

Malaysia Mulls Appointing Spokesperson To Handle Malaysia-Indonesia Issues
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By Ahmad Fuad Yahya

JAKARTA, July 3 (Bernama) -- Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said Malaysia may appoint an official government spokesperson to help handle issues that crop up between Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the Malaysian government thought this was necessary to ensure any issue that cropped up could be handled faster and more effectively to avoid misunderstanding about Malaysia by Indonesians to the point of resulting in polemics.

"We will bring this up with the Cabinet to determine who should be appointed the spokesman to handle such matters.

"Clarifications must be done quickly before an issue is raised here (Indonesia) and causes negative perceptions," told Malaysian journalists at the end of his visit to Jakarta Tuesday.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, left for Yogyakarta tonight to attend the Asean Education Ministers Meeting and related meetings, which will be held tomorrow and Thursday.

The Deputy Prime Minister today met Indonesian vice-president Boediono to discuss bilateral cooperation and issues that often cause friction between the peoples of the two countries.

He said the strong ties between Malaysia and Indonesia were often tested by various problems including issues like domestic help, encroachment by fishermen and borders.

The latest to crop up at the people-to-people level was Malaysia's proposal to register the Tor-tor dance dan Gordang Sambilan drumbeat of the Mandailing community in Malaysia as the country's national heritage.

At the meeting, Muhyiddin had stressed that Malaysia's plan to register the Mandailing culture under the country's National Heritage Act was aimed at preserving the heritage and not to claim it as its own.

Muhyiddin arrived here today for a six-day visit to Indonesia which besides Yogyakarta, also includes Bali. "Boediono and I also agreed that Malaysia-Indonesia ties are very good. We also agreed that meetings between the leaders of the two countries should be continued on a more regular basis," he said.

Muhyiddin, who is also Umno deputy president, also held meetings with the leaders of Indonesia's biggest three political parties.

They were Golkar president Aburizal Bakrie, Democratic Party president, Annas Urbaningrum and Parti Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (PDI-P) president, Megawati Sukarnoputeri.

Muhyiddin said the meetings were very fruitful to further boost relations between Malaysia and Indonesia.

Also in the Umno delegation were Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Umno 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.

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