

## **Zahid: Show respect - don't proceed with protests**

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Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has urged those planning to hold protests in conjunction with US President Barack Obama's visit not to do so out of respect for the guests.

Zahid said the visit of Obama and other foreign dignitaries during the Asean Summit is an honour to Malaysia as the host.

Obama is scheduled to arrive tomorrow for the Asean Summit, which will be held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, and he will depart on Nov 22.

“Two weeks ago, they held a demonstration in front of Masjid Putra in Putrajaya. I think we should celebrate differences of opinion, but I believe we should also respect our guests because we are the host of the Asean Summit.

“If there are differences in opinion, we should go towards constructive opinions and not destructive opinions. I hope they will be more open- hearted and open-minded.

“We should show that Malaysian etiquette is to respect guests, and these are important guests. The host's image must be safeguarded by all parties,” Zahid told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

He said this when asked by reporters to comment on a group that is planning to hold a protest outside the US Embassy in conjunction with Obama's visit. The group was not named throughout the press conference.

Meanwhile, in response to the query, US Ambassador to Malaysia Joseph Yun (photo) merely said, “This is not unusual of course, so we are used to it.”

Yun was referring to the many protests held outside the embassy in the past.

The group, Solidariti Anak Muda Malaysia (SAMM), had previously announced that it would hold a protest march against the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) in conjunction with Obama's visit.

The protest is to be held at 2pm tomorrow, starting at Menara Tabung Haji, which is about 600 metres from the US Embassy.

The US is the key proponent of the TPPA.

## **Agreement to combat crime**

Earlier today, Zahid witnessed the signing of the Malaysia-US agreement on Enhancing Cooperation in Preventing and Combating Serious Crime (PSCS), which is one of the prerequisites for admission into the US visa waiver programme.

Zahid said there are now 38 countries in the scheme, and Malaysia hopes to be the 39th country to join.

Under the programme, Malaysians will be able to travel to and stay in the US for up to 90 days, for tourism and business purposes, without a visa.

So far, the only two other Asean countries are entitled to visa-free travel in the US under the programme are Singapore and Brunei.

Yun said there is no definite timeline on when Malaysia would enter the programme, but he said Malaysia's progress has been swift and he is confident that Malaysia would be included soon.

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