

'PM's Saudi visit a success despite no meeting with king, crown prince'

Malaysiakini

26 March 2023

The success of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's official visit to Saudi Arabia should not be judged solely on the fact that there was no meeting with King Salman Abdulaziz Al Saud or Crown Prince Mohammed Salman Al Saud.

Community Communications Department (J-Kom) director-general Mohammad Agus Yusoff was responding to Perikatan Nasional's (PN) three main criticisms that painted Anwar's official three-day visit as a failure.

"The three main issues are the prime minister was only greeted by the governor of Jeddah, he was not taken inside the Kaabah and there was no meeting with King Salman Abdulaziz Al Saud or Crown Prince Mohammed Salman Al Saud.

"To add spice to the story, they (critics) compared the apparent successes of former prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin's official visit with that of Anwar's. They said, when Muhyiddin visited Saudi, his delegation was greeted by King Salman," said Agus on Facebook.

He pointed out that while Anwar had made the visit after four months in office, Muhyiddin had done so only after a year in power.

"But because of political differences (or maybe vengeance), Anwar's visit was described as a waste of public funds and holiday trip," said Agus.

Among others, PN Foreign Affairs Committee chief Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad Kamal yesterday said questions arise as Wisma Putra had previously announced that an agenda of the visit would include a meeting with the crown prince - who is also Saudi's prime minister.

By extension, the Bersatu Youth chief said Anwar had also failed to meet his other counterpart, Saudi's Finance Minister Mohammed Al Jadaan.

"Have the goals of this official visit been met with the absence of these meetings, based on Malaysia-Saudi bilateral ties?" he asked.

Agus, in response, highlighted Anwar's other agendas during the visit, including receiving a courtesy call from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) secretary-general Houssein Ibrahim Taha; witnessing the signing of three memoranda of understandings between Malaysian companies and their Saudi counterparts; as well as addressing the larger business communities in Jeddah.

He also noted that King Salman was among the earliest world leaders to congratulate Anwar after being named as prime minister, despite attempts by PN to raise questions over strained ties.

Contrary to PN's claims, Agus reiterated that Anwar was unable to fulfil Saudi's request for his visit to be extended by two days due to changes in the king and crown prince's schedules, in light of Ramadan that began on Thursday.

Anwar had reportedly expressed disappointment that he was unable to extend the visit to Saudi as there was an official cabinet breaking fast event with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong last night, as well as official visits to Cambodia and China starting tomorrow.

'Reveal cost of trip'

Meanwhile, Wan Ahmad Fayhsal urged Anwar to reveal the cost of his Saudi trip, which also included his wife Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Foreign Minister Zambry Abdul Kadir and Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil.

"In line with the prime minister's strong commitment to austerity measures within his administration, I urge him to table in Parliament the entire cost for this trip, including all preparations for travel costs and expenditures for security

personnel from the prime minister's office and offices of other accompanying ministers," he said.

In response, Agus said the question can be posed to Anwar during the weekly Prime Minister's Question Time in Parliament, scheduled every Tuesday.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/660027>