

At convention, PM Muhyiddin says only bars and pubs still to reopen under RMCO



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BY SYED JAYMAL ZAHIID



Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin attends a Perikatan Nasional event at Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur September 1, 2020. — Picture by Yusof Mat Isa

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 1 — Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin noted today that bars and pubs were the few types of businesses still barred from operating under the recovery movement control order (RMCO).

At an event whose speakers were mostly pro-government conservative academics, Muhyiddin noted that nearly all others have been allowed to reopen.

He made the remarks while he held up his administration's Covid-19 response as among his most notable achievements since becoming prime minister, which he also said demonstrated that the government was people-centric.

"Only the pubs and bars have yet to resume businesses, but I feel maybe if they don't open at all is a good thing," he said in apparent jest.



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Also present at the event was Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, president of Islamist party PAS.

Muhyiddin's party, Bersatu, now leads a predominantly Malay-Muslim coalition alongside PAS and Umno as a result of shifting political alliances that triggered the fall of the democratically-elected Pakatan Harapan government.

The political realignment not only drew allegations that Muhyiddin is now head of an illegitimate government, but has also raised concerns that minority rights could be undermined, especially as Umno and PAS seek to regain power.



Speaking at a convention held to "rate" the Perikatan Nasional (PN) administration's half-year performance, Muhyiddin again insisted that his ascent to power was by the book.

"I have the support of various parties in Parliament, I think from 12 parties in total if I'm not mistaken," he said, adding that he had never harboured ambitions to be prime minister.

"I never plotted or schemed to usurp or oust anyone," the Bersatu president said.

Muhyiddin took office in March just weeks before the country endured one of its worst economic and public health crises, which forced the government to shut down businesses and impose movement curbs in a bid to contain a deadly coronavirus outbreak.

In April and May, the PN administration unveiled several stimulus packages totalling RM265 billion to stem the fallout wreaked by Covid-19.

Analysts said the economic crisis caused by the pandemic was an acid test for Muhyiddin's leadership. Various polls held shortly after saw his popularity rating go up.



The Pagoh MP said today he wanted the public to judge his leadership based on how his government responded to the pandemic, and that the stimulus measures also proved his coalition was a government that put the people first.

"I did the best that I could so I hope you ladies and gentlemen can be fair," he said.

** Editor's note: The article's headline and contents have been amended to better convey Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's intended message at the convention.*

