



PRESS RELEASE BY PRIME MINISTER on current COVID 19 Situation in the Country

- Today, I wish to brief the nation on the current status of the COVID 19 pandemic in Papua New Guinea.
- COVID 19 continues to cause significant disruption globally, with widespread infections and deaths now being reported worldwide.
- As of today, there have been more than 16 million cases reported around the world with more than 600,000 deaths.
- In our region, two of our nearest neighbours, Indonesia and Australia continue to battle significant outbreaks. In Indonesia, there have been almost 2,000 cases in the last 24 hours alone.
- Along our western border with Papua, some 3,220 cases have been reported to date, with 116 new cases and 2 deaths in just the last 24 hours.
- Papua New Guinea is not immune from the impact of this awful virus. It does not discriminate. It effects the rich and the poor, the young and the old.
- In short, we must do everything we can as a nation to contain it.
- As you will be aware, Papua New Guinea has reported 62 cases of COVID to date. 51 of these remain active and in medical care. **We have conducted close to 10,000 tests, including 535 in the last 24 hours** which have revealed 23 confirmed cases, the nation's capital city.
- We are also continuing to monitor those that present to our hospitals and medical centres with symptoms.
- The reality is, that based on reputable modelling, the number of cases in Papua New Guinea is much higher than that which has been recorded.
- **And based on current numbers, we can expect to see a double in the number of cases every 2 to 3 days.**
- As a result, we have elevated our nation to stage 3 of the COVID 19, which means we must lift our mitigation and management performance, to stop the spread of the virus, across the country.

- Put simply, without urgent and coordinated intervention, numbers will grow out of control.
- That is why the Government has agreed to recommendations from the National Control Centre to implement immediate and urgent measures, including those announced recently in regard to the wearing of face masks in markets and other crowded places and restrictions on flights out of Port Moresby.
- The NCC has advised that more must be done to prevent widespread community transmission. That is why, effective immediately, we will implement the following additional measures:
 - The National Capital District and Port Moresby will be shut down for 14 days, with a Curfew declared under the Pandemic Act, with only essential businesses to operate.
 - A curfew will be in place from 10pm to 5am.
 - The wearing of face masks will be mandatory in all public places.
 - No gathering in public places – limited to maximum of 15 people.
 - There will be an immediate ban on all domestic flights from Port Moresby, for an initial period of 14 days.
 - Where essential business travel is required, this may only occur after a person has provided evidence of quarantine for 14 days prior to travel, with the cost to be met by businesses.
 - International flights will only be allowed to operate between Brisbane and Cairns and can only be operated by PNG aircraft.
 - Nightclubs will close indefinitely.
 - There will be a maximum limit of 15 people gathering in public places.
 - Sporting activities will be restricted.
 - All businesses will be required to implement COVID 19 protocols to ensure adherence to limitations in numbers and social distancing.
 - Testing in the NCD will be significantly scaled up and targeted.

- Health authorities will be working closely with Provincial Health Authorities to coordinate testing and other support.
 - There will be a downsizing of the public service with only staff identified by the Department of Personnel Management as essential required to work. Non-essential staff may be asked to assist the NOC when necessary during this period.
 - Increased awareness at the provincial, district and village level on social distancing and other measures to prevent contagion will take place
 - Schools will be close down for 14 days.
 - No PMV buses to operate except for taxis service, with masks.
 - Church services allowed with restrictive spaces, and mask worn at all times. Allow for double services if possible.
- I want to assure the people of Papua New Guinea that the Government is acutely aware of the economic impact that the ongoing crisis is having, and that we will continue to identify measures to cushion the economy and provide practical support to business.
 - I call on all Papua New Guineans to cooperate with all of the measures I have outlined today. All of us must play a role in defeating this terrible virus.
 - We must take personal responsibility of our health, your family, your neighbors and your country. Such times, it is not time to play petty politics or someone to blame but for all of us to work together to stop the spread of this invisible enemy.
 - The NCC and the Emergency Controller will continue to keep the public informed over the coming days.
 - I urge each and every one of you to remain calm and not to panic. By washing your hands, social distancing, and staying home unless it is essential, all of us can play our part in stopping the virus from spreading.
 - May God continue to watch over us at this time and bless each and every one of you.

Authorized for release by
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 Prime Minister