

Ashura going virtual this year

National Medical Taskforce outlines precautionary measures to be followed during Ashura season

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This year's Ashura commemoration rituals will be a virtual ceremony, amid the deadly pandemic, without the usual parades and passion plays re-enacting the martyrdom, it has emerged.

The day of Ashura, which falls on the 10th of Muharram, is a solemn day of mourning the martyrdom of Hussein in 680 AD at Karbala in modern-day Iraq.

The day is usually marked with mourning rituals, and passion plays re-enacting the martyrdom of Hussein, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

However, the deadly pandemic has derailed all those plans this year with the Kingdom facing the risk of a second wave of the outbreak as global nations continue to ease restrictions.

Top Supreme Council of Health and Jaffari Endowments officials thus concluded that "continued commitment" to preventive measures and restriction on gatherings are crucial in fighting the virus effectively.

The SCH chief stressed that the regional and global health conditions are still at stake, citing the World Health Organi-



Officials during a meeting held yesterday to outline the precautionary measure for the upcoming Ashura

sation's warning of the second wave of COVID-19.

The decisions came during a meeting held yesterday to discuss the precautionary measures to be implemented during the Ashura Commemoration season.

Board of Directors of the Jaffari Endowments Council, led by Yussef bin Saleh Al-Saleh, and President of the Supreme Council of Health (SCH) and Chairman of the National Medical Taskforce to Combat Coronavirus (COVID-19), Lieutenant-General Dr Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, took part in the meeting.

The meeting viewed that Bahrain is at the risk of a second wave of COVID-19, which could be avoided only through "aware-

ness" and "continued commitment" to preventive measures as suggested by the National Medical Taskforce.

On this note, the SCH chief stressed that the Ashura commemoration should be "restricted to remote broadcasting and that only the mourning staff should be present at the Ma'atam (Community Centre)."

Mourning staff, SCH Chief said, should adhere strictly to all coronavirus preventive measures including wearing masks and practising social distancing norms. Community centres are also required to record the names of the participating staff and ensure their safety by conducting pre-emptive checkups in coordination with the Minis-

try of Health.

20 minute broadcast

The National Medical Taskforce officials said that live broadcast sessions should not exceed 20 minutes to protect the safety of those present at the community centres.

The meeting also called on placing Ashura images and manifestations only at the permissible space and within the vicinity of the community centres.

The Jaffari Endowments Council stressed the need for banning gatherings outside community centres and on public roads, and the closure of women community centres and home Majlises while suggesting to commemorate Ashura at home with family members or through social media platforms.

Among other guidelines, the organisers of the community centres are urged to operate loudspeakers only during the live transmission of Ashura rituals, which should not exceed 20 minutes.

Based on studies showing gatherings as one of the causes of the COVID-19 outbreak, the meeting also suggested "home delivery of food" as an alternative to community banquets.



Key points

- ◆ Ashura commemoration will be a virtual ceremony, this year.
- ◆ Bans gatherings outside community centres and on public roads
- ◆ Bans women community centres, home Majlises
- ◆ Live transmission of rituals should not exceed 20 minutes
- ◆ Only mourning staff are allowed at the Ma'atam
- ◆ Staff should wear face masks, practise social distancing, and conduct virus tests
- ◆ Bans processions, banquets
- ◆ Encourages home delivery of food

The National Medical Taskforce said it's betting on the "awareness" and "commitment" of the Bahraini people in preventing the spread of the virus in the Kingdom. Yussef bin Saleh Al-Saleh pointed out that the current circumstances require more cohesion and solidarity, praying to Allah the Almighty to lift the pandemic and to protect the Kingdom of Bahrain from all evil.



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