#

Address by President Danny Faure on the easing of restrictions related to the COVID-19 situation

27 April 2020 | State House

Compatriots,
Seychellois brothers and sisters,

Today, more than 3 million people around the world have been infected with the coronavirus. The number of people that have died with COVID-19 is more than 200, 000. We see the suffering and pain caused by this virus every day on the news. In these difficult moments, Seychelles stands in solidarity with countries and people around the world at war with this virus.

Here in Seychelles, we had 11 people that tested positive. 5 among them are still in the treatment centre. 6 have recovered and have been discharged from the treatment centre. I am happy to say that 3 among these 6 people have returned home.

Luckily, since the 11th case we recorded on 5 April, we have not registered any new cases of COVID-19.

Measures in place today are to keep our population safe. They are measures that are necessary. Some of them, such as the restrictions on funeral services, have created a lot of pain. I know that throughout this period, it has not been possible to be physically present with our loved ones, our family and our friends. I thank you all for your understanding and your sacrifice.

Faced with the greatest threat to human health today, we rallied together and collectively stayed in the line of defence. We have all played our role to break the chain of transmission of this virus and we did it to keep our community healthy and safe.

Tonight, I would like to thank the Seychellois people for your solidarity, your unity and your discipline. I would like to especially thank all our health workers and volunteers, and everyone working in essential services and critical services. On behalf of the people of Seychelles, thank you so much.

Seychellois brothers and sisters,

If the situation stays under control up until Sunday 3 May, we will start to lift certain restrictions in force the next day.

Given this Public Health Emergency, the lifting of measures must be done gradually, with a great deal of caution. There is no room for error.

Following my discussion with the Public Health Commissioner, Doctor Jude Gedeon, and his team, I would like to announce a gradual easing of restrictions as follows:

**From Monday 4 May,**

Firstly, all restrictions on the movement of people will be removed.

Secondly, religious services, including funeral services, will be able to resume following guidance from the Department of Health.

Thirdly, all shops will be able to stay open until 8pm in the evening.

Fourthly, the majority of services and businesses will be able to reopen. Construction companies can resume their work as per guidance issued by the Department of Health.

**From 11 May,**

All child-minding and day-care services, all post-secondary institutions including A-Levels, Guy Morel Institute and University of Seychelles, will reopen.

**From 18 May,**

All primary and secondary schools will reopen.

**From 1 June,**

Firstly, the airport will reopen for commercial flights in line with guidance issued by the Department of Health.

Secondly, Seychellois will be able to travel abroad as per guidance and regulations issued by the Department of Health.

Thirdly, leisure boats and yachts will be able to enter Seychelles territory, respecting any guidance from the Department of Health.

Fourthly, sporting activities can resume, following guidance from the Department of Health.

Fifth, gyms, cinemas, bars and casino can reopen, in line with guidance from the Department of Health.

**All other measures will stay in force.**

We must remember that the situation is dynamic and that measures can be reviewed or revised at any moment in the interest of protecting public health.

Next month, Air Seychelles will carry out repatriation flights for our Seychellois patients presently in India and Sri Lanka. These flights will also serve any Seychellois currently stuck in these two countries: I urge them to get in touch with our Embassies.

Seychellois brothers and sisters,

We are in a new reality. One that requires a new way of doing things, a new way of living, and a new sense of responsibility.

Even if certain measures have been lifted, we need to stay on our guard and take every precaution against this invisible enemy. If the situation changes, restrictions may need to be re-introduced: we will review the measures with the aim of continuing to safeguard the health of our people.

We must continue to practise physical distancing and maintain good hygiene, in line with guidance from the Department of health.

The Department of Health has started working with organisations to prepare customised plans on how they can function given the new reality we are in.

Let us be conscious that during the month of May, no one is entering the country. We are the only ones moving around. Let us use this opportunity to consolidate the new practices we have learnt: practise physical distance, wash your hands, maintain good hygiene. I encourage workplaces and schools to use this time to prepare and equip yourselves for this new reality, and help us get ready for what we must accomplish together.

As long as this virus persists in the world, we will have to continue to scale up our public health response.

When we reopen our borders, we will undertake strict medical surveillance to detect any new cases and take the necessary steps

The second aspect of our ongoing COVID-19 response is strengthened contact tracing. We will improve the speed and effectiveness of our contact tracing to break any chains of transmission.

And finally, our ongoing response will be underpinned by testing. We will be maintaining high levels of testing and putting those who test positive in the treatment centre.

With these 3 pillars: strict border controls, rigorous contact tracing and testing, we will continue to minimise risks and keep the situation under control.

Seychellois brothers and sisters,

As we prepare ourselves for the lifting of certain restrictions, we also need to prepare ourselves to live in this new reality and consolidate a new way of doing things.

As long as there is no vaccine or treatment for this virus, we need to stay alert, maintain physical distancing, and continue to follow guidance from the Department of Health.

It will require a lot of work, a lot of sacrifice and a lot of readjustment on a personal and collective level. Things will not be like they were before. But I know that we can do it. And I know that because we are already doing it, together.

I hope that when measures are eased from 4 May, we can better appreciate the simple things: the sheer beauty of our country, the clear water in the sea, bird songs; the opportunity to see and reconnect with each other. As a student at school, better appreciation for the presence of our friends and our teachers. As a worker, better appreciation for the opportunity to return to work and see our colleagues. The value of life, the value of family, the value of friendship, the value of neighbourhood, and the value of community.

We have stayed united. Let us stay a united people.

When we hear and see what is happening in the world around us, we recognise how we in Seychelles, we truly are a blessed people.

May God continue to bless our Seychelles and protect our people.

Thank you and good evening.