

# Najib: No time frame for FTA deal

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia will not be pressured by time frames or deadlines in its free trade negotiations with the United States.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said Malaysia's stand was clear, that negotiations would continue until both Malaysia and the US reached a mutually acceptable decision.

"We are not constrained with respect to any specific timetable.

"We will not be bound to a time frame and we will study every issue with the utmost care," he said yesterday after an interview with Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM).

A media report yesterday said a two-week deadline was looming as US President George W. Bush would lose his Trade Promotion Authority, which allowed deals to be fast-tracked through Congress, on July 1.

The Malaysia-US FTA negotiations needed to be wrapped up by the end of the month to give the US Congress the requisite time of three months to consider the deal, the report said.

The report quoted Steve Norton, a spokesman for US Trade Representative Susan Schwab, as saying that the Malaysian Cabinet remained locked in debate about crucial provisions of the deal, including government procurement rules.

The report added that during negotiations last month, Malaysia had informed the US that "it needed more time to develop a political consensus in favour of the ambitious pact".

Najib said Malaysia's stand had been made known to the US government by International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

Asked whether the US was pressuring Malaysia into making a decision, Najib replied: "No, the US will not pressure us."