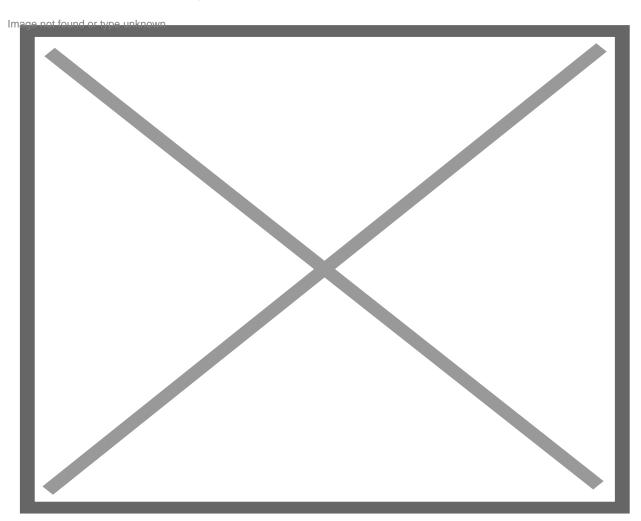# Coronavirus Begins Spread in Caribbean: Jamaica Confirms Second Case, Guyana Confirms First Death, St. Vincent and Grenadines Record First Case

Coronavirus / **Published On March 12, 2020 02:53 AM /**

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On Wednesday, when the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a pandemic, the announcement appeared to represent a shift in attitude toward the virus, which has killed over 4,500 people. Yet for most of the months the virus has spread since its origin in Wuhan, China, the Caribbean had mostly escaped its reach. Now, however, Covid-19 is spreading fast in the region, with Guyana reporting its first death from the disease, Jamaica reporting its second case, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines reporting its first case was well.

While there has been no confirmed cases of the virus in many Caribbean islands, health officials are predicting the virus's spread to virtually all populated areas of the world. In light of this assessment, along with the virus being declared a pandemic, governments have been bracing

— and initiating defense strategies — to combat the pathogen.

Jamaica records second case of Covid-19

Jamaica Health Minister Dr. Christoper Tufton has confirmed a second case of COVID-19 in Jamaica.

According to Tufton, the second case is a US Embassy employee who returned from the United Kingdom (UK).

The two COVID-19 cases in Jamaica both involve people who travelled to the UK.

On Tuesday, Tufton confirmed that Jamaica's first case of the virus involved a dual citizen who had returned to Jamaica from the UK to attend a funeral.

The UK is not on the list of places that Jamaica has imposed travel restrictions for, in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. However, following the second confirmed case, the government has been looking at the possibility.

Jamaica travel restrictions are in place for China, Italy, South Korea, Singapore, Iran, Spain, France and Germany.

Guyana records first death

Guyana became the third Caribbean Community (CARICOM) country to record a case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the last 24 hours, following Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

President David Granger in a radio and television broadcast on Wednesday night confirmed that a woman who had been taken to the Georgetown Public Health Corporation (GPHC) on Tuesday night had died of the virus.

"Guyanese, it is my sad duty to announce Guyana confirmed its first imported case of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Georgetown on Wednesday 11th March 2020. The patient has been identified as a 52-year-old Guyanese female who had travelled from the United States of America, which has reported cases of COVID-19.

"She arrived in the country on 5th March, presented to the public health system on 10th March and was found to have uncontrolled Diabetes and Hypertension. She subsequently died at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation at 08:00 hours on 11th March," Granger said.

He said that health professionals sought to conduct tests for COVID-19 based on the patient's travel history and that a clinical sample was collected and sent to the National Reference Laboratory, where laboratory test confirmed the diagnosis.

"The patient's infection is classified an imported case. Measures are being taken to prevent the risk of community spread," Granger said, adding that the measures include the dispatch of a health team to the home of the deceased for assessment and initiation of public health prevention measures as well as the identification and contact tracing for all possible exposed persons.

He said that health officials would be meeting with the staff of the hospital and there would be the implementation of necessary interventions.

Granger said that screening remains in place for those persons arriving from high-risk countries, like – Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, French Guiana, Panama, St. Vincent and Grenadines and the United States as well as travel bans from persons originating from China, Italy, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia and Iran.

"I advise, further, that public gatherings be discouraged (and) non-essential travel be discouraged," he said, adding that competent agencies continue to patrol irregular border crossings and there has been enhanced sensitization of key personnel at all air and seaports.

Granger said that the Ministry of Public Health has designated three quarantine facilities and others will be identified.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

St. Vincent and the Grenadines Wednesday night announced that it has recorded its first case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) after a national returned to the island from attending a meeting in the United Kingdom.

Health authorities speaking at a news conference here said the female is between the age 30 and 35 and that the Trinidad-based Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) had confirmed the results of the test.

Health Minister Luke Browne told reporters that the authorities have implemented the necessary protocols to deal with the situation and the members of the family of the woman had been placed in quarantine.

"It is an individual who is exhibiting mild symptoms and that is consistent with what you would see in most cases of COVID-19. So we reiterate that 80 per cent of the persons who get COVID-19 will only develop a mild version of the disease with limited symptoms.

"And it is only in a case where the 20 per cent group that you might have a more severe version of it, but in most instances, mild or severe you are expected to fully recover and we expect full recovery in respect to this particular case and we note that only persons who are very old…over 80 and who have an underline health condition are vulnerable to this," he said, urging nationals to continue to undertake proper hygiene practices.

Browne said that the plans were moving ahead for a suitable area for a proper quarantine area and there were also no plans at the moment for a broad based ban on travel from Europe.

"At the moment we have in place quarantine restrictions for persons travelling from certain countries including countries in Europe, such as Italy as a case in point and there is no intention at this moment, of course this is an evolving situation and we assess things as they develop, to carry out a broad based ban on travel from Europe or from any other particular part of the world," Browne said.