

**Malaysia Will Not Be A Mere Yes Man In TPPA Negotiations, Says Najib
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From Mohd Iswandi Kasan Anuar**

NUSA DUA (BALI), Oct 8 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will not be a mere "yes man" in the ongoing Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) negotiations, a 12-nation initiative to establish a free trade area (FTA) in the Asia-Pacific region, to protect the country's sovereign and independent rights, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Tuesday.

He said Malaysia had stated its firm stand that it would perform the "domestic process" -- to explain the agreement to the Cabinet; to the people of Malaysia; and to debate the agreement in Parliament before making a decision on the matter.

"We will never be a "Yes Man" at all, that's not true. We entered (TPPA talks) on our free will because we are trading nation, among the biggest in the world.

"That's why we have interests to join as a TPPA negotiator and has the opportunity to determine the new FTA framework in the world," he told Malaysian journalists after attending the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Ministers' Meeting here Tuesday.

Najib said Malaysia will not have the opportunity to offer inputs and views to shape the world free trade if the country was not engaged in the negotiations.

The prime minister said the TPP Ministers' Meeting had agreed to Malaysia's stand that the TPPA would undergo the domestic process, that is, to explain the agreement to the Cabinet, to the people of Malaysia and the agreement will be debated in Parliament.

He said the domestic process was adopted because the agreement touched on certain issues related to the country's sovereignty including the rights to determine domestic policies, intellectual property rights, investor-state dispute settlements, government procurements, state-owned enterprises, environment and labour.

"I see that they understand why Malaysia made the stand even though many of them (negotiating countries) want the agreement to be concluded as soon as possible in order not to block its momentum as they do not have the challenges and sensitivities like in the context of Malaysia," he said.

Najib said Malaysia will continue to take part in the negotiations until the final text of the TPPA was complete and the government will consider the agreement based on the people's support on whether they agree or disagree with the agreement.

In his meeting with leaders of 11 other countries involved in the talks, Najib said he explained that Malaysia had no problems with regard to trade and investment because the country had an excellent track record as an open economy and a preferred and choice investment destination by investors.

With regard to the third paragraph of the TPP Leaders' Statement which states that "We have agreed that negotiators should now proceed to resolve all outstanding issues with the objective of completing this year...", Najib said that it was an objective that cannot or cannot be necessarily achieved.

"What we mean is that we will continue work but if there are certain important issues in terms of substance that cannot be decided within the stated timeline, then it will be extended until after year-end," he added.

The 12 TPP members are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam.

They represent a huge market of 800 million people, with a combined gross domestic product of US\$27.5 trillion. The first round of TPPA negotiations commenced in March 2010 in Melbourne and so far 19 rounds of talks have been held.

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