

'Economic sector won't be totally closed'

KUALA LUMPUR: The government will not completely close the economic sector even when implementing the Movement Control Order (MCO) as it will adversely affect petty traders, said Senior Minister (Security Cluster) Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

He said the government had decided on this to strike a balance between lives and livelihoods although there were calls from various quarters to shut down the economic sector to curb the spike in Covid-19 cases.

"I have received many WhatsApp messages from petty traders and roadside traders saying it would be tough for them if they are not allowed to operate during the MCO period.

"Some of them said they had depleted their savings to keep their families going. Although we allow the stall operators to do

takeaway service, their income has dropped by 50 per cent," he told reporters after inspecting a roadblock at the Gombak toll plaza here yesterday.



Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob

Ismail Sabri said the government had to protect the economic interests of the poor, especially the Bottom 40 income group. He said while it was crucial to protect the people from Covid-19, the government also had to ensure that they could earn a living.

"We do not want people to die of Covid-19, but we also do not want them to die of starvation or to go without any income to support their families.

"Imagine what would happen if their stalls had to be closed for two weeks, then another two weeks. It will have a big impact as they are living from hand to mouth," he added.

Ismail Sabri said there should be a balance between protecting economic interests and the people's health to ensure that the nation's economic revenue remained stable even as the country was fighting the pandemic.

Nevertheless, he reminded the people to always abide by the standard operating procedures to break the infection chain. **Berna-**

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