

**TPPA serves the interest of the United States, warns Dr Mahathir  
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BY LEE SHI-IAN**

The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) is not a free trade agreement, it is a controlled trade agreement put together by an impoverished nation trying to exploit the natural resources of other countries, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (pic).

"The United States has fallen into hard times because its expenditure is greater than its revenue. Therefore, it is now trying to exploit the natural resources of young independent countries to boost its coffers," Dr Mahathir said in his keynote address at a TPPA roundtable discussion today.

He said although presently there are only 12 countries including the United States and Malaysia participating in the TPPA negotiations, the United States is hoping that more will be attracted to the group.

"It is true, the United States is a very big market and which country in the world doesn't want a slice of the cake? But there are very stringent conditions which has to be met first before foreign companies can gain access into the United States market," said Dr Mahathir, who was the country's longest serving prime minister.

While Malaysia would benefit from exporting more goods to the United States via the TPPA, he also cautioned that it was merely bait for Malaysia to sign up.

He pointed out that the country had yet to reach developed nation status and imports from the United States would exceed exports from Malaysia.

The two-day event held at Intan Mont Kiara in Kuala Lumpur was organised by Malay Economic Action Council (MTEM) which hoped that Dr Mahathir's influence would put pressure on Putrajaya to withdraw from the TPPA negotiations.

"The TPPA discussions have been going on for several years and have been shrouded in secrecy with just scraps of information being released by the government. Naturally, when negotiations are carried out in such a hush-hush manner, the public is bound to feel suspicious," Dr Mahathir said.

He said South American countries that had signed Free Trade Agreements with the United States had lost more than gained from it. That, he said, could happen to Malaysia too.

"We will have no avenues to appeal any decisions. The United States will benefit more from signing the TPPA with Malaysia than the other way around," he added, warning that there could even be a repeat of the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

"The United States can table tenders for military procurements, they will offer tanks and fighter jets to Malaysia. If we don't buy from them, they will question whether the tender process was fair and take us to a court or tribunal to claim that Malaysia has not kept its promise."

He expressed confidence that Malaysia could continue to progress without being a party to

the TPPA, pointing out that the country had reached its current trading status without being involved in such agreements.

"We are not that savvy in negotiating and signing these type of agreements, take the Singapore-Malaysia water concession agreement for example. The TPPA is just a ploy by the United States to match China's growing economic threat by putting all the Asia-Pacific countries in its pocket."

"If Malaysia signs up for the TPPA, it will be akin to colonising the country again as we will not be able to decide our own affairs without interference," he adding, firing a final shot by saying the West was trying to regain control of its former colonies. - August 26, 2013.

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