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Forum-Merger

IDEA OF MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE REMERGER IS HASH, SAYS PROFESSOR

PETALING JAYA, Dec 6 (Bernama) -- The idea of a Malaysia and Singapore remerger at present is hash as this issue is still very sensitive to both countries since Singapore divorced itself from Malaysia 30 years ago, Associate Prof Mohammad Abu Bakar of Universiti Malaya said today.

Associate Prof Mohammad, of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, said that this idea no doubt has received negative responses from both countries as they felt their foundational myths are best left untouched.

There might be other reasons to this but on top of it was that the past history kept haunting especially to Malaysians who actually experienced the turmoil of the incident including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, he added.

"I believed that Singapore senior minister Lee Kuan Yew got other reasons when he mentioned the possibility of remerger between the two countries," he said when presenting his working paper "Merger, Malaysia and the Prospects of Malaysia-Singapore Reunion" at the Sixth Malaysia-Singapore Forum, here.

He felt that one of the reason was that Lee is trying to test the Malaysian opinion as after 30 years parting from Singapore, Malaysia is now inching towards a Malaysian-Malaysia.

The three-day forum themed "Three Decades of Malaysia-Singapore Relations, 1966-1996" was opened today by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Answering a question from the floor on why both countries are still very sensitive over the issue of remerger, Mohammad said it is because geographically both countries are very near and felt that any conflicts which arose will surely affect each other.

Meanwhile, Dr N.Ganesan from the Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore, when presenting his working paper "Boundary-Markers in Malaysia-Singapore Relations," identified ethnicity, religion and state ideology as boundary-markers for both countries.

He said the existence of these boundary-markers is suggestive of the fact that some measure of residual emotions exist between Malaysia and Singapore into the post-independence period.

This makes any attempts to comment on or compare the situations between both countries, even if well-intentioned, will not be well-received, he said.

Nonetheless the nature of the historical linkages and geographical proximity has a tendency to attract comparisons or provocations even when none are intended, he added. -- BERNAMA

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