

**Art, Cultural Performances Can Strengthen Ethnic Ties Within ASEAN - Rais
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 3 (Bernama) -- Arts and cultural performances can strengthen ethnic ties within ASEAN, said Social and Cultural Affairs Advisor the Government, Tan Sri Dr Rais Yatim.

He said at times, arts and culture were more effective in resolving regional issues than formal talks.

"There might be obstacles in politics and in formal talks," he told reporters after announcing the launch of Konsert Muzika Nusantara, which will be held at Istana Budaya here at 8.30 pm on March 13 and 14.

The concert, themed "Oneness in Arts" will feature the music and poetry of Malays from various ethnic groups such as Javanese, Mairindailing, Batak, Minang, Boyan, Aceh and Sunda, besides dance and song performances from Brunei and Singapore.

The concert organised by the Yayasan Ikatan Rakyat Malaysia Indonesia (YIRMI), Yayasan Warisanegara with the cooperation of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, includes artistes like Datuk Siti Nurhaliza, Krisdayanti, Dwen, Tegar, Indonesian poet Rafli Kande as well as Orkestra Tradisional Malaysia.

Rais, who is also the founder of YIRMI, said the concert would hopefully attract the attention of people of all races to appreciate the arts.

Earlier, in his speech, Rais said the concert was in line with Malaysia's role as Chairman of Asean this year.

"It is too limiting to only have economic and diplomatic programmes, as each person would show more interest through entertainment, arts and culture," he said.

Tickets are priced at RM53, RM73, RM103, RM153, RM203, RM253 and RM303, and can be obtained at the Istana Budaya Box Office counter, or contact 03-4026 5520/03-87754666 or the website www.airasiaredtix.com.

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