

**COVID-19 CHECKS ON TRAVELLERS TO PROTECT PEOPLE, NOT DISCRIMINATORY – PM ANWAR**

**YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM**

**NEWS**

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PUTRAJAYA, Jan 4 (Bernama) — Malaysia does not discriminate against any country in conducting COVID-19 checks on travellers entering the country as its priority is the people's health and safety, said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The prime minister said the Immigration Department had also tightened controls at the country's entry points following reports of a surge in COVID-19 cases in certain countries.

“As we know the infection rate in China was reported to be high and the COVID-19 fatality rate in the United States and several other countries is also high.

“So we have taken action to save our people. Anyone entering (Malaysia) should be monitored and subjected to the same conditions,” he told a press conference after chairing the Cabinet meeting at Bangunan Perdana Putra here today.

Anwar said the Cabinet was of the view that tourism and economic matters could not take precedence over the country's interests in preventing the spread of any epidemic, including COVID-19.

According to the prime minister, media reports on tourists from China differed from the actual situation which showed that these visitors did not have an effect on the infection rate in the country.

“The Home Minister (Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution) gave the number of visitors from China in 2022 at 336,000, with a big majority being tourists, and this did not give the impact as reported.

“In December travellers from China totalled 53,000 people, so we did not see any jump in infections linked to any country,” he said, adding that this figure did not mean Malaysia had eased the conditions for incoming travellers from any country.

At the end of last year, China reported a spike in COVID-19 cases due to the highly transmissible Omicron variant, prompting several countries to impose curbs on travellers from China to check the spread of the virus.

Meanwhile, Anwar advised people to take the COVID-19 vaccine booster as only 49 per cent of the population had received the first booster shot, leaving an ample supply of six million doses still in stock.

Anwar said a lot of the earlier batches of vaccine had to be disposed of because the booster shot was not as popular as the first and second jabs.

“So I am proposing that journalists who have yet to take the first booster should go for it as, according to the Health Ministry’s projection and study, this spread is uncertain and has not ended.

“If you have taken the first and second doses, go for the booster as the vaccine is still available. So this January all journalists are required to take the booster and set an example for other people to follow,” he said.

Anwar said that he himself had received the booster dose.

“I have taken it (booster). Alhamdulillah. I can show you my MySejahtera,” he said when asked if he had received the booster.

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