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## Guidelines

# Independence Day Celebrations Programme, 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020

### Objective

To provide health guidelines for mitigation of spread of person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 during events conducted in relation to Independence Day celebrations.

### Rationale

COVID-19 pandemic has struck the world due to rapid human-to-human transmission. Independence Day of Pakistan is celebrated every year on 14<sup>th</sup> August. The events conducted in relation to Independence Day celebrations during Covid-19 can amplify the transmission of the virus and potentially disrupt the country's response capacity. Preventive measures play an important role in limiting the spread of a disease and can help reducing the infection transmission and unnecessary burden on health care facilities.

### Instructions

During Covid-19 pandemic, taking extra precautions are important when participating in Independence Day activities. The risk of COVID-19 spreading at events and gatherings increase as follows:

- **Lowest risk:** Virtual-only activities, events, and gatherings.
- **More risk:** Smaller outdoor and in-person gatherings in which individuals from different households remain spaced at least 6 feet apart, wear cloth face coverings, do not share objects, and come from the same local area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).
- **Higher risk:** Medium-sized in-person gatherings that are adapted to allow individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and with attendees coming from outside the local area.
- **Highest risk:** Large in-person gatherings where it is difficult for individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and attendees travel from outside the local area.

Following should be considered for enhancing protection of individuals and communities and preventing the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

### Maintaining Healthy Environments

The authorities should consider implementing strategies to maintain healthy environments during independent day celebrations program/event

- Hand sanitizers should be made available at the entry and exit points of the events/gathering.
- All common-touch surfaces must be frequently cleaned and sanitized with disinfectant that kill viruses, including coronaviruses. Washrooms must also have frequent cleaning and sanitization.



- Shared equipment (e.g., microphones, speakers) must be cleaned/disinfected frequently and after each use. If shared equipment cannot be cleaned/disinfected between attendees, then it cannot be used. Consider pre-recording speeches to alleviate the need for people to share a microphone.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children. Ensure adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent attendees or themselves from inhaling toxic vapors
- Use disposable gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash.
- After using disposable gloves, throw them out in a lined trash can.
  - Do not disinfect or reuse the gloves.
  - Wash hands after removing gloves.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air. Limit attendance or seating capacity to allow for social distancing, or host smaller events in larger rooms.
- Use multiple entrances and exits and discourage crowded waiting areas.
- Block off rows or sections of seating in order to space people at least 6 feet apart.
- Encourage people to stay at least 6 feet apart by providing signs or other visual cues such as tape or chalk marks.
- Prioritize outdoor activities where social distancing can be maintained as much as possible.
- Change seating layout or availability of seating so that people can remain at least 6 feet apart

### Flag Hoisting Ceremonies

- The flag-hoisting ceremony should be restricted to the Government officials in their designated Government vicinities. The participation of community members, older individuals, students and children should not be encouraged in these events.
- Thermal scanning of all the participants attending the event should be carried out
- The participants should strictly follow the healthy behaviors to prevent the spread of disease.
  - Practice social distancing and maintain a minimum 6 feet distance
  - All persons should use face masks
  - The rope of the flag and other frequently touched surfaces should be sanitized
  - The government official hoisting the flag should wear gloves and immediately discard them after hoisting

*Note: The above recommendations are being regularly reviewed by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and will be updated based on the international & national recommendations and best practices.*

*The Ministry acknowledges the contribution of Ms Javeria Yousaf and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.*

### References

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html>
2. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/10665-332235>

**For more information, please contact:**

HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH, PM National Health Complex, Islamabad

<http://covid.gov.pk/>

<http://nhsrcofficial.gov.pk/>

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