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Bahamas Government Hints at Extending Curfew Period

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NASSAU, Bahamas, Mar 30, CMC – The Bahamas government has hinted at the possibility of extending the state of emergency until April 8 as the country recorded three more cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Sunday.

Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis said that the new figures bring to 14, the number of persons who have tested positive for the virus that has killed more than 18,000 people worldwide.

“We have seen a doubling of confirmed cases over the last four days. We anticipate more cases in a short period of time over the coming 20 days. This means we must increase our efforts to restrict the spread of this virus and to save lives,” said Minnis in a live update to the population on Sunday.

Minnis, a medical practitioner, said that the Ministry of Health's Surveillance Unit has started the process of mapping COVID-19 cases to help identify clusters of cases and to inform the Ministry's strategy to mitigate the spread of the virus in communities.

He said this will help to identify cases early and decrease the need for hospital-based services.

"It is critical that each and every one of us take personal responsibility and do everything in our power to reduce the spread of this virus. The government will continue to closely monitor the increases in cases on a daily basis and respond accordingly."

Prime Minister Minnis explained that the government's response to COVID-19 is guided by the analysis and advice provided by the health professionals coordinating the response to the coronavirus.

He said when the House of Assembly meets later on Monday, legislators are expected to deal with a Resolution that will ask for approval for the continuance of a state of emergency inclusive of the emergency powers and authority in the two orders, extending the Emergency Proclamation for an additional eight days to 8 April.

"We must avoid speculation and rely on health officials to continue to advise where the country is in the fight against COVID-19. As Prime Minister and as a medical doctor I will act based on the facts and the best medical and scientific information possible."

He said to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and save lives, additional measures will be introduced.

Prime Minister Minnis urged persons aged 75 and older are asked not to leave their homes and those between the ages of 65 and 74 should work from home.

He said each household should have one designated shopper and grocery stores with the capability will be encouraged to activate online shopping platforms to reduce the number of people having to come into their stores for food and supplies and the length of time customers have to spend in the store.

Minnis said that the government will introduce a food shopping schedule. Shopping days and times will be designated based on the first letter of person's last name and that more details will be released this week.

"This measure is intended to reduce the number of people on the road and to reduce the number of people at grocery stores at any one time," said the Prime Minister who stressed that the country's food supplies are well stocked and that there is no need for panic buying.

Pharmacies will be allowed to operate from 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 pm (local time) and landscaping and property maintenance businesses and janitorial service businesses will allowed to operate on Saturday and Sunday only.

All street or roadside vendors will be prohibited from operating. This does not include newspaper vendors who should remain at one location and all public parks will be closed effective 9.00 am Tuesday.

"For us to overcome as a country we must work as one united citizen army in this fight. We are now a citizen army, fighting this threat together," Prime Minister Minnis added.

