



[Home](#) [News](#) [Berita](#) [Business](#) [Lifestyle](#) [Opinion](#) [World](#) [Sports](#) [World Cup '26](#) [Videos](#) [Property](#) [Education](#) [Carzilla](#) [Gallery](#)

Malaysia shows compassion, competence with wartime repatriation

3 MONTHS AGO

[Phar Kim Beng](#)

Share

Diplomacy, in moments like this, is not about grand speeches but about ensuring that citizens are accounted for and that families are reunited.

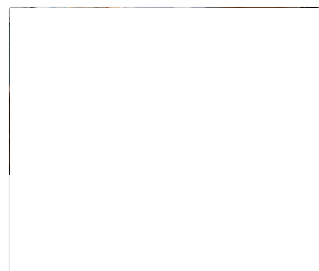


PHAR KIM BENG

Phar Kim Beng is Professor of ASEAN Studies and Director of IINTAS-IUM.

The arrival of 163 Malaysians and seven foreign family members at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on March 11 represents more than a routine evacuation.

It is a reminder that, in times of crisis, a government's ultimate responsibility is to protect its citizens' lives, wherever they may be.



The special evacuation flight operated by Malaysia Airlines landed at approximately 12.45pm, bringing home Malaysians stranded in parts of West Asia affected by the rapidly escalating conflict involving Iran and several external powers.

Among those repatriated were five Thai nationals, one Indonesian, and one Moroccan — spouses and family members of Malaysian citizens.

Their safe return should be recognised for what it is: a quiet but significant success for Malaysia's diplomatic and administrative machinery.

In a moment when the Middle East is experiencing one of its most dangerous military confrontations in decades, Malaysia has demonstrated the calm, practical diplomacy that has long been the hallmark of its foreign policy.

Credit must go to several institutions working in close coordination: the Prime Minister's Office, the foreign affairs ministry—better known as Wisma Putra—and the Malaysia Airlines Group.

Invariably, a large network of diplomats, officials, and volunteers mobilised quickly to bring Malaysians home.

This is governance in action.

In international crises, many governments often spend excessive time debating legalities, geopolitical alignments, or ideological positions.

Such debates are important, but they cannot take precedence over the safety of citizens caught in the middle of war zones.

The current conflict surrounding Iran has already shaken the global strategic landscape.

Many observers believe the military campaign launched by the United States and Israel represents a serious breach of international norms governing the use of force.

Whether one agrees with this assessment or not, the reality is that the region has been thrust into a dangerous escalation that could widen further.

The Middle East is not merely a distant theatre of war for Malaysia.

Thousands of Malaysians live, work, and study across the Gulf and wider West Asia.

Students, engineers, oil and gas professionals, businesspeople, and families are spread across countries whose stability is now under immense strain.

The danger is therefore not abstract.

When missiles fly across the region and military operations intensify, the risks faced by Malaysian citizens abroad increase dramatically. Airports can close without warning.

Shipping routes can become dangerous. Communications can collapse.

In such situations, evacuation is often the only responsible course of action.

The successful repatriation of the first batch of Malaysians is therefore a testament to the professionalism of Wisma Putra and the Malaysian government's crisis management capacity.

Diplomacy, in moments like this, is not about grand speeches at international forums.

It is about ensuring that planes land safely, that citizens are accounted for, and that families are reunited.

The presence of foreign spouses and relatives on the evacuation flight is also notable.

Malaysia's decision to bring them home alongside Malaysian citizens reflects a deeper principle of compassion.

Families do not function according to nationality.

When Malaysians are married to foreign partners or raising multinational families abroad, any evacuation effort that ignores these realities would be incomplete.

By allowing foreign spouses and relatives to accompany Malaysians home, the government demonstrated a humane approach that transcends bureaucratic rigidity.

This is very much in line with the broader philosophy of the Madani government under Anwar Ibrahim.

Malaysia Madani has repeatedly emphasised compassion, inclusivity and responsible governance.

The evacuation operation shows that these principles are not merely rhetorical slogans. They are operational priorities.

The coordination between government agencies, airlines, diplomats and emergency responders reveals a state apparatus capable of acting swiftly when circumstances demand it.

Equally important is the recognition that this first evacuation flight is unlikely to be the last.

The conflict in the Middle East remains volatile and unpredictable.

Oil prices have already surged, financial markets have reacted nervously, and geopolitical tensions are spreading far beyond the immediate theatre of war.

Should the situation worsen, thousands more Malaysians could require assistance.

Malaysia must therefore remain prepared for additional evacuation missions, contingency planning, and diplomatic coordination with countries across the Gulf.

This requires not only logistical capability but also diplomatic finesse.

Malaysia's longstanding reputation as a neutral and principled country has often allowed its diplomats to operate effectively even in regions marked by intense geopolitical rivalries.

Unlike larger powers that may be perceived as partisan actors in regional conflicts, Malaysia has maintained constructive relations with multiple sides across the Middle East.

This diplomatic credibility can be invaluable when negotiating evacuation corridors, securing flight clearances, or coordinating with host governments during emergencies.

In this sense, Malaysia's balanced foreign policy continues to pay dividends.

At the same time, the evacuation underscores a broader lesson about the nature of modern conflicts.

Wars today do not remain confined within national borders.

A conflict that begins with military strikes in one part of the Middle East can quickly disrupt oil markets, threaten shipping routes, and endanger civilians from dozens of countries.

For a globally connected country like Malaysia, whose citizens are spread across many regions, crisis management must therefore be international in scope.

The safe return of the first group of Malaysians should be celebrated, but it should also remind us of the fragility of the global order.

When international norms erode and great powers resort to force without broad consensus, the consequences ripple outward, affecting ordinary citizens far from the battlefield.

Yet amid this turbulence, Malaysia has demonstrated something encouraging.

Even in a world where geopolitics is increasingly chaotic, competent governance and compassionate diplomacy still matter.

By focusing on the immediate safety of its people rather than becoming entangled in ideological disputes, Malaysia has shown what responsible statecraft looks like.

For the families waiting anxiously at KLIA, the sight of loved ones walking through the arrival hall was more than a relief.

It was proof that their country had not forgotten them.

And that, ultimately, is the most important duty of any government.

The views expressed are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of FMT.

Stay current - Follow FMT on WhatsApp, Google news and Telegram



Subscribe to our newsletter and get news delivered to your mailbox.

Email address

SUBSCRIBE