

PRESS STATEMENT BY YB CHONG ENG

**STATE ASSEMBLYPERSON FOR PADANG LALANG IN PENANG
STATE EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR WOMEN & FAMILY DEVELOPMENT,
GENDER INCLUSIVENESS & RELIGIONS OTHER THAN ISLAM**

**“THE PENANG STATE AGREES WITH FEDERAL’S DECISION PROVIDED THE
HOUSE OF WORSHIP’S COMMITTEES ARE CONFIDENT”**

DATE: 16 JUNE 2020

The Penang State EXCO for Religions Other Than Islam, YB Chong Eng stated today that the Penang state government agrees with the Federal Government’s decision to re-open non-Islamic houses of worship from today onwards, provided that the respective committees are confident in abiding by the standard operating procedures (SOP) given.

Senior Minister Ismail Sabri announced on 15th June that all 5,230 non-Muslim houses of worship in the country will be allowed to re-open and operate as usual, however, they are still subjected to the decision of the respective state governments.

After further discussion, the Penang State Government has agreed to allow the re-opening of all non-Muslim houses of worship in Penang. Those who have submitted their application through the Penang government previously can also re-open from today, 16th June 2020 onwards. However, they must adhere to the following SOPs strictly:

1. Only one-third of the original capacity is allowed in each house of worship at any one time and maintain social distancing.
2. The distance of 1-meter marking is clearly marked in each house of worship.
3. Children under 12 years old are not allowed but worshippers who are above 70 years old and healthy are allowed.
4. Those with symptoms (eg: flu, body temperature exceeding 37.5°C, coughing, difficulty in breathing) are strictly prohibited from attending.
5. High-risk groups (patients with diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, cancer, etc.) are discouraged from visiting the house of worship.
6. Measure body temperature, wash hands frequently and wear masks. We also seek your cooperation to prepare hand sanitiser stations throughout your premise.

7. Personal data of each attendee must be recorded. It is recommended to download and use PGCARE APP (to ease contact tracing and notify any affected parties).
8. Religious processions, dinners and large gatherings are still prohibited.
9. The respective managements or committees must ensure to the best of their ability, that all attendees adhere to the SOPs strictly.

Chong Eng emphasized that each house of worship must ensure that they can fully-abide by the SOPs before deciding to re-open. "As we are now in the recovery phase of the movement control order (RMCO), we need the cooperation of all religious leaders and religious organisations to assess and minimize potential risk, to ensure a safe space for worshippers to perform their prayers. Throughout this period, we have received many inquiries from religious organizations in regards to the SOPs for the reopening of the houses of worship. We understand that a unified set of SOPs cannot completely address all doubts, therefore, the Penang state government will also consult representatives of various religious organizations to improve existing SOPs according to the situations"

YB Chong Eng said that Penang has remained a zero confirmed case for more than a month. She thanked everyone, especially the religious groups in Penang, for their cooperation throughout the MCO. Many have launched online worship in response to the call of a new normal by the Chief Minister. Simultaneously, she understood that although many houses of worship face insufficient income and increase in expenditure during this period, they still actively carry out charity activities in helping to fight the pandemic. This act is commendable and has become a role model for society.

If you have any further inquiries about the SOPs for houses of worship in Penang, you may contact Mr. Paul Au at 04-650 5143 or 010-375 9964.

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