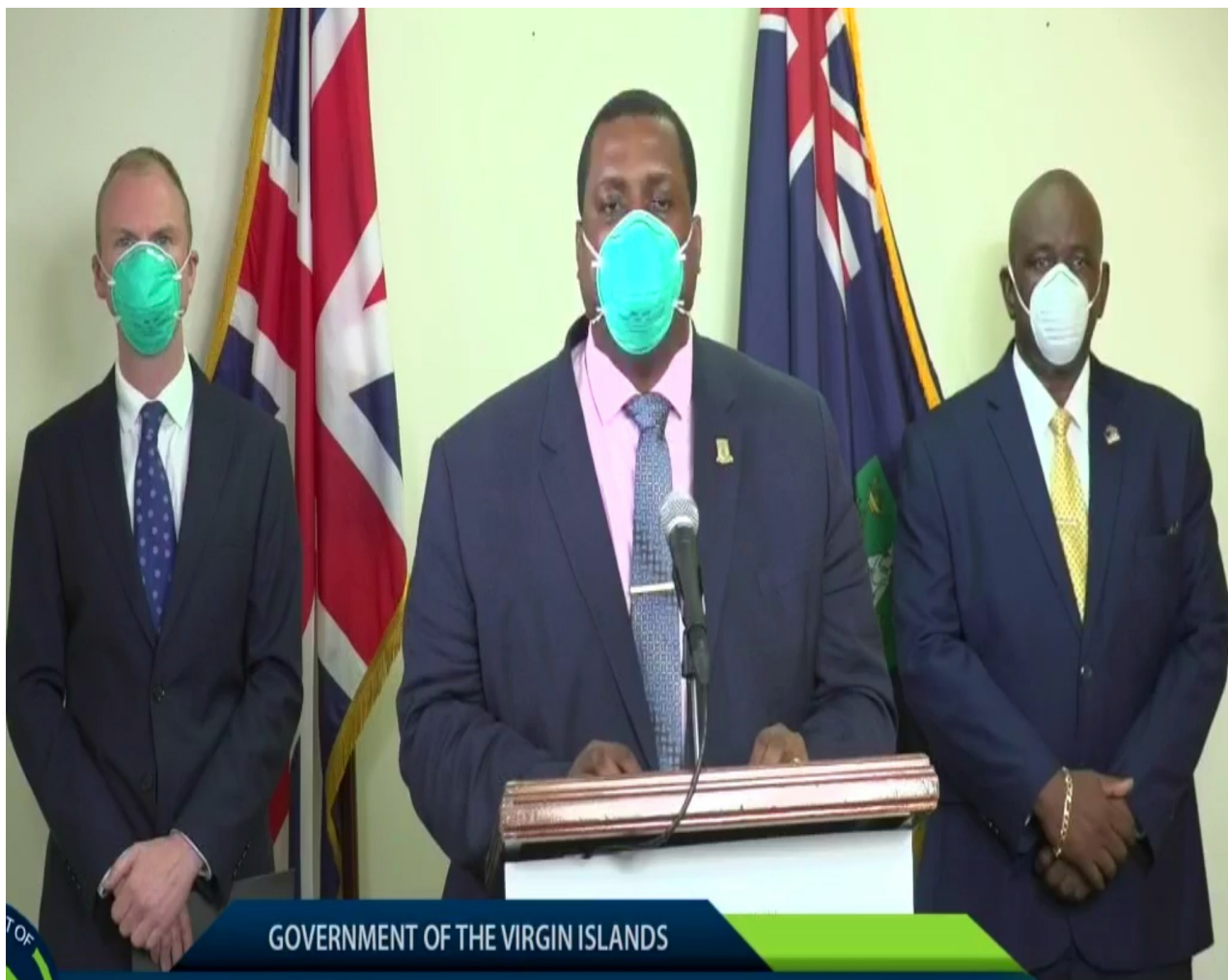


# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Restricted Reopening of BVI Businesses Starting Monday to Reboot Flattened Economy; 6th Coronavirus Case Reported

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TORTOLA, BVI — The British Virgin Islands economy went completely flat after almost a month of lockdown due to strict measures in place to prevent the spread of coronavirus, but with the planned reopening on Monday, while on a restricted level, government hopes this would boost the national flow of income.

On Friday evening, Premier and Minister of Finance Andrew A. Fahie, Governor Augustus Jaspert and Health Minister Carvin Malone donned their face masks for the first time as they provided an update on the lifting of the 24-hour curfew in place since April 2,

prior to which there was a phased lockdown from March 22.

Mr. Fahie said the Cabinet of the Virgin Islands decided, in meetings from April 22-24, that the current curfew order will be lifted from Monday April 27 at 6:01 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. daily for the next 14 days and businesses, including the government's cargo port, will be allowed to reopen on a phased and restricted basis.

"Crucial to the rebooting of our economy are our imports and...I am advised that there are a lot of goods at the port waiting for the past 21 days to be cleared," the Finance Minister said. He promised that the Customs Department will put measures in place to expedite this process.

During this phase of the reopening strategy, the borders of the British Virgin Islands will remain closed. When the borders reopen, for an initial period, only persons deemed to belong to the territory and persons with residency status will be allowed entry. At that time, such entry will only be allowed at the Terrance B. Lettsome International Airport, subject to a pre-approval of passenger information 7 days in advance of travel, among other measures.

Private and commercial boats, except ferries and freight, are prohibited from moving within the territorial waters, except when authorized by Cabinet for essential supplies. House-to-house garbage collection will continue.

Cabinet approved the reopening of supermarkets; bakeries; fishers and farmers; pharmacies; banks; fuel stations; ferries for inter-island transportation only; buses and taxis; construction companies, building and concrete supplies businesses; laundries; home delivery services; insurance, legal and financial services; office supplies; automotive parts and repairs; manufacturers of hand sanitisers and PPEs; water and ice production and deliveries; and emergency household and business repairs.

"We decided that the Premier's Office and Deputy Governor's Office... (will) provide joint advice on any necessary changes to business and trade licences, liquor licences and work permits...that the service of free water delivery continues for all customers of the Water and Sewerage Department until June 1...(and that)...the Internal Audit Department (will) conduct a review of the Territorial Provisioning Logistical Plan," Mr. Fahie outlined. Registrations have been extended until April 25 at 7:00 p.m.

The BVI leader added that all schools will remain closed to students, but teachers, in a limited capacity, can access schools for the purposes of providing online instructions.

An economic stimulus plan has been approved by Cabinet and will be made public soon.

Meantime, Health Minister Malone reported a 6th confirmed case of COVID-19 in the British Virgin Islands. This was provided among world statistics from the World Health Organization WHO and Worldometer.

"Here in the Virgin Islands, an aggressive contact tracing strategy has been implemented, which resulted in 189 persons currently placed in quarantine and 1 person in isolation at the Dr. D. Orlando Smith Hospital," he mentioned.

No further details relating to the gender of the new case or how the virus was contracted are available. The media is not invited to the updates.

“Since my last update, an additional 9 samples were tested by CARPHA Caribbean Public Health Agency), 8 of those samples were negative for the virus that causes COVID-19 and 1 additional positive case was detected,” the Health Minister said. “This brings the total number of COVID-19 cases detected in the BVI to date to 6, with 3 recoveries, 1 death and 2 active cases.”

Ten additional samples were expected to be transported to CARPHA on Friday for verification.

The Health Minister announced new and ongoing initiatives to ensure readiness to meet the new challenges presented by COVID-19.

These include a dedicated private home visiting testing service; a screening and assessment area outside the emergency room with capacity to treat 20 to 30 mild cases per hour with severe cases being referred inside; the relocation of medical/surgical wards to the 5th floor of the hospital and providing a dedicated special care unit on the 3rd floor to isolate and treat COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalization or isolation.

“Significant investments and donations have been made towards the procurement of a large stock of PPEs and additional ventilators and other medical equipment, the BVIHSA (British Virgin Islands Health Services Authority) has also set up a dedicated telemedicine service with a call center and the use of a new Electronic Medical Record and Patient Application, an online prescription refill and delivery system is now available to the entire territory, an advanced triage and screening facility has been constructed on the 3rd floor car park of the Dr. D. Orlando Smith Hospital, and construction drawings have been finalized for the construction of new facilities at the Major Peebles Wing,” Mr. Malone reported.

Governor Jaspert reported that government has so far distributed almost 5,000 food packages and received more medical support.

“This includes both a shipment of medical equipment provided by the United Kingdom government and the release of the BVI shipment which was delayed by the US Customs and Border Protection,” he revealed.

He said further supplies from UK will follow.