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## **Cultural Diplomacy: Searching For Asean Common Values**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 5 (Bernama) -- The general knowledge of cultural experiences is not between nation states but the people and the community in Southeast Asia, says former Malaysian ambassador to China, Datuk Abdul Majid Ahmad Khan.

"We need to share our cultural experiences and should not be thinking that Ankor Wat is only for Cambodians but take it as ASEAN, (the) same goes for Mount Kinabalu, Borobudur...it is all for ASEAN nations.

"The picture of a bundle of paddy on the ASEAN logo shows the exact similarities of all members of ASEAN countries," he said in a panel discussion on 'Cultural Diplomacy: Searching for ASEAN Common Values' organised by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations here today.

The discussion, participated by four panelists, including Abdul Majid, seeks to explore the role of cultural diplomacy in forming bridges and interaction within cultures, transcending national and cultural boundaries.

Panelist from School of International Studies Nanyang Technology University, Singapore, Associate Professor Dr Farish A. Noor said the path to success in attempting to seek ASEAN common values lay in the pre-colonial and pre-modern era.

"If today, there are objective viable elements of culture that we claim belong to different communities in Southeast Asia, that is partly because these things emerged from the pre-colonial and pre-modern times in Southeast Asia, where communities (not state) interacted with each other by trade, migration and marriage.

"States cannot share territory but people are able to share a culture," he said.

Meanwhile, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute chief operating officer, Ng Yeen Seen said searching ASEAN's common values included three main approaches - tourism, education and culture.

"Through this approach, compatibility among ASEAN countries will be much stronger and solid," she said.

Sharing Ng's view that education was an important foundation to develop the future ASEAN generation, United Nations Association Malaysia panelist, Datuk Kenneth Luis said ASEAN history should be taught at school.

"This is to enable the kids to understand and appreciate the regional countries," he added.

Also present during the lecture series were Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs founding president, Tunku Zain Al-Abidin ibni Tuanku Muhriz and former Malaysian ambassadors Tan Sri Razali Ismail and Tan Sri Muhammad Khatib.

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