

# Land VTL to open by May

## PM: MOH will study proposals for travel to neighbouring countries

**BANGKOK:** Malaysia can implement the land Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL) by May, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

He said the Health Ministry (MOH) would be studying several proposals on Malaysia's VTL with neighbouring countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Brunei.

"The air VTL is easier to implement compared to land VTL as travellers arriving at airports can be quickly screened.

"However, we need to avoid creating long queues of vehicles when conducting screenings at land entry points.

"We have given several proposals to the MOH to find the best way to facilitate and expedite the implementation of the land VTL. This matter can be settled before Hari Raya," he said.

Ismail Sabri said the land VTL, particularly between Thailand and Malaysia, was important because it not only involved tourism but also bilateral trade.

Border trade between both countries accounted for half of the Malaysia-Thailand trade, totalling US\$10.5bil (about RM44.1bil).

He said Malaysia's land VTL with Singapore and Brunei was also important for the cross-border movement of people.

"Almost 200,000 Malaysian workers commute between Malaysia and Singapore.

"At the Malaysia-Brunei border, those in Limbang and Lawas need to go through Brunei. Until today, they could not cross the border yet," he said.

Ismail Sabri met with his Thai counterpart Prayut Chan-o-cha on Friday.

Malaysia and Thailand have agreed in principle to implement the air, land and sea VTL to facilitate the movement of people between both countries.

Ismail Sabri also said that Malaysia and Thailand had agreed to recognise their respective vaccination certificates - MySejahtera



**Strengthening ties:** Ismail Sabri says the land VTL is important because it not only involves tourism but also bilateral trade. — Bernama

(Malaysia) and Mor Prom (Thailand).

On another matter, he said Malaysia would use the national language at official functions, including at international meetings, as part of efforts to strengthen Bahasa Malaysia.

"If a country uses its (own) language, we use Bahasa Melayu. If the country uses English (as official language), we use either English or our own language (Bahasa Melayu)," he said.

Ismail Sabri said he used Bahasa Malaysia when holding bilateral meetings and joint press conferences during his official visits to Brunei, Cambodia and Thailand.

"It is time for us to be proud of Bahasa Melayu, which is our national language.

"So, there is no reason for us to feel awkward and embarrassed to speak Bahasa Melayu overseas as

other people are proud of using their own languages," he told Malaysian journalists here at the end of his three-day official visit to Thailand yesterday.

Ismail Sabri, reported Bernama, had used Bahasa Malaysia when holding talks, restricted meetings and joint press conferences with Prayut.

He noted that Asean has the most number of people using Bahasa Malaysia and he did not rule out the possibility that it could one day become an Asean language.

Later in Kuching last night, Ismail Sabri said the Langkawi International Travel Bubble (LITB) has brought in 5,686 foreign tourists since it was introduced last November.

He said the bubble had generated over RM28mil in revenue to Langkawi's economy.

"Since its introduction, no Covid-19 clusters have resulted from the LITB travellers.

"Only 1% were found to be positive in Categories One and Two during screening at KLIA and Langkawi," he said when launching the Keluarga Malaysia Citrawarna programme at the Kuching Waterfront.

Also present were Sarawak Governor Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud and Chief Minister Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg.

Ismail Sabri said the LITB was a pilot test on the readiness of the tourism industry and relevant government agencies for the new normal.

"Good feedback from those involved in the LITB gives the government confidence to continue implementing it until the nation's borders reopen fully," he said.