

## PM to undertake first official visit to Vietnam from today

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Prime minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob is scheduled to make his first official visit to Vietnam from today till March 22.- BERNAMA Pic

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob is scheduled to make his first official visit to Vietnam from today till March 22.

The three day official visit reflects the importance of Malaysia–Vietnam relations as close neighbours and partners in Asean.

The two countries will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2023.

The Foreign Ministry (Wisma Putra) in a statement said the PM's visit is undertaken at the invitation of his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Minh Chinh.

Both leaders will hold meeting to review the progress of the implementation of the Plan of Action 2021–2025 of the Malaysia–Vietnam Strategic Partnership.

The statement said both leaders will also exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual concerns.

"The two prime ministers will witness the exchange of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Legal Cooperation Activities and on Recruitment, Employment and Repatriation of Workers.

"Malaysia and Vietnam will also exchange a Letter of Intent (LOI) on cooperation in diplomatic training.

"In addition, Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) and Vietnam News Agency would sign an Agreement on Professional Cooperation," said the statement.

Based on the programmes lined up by Vietnam, Ismail Sabri is also scheduled to hold separate meetings with the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, President of Vietnam and Chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam besides having engagement sessions with Malaysian business community and Keluarga Malaysia in Vietnam.

Also accompanying Ismail Sabri during the visit are Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Abdullah, Senior Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali and senior officials from Prime Minister's Office.

Meanwhile, Foreign Ministry deputy secretary-general Datuk Amran Mohamed Zin said post-pandemic economic recovery in various sectors including trade, investment, and tourism, as well as recognition of vaccination certificates between Malaysia and Vietnam will be among the focus in the three day visit.

He said the Vietnamese authorities informed that the country had recognised Malaysia's vaccination certificate and that Malaysia welcomed the decision as it was one of the aspects of cooperation that Malaysia wanted to have within Asean and also with Asean strategic partners.

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

"Maybe during the visit, the Prime Minister will make an announcement on the latest development on 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 too," he told a press conference with the Malaysian media here.

Amran said Vietnam had 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.

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 and

Vietnam was 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. - Bernama