



MEDIA STATEMENT ON THE CURRENT COVID-19 INFECTION IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

10 March 2020

1. The Ministry of Health Brunei Darussalam would like to inform the public of the recent development in the case of COVID-19 infection in Brunei Darussalam which was reported on 9 March 2020. Confirmatory test for the case has been found to be positive for COVID-19. As this is the first case for Brunei Darussalam, samples will be sent for further tests at the WHO Reference Laboratory in Singapore, in line with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.
2. The case is a 53-year old local male pensioner who went to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia with three friends, also locals, on 27 February 2020. He attended a religious congregation (*tabligh*) at the Jamek Sri Petaling Mosque, Kuala Lumpur which was reported to have been attended by more than 100 people coming from other places, including Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. He and his friends returned home on 3 March 2020 through Miri, Sarawak on Air Asia flight AK5651. He also went on a day trip to Miri on 6 March 2020 and stopped for Friday prayer at Kg Sg Teraban Mosque. He started to develop symptoms in the same evening and went to the Emergency Department, Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha Hospital on 8 March 2020 for treatment and had nasopharyngeal swab taken for COVID-19 test. He is known to have chronic illnesses such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. He was taken to the National Isolation Centre in the

Tutong District on 9 March 2020 i.e. as soon as the preliminary results was obtained.

3. In line with the current Action Plan, all his symptomatic contacts have been brought to the National Isolation Centre for further investigations while Quarantine Order under the Infectious Disease Act Chapter 204 has been issued for other contacts. The Order requires all contacts to undergo mandatory isolation and their health status monitored. This step is taken to protect the people around them and to ensure that if the contacts develop any symptoms, early treatment can immediately be given. Contacts who violate the Quarantine Order by leaving their place of quarantine on purpose can be brought to court. To date, preliminary tests have been conducted on all close contacts and five of them have been found positive. This include the wife and two sons of the case, a friend and the friend's son who also attended the religious congregation (tabligh) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Confirmatory tests will be conducted after 24 hours of the first test, in line with existing guidelines. At present, all five contacts are having mild symptoms such as cough and cold but are stable, afebrile and do not require breathing aids.

4. The Ministry of Health will continue with contact tracing and further relevant actions, in accordance with current evidence-based guidelines. The Ministry of Health would also like to clarify that close contact for each case is defined as people living in the same house as the case or those who have been with the case in an enclosed space within a distance of less than one meter for 30 minutes or more. As such, risk of transmission from transient or casual contacts such as brief encounters including in public transport is assessed as being low.

5. In this regard, the Ministry of Health has received information of approximately 90 local citizens who were at the same religious congregation (*tabligh*) at Jamek Sri Petaling Mosque, Kuala Lumpur between 28 February to 3 March 2020. They are therefore required to immediately call 2381383 or 2381380 (office hours only) or Darussalam Hotline 123 (outside office hours) for health advice and further investigation. Those who were involved in the congregation and are having symptoms such as fever, cough or difficulty in breathing must immediately go to the Flu Centre at the Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha Hospital, located opposite the entrance to the Emergency Department.

6. The Ministry of Health would like to remind the public not to spread inaccurate information or issue threats to anyone suspected of being infected with COVID-19, including their family members. As the citizens and residents of Brunei Darussalam, especially of the Islamic faith, we should pray for the health and well-being of the people infected with COVID-19 and that Brunei Darussalam is protected from any disasters and disease outbreaks. The public is also advised to maintain self hygiene and adhere to the cough etiquette. Muslims are advised to maintain the state of ablution as the pillars of ablution are in line with health advice on self hygiene such as washing hands, washing nostrils and mouth and other parts of the body.

7. In the meantime, the Ministry of Health would also like to advise the public not to panic if additional cases are found following contact tracing that is currently being undertaken. There is currently no evidence to show widespread community transmission and the situation is under control.

8. The Ministry of Health will continue to monitor the situation and will inform the public of any developments. The Ministry of Health will continue to ensure all prevention and control measures are undertaken, according to requirement. The public is advised to refrain from going out of the country needlessly and should cooperate with government officers on duty. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim, Nabi Muhammad Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wasallam said: "If you hear that it (the plague) is in a land, do not go there, and if it breaks out in a land where you are, do not leave, fleeing from it." Hence, we must stand together in solidarity in facing COVID-19 outbreak and not to discriminate anyone. Insya Allah, with prayers and faith to Allah, we will succeed in controlling the spread of this outbreak.

9. For further information and latest developments, go to the Ministry of Health's website **www.moh.gov.bn** or call:
 - **Health Advice Line - 2381380 or 2381383** (office hours only) or;
 - **Darussalam Hotline 123** (outside office hours).

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