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BVI's Covid-19 Cases Climb to 3

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Tortola, British Virgin Islands – British Virgin Islands Health Minister Carvin Malone has confirmed a third imported case of COVID-19 in the territory.

He gave the update just after midday during a live Facebook stream.

On March 25, the government reported that 9 persons were under investigation awaiting results from the Caribbean Public Health Agency CARPHA in Trinidad and Tobago. Subsequently an additional 16 persons were tested. The new case was identified from among those 25 persons.

“The third patient is a 26-year old male with travel history to a country where there is community spread,” Mr. Malone announced. “He is currently in quarantine and had only mild symptoms. His contacts are also quarantined and are asymptotic, which means they have no symptoms.”

In the latest BVI statistics, there are now 143 persons under self-quarantine protocol at their homes.

The Health Minister said the Health Emergency Operations Center HEOC continues to work around the clock to trace and test persons at risk. He said testing, containment strategies and follow up, continue to be carried out in accordance with World Health Organization WHO guidelines, taking into consideration the local context.

The Caribbean Community CARICOM has made a royal security system available to the BVI to collect samples on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and have them taken to CARPHA for recertification.

“The government of the Virgin Islands would like to assure the public that we continue to work in a proactive manner to further detect and manage the spread of COVID-19 in our territory,” he added.

A 24 hour curfew is now in effect since Friday, March 27 from 8:00 pm until 6:00 am Thursday April 2. Prior to this, all air and sea ports were closed and gatherings were limited to 20.

“We are discussing the schedule for the public to be able to access basic critical supplies and carry out essential services (and) will announce new measures to maintain, manage and collect household waste,” the Health Minister said.

He also said arrangements are being made regarding isolation centers, quarantine facilities and accommodations for health care professionals including the requested Cuban health care personnel.

The 3rd level car park at the Dr. D. Orlando Smith Hospital in the capital Road Town has been transformed by the emergency department for enhanced pre-screening of patients suspected of COVID-19.

A 25-bed field hospital is being negotiated with the United Kingdom government.

Speaking from the main island of Tortola, the government minister said arrangements have been made for the transfer of patients to sister islands with Speedy’s Ferry Services for Virgin Gorda and Virgin Islands Search and Rescue VISAR for other islands.

On Friday, the Virgin Islands House of Assembly passed a COVID-19 bill, allowing for the introduction of mandatory quarantine and fines up to \$5,000 or up to 12 months in prison, and to source medical personnel and expedite their registration without delay.

“All of these proactive measures are being done with everyone’s best interest in mind, but we must remind you that you have a role to play...wipe surfaces, wash your hands, use hand sanitizers, avoid touching your face, cough in your folded elbow and if you use disposable napkins you have to apply the one-use theory, throw away and use another,” he concluded.

Persons who show any symptoms of COVID-19 — fever, coughing, tiredness and or difficulty breathing – during this period of curfew are urged to self-isolate. Everyone is also admonished to stay at home and follow the rules outlined by the government.