have been screened as all passengers would be at the airport but they were not on the list of countries that would have been quarantined.

"The UK even though it has the virus and it is getting worse would not have represented one of those high risk at the time. So the person would have been screened in the normal course of activities at the port of entry, but having arrived one of the things that we tell persons ...is that they must also self-assess and they are given documentation to that effect."

He said based on the investigations the person did not have symptoms until "days after arriving and having had those symptoms they went to see their doctor which led to all the other things that have transpired".

Tufton made it clear that "there are no guarantees" as it relates to the spread of the virus, for which here is no vaccine, adding the only way to prevent the island having an imported case is to shut the island away from the rest of the world.

“Even so under the legal framework you can’t shut Jamaica out from Jamaicans who are all over the world and want to come back home, what you do is quarantine them. So the reality is as the virus spreads it increases the possibilities and the exposure, which is why we said in the early stages of public education and information that a key part of the strategy was to delay to allow us time to plan for eventuality or the possibility of it coming,” Tufton added.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness said as of Monday, March 9, there were 241 travellers, who visited a country of interest, before arriving in Jamaica.

“Notably, among that number, seven persons are in home quarantine, while some 23 are in quarantine at government facilities. In the meantime, there were 105,586 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally and 3,584 deaths confirmed.”