

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	16 NOVEMBER 2016

# Committed to boosting trade

NST-16/11/2016

**STANCE:** Malaysia to strengthen economic relations with US and other nations with or without TPP, says Najib



Reporting from Tokyo

**M**ALAYSIA is committed to boost trade ties with the United States and other nations with or without the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free-trade pact, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said.

The fate of the proposed free-trade pact is now in a limbo after Donald Trump, who has called for the US to abort the trade deal, won the US presidential election.

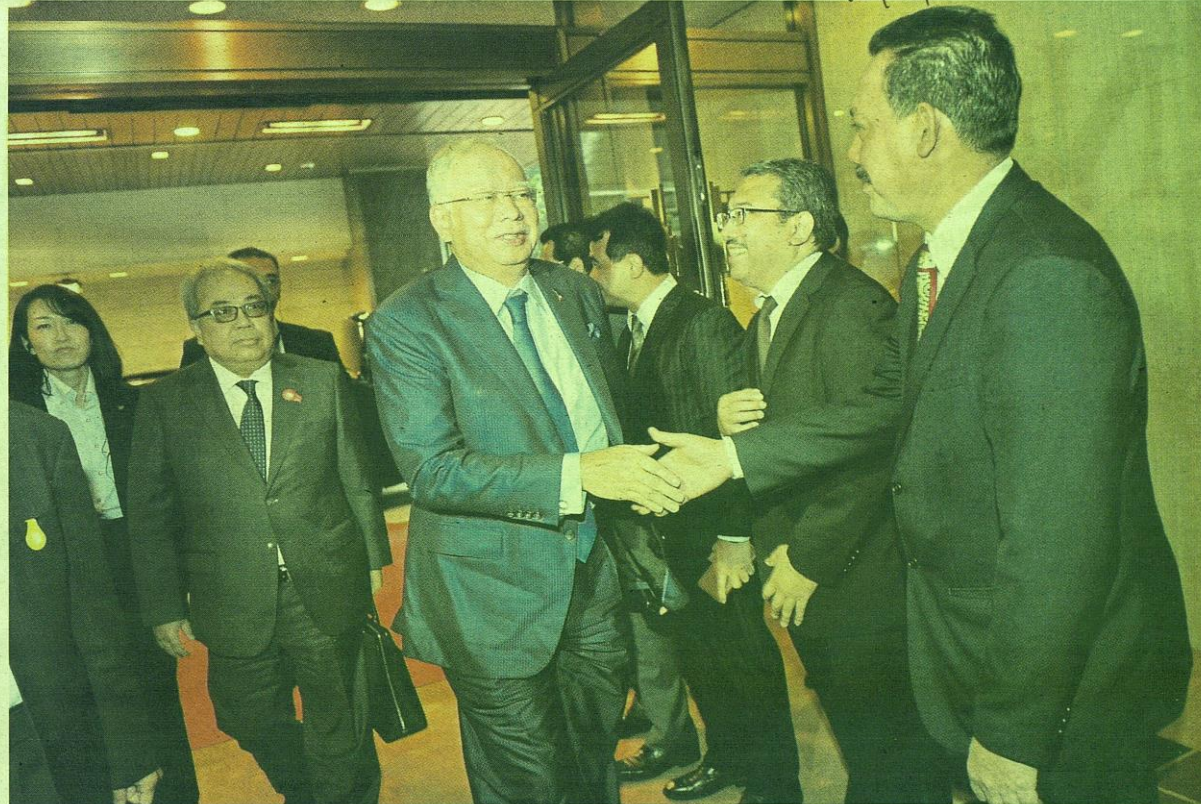
Najib, in an interview with Japan's *Nikkei Asian Review* published yesterday, said it would be premature for Malaysia to make any conclusions before Trump assumes office in January.

But, he said, there would not be a TPP, which groups 12 countries, without the US involvement. The US alone accounts for some 60 per cent of the combined gross domestic product of the pact's members.

"Whether TPP proceeds or not, we remain committed to strengthening our economic and trade ties with the US and the other countries involved," he said.

Najib arrived here earlier yesterday at the start of his three-day working visit to Japan where he will hold talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe today on bilateral economic cooperation.

Najib's published comments came



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** greeting embassy officials on arrival in Tokyo on Monday. Bernama pic

as Abe said Japan should step in to lead efforts to put TPP into effect at an early date given the change of power in Washington D.C.

Japanese lawmakers last week adopted TPP which, besides Japan and the US, includes 10 other countries: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

The free trade area would encompass about 40 per cent of global economic power and was championed by outgoing US President Barack Obama.

With the pact, Obama intended to set the global trade agenda in the

face of China's increasing economic clout.

"Now, at a time when the United States is going through a change of government, our country should be leading efforts for early effectuation (of the TPP)," Jiji Press quoted Abe as saying at a meeting on Monday of a House of Councillors special committee on the TPP.

"It's not yet over," Abe said. "The TPP is necessary, especially now, when protectionism is prevailing."

"We have to show our country's will, or the TPP will be completely dead," Abe also said, stressing the significance of approval of the trade

pact by the Diet.

"We will show to the world our ability to produce an outcome."

Japanese lawmakers have also mentioned the possibility of a TPP that doesn't include the US, citing reports that Mexico's Economy Minister Idefonso Guajardo said such a scenario should be considered.

Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski also made similar comments over the weekend.

The Japanese, Mexican and Peruvian stance seemed to be at odds with the existing provisions of the TPP.

Najib and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri

Mustapa Mohamed said existing provisions clearly stated that the agreement would effectively be dead without the inclusion of the US.

Mustapa said yesterday the agreement required ratification of at least six countries, accounting for 85 per cent of the total GDP of the 12 countries, to bring it into force.

"Hence, there will be no TPP without the US' participation," he said, adding that leaders of the 12 TPP member-states will meet on the sidelines of this weekend's APEC Summit in Lima, Peru to discuss the way forward.