

End to Confusion on Visa System for China's Tourists

Bernama

Feb 4, 2016

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BEIJING, Feb 4 (Bernama) -- The confusion on the visa system for tourists from China finally ended following the four-day working visit of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, here.

In the past, the visa-free program for tourists from China could not be implemented because the Chinese government had yet to give its feedback on the Malaysian initiative.

As a result, Chinese tourists had still to apply for the visa to visit Malaysia although the Cabinet had decided to introduce the six-month visa exemption for Chinese tourists coming in groups of 20 or more effective Oct 1 last year.

The government had decided early last year that payment for visa application from Chinese nationals would be exempted from Feb 15 to Dec 31 last year in an effort to attract more tourists from that country to Malaysia.

However, the initiative was postponed because the Chinese government did not give any feedback and as a result, there was confusion among the Chinese nationals on the visa requirement to visit Malaysia.

Ahmad Zahid's four-day working visit to China concluded in success by clearing the air on all confusions over the visa issue.

The success achieved during the brief visit proved that Malaysia not only had close diplomatic relations with China but also the long-established friendship that started in 1975.

Ahmad Zahid said the working visit followed the immediate action to ensure that the government's aspiration to accept eight million Chinese tourists to Malaysia had been achieved.

"We are aware that the Home Ministry had faced obstacles in implementing everything that had been agreed upon at the higher level previously. As such, the visit is to help in clearing several obstacles in administration faced by both countries to obtain the special approval in implementing the visa payment exemption and e-visa," he said.

He added that the brief visit was successful due to the cooperation of the Malaysian Ambassador to China, Datuk Zainuddin Yahya as well as the Malaysian Embassy officials in China to ensure the implementation beginning March 1 was not delayed.

In the 2016 Budget recalibration recently, the government announced visa exemption and the non-payment of fees for Chinese nationals visiting Malaysia for a period of less than 15 days.

It was also announced that tourists from China need not apply for visa to visit Malaysia between March 1 and Dec 31 this year.

Ahmad Zahid said his working visit was facilitated by the good relations between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Chinese President Xi Jinping and Chinese Prime Minister, Li Keqiang as well as his personal contact with the Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Centre of the Chinese Communist Party, Meng Jiangzhu, and his Chinese counterpart, Guo Shengkun (China's Public Security Minister).

"Such relationships must be maintained with other friendly nations such as the United States on a bilateral basis and multilateral basis especially with ASEAN member countries," he added.

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