

**Zahid Discusses Strengthening Bilateral Ties with Japan**  
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PUTRAJAYA, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- A delegation from the Japan-Malaysia Parliamentary Friendship Association (JMPFA) today called on Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also the Home Minister, held talks with the JMPFA delegation which was led by its chairman, Keiji Furuya, at his office at the Home Ministry.

Ahmad Zahid said in a statement later that Malaysia and Japan would strengthen bilateral relations and raise their enhanced partnership to a strategic partnership.

He said the exchange of visits at various levels between Malaysia and Japan would continue the momentum of high-level discussions for the benefit of their peoples.

"Malaysia and Japan plan to implement various programmes to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations next year," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said the Malaysian government hoped that Japanese firms would participate in the tender for the construction of the high-speed rail link between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

"The Japanese government has offered a financial aid package for the high-speed rail project. Malaysia is aware of the excellent Japanese track record in similar projects," he said.

On the halal industry, Ahmad Zahid said Malaysia was prepared to share its expertise, knowledge and experience and various services related to Japan.

"The demand for halal products will rise in Japan during the 2020 Olympic Games. Japan foresees a rise in the number of tourists and is keen to develop its halal industry," he said.

Ahmad Zahid also said that Malaysia garnered good returns from the first wave of its 'Look East' policy, particularly in the area of training and education in science and technology.

"The second wave of the Look East policy will continue efforts to empower bilateral cooperation with the economy as the primary focus to step up trade and investment opportunities in the areas of priority between the two countries.

Last year, Malaysia and Japan registered a two-way trade volume of RM127.4 billion (US\$32.77 billion), the fourth largest at the global level. Between January and August this year, total trade volume was RM77.92 billion (US\$19.07 billion).

Japan remains the biggest foreign investor in the manufacturing sector with more than 1,400 Japanese companies operating in Malaysia. The total investment last year was RM4 billion (US\$0.93

billion) with 60 projects that generated 5,201 employment opportunities.

Between January and August this year, total investment amounted to RM1.1 billion (US\$0.3 billion) with 36 projects that generated 1,283 jobs.

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