

# Rafidah: No hard and fast rules for trade pact

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia is not bound by any US government procedure, so the ongoing negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement between both countries can continue.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said the impending expiry of the current United States Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) did not mean that negotiations could not go on.

“(US Trade Representative) Su-

san Schwab has told me that negotiations can still go on even if they do not get their TPA, it doesn't matter,” said Rafidah in the Parliament lobby yesterday.

“We can continue to negotiate until everything is resolved satisfactorily.”

Asked to comment on the yet-to-be-concluded FTA, Rafidah said both sides had to ensure that the terms were favourable to them.

“It's the same thing for the US. We might have asked for some-

thing they cannot comply with. Both parties have agreed that they should be looking at the terms very objectively in the spirit of wanting to come to a conclusion, meaning that neither of us should be hard and fast on things which the other can move on.

“There are certain things which we will not compromise on, for example, the Bumiputera agenda, government procurement rules and government sovereign rights.

“All in all, Malaysia is not bound

by any US government procedure.”

The US is aiming for discussions to be wrapped up by this month for consideration by the US Congress, 90 days before the current TPA expires.

The TPA granted to negotiate FTAs expires in June, after which the US Congress needs to approve a new mandate for talks.

“I will be answering at length in parliament on this issue and will also be appearing in an interview on RTM tomorrow.”

