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Diplomats sent packing over PM's UAE visit

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS



PUTRAJAYA: Two senior Malaysian diplomats in the United Arab Emirates were ordered home because they had failed to coordinate administrative and logistic matters during the Prime Minister's visit to the country last month, says Wisma Putra.

It said the Malaysian ambassador to the UAE as well as the consul-general in Dubai failed to handle tasks as per the standard operating procedure for high ranking visits overseas, especially during Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob's arrival in Dubai on March 29.

"The failure resulted in the Prime Minister having to wait long at the normal arrival hall for passport and immigration clearance.

"Also, there was no security coverage such as a motorcade that should have been provided for the Prime Minister," Wisma Putra said in a statement yesterday. The Foreign Ministry's statement on the matter came following a report in a news portal stating that two senior diplomats in the UAE were ordered home for the lack of official "guest status" for the Prime Minister's visit to the Emirates recently.

The statement said it was common practice for Malaysia's head of mission abroad to provide security coverage and a motorcade for the Prime Minister during his visit.

It cited the case when the Prime Minister attended the United Nations General Assembly in New York when the host country could not prepare the "guest status".

Malaysia's head of mission then went on to provide the security and motorcade in accordance with the SOP.

“The two diplomats had also failed to inform the ministry about the World Government Summit (WGS), which was held during the Dubai Expo. Wisma Putra only knew about the summit on March 30 through a different source.

“Should we have been informed of the summit, efforts would have been made for the Prime Minister to deliver a speech at the programme,” it said.

The ministry said the Foreign Minister had met UAE State Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Reem Ebrahim Al Hashimy on March 30 and through the meeting, the Prime Minister was invited to attend the WGS closing later the same day.

“This problem would not have occurred if coordination was done earlier. This is because the UAE government had prepared all facilities for the Prime Minister as head of government right until the end of his visit,” said Wisma Putra.

It added that the UAE government had arranged for a static guard of honour at the Al Maktoum International Airport on the day the Prime Minister departed from Dubai and that the State Minister of Artificial Intelligence, Digital Economy and Remote Work Omar bin Sultan Al Olama was present to represent his government.

“The move to call back the two officials is nothing out of the ordinary and was done through discussions with all parties, including the Public Service Department.

“It was taken to protect interests in bilateral relations between Malaysia and the said countries and to ensure the competency of the public service,” it said.

During his visit to Dubai from March 27 to 31, Ismail Sabri attended the closing ceremony of the Malaysia Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai and witnessed the signing of several memorandums of understanding between Malaysian corporations and international companies.

He also held a meeting with the Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.