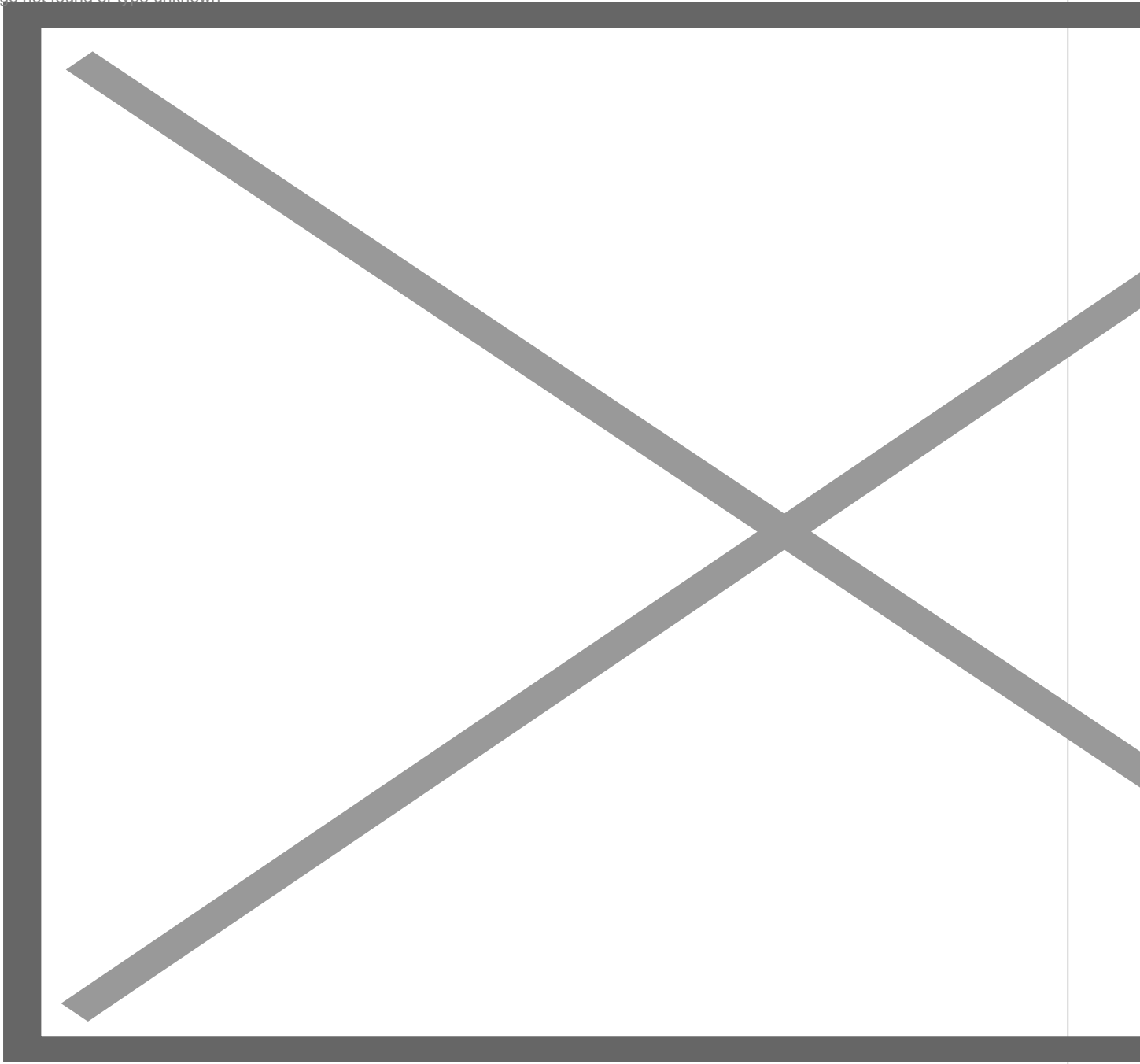


*Zimbabwe tightens COVID
restrictions in face of
overwhelmed health system*

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Zimbabwe extends curfew, bans gatherings, and closes non-essential businesses amid a surge in COVID-19 infections

Harari, January 4 (RHC)-- Zimbabwe has extended a nationwide curfew, banned gatherings and ordered non-essential businesses closed for a month in an effort to curb a surge in coronavirus infections. Vice President Constantino Chiwenga, who is also the health minister, said that some of the tighter restrictions were effective immediately and included a 6pm to 6am curfew and a ban on inter-city travel.

“People must stay at home save for buying food and medicines or transporting sick relatives,” Chiwenga told a news conference. The country had recorded 1,342 COVID-19 cases and 29 deaths in one week, the highest to date, he said.

“Only essential services are to remain open such as hospitals, pharmacies and supermarkets, with only essential staff allowed to come to work,” Chiwenga said, adding such services would have reduced hours and be subject to the night curfew.

Over the weekend, government spokesman Nick Mangwana wrote on Twitter that “we are being overwhelmed and overrun by this virus.” Chiwenga said air travel was still allowed, with arrivals and returning residents being required to present certificates showing themselves to be free of COVID-19.

Zimbabwe first introduced a tough lockdown in March but had gradually eased the restrictions. It has recorded a total of 14,084 cases and 369 deaths. Last week, the government postponed the reopening of schools planned for Monday due to a surge in coronavirus infections and a tropical storm that swept through the region.

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