

## **Health DG: Top officials only knew minister broke quarantine last week**

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Health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said top ministry officials were in the dark about Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Khairuddin Aman Razali's violation of home quarantine rules until last week.

An internal investigation into the events following the minister's July 7 return from Turkey has since been completed and shared with the police, who are probing the issue.

Asked during a press conference this evening, Noor Hisham shared that he, along with the ministry's deputy director-general and head of infectious diseases, were not informed about the matter until it made the news.

"We were not informed. We (were) only informed last week and the first thing we did was (to) instruct an internal investigation.

“Yesterday I got the report from that, the full report (of) what happened from the ground.

“We were not informed. So it is very important for our frontliners (that) whatever happens at the ground level, to inform us and their superiors so that action can be taken as soon as possible,” he said.

However, Noor Hisham sidestepped a question on concerns that the Aug 7 compound issued to the minister was backdated.

Khairuddin’s offence first made headlines on Aug 18 when Seputeh MP Teresa Kok raised it in the Dewan Rakyat.

“It is not appropriate for me to comment because it will prejudice the police and et cetera.

“So I think we should leave it to the police to investigate this case and we will wait for the report from them,” Noor Hisham said.

Khairuddin (above) had visited Turkey from July 3 to 7. Despite a mandatory 14-day home quarantine order, he attended Parliament six days later on July 13.

He is accused of also visiting other places after returning including his constituency Kuala Nerus and the Prime Minister's Department when he was supposed to be under quarantine.

Critics have since questioned if Khairuddin's fine was backdated to save him from being charged in court which could see him fined more than RM2,000 and eventually cause him to be disqualified as an MP.

Previously, an elderly woman was jailed one day and fined RM8,000 after pleading guilty to breaching the home quarantine order by going out for a meal.

Meanwhile, a restaurant owner linked to the Sivagangga cluster was sentenced to five months' jail and fined RM12,000 for also violating home quarantine.

Since the controversy, there have been calls for Khairuddin to resign similar to what ministers in other countries have done when they flout Covid-19 safety rules.

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