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Malaysia bans public events to curb COVID-19 spread

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KUALA LUMPUR (March 13): To contain the spread of COVID-19, the Government has decided that all public gatherings including international meetings, sporting fixtures, social and religious events will be postponed or cancelled accordingly until April 30, 2020, said Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

“The decision will be reviewed if the COVID-19 situation improves,” said Muhyiddin in a televised speech tonight.

He noted that the Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Religious Affairs) issued a set of guidelines for religious gatherings at mosques to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“For other religions, organisers of religious gatherings with big crowds should seek advice and recommendations from the Health Ministry. As for schools, the Government has taken steps to curb the spread of the virus including banning all assemblies,” said Muhyiddin.

Muhyiddin told the Malaysian public that the COVID-19 crisis is not expected to end soon, given the increasing number of infected cases globally. Back home, he said the rising new cases have been traced to two COVID-19 clusters, mainly involving Malaysians.

According to the Ministry of Health, there are 39 new confirmed cases as of 12 noon today, bringing the tally to 197 in the country.

Muhyiddin noted that the virus outbreak, which originated in Wuhan, China, has entered a second wave, prompting the World Health Organisation (WHO) to declare it a pandemic on March 11.

In view of this, Muhyiddin said the Government will step up screening processes at all international points of entry in Malaysia, impose travel bans on high-risk countries and provide special passages for tourists from such countries.

“Apart from this, the Government will also increase the number of hospitals that can provide treatment for COVID-19 cases. To date, there is a total of 26 public hospitals and one university hospital, namely Pusat Perubatan Universiti Malaya, that are equipped to handle COVID-19 cases.

“A collaboration between public and private hospitals is also underway to cater to the rising number of infected cases. This includes hospitals under the Defence Ministry and universities,” he added.

For holiday cruise ships, Muhyiddin said they will only be allowed to dock at Malaysian ports to restock food supply. “Only crew members will be allowed to get off the ships and even so, they will be required to go through the health screening process,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Government is in the process of bringing home 65 and 323 Malaysians from Iran and Italy respectively. So far, a total of 107 Malaysians have been flown home from high-risk countries including China and South Korea, he announced.

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