

SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT



GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION UNIT

MEDIA RELEASE

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STATE OF EMERGENCY EMPOWERS PRIME MINISTER TO MAKE NECESSARY ORDERS ON COVID-19 SITUATION

The current State of Public Emergency which was proclaimed by the Governor General Sir David Vunagi last week has given special powers to the Prime Minister to make necessary orders in relation to the current COVID-19 situation facing the country.

The Governor General's proclamation was made on the advice of the Cabinet pursuant to section 16 (2).

This was in response to the escalation of COVID-19 around the world and the imminent threat that it poses to the country's small and vulnerable economy.

The Emergency Powers (COVID-19) Regulations 2020 has given Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare powers:

(a) To declare a public place to be a quarantine station; (b) To prohibit the entry of a person or a class of persons into Solomon Islands; (c) To direct a person or a class of persons to comply with quarantine procedures; (d) To take possession of or requisition property to establish a quarantine station; (e) To declare a public place to be an emergency zone; (f) To restrict the movement of a person for the maintenance of order and security of the public in an emergency zone; (g) To temporarily close a public place; (h) To restrict the movement of vessels and aircrafts; (i) To suspend access to online media outlets or media outlets; (j) To make an Order for the National Disaster Council to coordinate and implement emergency operations; (k) To order the release of special funds provided for under other laws of Solomon Islands to implement public safety measures.

Last week, the Cabinet has considered our lack of capacity to deal effectively with a fully blown out spread of the virus and agreed that our efforts must be focused firstly in protecting the country from the entrance of this serious threat to our national security, and secondly, to control the spread of the virus if it slipped through.

"To be effective, our strategy requires the backing of the law, to enforce the much needed discipline and cooperation of our people, which are considered indispensable to the success of

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our national effort to fight against this threat to our national security,” Prime Minister Sogavare said on Friday.

He said the current steps taken by responsible government authorities are a giant leap in our strategic actions, which requires the full understanding and cooperation of our people and due care on the part of the government to be successful.

“I wish to reassure our good people that Government authorities have been working around the clock to manage this COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts will be further enhanced by the new powers,” Sogavare said.

The Prime Minister has already made six orders last week including (a) An order declaring Honiara to be an emergency zone starting from Alligator Creek to Poha River; and (b) An order to temporarily close the following places in the emergency zone (i) Nightclubs; (ii) Kava bars; (iii) Bars; (iv) Casinos, (c) An Order for the release of Members Discretionary Fund under Regulation 9(3)(a) of the Members of Parliament (Entitlements) Commission Regulations 1988 to Members of Parliament for the purpose of the repatriation of public officers or of the public of their constituency from Honiara to their village, (d) An Order declaring designated places a quarantine station and (e) An Order to prohibit the entry of Non-Citizens into Solomon Islands.

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