

To Reduce Conflicts, Indonesia and Malaysia Should Meet Intensively

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YOGYAKARTA- The rising conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia recently, especially after the arrest of three officers of Marine and Fisheries Affairs Board (DKP) of Riau Islands by Malaysian police in Johor on August 13 needs to be resolved immediately. Up to now, the conflict between the two countries has been fluctuating since the term of office of President Megawati Sukarnoputri. Several cases related to border disputes include the case of Sipadan and Ligitan Islands and the case of state boundaries in Ambalat, Nunukan, East Kalimantan.

"So, the problem is on the one hand an internal problem of Indonesia, and on the other hand it is Malaysia's overreaction," said the lecturer of UGM International Relations, Fatkhurrohman, SIP, M. Si, on Tuesday (31/8).


In his view, the government takes cowardly and soft stance on Malaysia's arrogance related to border issues. This is also exacerbated by the lack of budget for the Indonesian military.

"Our military budget in 2009 was only around Rp 35 trillion whereas Malaysia reached up to Rp 37 trillion," he added.

Unfortunately, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) was not firm on the Malaysian act. President SBY should immediately be proactive and meet with Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak after the memorandum of protest sent by the Indonesian government has not been responded by Malaysia. Former Philippine President, Gloria Arroyo, has given an example in the case of Philippine workers in Malaysia.

"We can follow the step of former President Arroyo, who came to Malaysia directly related to the manpower case. The result was they were freed," Fatkhurrohman said.

He explained that Indonesia's position is still weak compared to Malaysia's. Besides the low military budget, the government's soft stance, there are currently around two million Indonesian workers in Malaysia. If the Indonesian government makes the wrong policy, Malaysia will deport and refuse those migrant workers. "Basically, our position is still weak," he explained.



Fatkhurrohman, proposed that a collective agreement is made between both parties, especially related to boundary issues. He believes that discussion will take quite a long time; the discussion of Malaysia-Vietnam border took up to 24 years. Besides, meetings between heads of state needs to be intensified to improve the relations and anticipate against a similar incident.

"Meetings between heads of state, ministers and higher education institutions will further improve those relations," he concluded.

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