

'RAMADAN BAZAARS ALLOWED THIS YEAR'

No restrictions on business activities but SOP may be refined, says Ismail Sabri

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the annual Ramadan bazaars, a favourite of Malaysians during the fasting month, will be allowed to operate this year despite the Covid-19 Omicron wave battering the country.

He also reiterated his previous stance that the government would not be restricting business and trade activities, including Ramadan bazaars.

He said although it would be about two months until the fasting month arrives, he believed that the decision would stand.

"We have said that we will not close businesses, that is the (government's) decision.

"Be it for Hari Raya, fasting month, Ramadan bazaars or even *pasar malam*, it will be allowed to go on," he said.

However, he noted that there could be a change in the standard operating procedures (SOP) governing the bazaars.

He said although no discussions had been held on possible

changes to the SOP, the Health Ministry would be making a decision on it when the time came.

"The most important thing is the safety of our people," he told reporters after attending the Keluarga Malaysia Chinese New Year Luncheon at the Hilton KL here organised by Asean Retail Chains and Francaise Federation.

Present were China's Ambassador to Malaysia Ouyang Yujing and Senior International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali.

On another matter, the prime minister brushed off claims that the country could achieve political stability without Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN).

He said this was evident as Malaysia was currently led by a prime minister from Umno.

He said the country witnessed history as a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the government and the opposition on Sept 13 last year to provide stability.

"Umno is in the government now, and I am a prime minister from Umno. This matter is supported by other parties.

"The government that we have now is stable. For the first time in history, an MoU was signed between the government and the opposition.

"Hence the issue (of instability) does not arise," he said.

Ismail Sabri was commenting on a statement on Saturday by Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Md Noor, who is also Pas election director, who claimed that political stabil-

ity could be achieved if Umno and BN were stopped from leading the country.

Meanwhile, the prime minister said a visit to the Middle East was in the works to boost Malaysian trade and investment.

He said he was focusing on visits to Asian countries, with Brunei slated for today before going to Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Ismail Sabri's official visit to Bandar Seri Begawan will be his first since assuming office on Aug 21 last year.

He will have an audience with Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, where both leaders will take stock of the progress of the ongoing cooperation and further enhance the post Covid-19 cooperation of both countries.

This, among others, would include discussions on the proposed establishment of the Vaccinated Travel Lane arrangement by air, cooperation on health diplomacy, and promotion of closer economic cooperation.

The meeting will be followed by an official luncheon hosted by the Sultan. The prime minister is also scheduled to meet the Malaysian diaspora in Bandar Seri Begawan.

The prime minister will be accompanied by his wife, Datin Sri Muhaini Zainal Abidin, as well as by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Abdullah, Senior Works Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, Federal Territories Works Minister Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim and senior government officials.