



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

19 March 2020

1. The Ministry of Health would like to update the public on the COVID-19 situation in the country.
2. As of today, 19 March 2020, **5** new cases have been confirmed **bringing the total number of cases in Brunei Darussalam to 73 people.**
  - Case 69, aged 46 is a local citizen who returned from a family holiday in Malaysia on 11 March 2020. Case 69 started developing symptoms (cough) on 9 March 2020.
  - Case 70, aged 72, is a family contact of Case 53. Case 70 does not have a travel history and has not shown any symptoms of the virus.
  - Case 71, aged 52, and Case 72, aged 46, have ties to the tabligh cluster whereby they attended a tabligh gathering in Brunei on 5 March 2020. Both these cases are part of a group of attendees of said gathering who have come forward to undergone the COVID-19 test following the confirmation of positive cases who also attended the same gathering. Since the statement released by the Ministry of Health concerning the tabligh gathering on 5 March 2020, as many as 56 attendees without history of

prior travel to Kuala Lumpur have undergone the laboratory testing for COVID-19.

- Case 73, aged 68, is a local citizen who returned from a family holiday in the United Kingdom on 16 March 2020 via flight onboard Royal Brunei BI004 (seated in 9A). Case 73 started developing symptoms (cough) on 12 March 2020.

3. The Ministry of Health would like to inform the public that all the confirmed cases are currently treated at the National Isolation Centre. Two confirmed cases are currently in critical condition, requiring respiratory assistance and are being treated at the Intensive Care Unit at the National Isolation Centre. Two other cases are being monitored closely, while the remaining cases are well and in a stable condition.
4. The Ministry of Health at this point in time is still actively performing contact tracing for every confirmed case. As of today, as many as 1,486 individuals are undergoing quarantine according to the Infectious Diseases Act (Chapter 204). To date, 99 individuals have completed their quarantine at the Sports Village Complex or in their respective homes, and all are well. Since the emergence of COVID-19 in early January 2020, a total of 2,329 laboratory tests for COVID-19 have been conducted.
5. The Ministry of Health would also like to inform the public that starting from 20 March 2020, all passengers arriving in Brunei Darussalam through the Brunei International Airport are required to undergo self-isolation immediately for 14 days at appointed monitoring centers in accordance with the Infectious Diseases

Act (Chapter 204). The Ministry of Health is currently working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Primary Resources & Tourism, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Transport and Infocommunications as well as Royal Brunei Airlines in order to carry out this procedure.

6. In an effort to ensure the effectiveness of these integrated measures by the government agencies under His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, to contain and control the spread of COVID-19 and to ensure the safety and welfare of the citizens and residents of Brunei Darussalam, beginning **Saturday, 26 Rejab 1441 Hijrah together with 21 March 2020**, the Ministry of Home Affairs will **shorten operating hours** for Immigration Control Posts for land transportation (**previously open from 6.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m.**) to **6 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. only**.
7. The Ministry of Health would also like to inform the public that His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam has consented to the amendment of the Infectious Diseases Act (Chapter 204) under the Infectious Diseases Act (Amendment) Order, 2020, effective beginning 30 January 2020. Following this amendment, whomsoever has been found to breach or refuse any order that has been issued by the Ministry of Health such as hosting gatherings at any place that has been forbidden or leaving the place of quarantine at any point in the quarantine period, will have found to be in violation of the Infectious Diseases Act (Chapter 204) and is punishable with a fine of up to \$10,000, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or both. The Ministry will not be hesitant in taking legal action against any individual who has gone against the directives that have been issued.

8. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health would once again like to seek cooperation from the public in practicing social distancing in order to contain the spread of COVID-19 that has befallen the nation at this time:

- Avoid going to public areas if you feel unwell;
- Avoid going to crowded places;
- Avoid organizing or participating in any event or gathering;
- Abide by quarantine orders or self-isolation if you have been issued a Quarantine Order or Self-Isolation Notice.

9. The Ministry of Health would also like to reiterate to employers, particularly those in the private sector, to give their full cooperation to facilitate the measures that have been taken by the Ministry in controlling the spread of COVID-19 such as,

- Not forcing employees to obtain medical certificates from doctors;
- Not deducting the self-isolation period or quarantine period from the annual leaves that employees are entitled to;
- Not deducting salary for employees who have received Quarantine Orders or Self-Isolation Notices.

Any employer who is found to have deducted salaries for employees who have been ordered to undergo quarantine or self-isolation OR deducted days from annual leaves can be reported to the Labour Department by calling 2381848 (during working hours) or 7298989 (outside of working hours);

- Be considerate and compassionate towards employees with higher risk towards COVID-19 such as those with chronic diseases (diabetes,

cardiovascular diseases, kidney diseases, cancer, etc.) as well as pregnant employees.

10. 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 (HAL 148)** (operating 24-hours).

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Reference : KK/PR/2

Date : 24 Rejab 1441H / 19 March 2020