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St. Lucia Prime Minister Announces Plan for Phased Reopening of Economy

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CASTRIES, St. Lucia, CMC -Prime Minister Allen Chastanet has announced plans for a phased reopening of the island's economy as the fight against COVID-19 continues.

In an address on Sunday it was disclosed that after another round of testing, the number of the COVID-19 cases remains at 15.

According to Chastanet, if this trend continues, then at the end of the month, the Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with other ministries, will work with the public and private sectors for a phased reopening of the economy.

“We’ve agreed at Cabinet to appoint a committee to work with the private sector and all the public health departments to start now, putting the protocols in place for the full operationalization of our commercial activity.”

He said the decision to plan for the reopening of commercial activities was also informed by the success the Ministry of Health has had in their contact tracing efforts.

The prime minister called the contact tracing team the backbone of country’s efforts against the virus and noted that in the most recent confirmed cases, many of the individuals were already identified and either in an isolation center or in-home quarantine.

The prime minister made it clear that a plan is being put in place but that government will not be implementing it as yet.

“Cabinet has agreed to maintain the existing partial shutdown/scale-down operations for the period of April 14 until April 26, 2020.”

After the partial shutdown expires on April 26, the prime minister says: “At that point, we’re hoping to be able to announce the full opening of the commercial activities in St Lucia, but again, that’s going to depend on the results over the next couple of days, as well as the recommendation of the command center in doing so.”

During the April 14 – 26 partial shutdown, “We’ve agreed to expand the activities under the hardware service, as well as home suppliers, to include emergency renovation and maintenance activities at the household level to facilitate water storage, plumbing maintenance in preparation for the drought alert.”

As such, home suppliers will be able to open for business during this time, once they engage with various ministries on the protocols they must follow.

“So in addition to grocery stores, and other essential services, hardware stores and home suppliers will also be open during the coming week in preparation for the upcoming hurricane season.”

The April 14 – April 26 curfew hours remain the same, 7 pm to 5 am (local time) daily.