Beat: Health

Comatose Dutch Prince Friso showing signs of minimal consciousness

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USPA News - Dutch Prince Johan Friso, who has remained in a coma after being critically injured in an avalanche in western Austria earlier this year, has begun showing minimal signs of consciousness, the royal family said on Monday. The prognosis remains uncertain.

Friso, 44, was skiing in the Austrian town of Lech on February 17 when he was hit by an avalanche and buried under the snow for about 25 minutes before being rescued and resuscitated at the scene. Doctors said the oxygen deprivation caused extensive damage to his brain, leaving him in a coma which he may never come out. Little news has been released since February, but South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu earlier revealed that Friso had moved when Friso`s wife, Princess Mabel, kissed him. "On another day, she said she kissed him and he moved a bit," Tutu said in an interview in September, although there was no confirmation from the royal family. In a statement on Monday, the Netherlands Government Information Service (RVD) said Friso has recently begun to show signs of `extremely minimal consciousness.` "The prognosis remains very uncertain and the medical team is still very concerned," the statement said. "It will take many months before there is more clarity." The RVD previously said it would only make an announcement in the event of medically significant changes in the condition of Friso, but doctors who are not involved in the treatment of the prince cautioned that minimal consciousness does not necessarily mean a patient will eventually recover and regain full consciousness. In Monday`s statement, the royal family also asked the media to continue to respect the privacy of the family and thanked people who have sent messages of support. "This is the worst period of my life," Mabel said. "My love for Friso, the support of family and friends, and the many messages of sympathy give me strength in this difficult time." The prince is currently being cared for at Wellington Hospital in London, the largest independent hospital in the United Kingdom. Friso is the second son of Queen Beatrix but is not in line for the throne since marrying Princess Mabel in 2004 without permission from the Dutch government.

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