

Nation comes first in FTA talks, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Government will always safeguard the nation's interest in its negotiations on the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States.

He said the matter was discussed at length by the Cabinet yesterday and would again be discussed at

next week's Cabinet meeting.

"The Government fully understands the thinking and concerns of the people on this matter. I would like to assure them that the nation's interest will always be safeguarded and will not be sacrificed in any way," he said.

Some quarters had expressed concern that the FTA with the United

States would only benefit the Americans.

A total of 18 issues are being negotiated with the United States in the FTA and they include industrial goods, textiles and clothing, Customs procedures, intellectual property rights, agriculture, financial services, telecommunications, the environment and investment.

Several rounds of talks have been held in the last year with the latest in Kota Kinabalu last month.

Malaysia has taken the stand that there is no timeframe for the conclusion of the FTA negotiations but the United States hopes that the deal could be sealed by this July. — Bernama

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»The nation's interest will not be sacrificed in any way«

DATUK SERI ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI