

Malaysia trains sights on pressing issues at UN General Assembly
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Abdul Muin Majid, Bernama

Malaysia is set to voice out its views on and offer possible solutions to a number of pressing issues plaguing the world as the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) convenes at the UN headquarters in New York.

Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is leading the Malaysian delegation, will also get the chance to highlight Kuala Lumpur's contributions towards addressing issues such as the refugee crisis and securing global peace.

"It's worth noting that Malaysia is a (non-permanent) member of the United Nations Security Council and, as such, has been able to convey our views on matters affecting the international community," he told Malaysian media covering his participation at the UNGA in New York yesterday.

Today, Ahmad Zahid, who is also home minister, will participate in the High-Level Meeting to address large movements of refugees and migrants at the General Assembly.

On the refugee crisis stemming from conflicts including in places like Syria, he said Malaysia remained committed to fulfilling its pledge to receive 3,000 Syrian migrants over a three-year period as announced by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak at last year's UNGA.

This, he said, was despite Malaysia not being a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Ahmad Zahid said that at tomorrow's meeting, he would like to highlight efforts being done by Kuala Lumpur to address issues like those concerning the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) card holders.

He said there were currently some 154,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Malaysia and that it was important for the government to tackle problems associated with them to prevent the country from becoming a transit or final destination for such people, including economic migrants.

Another concern for Malaysia, he said, was the presence of close to 60,000 ethnic Rohingyas in the country.

In this regard, the deputy prime minister said Malaysia planned to organise an international conference on the mass movements of the Rohingyas by year-end.

“We are working together with the IOM (International Organisation for Migration) and UNHCR to ensure that Malaysia won’t have to (perennially) contend with the problem of mass movement of illegal immigrants,” he said.

Ahmad Zahid said that security measures at the border areas and law enforcement by relevant agencies were among efforts being undertaken to prevent the problem from happening.

“What has been stressed by the prime minister to the Home Ministry and Immigration Department is the need for standard operating procedures (SOPs) and relevant laws in Malaysia to be adhered to by everyone,” he said.

He further said that Malaysia had played a role in addressing trafficking in persons and would continue to cooperate with other countries like Britain on the matter of forced labour.

Ahmad Zahid is also scheduled to participate in the High-level Meeting on the situation in Syria at the UN Security Council on Sept 21 and deliver Malaysia’s national statement at the General Debate session on Sept 24.

- *Bernama*

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