

Address to the Nation
by
Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis
Dr. the Hon. Timothy Harris
on the State of Emergency
Tuesday, 7th April 2020

My Fellow Citizens and Residents:

As you are aware, on Friday, 27th March, His Excellency, the Governor General, Sir S.W. Tapley Seaton, proclaimed a State of Emergency in St. Kitts and Nevis beginning 28th March and continuing to 11th April on the grounds of the threat of a natural calamity of the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19), an infectious disease which had taken effect on a pandemic scale throughout the world and which threatened the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis.

At the time, St. Kitts and Nevis had had two (2) confirmed cases of COVID-19 and, in order to prevent the spread of the Novel Coronavirus, my Government had published Regulations to restrict persons from coming into contact with each other except in very special circumstances.

Yesterday, Monday, 6th April, the Cabinet of Ministers was informed that eleven (11) persons have been tested positive in St. Kitts and Nevis. The advice that we have had from our Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Hazel Laws, is that there is no known cure. However, we can control the spread of the virus and protect our people if we were to continue our strategy to practise social distancing and follow all health guidelines for the foreseeable future.

On the advice of Cabinet I have asked His Excellency, the Governor General, to extend the State of Emergency currently in place, to Saturday, 18th April and to extend Regulations made under the Emergency Powers Act.

The St. Kitts and Nevis Constitution provides that a declaration of emergency shall lapse at the expiration of twenty-one (21) days beginning with the date of publication of the declaration. Saturday 18th April will be 21 days since the State of Emergency was proclaimed on the 28th of March.

Further Regulations would also be published in the Official Gazette and would come into force after the current Regulations expire on Thursday, 9th April at 7:00pm.

The new Regulations would continue to be centred on the directive for all persons to shelter in place (in other words, stay at home), except they are essential workers or they must leave home for a medical emergency or to purchase food or medicine.

These new Regulations, SR&O No. 12 of 2020, will come into effect on Thursday, 9th April at 7:01pm and continue to Saturday, 18th April. Most importantly, there will be a total 24-hour curfew or lockdown from Thursday, 9th April at 7:01pm to Thursday, April 16th at 6:00am. This means that from Thursday night this week, and continuing over the Easter weekend including Good Friday, Saturday, Easter Sunday, Easter Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, until Thursday morning, no one should be away from their residence unless he or she has a special exemption as an essential worker or has a pass or permission from the Commissioner of Police.

I appeal to you to stay at home. Please stay at Home! Stay at Home! Stay at Home so that we can halt the spread of the virus.

If you are wandering around, if you go to the beach, if you arrange parties and other gatherings that are prohibited at this time, the police will disrupt those activities and arrest you. This is not the time to be cavalier or callous. We are in a war against COVID-19 and we

must win. The State will do what it has to do to protect all our people! The cooperation of all is required so that together we can prevail.

There will then be two (2) more days, on Thursday and Friday next week, when there will be a partial curfew, or limited restrictions, to allow persons to go to supermarkets or shops in their villages, to restock their food supply. Or you may want to get medicine or other essentials. Like the partial curfews that you have experienced so far, they will be interspersed with a night curfew from 7:00pm to 6:00am the following morning.

If you need to buy your food or medicine, we encourage that only one member of a household leave the residence to do so. We encourage you to prepare a list of your food items, avoid both unnecessary shopping and frequent visits to the supermarket. This, of course, is for your own health and indeed for the benefit of all of us.

We have been concerned that many of our citizens have been overcrowding the supermarkets and shops and have not always observed the social distancing guidelines. There have been reports of individuals being too close to each other in the parking lots of supermarkets and on the sidewalks outside of pharmacies.

I want to let you know that the Cabinet has had advice from the National COVID-19 Working Group, which has been discussing this with the Chamber of Industry and Commerce and their food retail members. The Working Group or Task Force is made up of Government Agencies that have been working around the clock to protect us all: the Security Forces, the Healthcare workers, Customs, Immigration, Foreign Affairs and our National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and we have adopted their recommendation regarding the movement of people on days when there will be a partial curfew.

Zoning

So beginning tomorrow, Wednesday, 8th April and Thursday, 9th April, the Police will introduce and enforce a zoning plan for those shoppers who must leave their homes. On Wednesday, during the hours of 7:00am to 3:00pm, the Partial Curfew will be lifted for those persons in Zone One to purchase essential goods at supermarkets, pharmacies and food retail shops while exercising, of course, the strictest social distancing rules. During Wednesday, there should be no movement to Basseterre except by persons in Zone One. Zone Two will be allowed to travel on Thursday during the hours of 7:00am to 3:00pm while there will be a restriction of movement of Zone One.

Zone One (East Side) will comprise all those areas east of a line through the center of Fort Street, Basseterre, continuing north through Victoria Road and extending all the way to the Roundabout on the FT Williams Highway at the RLB International Airport just west of Taylors Housing Development. Continuing east along the FT Williams Highway to the Island Main Road and including all those areas traditionally known as the East Basseterre Constituency. Then continuing in a northeasterly direction along the Island Main Road from Conaree and Needsmust and extending all the way to Saddlers and Lavington.

Zone Two (West Side) will comprise all other areas on the island of St. Kitts, from Parsons travelling via Sandy Point to Basseterre and including all other areas in the Basseterre Valley such as St. Peters, Central and West Basseterre but excluding East Basseterre.

In Nevis, Zone Three will comprise the parishes of St. Pauls, St. Thomas and St. James. Persons in these parishes will be allowed to leave their residences on Wednesday, 8th April between the hours of 7:00am to 3:00pm.

Zone Four comprises the parishes of St. John and St. George in Nevis, and persons there will be able to leave their residences on Thursday, 9th April from 7:00am to 3:00pm.

I urge all residents of villages and settlements in the rural areas to utilize those establishments and village shops in your area and so reduce the congestion in Basseterre and Charlestown. Many of these village shops have the identical items that you are travelling to Basseterre and Charlestown to purchase. This travel is not essential and you are likely exposing yourself and your loved ones to the virus.

Early Payment to STEP and GAE Employees

The Cabinet has mandated that those who receive wages from the public sector, the Government Auxiliary Employees (GAEs) and the STEP workers will be paid tomorrow morning and Thursday morning depending on your zone. In other words, those who live on the East Side can collect their payments on Wednesday. Those who live on the West Side will have the same opportunity to collect their payments on Thursday.

My Fellow Citizens and Residents, I must reiterate: these are not normal times. Our situation changes from day to day. Our Emergency Powers Regulations will be kept under constant review, and those changes that are seen to be desirable will be made from time to time.

I want to assure you that my Government is fully committed to this fight against this COVID-19. We are indeed very resolute. We will not give up. And I am so proud of my people, because I know that you will not give up. You will do what is necessary to stay alive and we will come out of this, Stronger, Healthier and Safer as a People and Nation. As one of our great Calypsonians, King Socrates tells us, *“This [meaning the Coronavirus], this too will pass.”*

We must all act responsibly not just for ourselves but for the wider community and indeed our Country. We must show greater respect and love for each other. In particular, special consideration must be given to the elderly and the very young, and other vulnerable groups

in our society. We are fighting for the good of our communities and indeed we are fighting for the Country that we love, and we must never waver.

May God Continue to Bless All the People of St. Kitts and Nevis, and May He in His Mercy Continue to Protect Us All.

I thank you.