

Vaccination certs, trade and investment among issues to discuss during PM's visit to Vietnam

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Ismail Sabri will also hold engagement sessions with the Malaysian business community and Malaysian families in Vietnam. (File photo by Zahid Izzani Mohd Said/The Edge)

HANOI (March 19): The post-Covid-19 pandemic economic recovery in various sectors including trade, investment and tourism, as well as recognition of vaccination certificates between Malaysia and Vietnam are among the focus of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob's three-day official visit to Vietnam from Sunday (March 20).

Foreign Ministry deputy secretary-general Datuk Amran Mohamed Zin said the Vietnamese authorities had informed that the country recognises Malaysia's vaccination certificate and that Malaysia welcomes the decision as it is one of the aspects of cooperation that Malaysia wants to have within ASEAN and also with ASEAN strategic partners.

"It's just that on the Malaysian side, the recognition of Vietnam's vaccination certificate is still being actively looked into by the relevant ministries, especially MOSTI (the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation).

"Maybe during the visit, the prime minister will make an announcement on the latest development in the recognition of the certificate in line with the reopening of Malaysian borders.

"We will also look into the procedures that need to be set between the two countries to facilitate travelling between Malaysia and Vietnam for all categories of travellers, tourists, business and even students," Amran told a press conference with the Malaysian media here on Saturday.

He said Vietnam already opened its borders on March 15 and the visit would provide an opportunity for the two countries to discuss post-pandemic matters.

He said the number of tourist arrivals from Malaysia to Vietnam was quite high in 2019 as over 600,000 were recorded, while those from Vietnam to Malaysia were just over 400,000.

Trade cooperation between the two countries in 2021 was around US\$16 billion (about RM67.09 billion).

During a joint committee meeting between Malaysia and Vietnam last year, a preliminary agreement was reached for the two countries to achieve a trade value of US\$18 billion by 2025.

"Of course, this matter will be discussed by the prime minister with his Vietnamese counterpart, and we will set the final target during the top-level discussion.

"In terms of investment, Malaysian investors do have relatively huge investment in Vietnam," he said.

Amran said Malaysia is the ninth-largest trading partner for Vietnam, while Vietnam is the 19th largest trading partner for Malaysia globally.

He said the value of Malaysia's investment in Vietnam in 2021 was US\$12.81 billion, making Malaysia the eighth largest investor in the country, while the value of Vietnam's investment in Malaysia was still at a level that needed to be improved.

"The prime minister will most likely invite Vietnamese investors to come to Malaysia to balance the value of bilateral investments as Malaysia has so many investment opportunities to offer," he added.

Meanwhile, Wisma Putra in a statement said the prime minister's maiden official visit to Vietnam was on the invitation of Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh.

It said that during the visit, the two leaders would hold a meeting to assess the development of the implementation of the Malaysia-Vietnam Strategic Partnership Action Plan 2021-2025.

The two leaders will also exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest as well as witness the exchange of documents, including a memorandum of understanding on legal cooperation activities as well as the recruitment, employment and repatriation of workers.

“Malaysia and Vietnam have also agreed to explore cooperation in the diplomatic training field, which will be materialised through a letter of intent. Apart from that, a professional cooperation agreement between the *Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama)* and the *Vietnam News Agency* will be inked,” the statement said.

The prime minister is also scheduled to hold separate meetings with the secretary-general of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the president of Vietnam and the chairman of the Vietnamese House of Representatives.

Ismail Sabri will also hold engagement sessions with the Malaysian business community and Malaysian families in Vietnam.

The statement said the official visit reflects the importance of Malaysia-Vietnam relations as neighbours and partners in ASEAN, with the two countries set to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2023.

During the visit, the prime minister will be accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Abdullah, Senior Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali and senior government officials.