

**Malaysia to Look Into India's Request for Prisoner Transfer Programme - Ahmad Zahid
Bernama
July 18, 2016
From Mohd Faizal Hassan**

NEW DELHI, July 18 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will look into India's request for an international transfer of prisoners programme with the country, said Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said the matter had been previously discussed at the level of senior government officials, and would now be scrutinized at a higher level.

"We will scrutinize this request at the right time. It needs approval from our Attorney-General's Chambers," he told Malaysian media covering his three-day working visit to India, here on Monday.

Ahmad Zahid noted that Malaysia had such prisoner transfer arrangements with countries like Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Iran, Iraq, Latvia, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Turkey.

For a similar programme with India to materialize, he said certain terms and conditions according to international practice would need to be fulfilled.

For one, he said, the transfer of international prisoners could only be carried out with countries having similar laws with Malaysia.

To be eligible to be transferred to their country of origin, Ahmad Zahid said the prisoners, among others, should not be those on death row and their cases should not involve rape and sodomy.

Earlier, Ahmad Zahid met India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval in a closed-door meeting where discussions focused on security and safety issues between the two nations, including the international prisoner transfer programme.

The Malaysian deputy prime minister noted that of the 361 Indian nationals - 342 men and 19 women - currently held in Malaysia, 41 would technically qualify for such an international prisoner transfer scheme.

A total of 221 of them were convicted for dangerous drugs and immigration offences while 140 others were under remand detention.

"Our Prisons Department is continuously undertaking rehabilitation programmes for them per standard operating procedure," he said, adding that there were now some 55,000 prisoners, including 16,170 foreigners, in Malaysia.

On efforts to combat drug abuse, Ahmad Zahid said he had discussed with Ajit possible cooperation and joint efforts on this matter despite no formal agreements between both sides.

On Malaysia's efforts to curb radicalism, Ahmad Zahid said the Blue Ocean Strategy programme under the Malaysian Prisons Department had been a success and several countries had shown interest to learn from Malaysia.

He said that under the programme, 97 per cent of those rehabilitated did not return to their extremist activities.

"This programme makes Malaysia an example of the most successful country in the deradicalisation programme since it was introduced in January," he added.

Ahmad Zahid arrived here Sunday for a three-day working visit to enhance ties between Malaysia and India.

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