

Obama: TPPA encourages accountable governments

MalaysiaKini.com

Nov 21st, 2015

Geraldine Tong

The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) will encourage more accountability among governments involved in the trade agreement, US President Barack Obama said.

"(The) TPPA has the strongest anti-corruption and transparency standards of any trade agreement in history.

"So the TPPA encourages stronger, more effective and accountable governments," Obama said in his speech at the Asean Business and Investment Summit 2015 in Kuala Lumpur today.

The TPPA is a wide-ranging trade agreement involving the United States and 11 other countries, including Malaysia.

Negotiations on the deal were concluded in Atlanta, US, on Oct 5, but it still needs to be signed by the governments of the respective member countries.

Obama, who is on a three-day working trip in Malaysia, said corruption damages a country's ability to be competitive and prosperous.

"Corruption drains billions of dollars that can (instead) be used to improve the lives of citizens.

"Imagine the schools, hospitals and bridges that can be built (instead); the investments that can make countries more competitive and more prosperous," he said.

Tough against corruption, abuses

The TPPA will require countries to enact laws against corruption, he added, and that the countries must enforce those laws.

Other than standards against corruption, Obama stressed again that TPPA has the highest trade standards ever committed in a trade agreement.

Unlike other trade agreements, the TPPA also has human rights and universal values and environmental standards embedded within, he said.

"The standards we described are actually enforceable.

"We're going to be vigilant, to make sure countries fulfil their obligations (in the TPPA). And if they don't, we will take action," he said.

The TPPA, then US president asserted, will also help workers and companies to stay competitive in the global economy.

"The TPPA is a win for the kind of trade that the workers and companies need to compete in the 21st Century.

"It makes sure globalisation works for us, and not against us," Obama said.

'Slavery' has to stop

In his speech, Obama also strongly condemned human trafficking.

"This is not labour. This is akin to modern slavery. It has to stop," he said.

Internationally-recognised labour rights contained within the TPPA, he said, would help to stop human trafficking.

The US State Department had previously [upgraded Malaysia](#) in its Trafficking In Persons (TIP) Report from Tier 3, the worst ranking, to Tier 2 this year.

This is despite the discovery of mass graves of suspected human trafficking victims at the Malaysia-Thai border about a month before this year's TIP Report was released.

Many have criticised the upgrade as politically motivated, specifically to allow the US to engage with Malaysia to sign the TPPA, although US Secretary of State John Kerry has **denied** this.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/320456>