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75 CENTS

First COVID-19 Case

BY LAURENCIA I.A. SMITH
 Journal Staff Writer

The Bahamas has confirmed its first case of the coronavirus (COVID-19), according to health officials, after a 61-year-old female resident tested positive for the disease. Health officials said the woman has no history of traveling outside the country within the last 20 days.



► Acting Minister of Health the Hon. Jeffrey Lloyd (centre) announced that a 61-year-old female resident of New Providence, who does not have relevant travel history, is the first confirmed person with COVID-19 in The Bahamas during a press conference at the Ministry of Health on Sunday. Also seated from left: Dr. Nikkah Forbes, Director of Infectious Diseases and Manager of the National AIDS Centre; Permanent Secretary, MOH, Marco Rolle; Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Pearl McMillan and Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Delon Brennen. (BIS Photos/Kemuel Stubbs)

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PM Announces Drastic Measures

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON
 Journal Staff Writer

Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis announced yesterday that foreign nationals traveling from the United Kingdom, Ireland and Europe within the last 20 days will be prohibited from entering The Bahamas. This travel ban will



► Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis

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Schools Closed Until April 14

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON
 Journal Staff Writer

With concerns over public health and the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis announced that schools will be closed from March 16 until April 14. The prime minister announced the closure of schools yesterday during his televised national

address on the deadly disease. According to Dr. Minnis, the minister of education will give a communication in the House of Assembly on Wednesday concerning the closure of schools. The first case of the coronavirus was confirmed in The Bahamas on Sunday after a 61-year-old woman tested positive for the disease.

The prime minister also announced that out of an abundance of caution, all national sporting events will be postponed until further notice. "There is an indefinite suspension of all permits for use of public open spaces," Dr. Minnis said. "Fellow Bahamians and residents, we are still recovering from the

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Doctors Hospital to Treat COVID-19 Patients

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON
 Journal Staff Writer

Patients who test positive for COVID-19 will be treated at Doctors

Hospital on Blake Road, according to Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis. During his televised national address on

COVID-19 yesterday, the prime minister said Doctors Hospital has been secured as the facility to treat COVID-19 patients and health pro-

fessionals treating those patients will utilize various protocols to protect themselves. "This facility will be secured by defence force

officers," Dr. Minnis said. "No visitors will be allowed into the facility unless authorized. We are securing another facility for quarantine

purposes." Last week, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a

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Major Cruise Lines Suspend Sailing Nassau Anticipates More Berthing Requests

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON
 Journal Staff Writer

While some major cruise lines have suspended sailing because of COVID-19, Nassau Cruise Port Ltd. said it anticipates that

some cruise lines may request to berth ships in Nassau during the suspension period. On March 13, 2020, the Cruise Lines

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PLP Forms COVID-19 Taskforce

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON
 Journal Staff Writer

With immediate effect, Progressive Liberal Party Leader Philip Davis announced the establishment of the PLP COVID-19 Taskforce. Davis made the announcement on Saturday, adding that the taskforce is co-chaired by

Senator Dr. Michael Darville and Melissa Evans. The taskforce members are Een Colebrooke, Michelle Adderley, Dr. Lynwood Brown, Latrae Rahming, Stan Smith and Ian Poitier. "The mandate of this taskforce is to from time



► PLP Leader Philip Davis

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Woman Shot Dead on Carmichael Road

TYLER SYMONETTE
Journal Staff Writer

Police are investigating a shooting that took place in the capi-

tal which left one adult female dead.

According to police, on Friday shortly before 12 a.m., at a residence on

Carmichael Road, east of Lazaretto Road, two females were approached by three males, one of them being armed with a

firearm.

The armed male opened fire on the females, injuring one of them.

Emergency medical

personnel were called to the scene and attempted to resuscitate the women but were unfortunately unsuccessful.

The female was pronounced dead at the scene.

Investigations are ongoing.

Man Dies after Eight Mile Rock Shooting

In other crime news, Police in Grand Bahama are also investigating a homicide that took place in Eight Mile Rock on Friday.

Shortly before 1 a.m. police were called to the Sunset village area, at

the local fish fry on Bayshore Road, Eight Mile Rock, where there were reports of gunshots being fired.

When officers arrived to the scene to investigate, it was revealed that there was an altercation

between a group of males.

The result was one the males discharging his firearm, wounding a male and female.

While the female victim received nonlife threatening injuries to

her leg, the male victim received multiple gunshot wounds about the body.

He was transported to the emergency section of the Rand Memorial Hospital where he was treated by a doctor, but

later succumbed to his injuries.

Police are currently following significant leads into this matter.

Investigations are ongoing.

Police are appealing to members of the pub-

lic, who may have information that can assist with this and other investigations, to contact the Central Detective Unit at 502-9991/2, crime stoppers at 328-tips (8477) or the nearest police station.

PM Announces Drastic Measures

Continued from / PAGE 1...

become effective on Thursday and according to Dr. Minnis, it was introduced because of the growing public health concern and the need to protect the health and well-being of the Bahamian population as the coronavirus (COVID-19) spreads globally.

The ban is in addition to restrictions already in place for China, Iran, Italy and South Korea.

"This restricted travel list of countries will be continuously monitored and updated as necessary," Dr. Minnis said during his televised national address on COVID-19.

"All Bahamian nationals and residents returning to The Bahamas through any point of entry from any of the restricted countries or an area where community infection and spread is present will be quarantined or be placed under self-isolation upon arrival and are expected to follow the protocols of

the Ministry of Health."

The prime minister advised that Bahamian nationals or residents returning to The Bahamas who have been abroad and believe that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 are asked to contact the Ministry of Health's hotline or their local health provider.

"Non-essential travel by Bahamian nationals and residents and other countries is highly discouraged," Dr. Minnis said

"Let me repeat this. If you do not need to travel overseas at this time, I highly urge you to remain at home.

Dr. Minnis also reminded Bahamians of some the symptoms of COVID-19.

"Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties," he said.

"In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kid-

ney failure and even death.

"Most people who contract this virus will fully recover. But there are a number of people who are particularly vulnerable, including the elderly and those with chronic diseases, such as hypertension and diabetes, and those with compromised immune systems.

"We do not know how long this crisis will be with us.

"Hand washing is among the most important hygiene measures in preventing the spread of infection.

"Standard recommendations to prevent the spread of infection include regular hand washing with soap for at least 20 seconds, and covering the mouth and the nose when coughing and sneezing."

The first case of the coronavirus was confirmed in The Bahamas on Sunday after a 61-year-old woman tested positive for the disease.



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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Elderly Man Shot Dead by Police

BY LAURENCIA I.A. SMITH
Journal Staff Writer

An elderly man was fatally shot after exchanging gunfire with police officers at the Fox Hill Police Station on Friday, shortly before 7 a.m.

Police said the man, who was out on bail for grievous harm, arrived at the Fox Hill Police Station to sign is as customary for persons on bail and after producing an identification card, he then produced a firearm pointing it at

the officer, which then forced that officer and another female officer to retreat to the back of the station.

According to Chief Superintendent of Police Solomon Cash, police noticed the same male suspect, who appeared to be in search of them.

"The officers produced their weapons, discharged at the male suspect, who also fired on the officers," he said.

"The male suspect then ran west along

Ferguson Street and the officers pursued him. At this point, there was an exchange of gunfire, both between the male suspect and the officers. The suspect was fatally shot."

Cash added that the victim was in his seventies.

He told reporters on the scene that after the shooting the victim was searched and found in possession of two pistols.

When asked if it's protocol for officers to retreat when faced with

such situation Cash said yes.

"You want protect your life as much as possible. You know, even though officers may be armed, if a gun is pointed at you, before you have an opportunity to let go. Have you been shot and killed? So the officers did the right thing around in that case until he was able to prepare himself better to engage the suspect." Cash said.

Also Cash mentioned that at this time

police do not know the intention of victim, but investigation continues.

This is the fifth police involved shooting and the fourth fatality according to The Bahama Journal's records.

Cash reiterated comments made by National Security Minister Marvin Dames who recently stated that if criminals engage police officers, they will lose.

"I can't speak to the intent of people. But I can tell you that we, the

police, are mandated to protect and serve and our constitutional rights. We have to protect our lives first and then we will protect those of the citizens of The Bahamas. So, I would say to persons out there who would think about engaging the police, I would say that they should cease," Cash said.

"Both officers were unharmed, but are traumatized. No one else was injured in this latest police involved shooting."

First COVID-19 Case

Continued from / PAGE 1...

Acting Minister of Health Jeffrey Lloyd, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Pearl McMillan and other health officials confirmed the first case of the virus yesterday during a press conference at the Ministry of Health.

The patient is receiving care in a designated isolated area of the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH), according to health officials.

Also, the patient's family and social con-

tacts are currently being investigated to establish the source of her infection.

Lloyd said on Friday, the patient went to PMH after showing signs of a respiratory issue. She was then tested following morning and early Sunday morning her test was confirmed positive for COVID-19.

With the first confirmed case of COVID-19, steps are being taken which includes expanded testing, Lloyd further explained.

"We made the deci-

sion to expand our testing, have a heightened sensitivity for persons presenting with influenza like symptoms due to lessons learnt from countries that have diagnosed cases in keeping with this enhanced surveillance approach," Lloyd said.

Over the past several weeks, health officials have been providing update on COVID-19 through various outlets, as first cases of the virus being confirmed in neighbouring Caribbean countries

last week.

Health officials would confirm and shared that they would have taken the necessary steps to prepare for the virus if was hit our shores.

According Dr. McMillan, there more plans being put in place as the virus is evolving.

"We know that Doctors Hospital health system also has a plan for how they will deal with cases. Our plan is evolving and we are actually seeking to put in place a surge capacity plan in the the event

we get a large number of cases that we need to manage," she said.

Dr. McMillan also confirmed that there is about 100 test kits in country and about eight were used so far.

Health officials are seeking to enhance the country's testing capacity.

However, the acting minister of health is encouraging Bahamians not to panic and to get their information and updates from credible sources on COVID-19.

"I want to use this opportunity to appeal to the public to remain calm and follow and implement the advisories relating to personal hygiene and overall infection prevention control," Lloyd said.

Health officials encourage persons who may have any respiratory systems of fever cough, or shortness of breath to call their doctor's office or the Ministry of Health COV-19 hotline at 376-9350, 376-9387 or 376-9357.

U.S. Embassy Cancels Visa Appointments

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday that the U.S. Embassy in The Bahamas has implemented measures to control the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) which include the cancelation of visa appointments.

"The U.S. Embassy has indicated that it is canceling routine immigrant and nonimmigrant visa appointments. The embassy will resume routine visa services as soon as possible but is unable to provide a specific date at this time," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

The measures taken by the embassy include social distancing.

If members of the travelling public have an urgent matter and need to travel immediately, they should follow the guidance provided at [Ais.usvisa-info.com](https://ais.usvisa-info.com), by phone at +1-242-603-1290 or +1-703-831-3448, or via email to VisaNassau@state.gov to request an emergency appointment.

Members of the public are further advised to visit the embassy's website <https://bs.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/> for additional detail and updates.



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Public Service Announcement Resident Return Quarantine

On 30th January, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

Currently, The Bahamas has no suspected, reported or confirmed cases of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus. Moreover, the Ministry of Health is closely following the global development of this virus.

In view of the implemented border control and quarantine measures for travelers to The Bahamas, as a component of its 2019 nCoV Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan, the Ministry of Health advises the public that **residents returning to The Bahamas who have a history of travel to China within 20 days of commencing travel, WILL be quarantined on arrival in The Bahamas for up to fourteen (14) days.**

During this quarantine period, persons will be monitored for the development of symptoms. Additionally, contact with non-health personnel, such as families and friends will not be permitted.

The Ministry of Health requests the understanding and support of the general public during this time to ensure the protection and well-being of all our residents and visitors. These public health measures are being taken to minimize the risk of introduction of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, and to protect the health of the population.

2nd February, 2020

GOT NEWS?
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Ministry of Youth Monitors COVID-19

CHERIKA JOHNSON
Journal Staff Writer

The Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture issued a statement on Friday explaining that the ministry is the

process of determining which events of local, regional and international interest should be best postponed or cancelled in the interest of public protection, health and safety as the coro-

navirus (COVID-19) spreads globally.

The statement comes after the cancellation of the High School Track and Field Championship, which was scheduled to be

held from March 12 - 14, but was postponed.

The Ministry of Youth officials said they continue to monitor ongoing developments and reports as it relates to the coronavirus.

The statement added that as the virus continues to spread to countries within the Caribbean region and new cases are being reported daily, the ministry is heading the

overarching advice from health professionals, which is to avoid large gatherings and comply with all hygienic protocols, while ensuring the health and safety of the public.

Tripped BPL Engines Caused Power Outage

CHERIKA JOHNSON
Journal Staff Writer

Two Wartsila engines tripped offline on

Friday morning, causing outages in a number of areas throughout the capital.

Bahamas Power

and Light Company (BPL) released a statement at 8 a.m. on Friday, stating that its two engines went

offline at station A, including its GT9, at its Blue Hills Power Station.

The power company

said it restored power to a number of affected areas, and full restoration was at 9:10 a.m. on Friday.

BPL added that its GT9 engine, that went offline, was being assessed by technicians.



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Amnesty International calls for release of artist and prisoner of conscience

Cuban artist Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely because of his conscientiously held beliefs, and should be released immediately, said Amnesty International today.

"It is absolutely shameful that the Cuban administration continues to stifle any voices that are not aligned with the official position. Luis Manuel Otero is a prisoner of conscience and we urge the Cuban government to release him immediately and unconditionally" said Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas director at Amnesty International.

According to the information Amnesty International has obtained, Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara appears to be charged with "insults to symbols of the homeland" (Article 203 of the Penal Code), an offense inconsistent with international human rights law and standards, and "damage" to property (Article 339).

According to NGO Cubalex, in the past 30 months, authorities have arbitrarily detained Luis Manuel more than 20 times. Prior to his detention, he had announced on Facebook that he planned to participate in a protest convened by LGBTI activists after alleged state censorship of a movie featuring two men kissing.

In an interview with Amnesty International in 2019, Luis Manuel said: "I'm like the tip of the iceberg. We are talking about an endless number of artists in Cuba. [The authorities] come after me, because as I am supposedly the most visible of the youth, activists-artists, they send the message 'Well, if we lock this one up, look what we can do to you lot.'"

Cuba is the only country in the Americas that prohibits Amnesty International from visiting.

The organization asks all artists, journalists and LGBTI activists to call on the Cuban authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara.

Background information

Under Decree 349, all artists, including collectives, musicians and performers, are prohibited from operating in public or private spaces without prior approval by the Ministry of Culture. Individuals or businesses that hire artists without the authorization can be sanctioned, and artists that work without prior approval can have their materials confiscated or be

substantially fined. Under the new decree, the authorities also have the power to immediately suspend a performance and to propose the cancellation of the authorization granted to carry out the artistic activity. Such decisions can only be appealed before the same Ministry of Culture (Article 10); the decree does not provide an effective remedy to appeal such a decision before an independent body, including through the courts.

The decree contains vague and overly broad restrictions on artistic expression. For example, it prohibits audiovisual materials that contain, among other things: "use of patriotic symbols that contravene current legislation" (Article 3a), "sexist, vulgar or obscene language" (Article 3d), and "any other (content) that violates the legal provisions that regulate the normal development of our society in cultural matters" (Article 3g). Furthermore, it makes it an offence to "commercialize books with content harmful to ethical and cultural values" (Article 4f).

International human rights law and standards require that any restriction to the right to freedom of expression, including through art, must be provided by law and formulated with sufficient precision to avoid overly broad or arbitrary interpretation or application, and in a manner that is accessible to the public and that clearly outlines what conduct is or is not prohibited.

As signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Cuba is required to refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the treaty. Article 19 of the ICCPR specifically protects the right to freedom of expression, which includes the "freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds..." including "in the form of art".

Amnesty International has previously expressed concern that Decree 349 is likely to have a general chilling effect on artists in Cuba, preventing them from carrying out their legitimate work for fear of reprisals.

Article 203 of the Penal Code, one of the provisions under which Luis Manuel appears to be charged, is inconsistent with international standards as its effect is to limit freedom of expression. Amnesty International opposes laws prohibiting disrespect of heads of state or public figures, the military or other public institutions, or flags or symbols (such as lèse majesté and desacato laws).

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EDITORIAL

Turbulent Times Ahead

The Bahamian people must be prepared for the most turbulent times that the Bahamian economy has experienced in many decades. Following the trend announced by U.S President Trump, our Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis last night said the government will not allow visitors to the Bahamas from The United Kingdom, Ireland and Europe for the next twenty days.

While we know that the world is facing a crisis due to the Coronavirus, we thought President Trump over-reacted when he banned visitors to the United States last week. Indeed, many European leaders have the same view. However, since America is the largest economy in the world and is able to print money, the Trump decision could probably be justified by his countrymen. As for the Bahamas whose main industry is tourism, the decision by our government is questionable. The American President also delivered another body blow to the Bahamian economy when he ordered all Cruise Ships to the Caribbean to suspend operations for thirty days.

In addition, many airlines have drastically reduced flights in the United States and Europe. What has effectually happened is that the tourism industry has come to a virtual standstill with far reaching negative consequences for the Bahamian economy and the livelihood of thousands of Bahamians. These measures also come at the peak time in the hotel industry and when revenue in this period is needed for operations for the entire year.

We are forced to ask a number of questions on the justification of certain decisions being made. The main one is this: are we making these decisions because other

countries are doing so, and how are they impacting our economic and social circumstances. For instance, the Prime Minister announced that schools will be closed until April 14th. What is going to happen between now and then for students to return to their classes? Why should schools be closed on every Family Island, day including the small schools in the southern Bahamas?

Our economy has not grown in the last two decades and has not recovered from the global recession of 2008. To compound matters, there have been a series of Hurricanes over the last five years which have created consternation in the economy. What is needed now are measures to mitigate the damage done.

We have a structural problem in the Bahamian economy. The U.S economy has been strong for years and although our tourism numbers show an increase in tourist arrivals, the impact has not been felt in the general economy among ordinary Bahamians. The problem exists because the economy is out of balance due to the contraction of the financial services sector.

Over the last ten years that sector has been under sustained attack from the European Union and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. These attacks diminished our middle class. We are now in real danger of just having the rich and the poor in our country.

These times call for energy in the government to develop a vision to diversify our economy. This has to be a national effort. We have had many warnings. We had 911, hurricanes and now we have a world virus that can ruin our economy and our way of life. We need to be able to feed ourselves and to be less reliant on foreign elements for our very survival.

This is no time for the government to worry and panic. This is a time to be imaginative and innovative.



THE BAHAMAS

Sun, Sand, Sea and the

The Bahama Journal

NO BETTER READING

Gibson Family Serves Elderly in Honour of Mother's Birthday

TYLER SYMONETTE
Journal Staff Writer

The late Gerlene Gibson, mother to former Minister of Labour Shane Gibson, was honoured by her family for living a life full of compassion and love.

The children, grandchildren, siblings and family members of Mrs. Gibson hosted a lunch in her memory on March 13, Mrs. Gibson's birthday.

The lunch was held at Pat's Senior Citizens Home and was sponsored by Bahama Grill, whose owner is the son of Mrs. Gibson.

The family thought it very appropriate to honour their mother by continuing with her teachings of altruism.

Ann Hutchinson, the last daughter of Mrs. Gibson, discussed the importance of serving the elderly.

"We're just having a

great time, not only celebrating her life, but bringing attraction for Pat's home for the elderly because the thing is all of us are going to die one day. All of us are going to get old one day and people seem to forget that," Mrs. Hutchinson said. "And so, the seeds that we plant in these people lives, we know that it's going to come back to us when we get older."

Patricia W. Moxey, founder and owner of Pat's Senior Citizen Home, expressed her gratitude to the Gibson family for treating the senior citizens living at the home to a nice meal and a good time.

The home is a private organization and relies heavily of donations and volunteer work to keep the doors open.

Mrs. Moxey also mentioned that the

home has taken some extra precautions because of the spreading coronavirus (COVID19), which is said to be particularly dangerous to elderly people.

"Well for one, we limit the visitation of loved ones and when they do come our staff will govern them. Make sure they sanitize their hands coming in and even going in, not putting their hands on the

doorknob." Mrs. Moxey said.

"We make sure all of that is done. And we asked the loved ones to not interact with the family. If they need something, the nurses and the caregivers here will do it for them."

This is the second time the Gibson family has held this event and Mrs. Hutchinson said she hopes to do it annually.

Schools Closed

Continued from / PAGE 1...

impact of Hurricane Dorian.

"This coronavirus crisis represents yet another risk to our economy and the country's finances and fiscal sustainability plans.

"This crisis will have

a growing adverse impact on confidence, travel, and supply chains across the globe.

"This will affect Bahamian workers and businesses and will have an impact on the poorer and more vulnerable in our country."

However, the prime minister noted that he will be meeting and consulting with major business entities to get their input on The Bahamas' national response to COVID-19.

He added that no sector is more at risk than travel.

"This crisis will have a tremendous and widespread economic impact," Dr. Minnis explained.

"Tourism accounts for an estimated 50 percent of our gross domestic product, just under 50 percent of direct employment, and

has a cascading impact across the broader economy.

"Another important fact is that over 80 percent of our stopover visitors are from the United States, which is reporting increasing cases of the virus and 75 percent of our visi-

tors come by cruise ships, which are suspending cruises.

"All of these developments signal to us the huge exposure our economy faces from the spread of the virus, which has already began to show up."

Doctors Hospital to Treat COVID-19 Patients

Continued from / PAGE 1...

pandemic.

"We are watching carefully and learning from other jurisdictions, particularly the countries that are best managing the outbreak in

their country," Dr. Minnis said.

He also discussed some of the measures the government has taken to respond to COVID-19.

"The Ministry of Health has activated its

national preparedness and response plan," Dr. Minnis said.

"We have conducted training for healthcare providers on proper screening, use of protective equipment and COVID-19 protocols,

and secured adequate supplies of hand sanitizers, cleaning supplies and protective equipment.

"There is in-country testing for COVID-19 at the National Reference Laboratory.

"Businesses should continue to institute measures to protect the health of workers and consumers."

Dr. Minnis also advised Bahamians who are sick to stay at home, practice social

distancing and avoid crowds.

"Large public gatherings have been shown to be linked to the widespread of COVID-19 in jurisdictions now recording large numbers of cases."

Bubbles, zero calories



DASANI SPARKLING

MAJOR CRUISE LINES SUSPEND SAILING

Nassau Anticipates More Berthing Requests

Continued from / PAGE 1...

International Association (CLIA) announced that several major cruise lines, including Royal Caribbean, Carnival, Norwegian, and MSC, will voluntarily suspend sailing operations to and from U.S. ports for 30 days due to the novel coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic. Disney also suspended its sailings through to the end of March 2020.

In a statement on Sunday, Nassau Cruise

Port added that most cruise ships at sea will continue with their itineraries as planned as the cruise lines prepare to temporarily suspend North American service.

"We anticipate that some cruise lines may request to berth ships at Nassau Cruise Port during the suspension period. These ships may contain a relatively small number of crew members who will spend this time here in port. These cruise lines will provide a Declaration of Health to Bahamas

Customs and Immigration as part of the application for entry into The Bahamas," the statement said.

"The Declaration of Health will describe any health concerns of any person onboard the ship. The crew is subject to the COVID-19 protocols of the Bahamian government at the time that they apply for entry."

Nassau Cruise Port explained that it has been and remain in constant communication with the major cruise lines and

CLIA, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Tourism and other key stakeholders as this situation unfolds.

"Our cruise line partners have undertaken extraordinary measures to safeguard their crew, passengers, shareholders, and other stakeholders, and we have and will continue to benefit from their efforts," Nassau Cruise Port said.

"We support their difficult decision to temporarily suspend sailings amid this global public health

crisis. Everyone's health and safety are our paramount concerns."

According to Nassau Cruise Port, this very unfortunate situation will not derail its construction plans.

"We expect to begin demolition of the warehouse at the port by the end of the month, subject to obtaining the necessary approvals," the statement said.

"Over the next few weeks, we will review our health and safety protocols in anticipation of

the resumption of cruise visits to Nassau and to improve the safety of the port environment in the short-term and long-term.

"This may include technological upgrades, enhanced security screening measures, and a review of our medical procedures, among other efforts. We are committed to the health of our passengers, employees, port stakeholders and the entire Bahamian and global communities as we navigate this challenging situation."

PLP Forms COVID-19 Taskforce

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to time inform our members, supporters and the country on new developments and events both locally and internationally surrounding this global pandemic and its potential impact on The Bahamas," Davis said.

He added that the taskforce will also monitor the performance of the gov-

ernment in the handling of this critical issue and will assist the government in public health issues for the protection and wellbeing of the general public.

"I advise the public that we live in the era of fake news, therefore, all relevant information should be accessed from reputable sources. The official websites of the Bahamas government, the Center for Disease

Control and the World Health Organization are recommended information sources," Davis said.

"Cooperate with all public service announcements, including travel advisories, released by the government.

"Follow all established personal hygiene and health protocols at home and when using public facilities. These include washing hands under run-

ning water with soap for at least 20 seconds."

The PLP leader also called on the government to have a comprehensive response to and an economic forecast in light of the potential economic fallout given the recent announcement by U.S. President Donald Trump on the schedule of cruise ships leaving U.S. ports for the next 30 days.

"It is the considered view of the PLP that legislation is needed as a standard national and government response in these extreme and unusual circumstances. The parliament debated and passed legislation on official action in the event of a natural disaster such as a hurricane and legislation is necessary in the event of drastic external shocks emanating

from bio-attacks and public health crises," Davis said.

"The PLP as always stands ready to assist the government in protecting the health, safety and general wellbeing of our people."

Yesterday, The Bahamas recorded its first case of the coronavirus after a 61-year-old female tested positive for the disease.

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