

**Calls for 'war' in Indonesia-Malaysia dance spat**  
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Simmering anger in Indonesia over Malaysia's "theft" of a traditional dance is spurring unlikely calls for war in the latest spat between the two traditionally testy neighbours.

The dispute started in Indonesia in August after word spread Malaysia had screened tourism advertisements featuring the traditional 'pendet' dance of Indonesia's Hindu-majority Bali island.

The ad quickly turned out to have been a botched promotion for a Discovery Channel programme on Malaysia, with no role played whatsoever by Malaysia's government, but that has done little to dampen feelings here.

Protesters vowing to "crush Malaysia" have burned Malaysian flags and thrown rotten eggs at the country's embassy, while local media have for weeks run a steady stream of reports of Malaysian outrages, most of them recycled.

Many media have also studiously ignored an admission of guilt and apology from Discovery.

Nationalists - as they do in nearly every one of the two countries' frequent disputes - have already opened registration for volunteers willing to go to war with Malaysia, but admit this is largely a symbolic gesture.

"Malaysia has, in so many ways, robbed, stolen from and insulted Indonesia... we're offended as a people. We're angry, we're disappointed, we're upset," Mustar Bonaventura, the coordinator of a Jakarta recruitment drive by nationalist youth group Bendera told *AFP*.

"We have 486 volunteers who have signed up and they are ready for any consequences... All that's left for us with Malaysia is war," he said.

Bonaventura conceded war was very unlikely, but said the group had stockpiled food, medicine and weapons including samurai swords and ninja throwing stars, just in case.

**Issue refuses to die down**

Indonesian politicians have also voiced their displeasure to Malaysia over the controversy, and received apologies in return, but the issue has refused to die down.

For Bonaventura and others, the pendet dance controversy is only the latest in a string of perceived insults by Indonesia's wealthier and more developed neighbour.

Stories of horrific mistreatment of Indonesian migrant workers by their Malaysian bosses have for years raised public anger, as have territorial disputes over islands and the two nations' shared maritime boundaries.

Indonesian nationalists have also claimed in recent weeks that Malaysia's national anthem plagiarised an Indonesian song, but have been dealt a blow by musicologists who say both borrow from a 19th-century French tune.

A 2007 dispute over the use of "Rasa Sayange", a folk song that originated in Indonesia's Maluku islands, in a Malaysian tourism ad also has more than a whiff of familiarity with the current dispute.

According to political analyst Wimar Witoelar, the current spat draws on a long history of resentment that has built up between Indonesia and Malaysia despite largely similar languages and cultures.

Witoelar said the roots lie mainly in the early 1960s, when charismatic former President Sukarno whipped Indonesia into a fervour in a campaign of "konfrontasi", or armed confrontation aimed at destabilising the newly created Federation of Malaysia.

"The basic resentment that Sukarno encouraged did not go away easily. It was just submerged, so it become significant when it turned out Malaysia became more successful, especially economically," he said.

Spats over culture and tourism are part of this built-up resentment, Witoelar said. Despite 17,000 tropical islands, beaches, reefs and a rich cultural heritage, just over six million foreign tourists visited Indonesia last year, compared with around 22 million visitors to Malaysia.

Provoked by a sensationalist media, this is just another issue of hurt pride that can incite people "deprived of common sense, deprived of intelligence, deprived of understanding," he said.

- AFP

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