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Virus Stalls Court Cases

TYLER SYMONETTE
 Journal Staff Writer

As COVID-19 fears increase, Chief Justice Sir Brian Moree said courts will attempt to minimize in-person hearings by utilizing video conferencing, video applications, telephone calls and disposition on written submissions for court hearings.

only required to be present and at least three feet of distance will be maintained between people at all times and the court duration will be limited as much as possible.

Sir Brian also explained what would happen if someone who is actually in quarantine had to attend court and how justices are instructed to act.

"I've asked all of them to be governed first and foremost by our consideration of minimizing in-person hearings so we will always examine alternatives ranging from the formal video conferencing, to laptop video conferencing, to old fashioned telephone calls," Sir Brian said.



▶ Chief Justice Sir Brian Moree, QC

'Panic Buying Unnecessary,' Says PM

Prime Minister the Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis appealed to Bahamians and residents to stop panic buying food and hoarding supplies in reaction to news of the COVID-19 virus.

"There is no need for it," the prime minister said on Tuesday, following a meeting with local wholesalers and suppliers at the Office of the Prime Minister.

"I want to assure the population that we have at least a one to three



▶ Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis

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ACTING FINANCIAL SECRETARY BRIEFS COOPER ON ECONOMIC FALLOUT OF COVID-19



▶ Ministry of Finance Acting Financial Secretary Marlon Johnson briefs shadow Minister of Finance and Exuma and Ragged Island Member of Parliament Chester Cooper on the government's assessment of the economic fallout of COVID-19 and the proposed plans to mitigate the situation. During the briefing on Tuesday, Cooper also offered his recommendations for inclusion in the proposed measures for consideration by the ministry. (Photo/Ministry of Finance)

Sands Refutes Claims of New COVID-19 Cases

BY LAURENCIA I.A. SMITH
 Journal Staff Writer

COVID-19 in The Bahamas.

Minister of Health Dr. Duane Sands warned against the dissemination of fake news concerning COVID-19 and refuted false information about the spread of the disease.

The 61-year-old female, who tested positive for the first case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in The Bahamas, is in stable condition, according to Minister of Health Dr. Duane Sands.

Currently, there is only one confirmed case of

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Davis Calls for Financial Relief

TYLER SYMONETTE
 Journal Staff Writer

conference on Tuesday, Davis pointed out several issues that need to be addressed urgently.

Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) Leader Philip Davis wants the government to ease the financial burden many Bahamians may experience as COVID-19 threatens the economy.

"The National Insurance Board must provide temporary unemployment assistance," Davis said.

During the PLP's press

He also called for assis-

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ALL THE NEWS YOU NEED TO READ IN THE MORNING

Davis Calls for Financial Relief During Health Crisis

Continued from / PAGE 1...

tance to small and medium size enterprises (SME) and hotels that will be immediately affected and may be forced to reduce working hours and in some cases lay off staff.

"The Central Bank must strongly consider easing credit and lowering the cost of capital," Davis added.

"Arrangements must be made with financial institutions to temporarily halt foreclosures and demonstrate forbearance with customers regarding loan payments.

"Measures must be taken to ensure that consumers aren't being taken advantage of by 'price-gouging.'"

However, Davis

pointed out that the Water and Sewerage Corporation was correct to halt disconnections which were announced by its chairman on Monday.

"It would also be correct and effective to also consider the reconnection of those whose supply have been disconnected as water is an essential component to adequate hygiene," Davis said.

"It is also our view that it would be correct and effective if BPL would proactively support this national containment effort by similarly following the policy of the Water and Sewerage Corporation."

He also noted that Bahamians need regular updates from the

business community, particularly in industries like shipping, communications and energy.

Since the official report of a confirmed COVID-19 case in The Bahamas, all schools were closed as a response to the potential spread of the virus and Davis agrees with the government's decision.

"We support the government's order for the immediate closure of schools. Research has shown that closing schools can be critical to slowing the spread of a virus," Davis said.

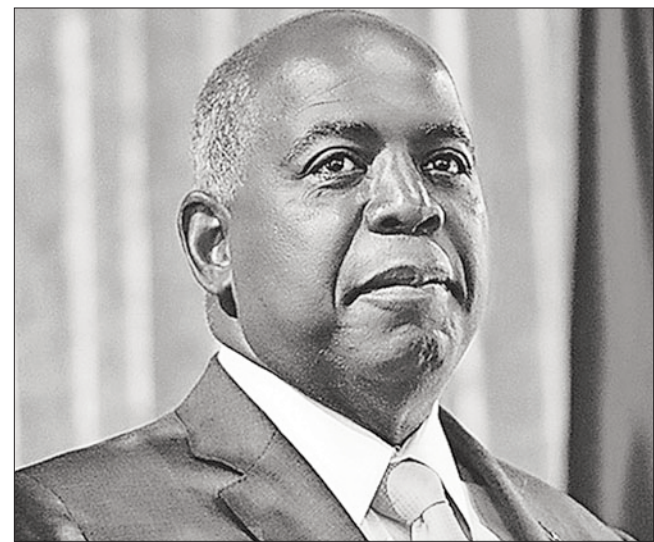
"At the same time, such an action causes an immediate impact on families and the economy. We must provide support to parents who cannot work because

they now must supervise small children, and we should take extra steps to protect children who will be left unsupervised."

According to Davis, as a matter of urgency, school closure means that those students who rely on the school lunch program may be find themselves in an extremely difficult situation.

"We must ensure that children who rely on these programs are being fed, and the school lunch vendors who rely on income for their services must be supported as well," he said.

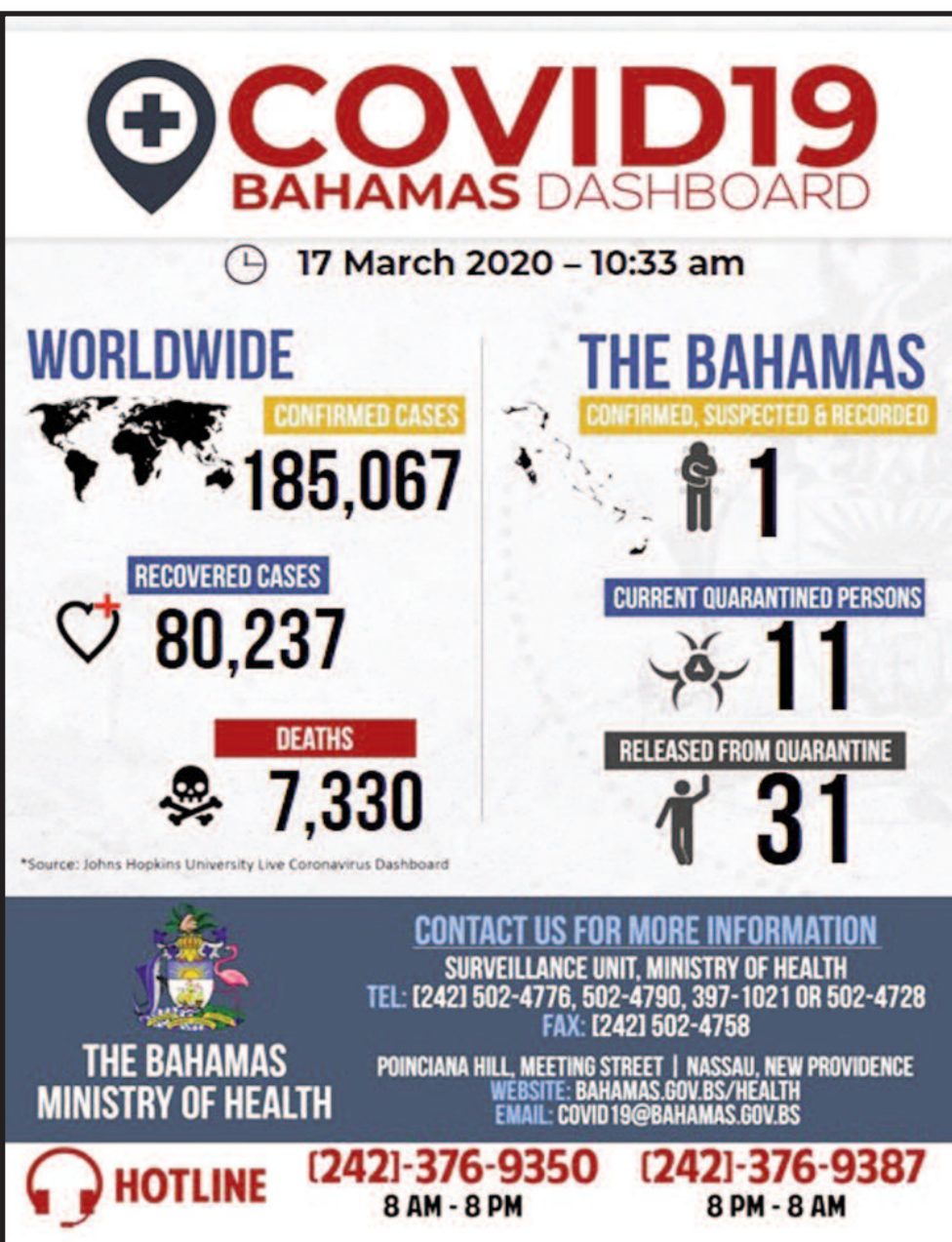
The PLP leader also urged all Bahamians to band together to help the country in its fight to survive the coronavirus.



PLP Leader Philip Davis

"My fellow Bahamians, we're all in this together. This is not 'every man for himself.' We cannot ask only how to keep ourselves and our families safe," Davis said.

"We are called to harness our compassion and service to protect our neighbours and our communities, with a special obligation to lift up the most vulnerable among us. Every organization, every church, every club, everyone in The Bahamas must ask the same question, what can we do to help?"



GOVERNMENT NOTICE
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the general public that the Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas will commence the salvage and demolition of the Clarence A. Bain building, located **University Drive (Old Thompson Boulevard) & Moss Road** beginning **2ND FEBRUARY, 2020** through to **2ND JUNE, 2020** during the hours of **9:00AM to 5:00PM**.

Members of the public are advised to cautiously traverse the area during demolition hours.

Should you have any questions or concerns, kindly submit the same in writing to the Superintending Officer, Director of Public Works, P.O. Box N-8156, Nassau, N.P., The Bahamas.

The public's cooperation in this regard is greatly appreciated.

Signed
Cora Bain-Colebrooke
Cora Bain-Colebrooke (Mrs.)
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Public Works

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Virus Stalls Court Cases

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"And that's going to be the first alternative. When that cannot happen, the judicial officer whether an in-person hearing can be done under the social distancing policies that we have or if not, the matter will have to be adjourned. We're not going to do any non-essential judicial work which would seriously put at risk

the health and well-being of any of the persons involved in the system."

Sir Brian also announced that justices will not be travelling until April 14.

"The way the circuits work, is that from time to time throughout the year and it could be twice a year, it could be three times a year, it's not that often. Circuit magistrates

go on circuit to these islands where there is no resident magistrate for the court," he said.

"In some cases, this temporary suspension will not affect those islands at all because there will be no circuits currently planned during the next two, three, four weeks. In those cases where a stipendiary circuit magistrate was

scheduled to travel, it just means that now that's going to have to happen later in the year, once life settles down a bit. So I don't think in the first instance that will cause a major problem."

The Magistrate's Court will also not be taking on new cases until March 30.

If the Supreme Court has any new trials that cannot be done via the

social distancing protocol, the matter will be adjourned until April 14.

Sir Brian added that the fourth and final stage in their protocol would be a total lockdown, but he hopes that the situation will not escalate to that point.

He said COVID-19 needs to be monitored closely and as situations develop the judiciary will

respond accordingly.

In addition, some of the protocols implemented for this first phase of the court's mitigation are enhanced cleaning regimens, hand sanitizing stations at strategic locations in courts, increased vigilance and control at entry points of court buildings and the adherence to social distancing policies.

'Panic Buying Unnecessary,' Says PM



► Prime Minister Minnis meets with local wholesalers and distributors on Tuesday. Photo: OPM Communication Unit

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months' supply of food on the island and shipping continues as normal."

Prime Minister Minnis

met with representatives of Super Value, A & M Foods, and local wholesale distributors, including pharmaceutical wholesalers and suppli-

ers, on Tuesday for a briefing on the state of the country's medicine and food stocks and other supplies.

Medicine supplies are

also healthy, with a two months' supply in stock and more supplies en route, wholesalers told the prime minister.

Household supplies,

such as cleaners and disinfectants, are expected to be on the shelves within days, and wholesalers are looking to build stock above the normal levels.

The prime minister reiterated that price gouging will not be tolerated and any establishment found violating the law will be prosecuted.

Sands Refutes New COVID-19 Cases

Continued from / PAGE 1...

Yesterday, the Minister of Health updated the media not only the patient, but ensured that more updates on COVID-19 in The Bahamas would be given in the House of Assembly on Wednesday.

"The prime minister would have outlined the plan and tomorrow in the honourable House of Assembly, we will give another update. We would like to make sure that the message is not being distorted," Dr. Sands said.

"Unfortunately, there's so much fake news out there. So much misinfor-

mation and disinformation, that it becomes very careful to ensure that the message is clear, it's on point and that people are not getting the wrong message."

He further added that health officials are confident in the plans that are already in place.

The minister of health also added that persons have been using the hotline and there are plans in the works to add more phone lines.

Once again, the minister addressed the spread of false news as there are social media reports that two fishermen in Exuma

contracted COVID-19.

"I think the prime minister was very clear that the public should listen to reliable sources. So, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Health, the chief medical officer and the official teams of the Ministry of Health, if you didn't hear it from us, then I would ask you to question the reliability and the veracity of the message that you're hearing," he said.

Dr. Sands added that he knows that there are many burning questions on the government's plans moving forward.

He asked persons to

remind clam, take the necessary steps for proper hygiene and be mindful of where they obtain infor-

mation.

According to the Ministry of Health, The Bahamas one confirmed

case of COVID-19, 11 persons in quarantine and 31 persons have been released from quarantine



URCA'S PUBLIC NOTICE

The Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority, URCA, advises the public that in the interest of public health and in consideration of the stance taken by the Government of The Bahamas in its efforts to contain the spread of COVID 19, URCA will immediately implement the following safety measures.

"In person" visits to its Frederick Street Office is discouraged until further notice. All meetings previously scheduled to be held at URCA's office will be scheduled virtually. URCA will provide details of the virtual meeting plan at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting. Other persons needing the services of the authority should contact URCA at 242 393 0234 or send an email to info@urcabahamas.bs; or visit our website at www.urcabahamas.bs.

Persons who feel they must visit the office will be asked to comply with URCA's prescribed social distancing protocols. The protocols will be available on URCA's social media platforms and posted at URCA's office entrance.

URCA further urges the public to take all necessary precautions to protect themselves, family and community. Should members of the public wish to file a complaint about services in the regulated sectors, please call 242 393 0263 or use the email info@urcabahamas.bs or go to URCA's social media platforms.

URCA will continue to provide the public with updates concerning its operations over the next few weeks. URCA considers the health and wellbeing of its employees and members of the public of utmost importance. URCA will continue to monitor and observe the established COVID 19 public health protocols of the relevant Government agencies.



PUBLIC NOTICE

The Ministry of Public Works/Bahamix, has scheduled Milling and Paving works for the North Bound Land of Beatrice Avenue between Charles Saunders Highway and Prince Charles Drive. The works will also incorporate the Junction of Charles Saunders and Beatrice Ave.

The road resurfacing will begin March 19th, 2020, between the hours of 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Works are scheduled Monday through Friday for 7 business days, or until completion of the works.

Bahamix will close the North bound lane and implement a two way traffic system on the South Bound Lane.

ONLY RESIDENTS be will allowed to access the paving site. All other motorists are asked to avoid the area if possible and be aware of and acknowledge the posted traffic paving signs.

If you have any queries or concerns, please feel free to contact us at telephone numbers (242) 361-3886 or (242) 341-3886.

Bahamix apologizes for any inconvenience caused.

ARDASTRA REMAINS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Situation could change if local outbreak worsens

For now, Ardastra Gardens and Wildlife Conservation Centre will remain open as management continues to closely monitor the spread of Covid 19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, which can infect both animals and people, and could trigger a range of respiratory illnesses from the common cold to lung lesions and pneumonia. Although much of its

tourist traffic has fallen off, Ardastra has taken several precautionary measures to safeguard staff, its animals and the locals who visit the property daily.

"In an effort to keep our staff and the animals healthy and safe, we've temporarily suspended all guided tours and animal interactions including the lorry bird feeding," said Katherine Solomon, Ardastra's

director.

"We're also following global protocols as it relates to personal protective measures – thorough and frequent handwashing with soap and water or 60 per cent alcohol-based hand sanitizers. The staff has increased the cleaning of surfaces in high traffic areas and management is executing a further screening of any guest exhibiting

signs of respiratory illness prior to their admission into the gardens."

In the meantime, gatherings of more than 50 persons, schedule to take place at Ardastra have been postponed until further notice.

However, guests can still participate in the flamingo show held three times a day at 10:30 a.m., 2:15 p.m.,

and 4:00 p.m.

"As we take measures to ensure our long-term sustainability, we remain committed to delivering an outstanding experience," said Mrs Solomon. "This is a balancing act, requiring us to prioritize and decide how to allocate our limited resources since the economic implications are staggering. We are keeping calm and

assessing the situation on a daily basis to ascertain the best way forward for Ardastra."

Over 200 creatures representing 50 species live in the gardens. They are cared for by a 27-strong team.

Ardastra is known for its close encounters with the parading pink flamingos, rainbow lorikeets, peafowl and parrots.

BAHAMAS NATIONAL YOUTH CHOIR SUSPENDS ALL ACTIVITIES

The Bahamas National Youth Choir is suspending all rehearsals and postponing all activities in celebration of its 30th Anniversary scheduled for the month of April.

Choir Director, Dexter Fernander said, "The Choir will continue to monitor the potential impacts of Coronavirus 19 (COVID-19) in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas and make additional operational plans." He continued by stating the decision is based on current best practices regarding social distancing as a prevention strategy for disease transmission.

Those who have fever, flu symptoms and suspect that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should call the hotline immediately: The numbers are, 376-3533, 376-9350, 376-4705502-4790, 502-4737, 502-4776. We are all encouraged to take the necessary precautions and to be safe during this time. We are hoping for the best but it will only happen if we each take

care of ourselves and follow the recommended guidelines.

According to Fernander, the choir's primary responsibility is to safeguard both our members and the general public from this current health crisis. At this juncture, as COVID-19 is now a reality in The Bahamas, this course of action is prudent and provides us the best opportunity to make the transitions necessary to transfer our work to virtual meeting spaces for choristers. This includes accessing dropbox, WhatsApp chat-group and revision material sound clips to continue the work necessary for a stellar performance.

BNYC will continue to monitor the situation as it remains fluid. The anniversary plans are subject to change in response to new information and recommendations received. We continue to work with the Government's Task Force on COVID-19 and the Ministry of Health as we develop our plans for the



► Bahamas National Youth Choir and Dexter Fernander (centered), choir director.

coming weeks and months. Our ultimate goal is to mitigate the risks posed.

Potential dates being considered for the celebrations are July 1st – 4th, 2020 (Pre-Independence). A fitting time that BNYC can cele-

brate 30 years of existence with its annual concert season entitled, "It's a Celebration!" This delightful concert is filled with international and Bahamian Folk music. A fusion of "Caribbean-Classical" with choral and dance arrangement of

indigenous music of the diaspora. Enjoy the sounds of The Bahamas National Youth Choir's 32 talented young Bahamians along with its Alumni. Bahamian dances such as the Quadrille dance, Heel 'n' Toe Polka along with the mesmerizing sounds

of Junkanoo and Rake 'n' Scrape will draw you back to the days of a good ole back yard party. All tickets sold will be honored for the new date. Tickets for the gala event are \$60 each and can be purchased from Turnquest & Co at telephone (242) 393-322.

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DASANI SPARKLING