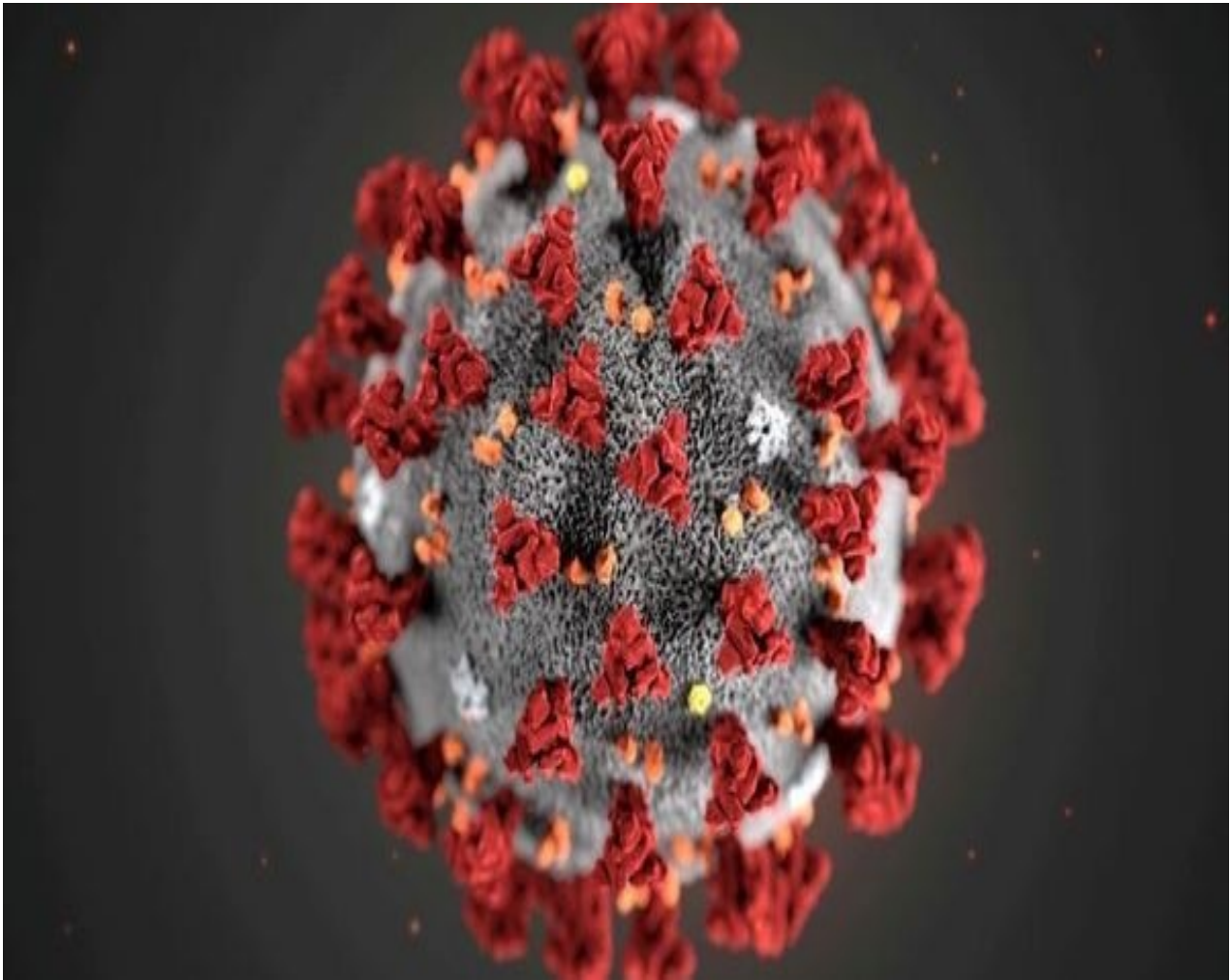


The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Lucia, Antigua, Suriname and Cayman Islands Each Report First Case of Coronavirus

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As the coronavirus pandemic continues to penetrate the Caribbean, St. Lucia, Antigua, Suriname and the Cayman Islands have each reported their first case of the pathogen. They join Jamaica, Guyana, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic in a growing number of Caribbean islands reporting cases of COVID-19.

St. Lucia

St. Lucia and Suriname Friday announced “imported” cases of the coronavirus joining several other Caribbean Community (ARICOM) countries that have announced cases of

the virus that was first detected in China last December.

Health authorities here said that a 63-year-old woman, who arrived here from the United Kingdom on March 7, had presented herself to the hospital four days later and samples sent to the Trinidad-based Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA).

They said the results of the tests were received Friday.

"The person of interest, we do not believe we should be giving out people's names or the names of hotels or businesses or anything like that," Health Minister Mary Isaac told a news conference.

She said to do so would only create more of a panic "towards that particular institution and there is no need for that.

"It is an imported case," Isaac said, adding that cabinet will be meeting over the weekend and Prime Minister Allen Chastanet will most likely address the nation on Monday.

"Yesterday we were in one position, today we are in a different type of situation. So as the thing unfolds then our decision also keeps changing," she said in response to a question as to whether the government was contemplating shutting down schools and banning public gatherings.

Suriname

In Suriname, Vice President Ashwin Adhin Friday said the positive case is a person who travelled from the Netherlands to Suriname on Wednesday.

He said Suriname has since announced the closure of its airspace from midnight and

The VP also announced on Friday afternoon that the Surinamese airspace will be closed at midnight. All ports of entries will also be closed.

The Ministry of Public Infrastructure in Guyana has announced that the Canawaima Ferry Services on the Corentyne will be suspended from Saturday, until further notice.

"The Management of the Guyana /Suriname Ferry Service sincerely apologized for any inconvenience caused at this time," the Ministry said.

Antigua

Antigua Prime Minister Gaston Browne Friday announced that Antigua and Barbuda had recorded its first case of the coronavirus following now other Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent and Guyana where the virus has surfaced.

Browne said that the case was an "imported one" with the unidentified woman have arrived here from the United Kingdom, earlier this month.

It is my unfortunate duty to advise you that our country recorded our first confirmation of someone who has contracted the coronavirus," Browne said in a radio and television broadcast, adding that he wanted to emphasise "there is no need for fear or panic arising

from this case”.

He said the woman, who had arrived here on March 10 “is in self-isolation at home and a regime has been put in place today, not only to continue such isolation but also to treat the condition”.

Browne said the authorities here had earlier announced that two individuals had been showing symptoms associated with the virus that was first detected in China at the end of December last year and which has been blamed for more than 4,000 deaths across more than 110 countries, globally.

He said samples were sent to the Trinidad-based Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) with one being positive.

“All of this happened very quickly and it is a demonstration of how well prepared our health officials are in identifying possible coronavirus sufferers,” he said telling the nation that the woman had arrived here from the United Kingdom on a British Airways flight.

“She went directly to her mother’s home that night and on March 11 she visited a private medical clinic where the doctors recognised the symptoms of the coronavirus and immediately contacted government health officials who took the required samples and sent them to CARPHA for testing.”

He said the results were returned on Thursday and that he has been given an assurance by health officials that the possibility of a spread “is unlikely since the person has been isolated at home during the entire period in the company only of a parent.

“In any event, no stone will be left unturned in testing the parent and other persons with whom the patient and the mother has been in contact. That exercise will be carried out today,” Browne said, noting that he had been informing the country of not “if but when COVID 19 would reach our shores”.

Browne said that the virus is crossing borders rapidly and short of closing down every point of entry in both Antigua and Barbuda “there is no way to seal our borders.

“In any event our country and our economy live by tourism and by the importation of goods, sealing our borders was no more possible for us than for any other country in the world,” he said, noting that his administration had put in place measures to prevent planes from some countries and cruise ships with suspected cases as well as developing a quarantine program.

Cayman Islands

The Cayman Islands confirmed its first case of the virus on Thursday.

According to the Cayman Compass, the patient is a visitor — a 68-year-old man from Italy — who was transferred from a cruise ship to Health City Cayman Islands for a critical cardiac issue, Cayman Islands Premier Alden McLaughlin said at a press conference Thursday afternoon.

The man, who arrived in Cayman in 29 Feb., was said to be doing and was still in isolation in a hospital as of Thursday. "We are confident that all the appropriate measures have been and continue to be taken and the patient poses no risk to the broader community," the Cayman Islands premier said.

The man was among six people who had been tested for coronavirus in Cayman. Four tested negative and the remaining test results are pending.

"We will be extending the travel ban to include a significant number of new countries. I do not want to preempt Cabinet's decision by going into those details right now, but we have spent the entire day dealing with a whole range of issues arising from the threat of this virus," McLaughlin said.