

Pressed by student, Obama vows to nudge Najib on transparency
MalaysiaKini.com
Nov 20th, 2015
Alyaa Alhadjri

Visiting US President Barack Obama has pledged to raise the issue of transparency in governance during his scheduled meetings with Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

"I will do it. I have to admit I was going to do it anyway but now that I am hearing it from you, I will definitely do it," said Obama at the Young South-East Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) town hall gathering.

Some 500 past participants of the two-year-old programme attended the event at the Taylor's University in Subang Jaya today.

"The US always has to be a little careful because we are a big country with a lot of influence and some people say they don't want us meddling in their internal affairs," he said in response to a question by a YSEALI fellow from Malaysia.

Obama was urged to ask Najib to introduce more transparency in the country's institutions, particularly with regard to the MACC, Bank Negara and the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) which are involved in ongoing investigations linked to state-investment arm 1MDB which are in turn linked to Najib himself.

The participant also said that Obama should address the issue of Malaysia's "failed justice system" and the crackdown on freedom of expression in his meetings with Najib.

"Countries work best when everybody has a voice that can be respected, where the press can report on what is happening and when people can organise peacefully," said Obama.

"When you look at countries that have done best in terms of development, typically, over time, those countries that have accountability and some measures of personal freedom tend to do better," said Obama.

Diplomatic dilemma

Obama said he also engaged with individual leaders through international platforms such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) grouping as well as Asean, encouraging them to move towards a more transparent administration.

“There have also been occasions of the US cooperating with countries that do not have very good human rights records but I assure you, whenever I meet their leaders, these (human rights) issues will be raised,” he said.

The *Wall Street Journal* had reported that observers are closely watching how Obama dealt with what they described as a "diplomatic dilemma" on his second visit here in conjunction with the 27th Asean summit.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/320415>