

COMMUNIQUE

MAURITIANS ABROAD

The COVID -19 pandemic is an unprecedented global health challenge which has resulted in travel restrictions, closure of airspace, curfews, lockdowns, and confinement. The virus has so far infected more than 975,000 people worldwide and caused around 47,000 deaths. International travel restrictions have been implemented by most countries in the world as part of the global strategies to contain the spread of the deadly virus. These stringent restrictions are accompanied by national strategies that limit movements of people through lockdowns to prevent transmission of the disease.

World Situation

Consequently, travellers across the globe are finding themselves stranded in foreign countries, including many Mauritians in countries as remote as Cambodia, Vietnam, Canada, Florida (USA) Brazil, Mexico, Senegal, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Belarus, New Zealand as well as in Europe, Pakistan, India and Madagascar, amongst others. Government is sympathetic to their plight and is doing its level best to assist them.

Local Situation

The Government of Mauritius is relentlessly fighting to control the spread of the Coronavirus. As from 19 March we went into a nationwide lockdown until 15 April 2020 and we closed our airspace to commercial flights in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are battling on several fronts to curb this scourge, including treatment of infected patients, quarantine, contact tracing, isolation and public awareness. The health systems as well as the medical and paramedical personnel are under tremendous pressure as they deal with the epidemic. As at now, there are around 1500 Mauritians in quarantine, of which the majority came from abroad. There are 161 confirmed cases of Coronavirus. To date, 7 deaths have been registered and the number of infections is increasing.

Return of Mauritians from abroad

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and its diplomatic Missions have, since the outbreak of the Coronavirus, been striving to bring back home the stranded Mauritians from overseas. In January, Government evacuated, with the assistance of the French Authorities, 12 Mauritian Nationals who were in lockdown in Wuhan, the epicenter of the Coronavirus outbreak. In early February, 44 Mauritians who were in distress following the spread of the Coronavirus in other parts of China were repatriated to Mauritius. In mid-March the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all its diplomatic Missions, in collaboration with foreign Authorities have airlifted 935 Mauritians who were stranded in **UK, France, Turkey, Australia, UAE, South Africa, India and Reunion Island** before the closing down of the airspace in those countries and cancellation of connecting flights.

In Mauritius, there are currently around 3000 foreign nationals/tourists stranded and facing difficulties to return to their countries due to closure of the airport, airspace and travel restrictions.

Data compilation of Mauritians still abroad

According to data compiled by our diplomatic Missions after lockdowns in most of the countries, there are 1721 Mauritians with a valid air ticket who are still stranded overseas in more than 40 countries. These include cruise crews, tourists, businessmen, students, patients on medical treatment and Mauritians on pilgrimage.

Over and above, there are 615 Mauritians who are currently working or residing abroad who have expressed their wish to return to Mauritius, although they do not have a pre-booked ticket.

There may be other people who have not yet contacted us and we urge them and their relatives to contact the nearest diplomatic Missions or our **Hotline on 181 (local) and +2304052576 (international)**.

Assistance by Mauritius diplomatic Missions

All our diplomatic Missions are providing consular services to our nationals. They have also contacted respective local Authorities for visa extension and for those requiring other assistance. The Minister has personally spoken to some of his counterparts requesting for assistance to be provided to our stranded nationals. Our diplomatic Missions are doing their utmost to assist our citizens despite the

various constraints under which they are operating such as flight restrictions, closure of airport and airspace, cancellation of connecting flights and nationwide lockdown in their countries of location.

Our Missions are also in contact with the cruise liners to ensure the safety of our nationals, both passengers and crew members.

The Ministry and all our diplomatic Missions are constantly monitoring developments pertaining to the lockdowns and the restrictions imposed by other countries. Once travel restrictions have been lifted, our diplomatic Missions in collaboration with the airlines would make appropriate arrangements for the return of our nationals on a case to case basis.

Our advice if you are stranded abroad

You must follow the advice of the local Authorities. Your safety and security is the responsibility of the local authorities where you are.

If the local authorities where you are, proposes to quarantine you for your own protection, you should follow their advice.

If there are cases of Coronavirus where you are, you may need to remain in your hotel room or accommodation for 14 days, move to quarantine facilities and take tests for Coronavirus.

If tested positive you need to be hospitalized and undergo treatment abroad

You should contact your airline or travel company and your insurance provider as soon as you can.

Compliance with foreign health protocol and guidance

Government makes a strong appeal to all our fellow citizens stranded abroad to comply with advice, rules and regulations of the Authorities of the countries where they are as these are meant to curb the spread of the COVID-19.

Our diplomatic Missions will continue to be in touch with all the stranded Mauritians until they return home safely. The health regulations require all incoming nationals, irrespective of risk category to undergo a screening, testing and be quarantined.

The situation is very challenging and requires a national drive to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the virus and alleviate its effects on our people. We fully understand the plight of our nationals abroad and we are sympathetic to their situation. The Government and our diplomatic Missions are in contact with airlines, foreign Governments, and local authorities to ensure the safety of our citizens and for them to return to Mauritius as soon as possible. The world is embroiled in an unprecedented crisis emanating from the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, which is far reaching, intensive, global and disruptive. Once the disease subsides and the travel conditions improve, needful will be done for our nationals to fly back home. Meanwhile, you are advised to stay where you are and take all the necessary precautions to protect yourself from this deadly disease. You may contact us on the hotlines: 181 (local) and +230 4052576 (international).

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs,Regional
Integration and International Trade
Port Louis**

Date: 02 April 2020