

# PM: Govt's priority is the safety of Malaysians in Ukraine

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by AZREEN HANI

**THE** government's priority is to ensure the safety of 11 Malaysian nationals in Ukraine, Prime Minister (PM) Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said.

"The government is saddened by the developments taking place in Ukraine. The government's priority at this time is to ensure that Malaysian families in Ukraine are safe," he said in a statement yesterday.

"The Malaysian Embassy in Kiev is currently working to provide protection and a safe haven for Malaysians before they can return to Malaysia," he added.

According to the PM, there are 23 Malaysian citizens registered with the Malaysian Embassy in Kiev, 12 have returned home while 11 are still in the country.

"Malaysia hopes that the best possible peaceful settlement between Ukraine and Russia can be reached soon, and subsequently successfully resolve the conflict," he said.

Various media reported that Ukraine has announced the closure of its airspace for



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civilian use yesterday due to "high risk" to civil aviation.

It is learnt that the evacuation plan for Malaysians is to travel via road to Poland that may take about 10 hours covering 782km.

It is understood that the Malaysian Embassy in Kyiv is in touch with its counterpart in Warsaw and has asked them to facilitate at the border crossing, according to *Bernama*.

Meanwhile, *AFP* reported that 18 people died in an air strike on a military base

near Ukraine's Black Sea port city of Odessa yesterday.

"Eighteen died — eight men and 10 women. At the moment, we are still digging through the rubble," the Odessa regional administration said in a statement.

The attack came on the first day of an invasion of Ukraine that President Vladimir Putin launched after sparring for weeks with the West about NATO's presence in eastern Europe.