

NEWS

PM: Additional compensation for nurses not being considered right now

CLINT CHAN TACK

THE Prime Minister said Government is not, at this time, considering requests for additional compensation for nurses and health care workers on the frontline in the fight against covid19.

He was responding to a question from Oropouche East MP Dr Roodal Moonilal in the House of Representatives on Wednesday.

Dr Rowley said, however, Government is giving "the assurance that all our health care givers and persons in the frontline will avail themselves of the best that the country has to afford."

Moonilal quipped, "Apart from giving a clap (for frontline workers and first responders), the Government should be seriously considering compensation for frontline health care workers as requested by the Nurses Association and other related groups

within the health care facility."

Rowley countered, "This Government, this PNM government does not run the business of TT by vaps." He said, by now the Opposition would know "any decision that we make here is carefully thought out. "This is one of such decision that will be carefully thought out before a decision is made. We do not run the public business by vaps and public relations."

After he praised the professionalism of health care workers in TT, Rowley said, "I know there are people in this House who have no confidence in our professionals." He also said there are people who continue to bad mouth the health sector from "Toco to Scarborough, from Carenage to Sangre Grande."

Rowley said the covid19 pandemic has allowed the population to realise that "it does have a health care sector and it does

have a working and functioning world class health ministry." He reiterated that decisions to guide this country's covid19 and post-covid19 strategies will be guided by the science and advice from medical experts.

When Caroni Central MP Dr Bhoendradatt Tewarie said the Opposition supported the work of local health care professionals, Rowley replied, "Yeah, right."

Health Minister Terrence Deyalsingh said, "the continued attempt by the Opposition to decry this Government's approach to covid should be deplored." Contrary to Opposition claims and allegations in some media reports, Deyalsingh said the Sangre Grande step-down covid19 facility is not "substandard, deplorable or unsafe." He said a request by a patient there for a can of insecticide to kill two cockroaches was exaggerated into an infestation.

He said corrective action was taken and

patients at that facility have since praised the level of care there. Deyalsingh said a report on that incident is with Attorney General Faris Al-Rawi. In response to questions from Moonilal, Deyalsingh told him as a former government minister he would understand that reports such as these require legal inputs. "We are following process."

TT's UWI students abroad receiving money for food

CLINT CHAN TACK

COMMUNICATIONS Minister Donna Cox announced that US\$300 has been wired to UWI campuses in Barbados and Jamaica to each of the 184 TT non-scholarship students there. Health Minister Terrence Deyalsingh said all Caricom countries accepted covid19 "as a definite threat to our way of life in Caricom."

They made their respective statements at the virtual health news conference on Wednesday.

Cox said on Monday, US\$300 was wired to the UWI campus bursars in Barbados and Jamaica.

This money, she explained, will be distributed to each of the 184 TT non-scholarship students who are at the UWI campuses in those countries, allowing them to buy food.

Cox said the bursars are "contacting each student so that arrangements can be made to wire the money directly to their bank accounts."

She said similar arrangements are being made for TT nationals who are studying in Cuba. Cox added, all national scholarship winners studying in Jamaica, Barbados "and elsewhere in the world have already received their personal maintenance allowances up to May and June."

Deyalsingh said the Caricom common health protocol which regional leaders agreed to on April 15, underscores the real threat covid19 poses to the region. While social distancing and proper hygiene are common threads in the fight against covid19, Deyalsingh said, "Different countries based on their risk profile will have different ways of treating with border closures, different ways of what they allow in and out."

He reiterated that TT has taken "all necessary steps to save lives and protect the society of TT" Deyalsingh added that because there is no vaccine to counter covid19 "we agreed at a Caricom level that we have to develop our own health protocols."



This photo of this green sea turtle was captured by 19-year-old first year veterinary school student with a passion for nature and animals. This cellphone image was taken while on a camping trip to the beach at Gordon Trace, Matura, on the way to Toco.

PHOTO BY ANANDAA MAHARAJ