

PM: Important for S'pore, M'sia to have close relationship

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As close, immediate neighbours, the deep relationship between Malaysia and Singapore is of immense importance to both sides, said Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

“More active multi-level engagements and a much stronger cooperation are certainly the way forward for our two countries,” said Ismail Sabri at a joint press conference with his Singapore counterpart Lee Hsien Loong in Singapore today.

“This is crucial also for our cooperation in undertaking effective and meaningful (economic) recovery efforts so that our countries will come out stronger following the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.”

The Malaysian premier is on an official visit to Singapore at the invitation of Lee.

He noted that today both countries marked another significant milestone in their

cooperation with the reopening of their borders through the launching of the land Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL-Land).

Ismail Sabri had this morning crossed Tambak Johor or the Johor Causeway and was received by the Singapore prime minister at the Woodlands Checkpoint.

“This in itself is very significant as we have also launched VTL-Air. This is part of the gradual reopening of our borders to facilitate travel between the two countries,” the Malaysian premier said.

Ismail Sabri said he had also discussed with his counterpart additional measures that both will undertake with regard to cross-border travels between Malaysia and Singapore.

Both of them have agreed to include all categories of travellers for the VTL-Land, subject to the health requirements determined by both countries.

They also agreed to expand the VTL-land to include additional bus service routes through the Second Link, trains operated by Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM), and gradually to include personal vehicles such as motorbikes and cars.

“We acknowledge that the reopening of borders is important to reactivate cross-

border social and economic activities that will benefit the people of both countries,” Ismail Sabri said. “We hope that by doing this, it would provide the opportunity for more people on both sides of the Causeway who have been away from their families due to the Covid-19 pandemic, to be reunited with their loved ones - which we know the people of both Malaysia and Singapore have long awaited for.”

Expanding cross-border movement by air to Penang, Langkawi, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu

Both of them also discussed the cross-border travel by air between Singapore and destinations in Malaysia like Penang, Langkawi, Kuching, and Kota Kinabalu.

“Both of us decided that our officials should start to draw up measures for this purpose,” he said.

Ismail Sabri and Lee had a four-eyed meeting at the Istana in the afternoon.

During the discussion, Ismail Sabri said they also agreed on the need to resume work on their existing bilateral mechanisms.

“This includes the 10th Annual Leaders’ Retreat, which we have not been able to

convene during the past two years due to the pandemic,” he added. “Insya Allah, we will have our Leaders’ Retreat in the first quarter of next year and I look forward to coming back to Singapore.”

Ismail Sabri revealed that he and Lee also agreed that the work on other mechanisms at the ministerial and official levels should resume as soon as possible.

“This is important to ensure that our multifaceted cooperation and outstanding issues are kept on the right track with a positive momentum going forward. Subsequently, PM Lee and I will discuss the progress of these bilateral mechanisms at our Leaders’ Retreat,” he said.

Both leaders also discussed the situation in Myanmar.

“We agreed that it is crucial for Asean to continue playing a positive and constructive role in facilitating a durable and peaceful solution in the interest of Myanmar and the larger interest of the Asean Community.

“We share the same view that it is crucial for Myanmar to cooperate in the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, and the necessity to preserve the credibility and integrity of Asean.

“We look forward to the return to democracy in Myanmar and the participation of Myanmar at the highest level at future summits,” Ismail Sabri said.

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