

**Malaysia To Accept Professional, Semi-skilled Syrian Refugees - Ahmad Zahid
Bernama
Oct 8, 2015
From Mokhtar Hussain**

WASHINGTON DC, Oct 8 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is to give preference to professional and semi-skilled people in accepting the 3,000 Syrian refugees it has agreed to bring to Malaysia over the next three years.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the Home Ministry was working out the procedure for these refugees to move to Malaysia.

"This is Malaysia's commitment to the international community," he said, elaborating on the announcement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on the acceptance of the Syrian refugees when addressing the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Oct 1.

Referring to the Syrian boy who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea as part of the Syrian refugee crisis, Najib said the world community should not just sit back and watch what was going on.

It is estimated that more than four million Syrians have fled as refugees from the civil war in their country.

Ahmad Zahid said Malaysia was more committed now than during the war in the Balkan states when the country accepted 200 refugees from Bosnia Herzegovina.

He spoke to Malaysian journalists soon after he began a working visit Wednesday to the United States administrative centre.

The visit is at the invitation of the United States government," said Ahmad Zahid, who is also the home minister.

He is scheduled to sign the Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6 (HSPD-6) with US Secretary of State John Kerry, the final procedure for Malaysia to be granted exemption of visa for Malaysians visiting the United States.

An announcement on the facility is expected to be made by US President Barack Obama during his visit to Malaysia scheduled for next month.

Ahmad Zahid said all Malaysians eligible to visit the United States would enjoy the visa exemption. He said Malaysia had already complied with most of the matters on the checklist towards visa exemption, and the rejection rate for visa applications shall not exceed three per cent compared to the existing 4.2 per cent. However, he said, this was more of a technical hitch related to knowing how to fill the application form than a security issue.

The deputy prime minister said this matter could be addressed with the cooperation of the US Embassy in Kuala Lumpur through the holding of awareness programmes for tour agents and the public on the visa application procedure.

Ahmad Zahid, who is on his third visit to the United States since October last year, is scheduled to hold discussions with various authorities in Washington, such as the State Department, Homeland Security Department and organisations such as the CIA and FBI.

On the first day of his visit, Ahmad Zahid held meetings with the CIA and FBI.

The deputy prime minister held discussions separately with CIA director John O. Brennan and deputy director Mark F. Giuliano, on among other things cooperation in addressing the threat of extremism, on cyber security and cyber crime, including cross-border crime.

Ahmad Zahid said that besides exchanging information and intelligence information, the US could share with Malaysian enforcement agencies its expertise in software and training on cyber crime and cyber security.

He also said that amendments would be made to Malaysian laws to provide for monitoring of the cyberspace and social media in the country.

Ahmad Zahid invited the CIA and FBI to attend the Putrajaya International Security Dialogue on Oct 21-22 as well as the International Conference on Deradicalisation in Malaysia in January next year.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2015 BERNAMA

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/newsindex.php?id=1177769>