

No bias against foreign tourists entering Malaysia

BY MUHAMMAD YUSRY
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia will not discriminate against foreign tourists entering the country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

However, he assured the public that the government's priority was to protect the people's health.

Speaking after the weekly Cabinet meeting yesterday, he said the government was well aware of the people's concerns and fears of experiencing another Covid-19 wave.

"The Cabinet agreed that the economy and tourism sector should take a backseat to public health. Our borders will be tightened. The Immigration Department has been tasked to check foreign tourists at our airports, including travellers from countries that have a high number of Covid-19 cases such as the US

> Government's priority is to protect people's health amid concerns of another Covid-19 wave, says prime minister

and China.

"We know travelers carrying the virus can come from anywhere around the world. We are acting to save our people. We don't want to be hasty."

Anwar said last month alone, 53,000 visitors from China arrived in Malaysia and despite the number, there was no spike in Covid-19 cases.

He said for the whole of last year, Malaysia recorded 336,000 visitors from China.

Anwar also called on Malaysians to take the Covid-19 booster vaccine as stocks are available.

"Only 49% of Malaysians have

had their booster jabs as of now. The Covid-19 virus is still present, not just in Malaysia but globally.

"We still have around six million booster doses ready for those who want to take them. Journalists should take the lead in getting the booster jabs and this can set an example for others."

Anwar said the onus is on the public to take care of one another and fight the virus together.

On another matter, Anwar added that all government projects in East Malaysia below a RM50 million budget would now be decided by the state governments of Sabah and Sarawak, and need not

go through the federal government.

He said this was the first step in proving that the unity government was serious about committing to the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63).

"This was decided by the Cabinet as many of the projects in Sabah and Sarawak have been delayed due to decision-making bureaucracy by the federal government. There will also be further allocation from the federal government for Sabah and Sarawak, which will be given through the Works Ministry."

Anwar said the Cabinet had discussed at length the need for political will to commit to the provisions of MA63, which were long overdue.

He added that a meeting of the special committee on MA63, chaired by him, would be held in Kuching late next month to iron out matters of contention.