



MEDIA STATEMENT

4 September 2009

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS FOR HAJJ 1430H / 2009

In light of the Influenza A (H1N1-2009) threat, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis), after consulting with the Singapore's Ministry of Health on the advisory issued by the Saudi Arabia's Health Ministry, would like to make the following announcements on health requirements for hajj 1430H / 2009.

Vaccinations

2. In addition to the usual requirement of getting a valid certificate of vaccination against seasonal flu, would-be pilgrims are also required to be vaccinated against Influenza A (H1N1-2009), once the vaccine is made available to the public.

3. If the Influenza A (H1N1-2009) vaccination is available, would-be pilgrims would have to submit both the certificates for the seasonal flu and the Influenza A (H1N1-2009) two weeks before obtaining the visa for hajj.

4. However, Muis would like to advise that in addition to the protective measures above, the best protection against the disease is to observe good personal hygiene at all times and to avoid close contact with anyone with the illness.

High Risk Groups

5. The Singapore's Ministry of Health has highlighted that the following groups are at higher risk of developing complications from Influenza A (H1N1-2009) which includes:

- those with chronic health conditions (e.g. asthma, chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, renal disease)
- 65 years and older
- Below 5 years old
- Pregnant women

6. In line with recommendations of an International Expert Panel convened by the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia, persons in these high risk groups are advised to postpone their participation in the Hajj and Umrah for their own safety.

7. Hence, Muis would like to appeal to would-be pilgrims who are in these high risk groups to consider postponing their hajj. However, Muis will leave it to the individuals concerned to make their own informed decision on performing the hajj.

Personal Hygiene Measures

8 During their stay at the Holy Lands, Muis would like pilgrims to be always mindful of the need to observe good personal hygiene at all times and to avoid close contact with anyone with the illness.

9. Good personal hygiene measures include the following:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and dispose the tissue properly in the trash after use.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water regularly and:
 - Before and after preparing food
 - After going to the toilet
 - Before and after eating
 - After any contact with respiratory secretions for example after coughing or sneezing.
- Use a serving spoon when sharing food from a common dish.
- Do not share personal items such as toothbrushes and towels.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth unnecessarily.

10 Muis would like to advise pilgrims to seek early medical attention if they are not well. The Singapore Haj Mission would be operating its Medical Clinics. More details would be made available during the pre-departure haj briefing which Muis and the Association of Muslim Travel Agents of Singapore (Amtas) would be conducting.

Influenza A (H1N1-2009) Contingency Plan for Hajj 1430H / 2009

11. As part of its preparedness plan to face any contingency, the Singapore Haj Mission has developed a contingency plan which outlines various scenarios if the Influenza A (H1N1-2009) becomes pandemic. This plan is developed jointly with Amtas whose members are mostly the hajj agents licensed by Muis, and Muis Medical team.

12. These scenarios include working out various contingencies to coincide with the departure and arrival schedules of our pilgrims from Singapore to Saudi Arabia and likewise, their departure and arrival schedules on their return journey from Saudi Arabia to Singapore including while they are in the Holy Lands performing their pilgrimage.

13. The first haj departure from Singapore is expected to be on 28 October 2009 while the last departure would be on 22 November 2009. *Eidul Adha* or Hari Raya Haji is expected to fall on 27 November 2009. The first return flight from Saudi Arabia is expected to be on 2 December 2009 while the last batch of Singapore pilgrims is expected to arrive in Singapore on 24 December 2009.

14. Muis will work closely with the relevant Government Ministries and agencies here, the Saudi Embassy in Singapore and our Missions in Saudi Arabia to ensure effective execution in managing any crisis situation.

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