Mauritius officially Covid-19 free

As of Sunday, 17 May, the Republic of Mauritius has recorded no new Covid-19 cases for the last 20 consecutive days.

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This can be attributed to the responsiveness of the Mauritian authorities who did not wait for the World Health Organisation (WHO) to declare the coronavirus as a pandemic.

While the WHO predicted more than 20,000 cases and 1,139 deaths in the group age of over 60 years for the Indian Ocean island, there have been only 332 positive cases, of which 322 people recovered, and 10 deaths recorded – five of which was directly related to the coronavirus – for the entire population.

The island implemented the following **precautionary and control measures** to contain the spread of the virus:

• As of 23 January, passengers inbound from China are quarantined, a measure extended to other Asian countries such as South Korea and Japan shortly thereafter. On 02 February, there is an outright travel ban of these nationals.

• On 16 March, Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth announces the closure of the borders of Mauritius to the countries of the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland from Wednesday, 18 March for an initial period of two weeks.

• On 19 March, with the announcement of the first three cases of the Covid-19 virus, the Prime Minister declares a state of national containment from the following day for 14 days. The entire economy is shut down except for essential services and a few grocery stores and pharmacies.

• Sanitary confinement is tightened three days later and then extended for the first time until 15 April, a second time till 04 May and finally a third time to 01 June, with a gradual opening of certain sectors of the economy from 15 May. The Prime Minister justifies this extension so that the stabilisation of the spread of the virus would not be annihilated by a second wave of the disease.

Controlling and stabilising the coronavirus

The closure of the borders first for the Asian countries affected by Covid-19 and then for all other countries, and the quarantine of Mauritians and residents coming from abroad, demonstrated the will to prevent the coronavirus from reaching the coasts of Mauritius.

The experience of local health services for diseases such as malaria had greatly helped in monitoring contact tracing of people found to be positive. In addition, the centralisation and creation of isolation units for people in need of intensive care also helped to minimise the spread of the virus.

A policy also helped by the creation of quarantine centres to accommodate all returnees through government and the private sector collaboration, saw no less than eight hotels become available to the government for quarantine purposes.

In addition, Rodrigues Island, another part of the Mauritian Republic, located 600 km from Port-Louis, and also a popular tourist destination, recorded no cases of the virus, while the sanitary confinement there lasted only 14 days.

Although no new cases have been detected for 20 days, vigilance has not been relaxed. Tests for the Covid-19 virus continue for all those who worked during the confinement period, including medical personnel, police and employees of grocery stores.

To date, 87,177 tests of Covid-19 have been performed and 149 people are still in quarantine.

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