

PM's visit to Thailand expected to bring good news on land border reopening

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Bernama

Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob's official visit to Thailand this week is expected to bring 'good news' on the reopening of Thai-Malaysian land borders.

Malaysian Ambassador to Thailand Jojie Samuel said Ismail Sabri's three-day visit, the first since he was appointed prime minister last August, was at the invitation of Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan o-cha.

This is also the first visit by a Malaysian prime minister to the Kingdom since the start of the global Covid-19 pandemic two years ago.

Jojie said matters to be discussed during the visit included the reopening of land borders, bilateral cooperation and exploring trade and investment opportunities post Covid-19.

“There will be some good news (on the reopening of land borders). There are a few proposals on the table.

“Senior officials and a technical committee will discuss the details on the reopening,” he told Bernama after attending the Kelab Malaysia of Thailand (KMT)’s Chinese New Year dinner.

Jojie added that there would be a discussion on recognising vaccination certificates from both countries.

Ismail Sabri is scheduled to go on a working visit to Bangkok from Feb 24 to 26.

Quarantine free programme

Last week, Thai Foreign Affairs Ministry’s deputy spokesperson Natapanu Nopakun said Thailand was planning to reopen the Thai-Malaysia border in March to boost tourist arrivals, as Malaysian tourists have been the largest group of visitors to the kingdom before the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said the Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) and Tourism Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) has been ordered to prepare and outline the pandemic mitigation measures for the reopening of the southern border

provinces in the checkpoints of Songkhla, Narathiwat, Yala and Satun.

Natapanu said tourists from neighbouring Malaysia will enter Thailand via a quarantine-free 'Test & Go' programme. However, travellers need to pass two RT-PCR Covid-19 tests on Day 1 upon arrival and the second on Day 5.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Thailand recorded nearly 40 million visitors including 4.1 million Malaysian tourists in 2019.

On KMT's Chinese New Year's Dinner, KMT president Bobby Tai said it was held to give fellow Malaysians a sense of 'home festivities', especially for those who cannot fly home due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

About 80 fellow Malaysians attended the dinner in compliance with Covid-19 standard operating procedures set by the government.

KMT was established by a group of Malaysians some 31 years ago to preserve the Malaysian identity in Thailand and to foster fellowships for Malaysian families living in Thailand.

- Bernama

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