

Brunei coughs, Labuan is worried

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LABUAN: The rising Covid-19 suspected cases in Brunei has triggered fears that the neighbour's situation could add to woes of the local economy with less Brunei tourism money flowing into the island.

Daily there are regular boat services, including a ro-ro ferry plying on the Labuan-Brunei route, many from Brunei come here for their weekend break and also ancestral ties. This also raises the possibility of entry in Labuan of suspected Covid carriers.

Brunei has announced that the sultanate recorded 14 new cases of Covid-19 positive cases in a single day on Thursday.

The Brunei Ministry of Health in a statement on Friday said there are now 25 confirmed cases in Brunei while Labuan has one confirmed case.

Labuan Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Datuk Dahlif Singh said it is still early to predict a gloomy outlook.

"Adding to this, the situation looks well controlled and our local healthcare officials have shown competence in monitoring the entry point of the island. People in business

will travel and for Brunei nationals, Labuan is still a safe destination to holiday so let's be optimistic."

Brunei citizens are known to be good spenders due to the strength of their currency, spending B\$M1,000, equivalent to RM3,000, over the year these visitors had contributed significantly to hotels, eateries, duty-free shops and entertainment sector.

A former chairman of Labuan Entertainment Association Bernard Wong concurred: "Brunei visitors are significant to the local economy as they are known to be generous in their spending and this helps increase the purchasing power of the market. They also preferred Labuan because it is near, safe and stress-free."

In the meantime, the EPF office at the Financial Park Complex has placed a notice on its door announcing its closure for a day (March 12) for the purpose of clean-up. It is understood that this precaution had been taken following an employee returning from Kuala Lumpur and placed under observation. The office would re-open on March 13.



File picture showing visitors departing at the Labuan ferry terminal.