

**Too premature to make final decision on TPPA, says Mustapa**  
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Malaysia and other countries participating in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) say that it is too premature to make a final decision on the fate of the trade pact.

International Trade and Industry Minister Mustapa Mohamed, who met trade ministers from Australia, the United States and Peru on the sidelines of the 24th Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Summit on Friday, said no decision can be made until foreign and trade policies, and the appointment of key personalities are in place in president-elect Donald Trump's new administration.

"We slogged over this pact for a very long time, five years of intensive negotiations (to conclude the TPPA).

"Not fair to rush into a decision," he told Malaysian reporters covering the summit and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's participation in the 24th Apec Economic Leaders' Meeting to be chaired by Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.

Apec, formed in 1989, is a forum for 21 Pacific Rim countries seeking to promote free trade and economic cooperation, and achieve prosperity among member states.

It is made up of Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the US, and Vietnam.

Twelve Apec members participated in the TPPA namely Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, Vietnam and Japan.

Mustapa explained that Malaysia participated in the TPPA as it had no free trade agreement with the United States, Mexico, Canada and Peru.

He said Malaysia and other trade ministers were anxiously waiting for President Barack Obama's meeting with all 12 leaders from TPPA countries today, on the sidelines of the Apec Summit, to get a clearer picture of the United States' stance on the TPP.

Obama is expected to brief the leaders on the current status and steps taken by him to persuade the new US administration and Congress of the TPPA's advantageous to the United States.

Mustapa said there were three categories of TPPA countries, following the latest developments in the United States, namely, countries which are very committed like Japan and New Zealand, countries which are assessing but adopting a 'wait-and-see' approach and countries like Vietnam which wants to review the TPPA.

"For Malaysia, we are still keen to see the TPPA become a reality and be part of the pact," he said, adding that it may take months or even a year to get a clear picture of the new administration's trade policy.

- *Bernama*

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