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Myanmar waives visas for business, govt staff

BOOST: Move comes after meeting between Najib and Thein Sein

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MALAYSIA and Myanmar have agreed to waive visa requirements for government staff and the business community.

Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman said the decision was made during a meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Myanmar President U Thein Sein yesterday.

Najib had a restricted meeting with Thein Sein followed by bilateral meeting with the Myanmar delegation.

"Passport holders who are civil servants and the business community who have been endorsed by their respective chambers of commerce are not required to get visas," he said after the meetings at Perdana Putra complex here.

Anifah said the decision would ease travel between both countries. As for other travellers, he said both sides would be working on it step-by-step.

He said Malaysia and Myanmar had discussed finding ways and means to boost trade cooperation: Total trade between the two countries was RM3.18 billion last year.

Malaysia was the seventh largest investor in Myanmar and more efforts would be made to find ways to increase trade and investment, he said, adding that the Myanmar government had offered Petronas the opportunity to carry out oil field exploration.

Other areas of mutual interest for both sides to explore further included human resources, education, tourism as well as technical and capacity building, Anifah added.

He said the relevant ministries from both sides would be working closely on tourism and how best to promote not only Malaysia and Myanmar but the other Asean member states.

Anifah said Thein Sein had requested for additional flights from Kuala Lumpur to Yangon and Mandalay.

"The prime minister has agreed



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak with Myanmar President U Thein Sein at the Prime Minister's Office in Perdana Putra complex in Putrajaya yesterday. Thein Sein is on his first visit to the country. Pic by Fariz Iswadi Ismail

to look into this seriously and get input from Malaysia Airlines and AirAsia. But, whatever decision is made on this, it will be a business decision."

On whether the plight of Rohingyas was raised in the meeting, Anifah said it was brought up and the Myanmar president had shared what the country had done to tackle the issue, including determining whether the Rohingyas were qualified to be categorised as citizens before considering taking them back.

"For Malaysia, we have to respect the laws of Myanmar. But, we will continue engaging them in the best interest of the Rohingyas as we have quite a sizeable number of

them in Malaysia.

"If and when these people are not qualified to be citizens based on set criteria put in place by Myanmar, (then) what are we going to do with it.

"This will be discussed in the joint commission (for economic, scientific and technical cooperation) probably in June."

On murder cases involving Myanmar nationals in Malaysia, Anifah said the prime minister had brought it up with Thein Sein.

"Besides providing employment and dealing with other social problems, security was one aspect that was discussed.

"Both home affairs ministries will work closely and, from time to

time, we will see how best to improve the situation."

On the proposed common Asean time zone, Anifah said Thein Sein had considered it "favourably" and this idea could be one of the deliverable elements during Malaysia's chairmanship of Asean.

The prime minister had also extended an invitation to Thein Sein to attend the forthcoming 26th Asean Summit, which is scheduled to be held next month.

The Myanmar president was on a two-day state visit to Malaysia starting from Thursday. It was Thein Sein's first visit to Malaysia since he was appointed president in March 2011.

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