

Muhyiddin's Visit To Open Up Space For Better Malaysia-Indonesia Ties
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JAKARTA, July 2 (Bernama) -- The six-day visit of Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin to Indonesia beginning Tuesday is expected to open up space for better bilateral Malaysia-Indonesia relations, especially after the recent controversy over the Mandailing culture which tensed up relations between people of the two countries.

The deputy prime minister's programme will include meetings with Indonesian Vice-President Boediono and leaders of the three largest Indonesian political parties in Jakarta, providing Muhyiddin and his delegation the opportunity to discuss and find solutions to bilateral issues which often sour relations at the people level.

There is no specific agenda prepared for the Muhyiddin-Boediono meeting Tuesday, allowing both leaders to expand the scope of discussion, especially on three unresolved issues, namely manpower, border and culture.

"The visit is very important as it encompasses more than the agenda of the annual Malaysia-Indonesia consultations. The meeting will also look into what is troubling bilateral ties on the ground," said the Malaysian ambassador to Indonesia, Datuk Syed Munshe Afdzaruddin Syed Hassan, here, Monday.

The Tor-Tor dance and Gordang Sambilan (Nine Drums) performance of the Mandailing community became a hot issue in the Indonesian media after Malaysia's Information, Communications and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim stated in Kuala Lumpur on June 14 that the culture practised by the Mandailing community in Malaysia would be recognised as one of the national heritage of Malaysia.

The proposal has caused various quarters in Indonesia to be suspicious of the move taken by Malaysia and also alleged that Malaysia was claiming ownership of Mandailing culture.

The heritage recognition had long been sought by the Mandailing community in Malaysia who migrated to the Malay peninsula more than 200 years ago before Indonesia and Malaysia came into being.

The controversy was discussed and fiercely debated by the local media, causing several groups in Indonesia to demonstrate in front of the Malaysian embassy in Jakarta, while 50 members of the Pancasila Youth resorted to violence by throwing stones and damaging the fence and parts of Malaysia Hall in Menteng, Jakarta recently.

Syed Munshe Afdzaruddin said apart from meeting Boediono, Muhyiddin was also leading a delegation of Umno leaders as the party's deputy president to meet and discuss with the head of Golkar Party, Aburizal Bakrie who was yesterday officially named as Indonesian presidential candidate from Golkar in the presidential election in 2014.

Muhyiddin and his delegation will also hold separate meetings with Parti Demokrat chief Anas Urbaningrum and secretary-general Edhie Baskoro Yudhoyono as well as Parti Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDI-P) chief Megawati Soekarnoputeri and her husband Taufik Kiemas, who is the People's Consultative Assembly speaker.

Members of the Malaysian delegation include Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad

Zahid Hamidi, Supreme Council member Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek, Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin and Puteri Umno chief Datuk Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, will later attend the Asean Education Ministers Meeting and related meetings in Yogyakarta before visiting Bali where he is scheduled to meet Bali Governor I Made Mangku Pastika and Malaysian students there.

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