

## **Mission Clarifies Issues Over Alleged Participation Of Singapore Diplomats In Bersih Rally**

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**By Tengku Noor Shamsiah Tengku Abdullah**

SINGAPORE, June 30 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian High Commission in Singapore has responded to letters published in The Straits Times last Thursday on the alleged participation of three Singaporean diplomats in the Bersih 3.0 rally seeking electoral reforms held in Kuala Lumpur on April 28.

Counsellor (Political) Nik Ady Arman wrote that firstly, it was important to recognise the difference between the action taken by the Government of Malaysia and the acts of certain NGOs and interest groups.

He said that while the Malaysian government had summoned Singapore's High Commissioner to Malaysia to address the issue diplomatically, the reaction of the NGOs and other interest groups did not come as a surprise considering the sentiments involved and was just as anticipated, as were the responses expressed by the readers in their letters to The Straits Times.

Secondly, Nik Ady said, there was also a need to appreciate the minor but nevertheless significant differences attached to the issue of diplomats attending a legitimate and illegal rally.

He said Malaysia, as a democratic country, had never restricted or prevented anyone from participating in any legitimate assembly, but pointed out that it was important to remember that the Bersih 3.0 rally was an illegal one.

"Not just foreign citizens' participation in local illegal rallies would generate speculation on the motive for their involvement, but the host government would also be accountable should the diplomats become victims of violent acts during the demonstration," he said.

Nik Ady said this was why Malaysian diplomats were continuously reminded to be mindful not to participate in illegal activities while serving abroad.

Thirdly, he said, Malaysia appreciated the Singapore government's decision to reject the application from certain groups in support of Bersih 3.0 in Singapore, which he added was a friendly gesture that surely had been in Singapore's best interest as well.

"Fourthly, there is no truth in the assertion that Malaysians still think of Singapore as an "adik" (younger sibling). Many Malaysians were born after or have very little experience with the separation (of Malaysia and Singapore in 1965).

To them, Nik Ady said, Singapore has always been a separate independent country from Malaysia.

Furthermore, he said, the success of its closest neighbours was important to Malaysia, as "we are clearly aware that prosperity can only be achieved when our neighbours are also doing well".

Nik Ady noted that the prime ministers of both countries were also visionary enough to have left the historical baggage behind, as evident from recent encouraging developments in

bilateral cooperation.

On June 22, Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman summoned Singapore High Commissioner to Malaysia Ong Keng Yong to explain that "the direct participation of diplomats in the illegal rally is an inappropriate move".

The Singapore High Commission has denied that the diplomats participated in the rally, saying they attended as observers as part of their "diplomatic duties".

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