

PM to raise tariff issue with Rubio

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Anwar says Malaysia must defend its position and maintain positive ties with US

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is continuing negotiations with the United States over the recently announced 25% tariffs, with Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim saying he will raise the matter with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in their meeting today.

The Prime Minister said relations with the United States must continue, adding that Malaysia must also defend its position.

"We are still in the midst of negotiations, and when I meet Secretary Rubio, I will raise some

of these issues for his consideration before the final decision by US President Donald Trump," he told reporters after officiating the 58th Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings.

Anwar said Malaysia had sent teams to negotiate and explain Malaysia's role as a trading nation.

"Any unilateral tariffs will have a negative impact on the country's economy as well as the region," he said.

Rubio is making his first trip to Asia as America's top diplomat.

He will be travelling to Malaysia to meet with Asean countries.

On April 2, Trump announced tariffs on various countries including 24% on Malaysia.

The tariffs were paused for 90 days to allow for negotiations.

On Monday, Trump announced varying tariff rates on 14 countries to take effect on Aug 1, including a 25% rate on Malaysia.

Apart from Malaysia, 25% tariffs were also imposed on countries including Japan, South Korea, Tunisia and Kazakhstan.

Some countries were hit with higher rates such as South Africa (30%); Bosnia and Herzegovina (30%); Indonesia (32%); Serbia (35%); Bangladesh (35%); Cambodia (36%); Thailand (36%); and 40% on Laos and Myanmar.

International Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz meanwhile said that Malaysia is optimistic that further negotiations will bring a positive outcome.

He said the Aug 1 deadline provides Malaysia several weeks to

negotiate for a "win-win" trade deal for both countries.

"Of course, we will continue the engagement.

"If we are not optimistic, why should we continue the engagement?"

"The important thing is that the US still wants to negotiate," he added.

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See pages 5 and 6