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British Virgin Islands Bans Cruise Ships for Next 30 Days, Tightens Borders in Response to Coronavirus Pandemic

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Tortola, British Virgin Islands — Effective today, Friday 13th March, the BVI has placed a ban on cruise ships coming into the British Virgin Islands for the next 30 days.

Premier Andrew Fahie said the decision was taken by Cabinet at a special meeting. This is in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) which is spreading throughout the world in pandemic proportions.

“We have contacted our cruise partners and advised them of our decision and we are committed to working with them when and wherever safely possible to transition our businesses and economies through this period,” he said.

The Cabinet also agreed to the limiting of the number of international ports of entry in terms of passengers to three. The ports are Terrance B. Lettsome International Airport, Road Town and West End Ferry Terminals, and one (1) cargo port of entry – Port Purcell. These measures are said to be necessary to facilitate the effective screening of passengers.

The Cabinet also agreed, effective Sunday, 15th March, to suspend travel to the territory by visitors, where that person has traveled to, from or through affected countries as defined by the World Health Organization in its list of special interest countries.

Additionally, the Cabinet decided that visitors who traveled to, from or through a high risk country within a period of 14 days or less, immediately preceding the visitor's arrival in the territory, will be subject to enhanced screening procedures and may be quarantined for a period of up to 14 days.

“I have written to the governor requesting the support of the UK Government for the provision of a suitably-equipped ship for the purpose of quarantining of persons in the event that we need to do so...(and) for the UK's support in setting up temporary quarantine facilities on land, among other resources, if needed,” the premier said.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development announced earlier that countries of special interest include China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, France, Spain and Germany. However, this list is not exhaustive, as this is an ever-evolving situation.

High risk countries are listed as USA, Switzerland, Japan and Norway.

Meantime, the BVI leader announced that the Virgin Gorda Easter Festival and the 2020 Spring Regatta will be postponed and that other future mass gatherings will be further reviewed at a meeting of the National Emergency Operations Centre on Monday, 16th March.

In encouraging persons to exercise safe hygiene practices, he said should someone develop symptoms such as coughing and shortness of breath, instead of visiting the doctor they should call the medical hotline at 852-7650.