

Zahid Succeeds In Strengthening Malaysia-UK Relations In First Visit

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From Ahmad Fuad Yahya

LONDON, Nov 12 (Bernama) -- Despite a brief working visit, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi made a successful first visit to the United Kingdom (UK), clearly paving the way for bilateral Malaysia-UK cooperation in new specialist fields beside sharing experience in security management in the ever challenging times.

This achievement can be attributed to the fact that no country in the world can now deal with the threat of transnational crimes and terrorism unilaterally but needed strategic cooperation at the international level, either bilaterally or multilaterally.

It is quite interesting that Ahmad Zahid's visit this time is that not only Malaysian security agencies will have the opportunity to learn a lot from the UK on the management of the national security system, but UK, as a developed nation, is also keen to learn from Malaysia's experience in handling the problem of militant Islam and religious extremists in the de-radicalisation programme.

For Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, his meetings and discussions with his counterpart, UK Home Secretary and heads of security agencies in London and in Manchester during his four-day visit, greatly contributed to the anticipated success.

He also met the Director General of Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) Richard Hannigan despite having unable to accept the UK government's invitation to Cheltenham to see the CGHQ facility.

"Overall, various security issues have been touched and discussed, such as terrorist threats, radicalisation and extreme violence, human trafficking or modern-day slavery, cybercrime, and also immigration.

"Malaysia has always been taking appropriate action to curb the crime and terrorism threats but continuous improvements can be made by taking into account the experiences and best practices that have been undertaken by the UK and other countries," he told Malaysian journalists here at the end of his working visit on Wednesday.

For example, Ahmad Zahid said Malaysia could learn UK experience in screening air passengers entering or leaving the country, in preparation for the Malaysian officials, who would operate a similar system when it is implemented in the near future.

The implementation of the screening system is also a pre-condition for Malaysia in joining the United States' Visa Waiver programme soon.

One thing that is not less important is that Ahmad Zahid's meeting with May and Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Hugo Swire had gave him the

opportunity to explain about the steps taken by the Malaysian authorities on the medical treatment given to the former leader of Malaysia's opposition, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

His explanation that Anwar was not only treated locally for his health problems but also allowed to bring in foreign medical specialists to treat him in Malaysia, had surprised May and Swire, probably due to the impression given to them previously that Anwar were not given any treatment.

Anwar, who is currently serving his sentence in the Sungai Buloh Prison, also received 200 visits while in detention.

Earlier reports said that Anwar suffers from chronic shoulder injury.

Overall, Ahmad Zahid thanked the parties involved in conducting the visit, especially the Malaysian security agencies which had contributed to the anticipated success.

"On behalf of the Prime Minister's Department, I am very grateful to the Home Ministry, police, Immigration Department and office of the Malaysian High Commission in London for helping to ensure the success of this programme.

"My visit has deeply impacted not only Malaysia-UK bilateral relations, but it also has created several new cooperation," he said.

Ahmad Zahid, who arrived on a commercial flight on Sunday, departed for Malaysia on Wednesday evening using Malaysia Airlines.

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