

## **Cabinet, PM have final say in full reopening of country's borders**

By Audrey Dermawan - February 10, 2022

BUTTERWORTH: Any decision on the full reopening of the country's borders will be discussed by the Cabinet or the Special Committee on Covid-19, chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

Senior Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said the issue (reopening of the country's borders) was not an easy one as it involved numerous ministries and needed to be discussed in Cabinet before a final decision could be made.

He said, among others, it involved his ministry as well as the Health and Finance Ministries.

"What was announced by National Recovery Council (NRC) chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin on Tuesday was merely a proposal for the full reopening of the country's borders as early as March 1.

"It will also be discussed by us (at the Covid-19 Quartet Ministers Meeting) and we welcome it.

"However, the decision cannot be made at the Covid-19 Quartet Ministers Meeting level or even the NRC.

"This matter needs to be brought to the Cabinet or the Special Committee on Covid-19, chaired by the prime minister," he told newsmen here today.

On Tuesday, the NRC had proposed for the full reopening of the country's borders as early as March 1, without the need for mandatory quarantine.

However, Muhyiddin, who chairs the NRC, had said that travellers must undergo a Covid-19 test before their departure and upon arrival in Malaysia, as per the recommendation of the Health Ministry.

He had also said that reopening of borders would support the country's economic recovery process and other industries related to tourism.

However, several lawmakers had claimed that there was confusion and non-agreement between the NRC and the Covid-19 Quartet Ministers Meeting on the full reopening of the country's borders.

To this, Hishammuddin said it was normal for these lawmakers to pit one quarter against another.

"If you want to say there is no communication between the NRC and the Covid-19 Quartet Ministers Meeting, it is not true.

"This is because the members of both the NRC and the Covid-19 Quartet Ministers Meeting are the same people.

"It is just that both the NRC and the Covid-19 Quartet Ministers Meeting have no mandate to make any decision," he added.

Hishammuddin was met after an introduction programme to the Leonardo AW139 helicopters to replace the decommissioned Sikorsky S-61A-4 Nuri fleet at the Butterworth Air Base here.

Present was Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) chief Gen Tan Sri Ackbal Abdul Samad.