

BVI Implements Immediate Curfew in Effort to Stem Spread of Coronavirus

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Street after a curfew in a German City to combat the coronavirus

Tortola, British Virgin Islands – The British Virgin Islands has implemented an immediate curfew, where everyone across the entire territory, except for essential workers, must be off the streets by 8pm Wednesday and going forward until April 2 in the first instance.

This was announced just one hour before the scheduled time by BVI Premier Andrew Fahie. He said the decision was made by the cabinet, which is made up of the United Kingdom representative here, Governor Augustus Jaspert and the five elected local government ministers.

Under the Curfew Act 2017, a curfew will be imposed from 8pm to 6am effective Wednesday, March 25 until further notice, with the exception of essential workers.

“Simply put, all persons are expected to be home after 8pm,” the BVI leader explained. “We know that given the time that this is being announced that certain workers will be on their way home slightly after 8 seeing that businesses were already closing at 8pm from a previous decision by cabinet.”

Cabinet has also decided that the curfew will be implemented again on Thursday from 8pm to 6am.

On Friday, the curfew will start from 8pm and will remain in effect for six days until April 2 in the first instance, with the exception of essential workers.

Mr. Fahie admonished residents to adhere to these restrictions, saying the law enforcement agencies will be out enforcing the curfew.

“When 6am comes, you have during the day on Thursday straight until 8pm to be out and about, continue work, finish shopping, so that we can manage not having panic shopping until the curfew goes back into effect until 6am Friday, then you can come out again until 8pm and do whatever you need to do to be able to stay at home when there will be a very strict curfew for the entire territory from 8pm on Friday until the 2nd of April in the first instance, with the exception of essential workers,” Mr. Fahie reiterated.

He said the aim is to ensure that health authorities get to do all the work they need to do to ensure the safety of the people in the Virgin Islands, to contain the spread of the virus and to keep the numbers limited to where they are.

Earlier this afternoon, Premier Fahie announced that the BVI had recorded its first two cases of COVID-19 – a 56 year old man who traveled into the territory from Europe on March 15 and a 32-year-old male resident who also traveled into the BVI from the United States on March 10.

Prior to this announcement of the curfew, government had already instituted strict precautionary measures such as closing all ports, social distancing and reduced business hours.

“This one is very important. We’re asking for you the public to please adhere to these measures because this one is going to be enforceable by law by the police,” the premier said. “Please be advised that this is only being done to ensure that we can further carry out more measures to ensure the safety of the people of the Virgin Islands.”

He asked residents to pace themselves and urged supermarkets and other businesses to put initiatives in place to regulate, monitor and abide by the social distancing guidelines and the limit of 20 persons gathering at a particular location.

The BVI leader said cabinet made suggestions on how they could avoid overcrowding to include ordering online, collection and delivery.

Governor Jaspert bolstered the announcement and spoke to residents about the need to remain calm. He said now is not the time to have one last party, big gathering or big event as all of the same principles still apply.

The House of Assembly will enact a new law on Friday to empower health workers and enforcement of these laws.

“These are restrictions on liberty and we wouldn’t take restrictions on liberty unless there is a real reason to do so,” the governor pointed out. "That reason is to make sure that we minimize the impact of the coronavirus in this territory.”

Health Minister Carvin Malone was also on hand to reiterate to residents the need to apply sanitization measures and to contact the medical hotline at 852 7650 if they have any symptoms.

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