

PM: WE HOPE TO SETTLE VTL BEFORE RAYA

Health Ministry finding best way to ease border crossing, says PM

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MALAYSIA hopes to resolve issues on the implementation of the Land Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL-Land) between the country with Thailand, Singapore and Brunei before Hari Raya in May.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the Health Ministry was looking into several recommendations proposed by the cabinet to ease cross-border movements by land between the four countries.

Apart from accelerating the recovery process of the tourism sector, Ismail Sabri said VTL-Land would also help boost bilateral trade and allow family members in Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Brunei to get together.

"The Health Ministry is finding the best approach to ease the implementation of VTL-Land, not only between Malaysia and Thailand, but also with Singapore and Brunei.

"For example, there are almost 200,000 people commuting between Malaysia and Singapore.

"As for (the VTL-Land between Malaysia and) Brunei, people from Limbang have to pass through Brunei to travel to Lawas in Sarawak.

"I hope issues revolving the VTL-Land between Malaysia and Thailand, Singapore and Brunei can be resolved immediately, since it is not only important to boost tourism and stimulate the economy, but as equally important to reunite families," he said.

Ismail Sabri said this to the Malaysian media at Krung Thep Maha Nakhon (Bangkok) in conjunction with his two-day working visit to Thailand.

"We also want to resolve all issues related to the implementation of VTL-Land immediately to enable all people (Malaysians working and residing in Thailand, Singapore and Brunei) to return home for the Hari Raya celebration," he said.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob speaking at a press conference at the end of his official visit to Thailand in Bangkok yesterday. With him are Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Abdullah and Malaysian ambassador to Thailand Datuk Jojie Samuel (left). **BERNAMA PIC**

It was reported that Malaysia and Thailand are targeting to increase bilateral trade to US\$30 billion (RM126 billion) by 2025 as they prepare to resume cross border movement for vaccinated travellers between both countries through the implementation of VTL by land, sea and air.

Both countries registered US\$23.64 billion in bilateral trade last year, with almost 50 per cent or US\$10.5 billion contributed by trade activities along the Malaysia-Thailand border.

"The reopening of border (cross border movement) is important for Malaysia and Thailand," he said.

Asked about a specific timeline on the implementation of the VTL by land, air and sea between Malaysia and Thailand, Ismail Sabri said: "Soon".

The implementation of VTL-Land, said Ismail Sabri, was among several important matters discussed during his meeting with his Thai counterpart Prayuth Chan o Cha at the Government House in Bangkok yesterday.

To facilitate and accommodate the implementation of Malaysia-Thailand VTL-Land, Ismail Sabri said both countries had agreed to recognise each other's Covid-19 digital vaccination certificates.

"This will be supported with the integration of the Malaysia's MySejahtera and Thailand's Mor Prom application for travel between the two countries," he said.

Other matters discussed during his meeting included a cooperation on the development of Covid-19 vaccines between Malaysia and Thailand.

To enhance land connectivity between the two neighbouring nations, both leaders also agreed to expedite the construction of roads linking the Immigration, Customs, Quarantine and Security (ICQS) Complex in Bukit Kayu Hitam, Kedah, and the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) Complex in Sadao, Songkhla.

Other new opportunities explored by the two leaders included carrying out a survey for the construction of a high-speed rail (HSR) project linking Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok.

"Malaysia and Thailand have agreed to do a feasibility study on the development of such a project in which we will instruct the respective ministries and departments to take immediate actions," he said.