

KERATAN AKHBAR

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Tourism pilot project to take off

Visitors can plan a visit to Langkawi from Sept 16 under travel bubble

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PETALING JAYA: Local tourists will get to visit Pulau Langkawi starting Sept 16 under the much-anticipated pilot project of a tourism bubble as the nation eases back to recreational activity.

The starting date was agreed to at a meeting of the Special Committee to Address Covid-19, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

"Other tourist destinations will be allowed to operate once the local vaccination rates reach 80%," Ismail Sabri said in a statement yesterday.

The welcome start to the pilot project, subject to conditions, came as two more states made progress in the Covid-19 management to advance under the National Recovery Plan (NRP). The conditions include limiting travel to those who are fully vaccinated.

Ismail Sabri announced that Melaka will transition to Phase Two, while Negri Sembilan to Phase Three of the NRP from Saturday.

The Prime Minister said it was also unanimously decided at the



Adventure ride: A river cruise where visitors to Langkawi can enjoy a chance to go eagle-watching is among the island's many attractions.

meeting that a change of name to the committee – now known as the Special Committee on Pandemic Management (Jawatankuasa Khas Pengurusan Pandemik) – was made to reflect involvement of representatives from the Opposition.

"This approach is one of the collective efforts to involve all stakeholders to ensure that the country's recovery goes as planned, in line with the spirit of the Malaysian

Family concept.

"Today (yesterday) is the first time in several months that the national infectivity rate or R-naught has gone below 1.0, and I am confident that we are on the right track towards national recovery," he added.

The last time the national average of the country's Covid-19 infectivity rate went below 1.0 was in late June.

Ismail Sabri also said the Special Committee on Ensuring Access to Covid-19 Vaccine Supply (JKJAV) has projected the average vaccination rates to reach 80% (of adult population) for all states by the end of this month.

"I am confident that a 100% vaccination rate may even be achieved by October," he said.

He added that all members of the Malaysian Family must be prepared to live with Covid-19 as it moves towards the endemic phase after October when the vaccination rollout is expected to be completed.

"So the Health Ministry has been ordered to prepare a new suitable pandemic and endemic strategy aside from full adherence to the standard operating procedures."

Ismail Sabri also welcomed the call to implement a behavioural change advocated by the Health Ministry.

"The Malaysian Family must come to realise that, eventually, we will have to live with Covid-19, like those around the world."

On Wednesday, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said that moving into an endemic phase will see

more sectors reopened with new Covid-19 norms being adopted.

Under Phase Two of the NRP, more industrial and economic activities are allowed to operate from 8am to 8pm, such as automotive (vehicles and components), furniture factories for export orders, bookstores, computers and telecommunications, electrical goods, car wash and barber shops (basic services only).

Interstate and inter-district travel is still prohibited while operating hours of restaurants and food stalls remain from 6am to 10pm. Farmers' markets and morning markets can operate from 7am to 11am, limited to certain commodities.

Under Phase Three, all economic activities are allowed, except high-risk ones such as spas, pedicure and manicure services, pubs and nightclubs.

Inter-district travel in this phase is permitted. Dine-in at restaurants is allowed, limited to two people per table. Night markets, farmers' markets and weekly markets as well as beauty salons can also operate.

The education sectors will be reopened and domestic tourism activities are allowed.

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