

VISA EXEMPTION PROGRAM TO UNITED STATES NEARLY READY - AMBASSADOR

Arau, April 14 - Visa Waiver Program to enable Malaysians to visit the United States (US) without a visa are expected to be completed in the near future, said US Ambassador to Malaysia, Joseph Y. Yun.

According to him, through the program implemented over the past two years, Malaysia will need to comply with certain conditions set by the US government which maintains the visa refusal rate below three per cent for a year.

He said, basically, Malaysia has shown better performance in relation to visa refusal rates when achieved 3.4 percent now versus 11 percent in the last five years.

"We are almost certainly finish (visa exemption) if seen to this favorable performance," he said.

He said this while delivering the International Lecture entitled "Strategic Relations Malaysia-United States" at Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra (PTSFP) Library Auditorium in the main campus of Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) here yesterday.

Raja Muda of Perlis, who is also UniMAP Chancellor, Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Ibni Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Jamalullail and Raja Puan Muda of Perlis, Tuanku Hajah Lailatul Shahreen Akshah Khalil also consented to attend the lecture, which was organized by UniMAP Centre for Leadership and Academic Development (LEAD).

Also present were Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic and International UniMAP, Dato 'Prof. Dr. Zul Azhar Zahid Jamal and top management of UniMAP.

Yun goes on to explain, when the program is implemented, Malaysia will become the first Muslim-majority country granted visa waivers.

He explained that, in addition to the rate of visa refusal, Malaysia and the United States also signed an agreement on security documents to enable the two countries to exchange data on crime and terrorism.

"Many see this agreement as something negative, but in fact the presence of this data exchange, the US will be able to restrict individuals who should be barred from entering the US.

"It is difficult in fact to mark criminals and terrorists under the terms of a country, and it actually delays the process of this visa waiver. However, based on the agreement signed, it is expected to be completed in the near future," he added.

Yun before it even attended lunch with Tuanku Raja Muda and Raja Puan Muda of Perlis and the Mufti, Assoc. Prof. Datuk Dr. Mohd. Asri Zainul Abidin.