

Obama requests TPP meet with Asean leaders
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MERGAWATI ZULFAKAR in PHNOM PENH

PHNOM PENH: United States President Barack Obama has requested for a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) meeting with some of the Asean leaders attending the Asean Summit and Related Summits here.

The meeting to be held here today is expected to explore ways and exchange views on how to conclude the TPP negotiations.

Officials said the special meeting was requested by the White House before Obama's re-election.

However, only half of the TPP countries are attending the meeting as Canada, Mexico, Peru are not involved in the series of the Summits involving Asean and its dialogue partners here.

Asean members involved in the TPP are Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam and non Asean are Australia and New Zealand.

The TPP is a free trade agreement that aims to further liberalise the economies of the Asia-Pacific region.

Obama during the last TPP leaders meeting in Honolulu last year had hoped that by the middle of this year, substantive elements would be in place.

International Trade and Industry Minister Mustapa Mohamed said he hoped that with Obama calling for the meeting, there would be momentum to the TPP.

"However, it will not be straightforward (negotiations) because we have to protect our own interest.

"It is not TPP at all costs because when we negotiate we look after our own interest," he said on Saturday.

Officials said the negotiations were still complex because of the growing number of countries included in the TPP list.

"A lot of work is still being done to complete it fast is a challenge. Now the countries involved are 11 from just nine.

" I dont think the leaders can take any decision in Phnom Penh because some of the participating countries are not here," said an official.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is attending the TPP meeting.

The 15th round of negotiations among officials will be held in New Zealand from Dec 3 to Dec 12.

Source:

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