

QUASHING RUMOURS

NO MCO FOR RAYA, SAYS ISMAIL SABRI

No need for travel curbs as most people have been vaccinated, says PM

ADIB POVERA
PUTRAJAYA
adibpovera@nst.com.my

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob yesterday dismissed rumours on social media that there would be another Movement Control Order, saying the government would no longer resort to massive lockdowns to control the spread of Covid-19.

In his New Year speech to Prime Minister's Department staff here, Ismail Sabri said the government was cautious about reopening the country's borders, especially to people from countries battling a surge in Covid-19 cases.

"I am aware there are rumours on social media that people will not be able to return to their

hometowns for Hari Raya and that businesses would be instructed to close.

"This is why I announced that we will remain open and that we will not close.

"In fact, I had announced two days ago that the government would not bring back the MCO and that restrictions on movement between states or districts were a thing of the past.

"Since the majority of the population have completed at least two doses of the (primary) vaccination and also received their Covid-19 booster jabs, there is no need for the government to close the economic sector and restrict the movement of people," said Ismail Sabri, adding that the government's focus was not only to control the spread of Covid-19 but



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri delivering his speech to Prime Minister's Department staff in Putrajaya yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

also post-pandemic economic recovery.

On the reopening of the country's borders, he said the government remained cautious on the matter since there were countries still registering a high number of daily Covid-19 cases.

He said the Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL) with Singapore had been implemented, and the government was planning similar schemes with Indonesia and Thailand.

"I had gone to Indonesia to start

the VTL between Malaysia and Indonesia, and I was also supposed to visit Thailand for the VTL between Malaysia and Thailand.

"However, due to the surge in cases in other countries, overseas trips have been postponed," he said.

Ismail Sabri also said Malaysia was considering emulating other countries to ease the standard operating procedures for foreign tourists.

"We may consider doing the

same since completing primary vaccinations coupled with booster shot should be enough (to control the spread of the virus).

"However, this will depend on the approval from the Health Ministry.

"If we are still rigid (on Covid-19 rules), it will affect the tourism industry in the country," he said.

Page 1 pic: Visitors taking shots with CNY decorations put up at the Si Thian Kong temple in Kuala Pilah, Negri Sembilan.