

PM hints at border reopening

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS

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Quick chat: Ismail Sabri speaking to Ministers in the Prime Minister's Department (from left) Senator Idris Ahmad, Mustapa, Datuk Dr Abdul Latiff Ahmad and Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili as well as Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali in Putrajaya. — Bernama

PUTRAJAYA: The country's borders look likely to reopen soon, with the Prime Minister saying the Health Ministry's views will be sought to "slightly relax" the standard operating procedure (SOP).

This move would further boost economic growth and recovery, according to Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

He said allowing international tourists to visit Malaysia would also help boost the tourism industry, which had suffered due to the closure of the country's borders.

"We have seen countries relaxing their SOP for international tourists. Maybe this can be considered for Malaysia.

"When the booster jab exercise is completed, maybe we can consider relaxing the SOP a bit.

"However, all this will depend on views from the Health Ministry," he said when addressing a gathering of staff from the Prime Minister's Department (JPM) yesterday.

He acknowledged that the strict policies had its effect, including on the tourism industry, which was now depending on domestic tourists to revive the sector.

"So when more people have received their vaccine booster shots, maybe we can consider relaxing the SOP. If we can reopen our borders, the economy will also improve," he added.

The country's borders have remained closed since March 2020 due to Covid-19 concerns.

On another matter, Ismail Sabri reminded JPM staff that "all eyes are on us", saying that they must have integrity and be honest and efficient in their work since almost all the country's policies were made by the department.

He pointed to the examples of the National Security Council, which deals with security matters, while Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy) Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed is overlooking the implementation of the 12th Malaysia Plan.

“That is why we need to be good at our work – to set a good example to other ministries.

“We must show the people that we work hard for them. We must be honest, trustworthy and perfect in executing our work. “Being the place where almost all the government’s policies are made, all eyes are on JPM,” he said.

Ismail Sabri added that it was important for policies set by the government to be executed quickly and effectively as the people wanted to feel the benefits.

Observing the lack of a push for the Malaysian Family concept by departments and agencies under the JPM, the Prime Minister urged the staff to play their part.

“JPM should be leading in promoting the concept, but I can see a lack of participation among agencies and departments here.

“How can I ask other ministries and agencies to support the Malaysian Family if we, as the host, do not do it? I hope for better cooperation from all of you,” he said.