

**Malaysia Appreciated For Its Role In Media Practitioners Relations**  
**Bernama**  
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**From Mohd Yusof Saari**

MANADO (Indonesia), Feb 9 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's role in strengthening the institution of journalism and enhancing the common cultural understanding between Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta is highly appreciated.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Information Communication and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim's direct involvement and concern for relations between media practitioners from both countries also led to isolated media issues being easily resolved.

Several Indonesian journalists, met by Bernama at the National Press Day (HPN) and Indonesian Journalists Association's (PWI) 67th anniversary celebrations here since yesterday, said the close ties between Malaysia and Indonesia and the journalists helped a great deal in defusing any tensions sparked intentionally by irresponsible parties.

Indonesian Journalists Association Centre manager Henry CH Bangun felt that close ties with Malaysian journalists made it easier for them to obtain information directly, without going through third parties who were possibly prejudiced.

Commenting on the presence of Rais and senior journalists from Kuala Lumpur on the opening night of HPN, he said, "Such visits should be continued to strengthen our existing ties. So if there are any issues or queries, we can get answers from the authorities directly instead of going through third parties."

With regards to Indonesian newspapers publishing sensitive matters leading to tension between the two countries, Henry, who heads a 15,000 member association, said it involved only a handful of isolated incidents and Malaysia need not worry about the impact of such reports.

Lampung PWI secretariat representative Mehdi Maharni was of the opinion that Rais' presence supported efforts by journalists from both countries to enhance their relations.

"It has raised awareness among the media practitioners on the importance of preserving the harmony of the regional Malay community, by refraining from highlighting 'hot and sensational' issues," he said.

Agensi Berita Indonesia (Antara) president director Saiful Hadi said Rais's visit and keynote address brought its own significance and provided the inspiration to uphold both the Malay and Indonesian languages and strengthen bilateral ties.

"Rais said we come from the same stock and this brotherhood should be understood by Indonesian journalists and authors so as to prevent them from sparking off controversies through their writing," said Saiful, who is also the Indonesian head of Ikatan Setiakawan Wartawan Malaysia-Indonesia.

In his keynote address at HPN, Rais among other points, urged media practitioners, especially journalists, on the need to be thinkers and critiques by always placing importance on harmonious relations between the two nations, in their writings.

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