

Rahinah wins US 'fight'

VINDICATED:

Lecturer barred from entering the US in 2005

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AFTER Dr Rahinah Ibrahim's nine-year exhaustive battle to strike her name off the United States Department of Homeland Security's terrorist watch list, the architecture professor, who won her case on Tuesday, has emerged unscathed.

"I bear no grudge against the US government because I want to move forward and I am excited about the future," she said, adding that she hoped to go to Silicon Valley in San Francisco soon to carry out her research and development projects.

Rahinah told the *New Straits Times*, in an exclusive interview at her office in Universiti Putra Malaysia, that she heard the news from her husband yesterday morn-



UPM's Dr Rahinah Ibrahim says she was frustrated when most international scholars whom she had tried to work with shut her out

ing. Her lawyer, Elizabeth Pipkin's email to convey to her the good news, followed.

The mother of four, who had a smile plastered on her face throughout the interview said she was unnerved by the likelihood of another round of legal battles should the US attorney appeal the decision by District judge William Alsup in San Francisco to rule against the Federal Government's no-fly policy.

The judge had also ruled that existing procedures to correct mistakes on that list did not pro-

vide adequate due process.

"I will fight it if it turns out that way. This is not only for me, but also others who had been unfairly categorised as terrorists by the system," Rahinah, who is dean of UPM's Faculty of Design and Architecture, said, adding that she was the sole Stanford alumni in the country.

Rahinah said her determination to fight against being barred from entering the US was also because she wanted to be the conduit for the sharing of knowledge between both countries.

Sharing the hardship she went through in the pursuit of greater knowledge, Rahinah said she was frustrated when most international scholars, whom she had tried to engage in the course of her work and study, shut her out because of her supposed links to terrorism.

Breathing a sigh of relief, Rahinah said it was hard for her and her family to say much about her case for the past nine years, for fear of jeopardising her case.

It is a widely-held belief that once you're in the watch list, it's almost impossible to get out.

The US government's secret terrorist watch list contains more than 900,000 names, according to the most recent figures released this

year by the US National Counter Terrorism Centre. The no-fly list had about 21,000 names as of early last year — Rahinah's included.

The 48-year-old said following the ruling, she was not expecting any privileges to be extended her way.

"I respect the Homeland Security's rules. When I apply to go to the US soon, I will go through the same process as everyone else."

Her case, filed in 2006, is the first legal challenge of its kind against the US government to go to trial when the court rejected the US government's application to dismiss the suit on grounds of secrecy.

Rahinah, who was then pursuing her doctorate at Stanford University, was on her way to Hawaii in January 2005 for a conference when she was detained and interrogated for two hours at the San Francisco International Airport before being told she was in the US government no-fly list. She was released and flew to Hawaii the next day, before returning to Malaysia.

When she tried to return to the US, she was told her student visa had been revoked on unspecified grounds relating to terrorism. **Additional reporting by Akil Yunus**