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Najib to discuss terrorism with Trump

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Issue at the top of agenda when both leaders meet next month in Washington

By Mergawati Zulfakar
merga@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Terrorism will top the agenda when Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak meets US President Donald Trump in Washington next month.

It is understood that the White House extended an official invitation to the Prime Minister through the Malaysian embassy in Washington several weeks ago for the two leaders to meet on Sept 12.

"The invitation came just before US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson visited Malaysia two weeks ago.

"The invitation from the Trump administration is an honour for Malaysia because it reflects the importance of the relations between both countries," said an official.

The White House, in a statement released yesterday, said Trump looked forward to discussing ways to strengthen the bilateral relationship and expand cooperation with one of America's closest partners in South-East Asia.

Najib told reporters after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting yesterday that terrorism will be discussed.

"One of the main topics will be our fight against extremism, Islamic State, militancy and also the role of Malaysia in making South-East Asia a zone of peace and harmony. We can improve our economic relationship with the US," he said.



Forging deeper relations: Najib and Trump with other leaders at the Arab-Islamic-US Summit in Riyadh in May. Najib and Trump will meet in Washington on Sept 12. — Bernama

Malaysian officials said terrorism is on the cards as the US recognised that Malaysia has been very consistent and strong in vocalising its position in the fight against terror.

"Malaysia is quite worried about

what is happening around the region, and we have supported initiatives like trilateral arrangements among Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines to fight terror.

"At the official level, we had a

discussion on this because South-East Asia could be a hotspot.

"We are on full alert with talk that there could be a gathering of foreign terrorist fighters who are facing defeat in the Middle East,"

said an official.

This is the 60th year of bilateral relations between the US and Malaysia.

In 2014, the relationship was elevated to a comprehensive partnership with robust ties in trade, investment, and educational and cultural relations.

"The intensity of ties have gone multi-faceted in many areas. Our ranking in the US Trafficking in Persons has improved and been recognised by Washington.

"We are making serious efforts to move up the rank to 'Tier 1,' the official said.

Trade related issues will also be raised during Najib's Washington visit. The US has labelled 16 countries as "trade cheats", causing it to face a trade deficit of almost US\$50bil. Malaysia is on the list.

International Trade and Industry Ministry officials said the visit will be an opportunity for Malaysia to explain the trade data discrepancy recorded, and that Malaysia's contribution to the US trade deficit in goods in 2016 was only 3.37%.

Its minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed is expected to meet US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross in Washington.

In 2016, the US was Malaysia's third largest trading partner after Singapore and China with trade totalling RM135.9bil, an increase of 5.3% from 2015.