

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) ON MASS GATHERINGS IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Updated as of 15 March 2020

These FAQs are drawn up in response to the current COVID-19 situation in Brunei Darussalam. Brunei Darussalam is currently in the containment phase of the pandemic, i.e. cases have been detected in the country. These public health measures are put in place in order to reduce the risk of local and further transmission in our community and one of the known effective measures is to limit large crowds and mass gatherings in close proximity over a prolonged duration.

1. What is a Mass Gathering (MG)?

A Mass Gathering (MG) has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an occasion, either organized or spontaneous where the "number of people attending is sufficient to strain the planning and response resources of the community, city, or nation hosting the event" (WHO, 2008).

In the context of COVID-19 in Brunei Darussalam, examples of mass gatherings include:

- All ticketed cultural, sports, recreational and entertainment events;
- Personal / social events including wedding events, birthday events and get-togethers, involving large crowds and the use of dedicated enclosed venues such as banquet halls and restaurants and event venues;
- Conferences, symposiums, expositions, training courses and meetings;
- Religious gatherings (with the exception of Friday prayers - to be stand guided by Ministry of Religious Affairs).

2. I am getting married in a few days' time. Can we still proceed?

- Solemnization of marriage (Akad Nikah) for Muslims preferably to be only done at home provided the number of guests are limited. Attendees to these events must be limited so as to reduce overcrowding and risking transmission of infection in an enclosed setting.
- Registration of marriages for other faiths may continue in designated registries but with limited attendees.
- If the groom or bride is unwell, then it is advisable to postpone the wedding.

3. Who can attend events that are allowed at home such as for registration of marriages?

Immediate family members (such as parents of the bride and groom and first degree relatives: sibling or child) and those deemed as close family members or friends are allowed. However, those with the following conditions are advised not to attend:

- Elderly with chronic diseases
- Immunocompromised individuals such as suffering from kidney or lung problems, cancer or other immunosuppressed conditions
- Pregnant women
- Infants and children below 5 years' old
- Those who are unwell especially with respiratory symptoms

4. What can organisers of personal events do to help with the government's effort in controlling COVID-19 transmission?

Organisers are advised to postpone the event if possible. However if the event needs to proceed, the organisers are advised to put in place the following precautions:

- **Reduce the scale of events to below 50 participants** where possible (if organized at a typical double storey house);
- **Improve the ventilation.** Encourage the use of fans and open windows, where possible;
- **Reduce contact with others** e.g. avoid shaking hands. If shaking hands is unavoidable for example during solemnization of Muslim marriage between a groom and Qadi, then to use hand sanitizers immediately after contact;
- **Know your guests or who you invite** - place measures to facilitate contact tracing if needed, such as obtaining contact details of attendees;
- **Always ensure personal and environmental hygiene.** Ensure that there are adequate and clean toilet facilities as well as for washing hands with soap and water, also disposable hand towels or tissues and covered rubbish bins. Do also provide hand sanitizers, where possible.
- **Attendees must practice social responsibility** including respiratory etiquette at all times.

5. What do attendees of personal events need to do after attending the event?

Attendees / participants are advised to monitor their own health conditions after attending the event for at least two weeks. They should seek medical attention if they become unwell with fever and/or respiratory symptoms and know of a person attending the same function has been confirmed as a case of COVID-19.

Please contact the Health Advice Line 148 for further advice or instructions.