

'Masking up is here to stay'

The Star - 3/10/2021 pg. 4

Unlikely that mandate will be removed, says PM

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS
and JOSEPH KAOS Jr
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: With Malaysia accepting that Covid-19 is going to be endemic, Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob envisions that mask wearing in the country is here to stay.

The Prime Minister said it was unlikely that the country would remove the mask-wearing mandate; face coverings would be the Malaysian norm.

"I feel that we will come to a point where mask-wearing becomes a culture here. Malaysians will develop a norm in terms of wearing face masks, just like people in Japan, South Korea and China.

"This is because Covid-19 will remain among us, like dengue and other diseases. So, to protect ourselves from Covid-19, we will just continue to wear masks. It is going to be part of our culture," said Ismail Sabri when asked if Malaysia intends to lift the mandate on mask-wearing.

Since Aug 1 last year, the government has made it compulsory for people in Malaysia to wear masks when in public, with those flouting the mandatory ruling liable to a fine of up to RM1,000 under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act.

Ismail Sabri said Malaysians would not find it difficult to adapt to



At the helm: Ismail Sabri discussing the 12th Malaysia Plan with senior editors from the media at Parliament's tower block in Kuala Lumpur. — Bernama

the mask-wearing culture as he felt the people in the country were generally law-abiding.

"From my observation, after we made mask-wearing compulsory, most Malaysians obeyed the rule. You don't see people walking out in public without masks on.

"This is our new culture. A culture that is health-conscious.

"If you ask me, having this culture is one of the positive things that has come out of this pandemic," he said.

For the most part of the pandemic, Ismail Sabri was the senior minister in charge of Covid-19 standard operating procedure.

Another noticeable trait of Malaysians, he added, was discipline.

"I realise that Malaysians are a disciplined lot. It is not easy to tell people that they cannot leave their homes for two or three months.

"But we did it. And when Malaysians spotted someone flouting the SOP, the people were not afraid to point it out.

"You see someone not wearing masks at a supermarket, you tell them they are defying the rules.

"As you can see, Malaysians are very conscious about following the law. At the same time, they also care about public health," he said.



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