

Najib Holds Productive Meetings Prior To APEC

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HONOLULU, Nov 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak held a series of productive meetings prior to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit which included deepening ties with Russia, raising Malaysia's profile among top American and Apec chief executive officers and most significantly fast-tracking negotiations for an ambitious Trans-Pacific Partnership.

In what was surely an historic leaders meeting hosted by US President Barack Obama Saturday morning, the nine TPP leaders agreed to a completion of a broad outline agreement by July 2012, Najib said in wrapping up the first day of the meetings here.

Najib told reporters he stressed to fellow leaders that ultimately, the TPP free trade agreement should have a balanced outcome, taking into account domestic priorities as well as issues pertaining to labour, environment, government procurement and dispute settlement.

This entails engaging the various stakeholders so that the final TPP pact will be mutually beneficial for all parties.

Negotiators will meet in December to iron out the details to accelerate talks and assess the progress that can be achieved by next year.

The Prime Minister also had a fruitful meeting with his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, whereby the latter noted there was room to take trade linkages to a higher level in areas such as palm oil, tourism and medical education.

He was also impressed with an initial investment made by Petronas in Russia.

There were also calls by Medvedev for Malaysia to increase air connectivity with Russia to locations such as Vladivostok where the next APEC summit would be held in efforts to step up business ties.

Google Executive Director Eric Schmidt, who also met Najib, was taken up by the Prime Minister's propensity in embracing information and communications technology and using social networks such as facebook and twitter to blog and engage the rakyat.

The International Trade and Industry Ministry would look into helping small-and-medium-enterprises to go online and increase their connectivity.

He also met American and APEC private sector officials including those from Ayala Group, Jardine Matheson and Sangyong Engineering who were keen to know investment opportunities offered under the Economic Transformation Programme.

Najib would join other APEC leaders and Obama at the Ihilani J.W. Marriott to deliberate on issues affecting APEC's future and regional integration efforts and measures that need to be taken to increase its economic resilience against a backdrop of the debt crisis in Europe which is threatening the global economy.

Obama is expected to come out with a Honolulu Declaration, at the end of the summit, which will set the way forward for APEC.

Malaysia is expected to host the APEC summit in 2016 by rotation practice.

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