



MEDIA STATEMENT
ON THE CURRENT SITUATION OF COVID-19
IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

09 Jamadilawal 1442 / 24 December 2020

1. The Ministry of Health would like to announce that today, Thursday, 09 Jamadilawal 1442H / 24 December 2020, Alhamdulillah with the grace of Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'Ala, **there is no new case** of COVID-19 infection in the country. Therefore, the total number of COVID-19 cases in Brunei Darussalam remains at 152 cases.
2. Meanwhile, there are **no active cases** being treated at the National Isolation Centre and **the total number of cases that have been confirmed recovered** are 149 people.
3. At present, a total of **11 import cases** have been confirmed since the last local infection case was reported on 6 May 2020, where,

Brunei Darussalam has recorded **232 days** without COVID-19 local infection case.

4. Today, a total of **752 individuals are undergoing mandatory self-isolation** at the monitoring centers provided by the Government, which are individuals that have just arrived in this country after traveling from abroad. At present, a total of **9,943 individuals have completed their mandatory self-isolation** at the monitoring centers.
5. In the past 24 hours, **a total of 131 samples have been tested** for the SARS-CoV-2 virus that brings the total number of laboratory tests conducted since January 2020 to **82,039 tests**.
6. The Ministry of Health would like to remind the public to practice their social responsibilities by maintaining personal hygiene, practice proper cough and sneeze etiquette, recommended to wear a face mask in crowded public places and if feeling unwell, not to go to public places and attend social gatherings. As per the provisions under the Infectious Diseases Act (Section 204), the

public is required to comply with all regulations and instructions that have been issued and are still in force during this COVID-19 pandemic.

7. In addition, the Ministry of Health would like to update the public on developments regarding **the COVID-19 situation in the United Kingdom.**
8. On 19 December 2020, the United Kingdom government reported information regarding **a new variant** of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that was found to be circulating in various areas in the UK. This variant, termed **B.1.1.7 (VUI-202012/01)**, is caused by mutations in the virus's genetic code that first occurred sometime in September 2020.
9. SARS-CoV-2 is an RNA virus, and mutations arise naturally as the virus replicates. Many thousands of mutations or changes have already arisen on the SARS-CoV-2 virus but only a very small minority are likely to be important and to change the virus in an appreciable way. Health authorities in the United Kingdom have

stated that this newly reported variant enhances the virus's ability to be more contagious or transmissible from one individual to another.

10. Although the variant or strain has been suggested to be more transmissible, there is currently insufficient evidence to determine if this strain is associated with any change in disease severity or antibody response or vaccine efficacy to the virus. These aspects are being investigated by the authorities in the United Kingdom.

11. The Ministry of Health will continue to closely monitor and review emerging information on the new variant for the virus as it emerges. So far, **no infections caused by this new variant has been reported in Brunei Darussalam**, and based on the scientific analysis conducted by the Ministry of Health indicates that existing PCR tests in Brunei Darussalam **will detect infections** resulting from this new variant. However, the Ministry of Health has taken steps to increase preventive and regulatory measures to prevent the importation of this new virus variant.

12. In Brunei Darussalam, the current travel restrictions entering and leaving the country as part of the prevention measures against COVID-19 **remain in force**. All non-essential travel into Brunei Darussalam has been temporarily halted. Essential travelers who have had their application for entry approved by the Department of Immigration and National Registration are required **to show proof of a negative RT-PCR COVID-19 test taken not more than 72 hours prior to departure, must complete up to 14 days of mandatory self-isolation on arrival, and will only be released pending a negative COVID-19 test result conducted in Brunei Darussalam.**

13. The recent concerning reports of this new COVID-19 variant, highlight the importance of identifying and deploying safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19, in order to ensure that Brunei Darussalam is protected from these emerging threats. In this regard, the Ministry of Health has examined the data and information on the current vaccine candidates. The Government is actively identifying effective and safe vaccine candidates and is securing access to these vaccines. Both multilateral arrangements

via the COVAX facility and bilateral arrangements with specific vaccine manufacturers were held and additional arrangements to ensure vaccine access and procurement for Brunei Darussalam.

14. Vaccine candidates available so far use different technologies including **inactivated viruses, proteins subunit, viral vectors and mRNAs**. All of these vaccine technologies have different safety and effectiveness profiles which can only be determined after the results of the Phase 3 Clinical Trial vaccines can be examined later. Any vaccine that will be used will be required to undergo a regulatory research process enforced by the **Brunei Darussalam Medicines Control Authority (BDMCA)**.

15. In addition to efforts on vaccine procurement, the Ministry of Health is also preparing for prioritization and national deployment strategy once a vaccine for COVID-19 that is safe and effective becomes available for use. A technical committee has been established to develop and implement a **National Vaccination Strategy**. Due to the limited global supply of vaccines, vaccine distribution will be done in phases and priority will be given to

high-risk individuals first. When this vaccination program is implemented, each individual can play their role by getting themselves vaccinated once a vaccine is offered to you. This will ensure that individuals can protect themselves, their loved ones, and the wider community from COVID-19.

16. The Ministry of Health will continue to monitor the situation of the outbreak at the national as well as regional and global level and carry out continuous risk assessment. The Ministry of Health will notify the public of any changes to this situation, if necessary from time to time.

17. For further information and latest updates, members of the public can visit the official website of the Ministry of Health at www.moh.gov.bn or by contacting the **Health Advice Line 148** or through the **BruHealth App**.

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Reference : KK/PR/2

Date : 09 Jamadilawal 1442 / 24 December 2020