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PM has final say on TPP

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It's now up to Najib to decide on Trans Pacific Partnership

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia's decision to stay or quit the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) – a trade deal involving 12 Pacific Rim countries – is now in the hands of the Prime Minister.

It is understood that after days of negotiations in Atlanta and progress made on government procurement and biologic drugs chapters, several partners in the TPP remain unhappy with Malaysia's position on state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed, who is in the United

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Malaysian official

States for the two-day ministerial TPP meeting, was given the mandate by the Cabinet to negotiate outstanding issues, including the SOEs.

After the first day of meeting, the

situation remained “tricky”, according to an official.

Mustapa had indicated in an interview this week that the SOE chapter was the toughest one for Malaysia but insisted that his team of negotiators wanted a better deal.

He also reaffirmed the Government's commitment that the TPP had to be agreed on Malaysia's terms.

“Tomorrow (today) is D-day. Parties are closing gaps, ministers are optimistic that negotiations can conclude. But the SOEs remain a complication.

“With the limited mandate given to the negotiating team, it will now have to be a political decision at the highest level,” said an official.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, in a

dialogue session with the US business community in New York, said yesterday that he was a strong TPP supporter and echoed Mustapa's views that Malaysia needed to engage the wider world, remove trade barriers and protectionism.

The TPP seeks to cut trade barriers and set common standards among a dozen nations from Japan to Chile, but talks have become snared over a set of issues, including dairy trade and patent periods for biologic drugs.

It is understood this will be the final meeting at the ministerial level as TPP leaders are scheduled to meet at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Manila next month.