



PRESS RELEASE
Ministry of Finance and Economy
Negara Brunei Darussalam

**MEASURES TO ASSIST MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
(MSMES) AND LOCAL EMPLOYEES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Date: 28 March 2020

1. Referring to the Press Release issued by the Ministry of Finance and Economy during the Press Conference last Saturday, 21st March 2020 with regards to the interim measures introduced by the Government to assist targeted sectors within the private sector affected by the outbreak of COVID-19 in Brunei Darussalam since 9th March 2020.
2. As the country and the economy is affected by this outbreak, the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MOFE) with the cooperation of Manpower Planning and Employment Council (MPEC), Prime Minister's Office; and Darussalam Enterprise (DARe) have made further assessments to the current business and labour market situation.
3. As a result of these consultations, MOFE is pleased to inform that His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam has consented to the introduction of **additional** measures to achieve the three primary objectives as below:
 - 3.1 Firstly, to support the private sector that has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak;
 - 3.2 Secondly, to ensure continuous job creation;
 - 3.3 Thirdly, to ensure job security and protect the welfare of local employees in the private sector.



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4. FIRST; Supporting life-long learning initiatives, especially in the upskilling and reskilling of local employees to support private sector growth.

As business activities are currently affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, companies are invited to take up the opportunity to improve their employees' skills including upskilling and reskilling of their local employees. As such, MPEC has provided training opportunities such as online and hands-on trainings, to build capacity building for the current needs but as well as for the future.

These will include cooperating with IT companies to provide programmes in the areas of programming, data analytics and others that will assist the country in its efforts towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution; provide trainings such as reskilling and upskilling of local tour guides registered with the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism; and provide trainings for those interested in the food & beverages sector.

Those interested can submit their application to the MPEC Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office via email: mpec@jpm.gov.bn.

At the same time, we are pleased to announce that Darussalam Enterprise (DARe) will be providing a fully sponsored online Industry Business Academy trainings starting today, Saturday, 28th March 2020 through the Coursera that can be accessed through their website www.dare.gov.bn. Coursera is a platform run by international business experts that also provides courses in top universities around the world. This platform will provide more than 300 courses related to business such as marketing and sales, accounting and finance, innovations and designs, as well as data analytics.



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5. SECOND, Assisting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to participate in e-commerce platform for more effective business matching.

As shared during the Press Conference on 21st March 2020, this initiative is to provide assistance to MSMEs to participate in e-commerce platform for a more effective business matching for their business' sustainability and competitiveness.

We are pleased to announce that the e-commerce platform will be opened to businesses starting on Wednesday, 1st April 2020 and can be accessed through the websites www.dare.gov.bn and www.aiti.gov.bn. This platform aims to provide an alternative for businesses to market their products online. This includes online payment and logistic providers for the shipment/delivery of goods.

Businesses can contact DARE through email info@dare.gov.bn or by calling 8363442 (during working hours) for further information.

6. THIRD; Providing Co-Matching Grant for e-commerce and logistic services.

Darussalam Enterprise (DARE) will also increase the grant amount to further expand the Co-Matching Grants initiative. This is to assist businesses to improve and better prepare for current and future situations.

7. FOURTH; Providing 25% salary subsidy to local employees of MSMEs with total employees less than 100, for a period of three (3) months.

This subsidy is intended to ease the burden of MSMEs especially for their local employees who are receiving a monthly salary of BND 1,500 and below; who contribute to the Tabung Amanah Pekerja (TAP). In line with the Government's objective to provide assistance to those who are genuinely in



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need, companies are advised to submit the completed application form via email to payments@tap.com.bn. The form can be downloaded via the website www.tap.com.bn from 1st April 2020.

8. FIFTH; Removal of rental charges for tamu, pasar and gerai (wet and dry markets) that are provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs for a period of six (6) months.

Starting March 2020, rental charges for tamu, pasar and gerai provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs will be temporarily waived with the aim to help ease the financial burden of those affected.

9. SIXTH; Extending I-Ready Apprenticeship Programme to Diploma Level 5 (HND or Advanced Diploma) and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET).

Currently, the I-Ready Apprenticeship programme is opened only to applicants with Bachelor degrees or higher. However, this programme is now extended to two additional levels; the diploma level based on Brunei Darussalam Qualification Framework (BDQF) Level 5 (HND or Advanced Diploma) or its equivalent; and the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) level, BDQF Level 2 – 4.

This apprenticeship programme for all three levels of education as just stated above, is now run for a period of 18 months only, as compared to the current 36-months arrangement. This change will give opportunities to more qualified locals to participate in the programme.



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During the course of the programme, the Government will finance the apprentices' allowances for a period of 18 months at the prescribed rate of BND 800 per month for Bachelor's degree and higher (the same amount paid currently), BND 600 per month for Diploma (Level 5) and BND 400 per month for Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET). In addition, the Government will also contribute in the TAP and SCP, on behalf of the companies.

Private companies intending to participate in the I-Ready Apprenticeship programme for the stated three levels of education are required to provide monthly top-ups with a minimum rate of BND 400 for Bachelor's degree participants and BND 300 for the Diploma (Level 5) and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) starting from the 11th month of the apprenticeship period in their respective companies.

10. SEVENTH; Job Centre Brunei (JCB) Portal Upgrade.

As a means to improve the effectiveness of advertised job vacancies, Job Centre Brunei (JCB) Portal will now include new functions, including:

- i. Automatic Job Matching for local jobseekers where they can receive notifications of new vacancies advertised according to their suitability and interests;
- ii. Local jobseekers will receive the status of their applications in real-time, where they can follow up with the respective companies;



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- iii. Provide reports on the compatibility of local jobseekers based on the criteria of the vacancies where this can be done automatically using algorithms and probability scanning that can be used by the Government and the private sector; and
- iv. Companies would be able to get a more comprehensive Talent Profile.

All facilities provided through this portal will be free-of-charge. Local companies and jobseekers who are not yet registered with Job Centre Brunei (JCB) are encouraged to do so via the website www.jobcentrebrunei.gov.bn.

- 11. EIGHTH; MPEC will continue to work together with companies to learn more about their projected manpower needs.

This is specifically for identified businesses that would require additional manpower such as e-commerce or online businesses, security services, cleaning services, manufacturing and delivery.

JCB will continue to assist in facilitating filling of the required manpower by providing services such as sending SMS to local jobseekers, providing talent pool for companies to choose from as well as to provide virtual platforms for conducting interviews. As a result of this initiative, several companies have shown considerable interest in providing job opportunities to the locals.

For more information, interested companies and local jobseekers can contact JCB via:

Telephone: +673 8239933
Email: jobcentrebrunei@jpm.gov.bn
Website: www.jobcentrebrunei.gov.bn



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12. Lastly, as stated during past Press Conferences, in addressing the challenges faced by companies at this time, the private sector is encouraged to play their role in assisting the Government in overcoming the challenges and to achieve the intended objectives.
13. I also urge and remind companies to not terminate the employment of their local employees and not delay their salary payment. Local jobseekers are also encouraged to seize any job opportunities that is available.
14. The initiatives stated above, with the exception of the removal of rental charges for tamu, pasar and gerai as provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs, will take effect from Wednesday, 1st April 2020.

Thank you.