

Positive Attitude Of US Leaders On Putrajaya Administration Opens New Era

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From Mokhtar Hussain

WASHINGTON DC, Oct 11 (Bernama) -- The willingness of the United States' administration to have close cooperation with Malaysia in matters concerning terrorism, cross-border crime and visa exemption will open a new era in bilateral relations.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said Malaysia saw the positive attitude of the US leaders on the Putrajaya administration following the conclusion of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations in Atlanta recently.

However, this development did not mean Malaysia should 'kow tow' to the US, he told a group of Malaysians who had gathered at the grounds of the official residence of the Malaysian Ambassador here in conjunction with the National Sports Day celebration on Saturday morning.

"Good friends should not kow tow but they appreciate our contribution especially in resolving the problems of terrorism, cross-border crime," he said.

At the same time, he said Malaysia respected relations with the other major world powers, especially those countries which were closer neighbours.

The Deputy Prime Minister said that while at the US administration centre, he could feel the respect accorded during his meetings with several US leaders.

"Although we are a small nation while the US is a major power, the feeling of respect exists and we see the chemistry in the discussions that they appreciate what is being done by Malaysia," he said.

Among Ahmad Zahid's programmes here is the signing of the HSPD-6 Homeland Security Presidential Directives No.6 with the US Secretary of State John Kerry, aimed at enabling Malaysia to participate in the US visa exemption programme.

Prior to Ahmad Zahid's visit here, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, together with several other cabinet ministers, had attended the major sessions at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York while International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed was in Atlanta to conclude the TPP negotiations.

Commenting on the TPP to Malaysian journalists later, Ahmad Zahid said the US understood and respected Malaysia's policy which must be protected when the cooperation came into force.

As such, the Deputy Prime Minister said there should be no doubt from anyone in Malaysia that the rights which were enshrined in the national policies would be ignored.

On the possibility of opposition when the TPP was being debated by the US Congress, Malaysian Ambassador to the US, Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin who was also together with Ahmad Zahid, said although protests were expected, the Congress eventually was expected to pass the TPP which involved Malaysia. He said this confidence was voiced by the US Trade Representative, Michael Froman during a breakfast meeting with Ahmad Zahid recently.

Besides the US and Malaysia, the TPP also involved Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Japan, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. On the visa exemption programme, Ahmad Zahid said Malaysians should appreciate the recognition when Malaysia became the 39th country to join the programme.

"I received positive comments that Malaysians who are in the United States are capable people, who are professional and always look after the image of the country," he said.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also the Home Minister, said Malaysia would study the structure of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for adoption by the National Disaster Management Agency which was recently formed on Sept 2.

He said the FEMA structure had undergone a lot of improvements following the experience gained in handling the disasters that occurred in the US such as the Katrina Typhoon in 2005.

In addition, the U.S. Coast Guard also offered to help in providing training to enhance the effectiveness of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) in patrolling the national waters.

He said Malaysia would get to share intelligence information such as the suspects' list in efforts to prevent and fight organised crime especially those having networks in several countries.

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