

# Jamaica Extends Curfew to May 13 as it Battles to Contain Spread of Coronavirus

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KINGSTON, Jamaica, CMC – The Jamaica government says the islandwide curfew, which would have ended on Wednesday, has now been extended to May 13 as the country continues to observe measures aimed at containing the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

The 12 hour curfew had come into effect on April 1 and Prime Minister Andrew Holness announcing the extension said that as it relates to the other measures under the Disaster Risk Management Act, which also would have also expired on Wednesday, those will be further extended until May 31.

These include the stay-at-home order for persons 70 years and over; the 10-person limit on public gatherings; physical distancing of six feet; the mandatory wearing of masks in the public space;

and the duty of employers to provide transportation for exempted workers for the curfew hours.

Also extended are the operating hours for markets, vending and public transportation centres, gas stations and public transportation as well as restrictions for barbershops and hair salons; closure of bars, night clubs and other places of amusement, beaches and rivers; work-from-home measures; and procedures regarding the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector.

Holness said that some of the measures imposed are likely to remain in place for a period after the pandemic has passed such as the stay-at-home order for persons 70 years and over, in order to protect persons in that vulnerable age group.

He noted that most of the deaths related to COVID-19 in the country involve persons 65 years and over with co-morbid conditions.

“So, this order to stay at home, if you’re 70 years old, it is absolutely important and one that even after we have gone through the epidemic, we may very well have to keep it for a little while just to ensure that we protect the vulnerable group in our society,” he said, noting that the physical distancing of six feet and the wearing of masks in public may also “become a feature of our society going forward as we cope with COVID-19”.

Holness said Cabinet has been examining the impact of the measures taken on the economy, which have been considerable but are necessary to contain and control the transmission of COVID-19.

He said the curfew hours have worked very well, noting that the limit on movement, would have significantly curtailed the spread of the virus.

“The truth is that the measures have been very effective...without a workplace outbreak, Jamaica would be on a 20-day doubling curve.

“We will be contemplating adjustments to the curfew hours. But, again, it all has to be based on what the science is telling us, what the public health advice is, and we have to weigh that [against] the public interest,” Holness said.