



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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NO DISCRIMINATION AT AIRPORT: NICHOLAS



Information Minister Melford Nicholas, right, toured the airport on Saturday afternoon. *See story on Page 2*

**PM: We must open
our schools! - Page 3**

We must open our schools!

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has vigorously defended the decision to reopen the nation's school on September 7.

"We can't leave our schools to languish; the cost for keeping our schools closed could be monumental. It could undermine our future development, particularly as it relates to students from low-income families who rely on education to lift themselves and their families out of poverty," Browne told listeners of his interactive weekly radio programme.

The country's schools were closed in the middle of March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Noting that six months would have passed come September since the students were removed from the classroom, Browne cautioned that a prolonged absence from school could result in students losing interest in learning; a chance his government is not willing to take.

Additionally, PM Browne raised concerns over the 'uncontrolled crowding' of young people which he has observed in moving about the country. He is of the view that extending the closure of schools could exacerbate this problem.

"If students are in a controlled space such as a classroom and having homework later at home, there's less time for this uncontrolled crowding and its potential to spread the virus," he explained.

The prime minister also

empathized with the concerns of parents as they prepare to send their children back to school, especially the parents of children who suffer health conditions such as asthma.

"Our parents need to work and have their children in the education system including pre-schools. We have to learn to manage the risk of further spread," he stated.

According to PM Browne, there have been calls from some quarters to keep schools closed until a COVID-19 vaccine has been developed, however he has dismissed this idea.

"What if a vaccine takes two years to develop? What if it is ready sooner but it takes two years to get to us because of logistical and other issues. These are matters over which we have no control," he declared.

He also gave a detailed explanation of some of the numerous measures that will be implemented for the protection of students. Students will be placed in groups, not exceeding fifteen persons, with one group receiving face-to-face tutoring and the other attending classes virtually. Drastically reducing class sizes is intended to make contact tracing easier should a member of a group contract the virus.

Other measures include placing cameras in the classrooms to enable students attending classes virtually to fully interact during lessons. Schools will also receive upgraded high-speed internet

access while the three major telecommunication providers on the island have agreed to zero-rate internet services for students.

While the government will provide five thousand laptops for students as part of this initiative, the prime minister is appealing to families who already own a computer to exercise patience so that students from low income families can be prioritized.

More than twenty-two thousand face shields will be made available to students and teachers.

This will be supplemented, however, by the Ministry of Trade's National Garment Manufacturing Initiative

which will be called upon to produce additional face masks for the education system.

Temperature guns will be provided to schools to facilitate regular testing and larger schools will be assigned a nurse as part of the staff.

The government is also considering offering flu shots to students to reduce the risk of flu symptoms being mistaken for those of COVID-19.

Combined, these measures form part of the government's arsenal to prevent the spread of the virus among the school population as the country continues its efforts to 'manage the risks' posed by the coronavirus.

APUA ELECTRICITY MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

These planned outages are necessary for our continuous upgrade and maintenance programme to provide reliable and consistent service to our customers. Please note that electricity will be suppressed during period of maintenance

Date: Tuesday 11th August 2020

Time: 08:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Affected areas: Section of Gray Hill near Tanny Rose area

Date: Wednesday 12th August 2020

Time: 08:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Affected areas: Small section of Langfords east of the new Chinese Embassy

Date: Thursday 13th August 2020

Time: 08:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Affected areas: Small section of Piggotts Call, St. Mark Drive

Kindly note that this schedule is subject to slight variation. Changes will be communicated on the APUA Facebook page.

Any service disruptions outside of this schedule were not anticipated. For further information and updates please call 311.