

Jan 2022 target to 'visit Malaysia'

PUTRAJAYA: The National Recovery Council (NRC) has proposed that the country's borders be reopened to foreign visitors on Jan 1 next year at the latest in a bid to expedite the country's economic recovery, especially the tourism sector.

NRC chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the Special Committee on Pandemic Management chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob will identify countries with high vaccination rates against Covid-19 and permit its citizens to travel to Malaysia.

He told Bernama this after chairing the fifth NRC meeting yesterday.

He said the decision to open the borders was also prompted by the excellent rate of the national immunisation programme, which saw 95% of the adult population and almost 67.7% of the adolescent population fully vaccinated so far.

Muhyiddin said the country's tourism sector has seen a relatively slow recovery due to the lack of international tourist arrivals, and industry players needed time and resources to resume their businesses.

"Our tourism sector will suffer losses of almost RM90mil if the borders were to remain closed. That is how much revenue the country can generate from the tourism industry," he said.

He said other countries like Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, despite struggling with Covid-19, had already allowed entry to travellers from Malaysia as most of their citizens were fully vaccinated.

"If we compare ourselves with those countries, our vaccination rate is among the highest in the world, and we should also benefit from that by allowing in foreign tourists.

"At the same time, we also have to be vigilant and continue to comply with the standard operating procedures," he said.

Meanwhile, Muhyiddin said Malaysia's decision to forge cooperation with Indonesia to form a travel corridor announced by Ismail Sabri yesterday is good and forward-looking.

He said the leaders of the two countries had considered the current developments, including efforts to control the transmission of Covid-19 in both countries.

Yesterday's NRC meeting kicked off with a briefing from Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah on the latest development of Covid-19 indicators.

"Overall, I am satisfied with the development, especially in terms of the declining trend of daily positive cases, deaths, admission of Categories 3 to 5 to hospitals and the vaccination rate," Muhyiddin said.

The council was also briefed by chief statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin on the performance of economic sectors and sub-sectors.

With the exception of the manufacturing sector, indicators showed that the performance of all other economic sectors in the second quarter of this year was still below the pre-pandemic level.

“We were also informed that the prospect of the country’s economy for the third and fourth quarter of this year will still be quite challenging,” he added.

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