

Economy, Tourism, Education among 10 Issues That Will Be Raised During India Visit - Ahmad Zahid

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From Mohd Faizal Hassan

NEW DELHI, July 17 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said economy, tourism, education, manpower and military technology are among 10 issues that will be discussed with Indian leaders during his three-day working visit here.

He said his maiden visit as Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister to India which kicked-off Sunday, showed Malaysia's commitment and strong diplomatic ties with India which has been built since 1957.

"This trip not only strengthens our diplomatic ties but it also involves government-to-government, business-to-business and people-to-people relationships between both nations. In terms of diplomacy, that shows our seriousness to create a win-win situation both ways.

"Both countries will also celebrate their 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties next year. Coincidentally, India will be hosting the 25th ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit next year," he told Malaysian media here Sunday.

Elaborating on the tourism issue, Ahmad Zahid said as Malaysia receives more than 700,000 Indian tourists each year, Malaysia would further ease tourist arrivals from India via the e-visa system that would be officially launched here during his visit. It was introduced last April in Malaysia.

Recently, the Malaysian government introduced the Electronic Travel Authorization Visa (e-visa) for a short visit to Malaysia and is valid for a single journey stay of maximum 30 days in Malaysia for tourism purposes.

On manpower, Ahmad Zahid, who is also Malaysian Home Minister, explained that the government had received applications from industry players to increase the number of foreign workers especially in the services and manufacturing sectors.

"This is a sensitive issue. Therefore it is much better if we put it in great detail before we make and conclude any decision," he said, adding that currently there were 130,000 Indian workers including expatriates in Malaysia.

Touching on trade, Ahmad Zahid said India is Malaysia's 10th largest trading partner with total investment amounting to USD1.77 billion (RM5 billion) involving various fields including infrastructure and public services.

As for education, Ahmad Zahid said that currently there are at least 5,000 Malaysian medical and dentistry students in India while as for military technology, he said India had enjoyed strong defence cooperation and participation with Malaysia via the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace

Exhibition (LIMA) and Defence Services Asia Exhibition and Conference (DSA) series.

"During my visit, I will also be meeting up with the Telengana State Minister of Industries who wants to learn from us on the successful development carried out in Cyberjaya, Putrajaya and other big cities in Malaysia," he added.

This maiden visit by Ahmad Zahid is significant towards enhancing bilateral cooperation between the two countries on various issues and fields of common interest.

Following his visit to India, the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister is scheduled to make a two-day working visit to Sri Lanka beginning Thursday.

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