

Did Muhyiddin violate quarantine SOPs, ask opposition MPs

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Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin returned to the country two days ago after completing an official trip to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, where he was allegedly welcomed by a group of government officials upon his arrival at an airport.

According to the standard operating procedures (SOPs) set by the government to curb the spread of Covid-19, all overseas returnees have to undergo a mandatory 10-day quarantine.

However, an exception was made for ministers coming back from official trips abroad, where they only need to complete three days in quarantine.

Several opposition politicians pointed out that Muhyiddin and members of his cabinet may have violated the already lax SOPs when they allegedly convened at the airport to welcome the premier upon his arrival on Thursday (March 11).

Based on photographs uploaded by Bersatu politicians on social media, including Senior Minister Azmin Ali, Muhyiddin and his wife had arrived at the airport to a welcoming ceremony attended by two cabinet members namely Azmin and Home Minister Hamzah Zainudin.

Also seen in the photos were Deputy Youth and Sports Minister Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad Kamal, Bersatu vice-president Rafiq Naizamohideen and Seberang Jaya assemblyperson Dr Afif Bahardin.

Rafiq had also shared a similar photo on his Facebook on the same evening Muhyiddin arrived, while Wan Fayhsal posted one on Friday evening.

Malaysiakini learned that the welcoming do, which included a group prayer (doa) recital right after Muhyiddin and his wife disembarked from the aircraft, took place at the Subang Air Force Base.

Several men in military uniform resembling that of the air force were also seen in the photographs.

"Based on current SOP, once returning from overseas, one must be quarantined for at least 10 days.

"Even though (Health Minister) Dr Adham Baba says three days is sufficient for ministers (which is not based on science), the moment the PM arrives in Malaysia he needs to be isolated.

"Now all those who had close contact with him at the airport technically must also go into quarantine and be considered person under surveillance (PUS)," said DAP lawmaker Dr Kelvin Yii on Facebook this morning.

The Kuching MP said this was one of the reasons the rakyat were unhappy with the government, claiming that they practise double standards in enforcing the SOPs.

He pointed to the recent law amendment which now gives the power for enforcers to issue a RM10,000 fine on SOP violators.

"But I guess for PN ministers all these rules don't apply. They seem to be able to flout rules at their whim and fancy, while others get fined up to RM10,000.

"This is why people are angry. Not because they do not want to follow SOP, but because there seem to be double standards in its enforcement," Yii added.

Former health minister Dzulkefly Ahmad also raised similar issues on double standards, and urged the government to lift the emergency so that Parliament can reconvene.

"The PM upon returning, must lead by example. Today 330 people were slapped with RM10,000 fines, yet the PM is there violating the very rules he approved. We can't continue to have double standards, ie one for the VVIPs and another for the rakyat.

"Should not all Malaysians returning from overseas be isolated for 10 days? This double standard shows that the Emergency Ordinance must be lifted, so that Parliament can make the PM answerable to these types of issues.

"The failure of a public health policy is specifically due to poor governance," said the Amanah MP for Kuala Selangor.

He also raised the issue of Muhyiddin having only taken the first dose of his Covid-19 vaccination.

According to Dzulkefly, even with a complete dosage, the immunisation does not provide 100 percent protection against the coronavirus.

"This means that even if fully vaccinated (two doses), the PM may still get infected by Covid-19, hence becoming a spreader.

"It only provides 100 percent protection against getting severe Covid-19 disease (avoiding ICU admission) and 95 percent against symptomatic Covid-19 after the second dose.

"This is the reason why, even after you are vaccinated you must still follow the SOP."

Bangi MP Ong Kian Ming, who is also a member of the Pakatan Harapan Covid-19 Vaccination Committee, urged those who met the premier upon his arrival from overseas to also quarantine themselves.

"Even though the PM has already received his vaccine jab, the reality is we don't know whether you can still transmit the virus even though you have been vaccinated.

"So it is very irresponsible for the PM to allow other people to meet him during this time. My strong call is for those people who had met the PM to observe SOP and to quarantine themselves for three days.

"This is to show people there are no double standards and more importantly, it will be a signal to others, especially those who have or will take vaccines, that they also have to observe SOPs even though they have taken the vaccine," Ong told Malaysiakini.

The DAP lawmaker also called for authorities to fine Muhyiddin and the other ministers present at the airport for violating SOPs.

This, he added, is to show that the administration is not a double standard government.

Malaysiakini reached out to Health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah for comments, where he confirmed that the SOP requiring three-day quarantine is still in force.

"All policies remain at the moment," he said in a text message.

However, Noor Hisham did not respond to queries on whether the welcoming party had violated the SOPs set by the health authorities.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob declined to comment on the matter, saying he had not seen the pictures yet.

"I haven't seen it. Whether there were many people or not, I haven't seen it. So I can't comment," he told reporters.

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