

## **Human Trafficking, Extremism Matters On Ahmad Zahid's Agenda During U.S. Visit Bernama**

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**From Mokhtar Hussain**

WASHINGTON DC, Oct 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's visit here beginning Wednesday is not just confined to securing visa exemption for Malaysians visiting the United States.

The visit is also important in terms of improving Malaysia's status in the matter of handling human trafficking and cooperation in combating extremism.

After Ahmad Zahid signs the Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6 (HSPD-6), the final process is another agreement that will be signed during the visit of US President Barack Obama to Kuala Lumpur next month.

"Then, the process of the American visa exemption (for a visit of 90 days) for Malaysians is expected to be completed early next year," said the Malaysian Ambassador to the United States, Datuk Dr Awang Adek Husin.

Awang Adek said this was Ahmad Zahid's third visit to the United States administrative centre in a period of a year to strengthen cooperation at the officials level between Kuala Lumpur and Washington.

During his visits in October last year and April this year as the Malaysian home minister, Ahmad Zahid met, among others, US Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson besides leading senior officials at discussions with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Ahmad Zahid was appointed the deputy prime minister on July 28 this year.

On the current visit, Ahmad Zahid is scheduled to attend a dinner with several senior US officials, particularly of think tank groups who handle Malaysian affairs, such as assistant secretary of state and assistant secretary of defence.

Meetings such as these are important to facilitate bilateral matters and resolve issues involving the two nations, said Awang Adek.

Another important matter for Ahmad Zahid is seeking Malaysia's upgrade from Tier 3 to Tier 2 in the US human trafficking report.

The US State Department annual report on human trafficking for 2014 issued on June 20 this year had downgraded Malaysia to Tier 3 from the Tier 2 Watch List.

Awang Adek said Ahmad Zahid would also have luncheon meetings with US business leaders here under the auspices of the US-ASEAN Business Council.

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