



Tommy E. Remengesau Jr.
President

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A Statement from the President Regarding The Test Results of Palau's Second Person Under Investigation for COVID-19

April 4, 2020

Dear fellow Palauans and residents:

We thank the Lord God Almighty for every single day of our lives, and in times like these we do realize more of his blessings and mercy. I thank all of you for your prayers to keep our home and people safe from this deadly virus.

Yet again we breathe a sigh of relief, as the results of our second COVID-19 test have come in negative. I would like to thank the Ministry of Health's Emergency Operations Committee for their exceptionally fast work and professionalism during this investigation. I would also like to thank the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in Guam, the Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services, and Guam Governor Lou Leon Guerrero for assisting Palau in its time of need as Guam has its own, very serious situation to handle.

I ask that we all pray for the patient, who is recovering at this time. I thank Ngardmau Governor and the people of Ngardmau for ensuring their own safety by abiding by and enforcing Ministry of Health procedures during the investigation. This case shows that our readiness is greatly improving.

My friends, COVID-19 is hitting the whole world hard, but we have been blessed with the time to prepare ourselves. We should be very grateful for that. To maximize this preparation time we have to work together, for the benefit of everyone in Palau. Resources, manpower, and energy should be dedicated to mitigating the impact of this pandemic. National, state, traditional, and community leaders are focused on protecting our people, our properties, and our environment during this especially difficult time. But our leadership cannot do this alone; this is a national effort, and we need every person to participate.

While we combat the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are also entering Palau's dry season this month. This time will bring new challenges with water shortages and the increased potential for brushfires throughout the Republic. We need to act now by beginning to exercise water conservation and preventing unnecessary fires.

Recently, there have been reports of several fires around Palau, especially in Babeldaob. While some of these may have been started by accident, those that were intentionally set must be investigated, and those found to be responsible for starting them must be prosecuted. The Ministry of Justice has already issued a public notice regarding this matter and a reward system has been established. We must all work together to resolve our challenges; it will take the whole of our communities to overcome these difficult times.



With all that is going on, many are also struggling with the spread of false, misleading, or unverified coronavirus information being shared through social media and other news reporting. Behaviors such as cheating, robbery, fraud, and price gouging continue to be reported. These behaviors are hurting Palau, and jeopardizing our response to COVID-19. We need all health, fire, and police resources channeled toward COVID-19. Behaviors that draw them away hurt our national preparedness and endanger our community.

We are all in the same boat, and in this crisis we must all paddle together. Please avoid risky or dangerous behaviors, mind your health, stop sharing unverified information, and watch out for each other. During this stressful time it is more important than ever to maintain unity and solidarity to keep our communities safe, and to protect our pristine paradise. Reliable information on COVID-19 can be found through the Ministry of Health, the Office of the President, the World Health Organization, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and by calling the Ministry of Health at 488- 0555.

I ask each and every one of us to continue being vigilant and stay the course of prevention – to save lives. We must not let up or let our guard down. We must continue to exercise social distancing and basic personal hygiene by covering your mouth with a clean tissue when you cough or sneeze, and to wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water or use a sanitizer that is at least 70% alcohol-based. If you begin to exhibit any of the symptoms the virus causes, contact your doctor or the hospital immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tommy H. Remengesau, Jr.", written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Tommy H. Remengesau, Jr.
President of the Republic of Palau