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## St. Kitts Government Attempts Explanation for Allowing Two Cruise Ships to Dock at Island's Port

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BASSETERRE, St. Kitts, CMC – The St. Kitts-Nevis government has defended its decision to allow two ships of the Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines to visit the twin island Federation, saying that it had not rushed into the decision given the measures in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Prime Minister Dr. Timothy Harris said much consideration and deliberation had taken place over a two week period before the go ahead had been given for the visits of the ships- Rhapsody of the Seas and Vision of the Seas.

The Rhapsody of the Seas was scheduled to dock at Port Zante on Wednesday, but its arrival has been delayed as health experts consider additional information. The Vision of the Seas is expected

to arrive on August 24.

“We looked at the pros and cons and we sought the input of the [COVID-19] Task Force. They advised that it would be safe once certain protocols were put in place. Our Task Force has never given us any bad advice,” Prime Minister Harris said during the edition of his “Leadership Matters” programme.

“They have been right on everything for example the lockdown, the opening of our beaches, the wearing of masks, the reopening of our factories and our early childhood centers and reducing the curfew. I know we can and should trust their judgement,” Prime Minister Harris added.

He noted that the experts advised that the risk associated with the granting of safe harbouring for the two vessels is very low.

Harris said in granting the approval, the crews of both vessels were all required to have a negative RT-PCR COVID-19 test before boarding from their home countries as well as being placed in quarantine on the ship under the supervision of the ship’s doctor for 14 days before assuming duties and physically interacting with the rest of the crew.

They authorities were also to review of the health records of all crew members show they are in good health.

“[Crew members] will be tested with the gold standard RT-PCR COVID-19 test upon docking in our port. This is compulsory. They will all be quarantined onboard the ship for a minimum of 14 days after arriving in our port. Again this is a standard safeguard to protect you my people.

“We mean it when we said from the very beginning that your safety and security and that of our beloved country of St. Kitts and Nevis are my main priority. Your welfare, your progress, your concerns are always on my mind,” Harris said.

The authorities said that the crew members will all be retested at the end of 14 days and only released from quarantine if they all test negative. It is only after the return of a negative RT-PCR test on day one and day 14 will they be allowed to disembark the vessels.

Prime Minister Harris said that these protocols are “similar to the ones used for the safe repatriation of 124 international students studying at Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine and all of our nationals and residents who returned home thus far.”

Moreover, security will be in place at the port to enforce the quarantine requirements and Harris said that while his administration is cognizant of the need to generate economic activity in the country while minimizing the health risk to the citizens and residents, this decision to provide safe harbour for the vessels will not make a significant impact now “but in the medium term we will benefit.”