

UPDATE ON COVID 19 IN MAURITIUS AS AT SATURDAY 18TH APRIL 2020

The number of positive cases who are at the treatment centres as at 17th April stands at 325 out of the less than 10000 persons tested mostly those who have been abroad and through contact tracing.

Among those infected are also staff of Health service, immigration officers, migrant workers and Air Mauritius staff.

While the number of deaths stands at 9 the number of patients who have been successfully treated are 108. All patients attending the Flu Clinics in the Regional Hospitals were being tested for COVID 19.

The procurement of medical items was being effected from China, Amsterdam and Hong Kong. The Government of India has donated has donated medical supplies. 500,000 tablets of hydroxychloroquine which were delivered by a special Air India flight on 15th April 2020. Jack Ma's Foundation has also donated medical items like masks to Mauritius.

The UNDP is assisting Mauritius in the setting up of an Electronic Laboratory Information Management System for COVID 19 patients at the Central Health Laboratory.

The COVID 19 Solidarity Fund has received approximately 75 million rupees out of which 11 million rupees from the EU.

The Wage Assistance Scheme was set up in March where Government decided to pay half the salary of workers in the private sector for those drawing up to Rs 50000 for the month of March. For the month of April Government decided to pay the full salary of those drawing less than Rs 25000 and 50% between Rs 25000 and Rs 50000. This would cost government an amount of Rs 4 billion.

An employer would be debarred from the scheme if he has benefitted from funds under the scheme and has not paid his employees for the months of March and April 2020 or he has laid off even one employee during the lockdown/curfew period.

The Self Employed Assistance Scheme will also be applicable up to the 30th April 2020 all employees.

Long queues could still be found at the supermarkets and cases of hoarding have been detected. Shops do not practice promotional prices currently. On the contrary prices of several food items and vegetable have gone up.

Several employees even in public hospitals have not been provided with appropriate protective equipment.

A circular has been issued by the Ministry of Public Service highlighting the conditions in which public sector organisations should operate their services during confinement period.

The confinement is due to end on the 4th May and if the situation permits work will start progressively.

We have requested Government and the private sector to engage into social dialogue with the unions to prepare for post COVID 19 in terms of provision of appropriate equipment to workers like masks and gloves, sanitisers at the workplace, arrangements for social distancing both at bus stops, in buses as well as in workplaces. Necessary information should also be given to workers when and in which situation to wear masks and gloves. All workers cannot be required to go to work at the same time cause of the rush and traffic problem.

If appropriate protective measures are not taken if work resumes on the 4th May we could face a relapse as asymptomatic persons can infect other workers without their knowledge.

We have also requested the Prime Minister's office to conduct an enquiry in the manner in which Air Mauritius has dealt with the COVID 19 case has not provided protective equipment to the cabin crew and made them to work without other necessary protection.

We have made public statements in the media and written to the authorities regarding non provision of protective equipment as well as denouncing the profiteering of traders.

According to the Minister of Finance the unemployment which turns around 6% currently could turn out to be 17% with COVID 19.

Conscious of the severe impact of COVID 19 on the economy and social aspect we have requested Government to engage in social dialogue with trade unions to discuss impact on workers and appropriate actions together.

Government has announced that it will come with a series of amendments to various legislations with a view to cope with similar situations in future.

We as trade unions believe that the outbreak of COVID 19 should be considered as a wakeup call to stop the massacre human beings are making to the nature.

Confinement gives an opportunity for regeneration of our natural resources on the land as well as in the sea.

It has also brought a halt to air pollution, helps to protect the environment and make people to be disciplined in terms of respect of the law which a curfew imposes on them.

We only hope the number of deaths stops, infected persons recover and the propagation also stops

We hope that human beings will then draw lessons from the situation and take appropriate actions

With kind regards

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President GSEA and State and Other Employees Federation