

Ahead of Obama's Malaysia visit, US diplomat makes strong pitch for TPPA
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Against the backdrop of US President Barack Obama's forthcoming visit to Malaysia, the State Department's top diplomat for East Asia and Pacific has made a strong pitch for the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) whose full text was officially released yesterday for public scrutiny.

The TPP negotiations were recently concluded in Atlanta, Georgia.

Daniel Russel, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, said Obama's visit is to underscore America's support for Asia's regional institutions, aimed at enhancing security and prosperity while also advancing the US strategy to rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region in all its dimensions.

The president will be in the Philippines and Malaysia to participate in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Summit, and in the US-Asean Summit and the East Asia Summit respectively.

"Our engagement with Asean has promoted a trend towards reform that has helped these 10 countries towards economic integration, just as re-energising Apec has helped us bring economies together around the Pacific.

"One of the benefits has been the revitalisation of rules-based open forums – like Apec, and more recently the East Asia Summit – that are establishing the institutional frameworks to promote peace and prosperity for all in the region.

"And most recently, five years of intensive negotiations have paid off with the conclusion of the landmark TPPA," he said.

Obviously addressing the domestic gallery, Russel presented TPPA as a "trade deal" which will support "high-paying jobs and strengthen America's middle class in many ways.

"TPPA sets favourable new rules for economic engagement in industries we are particularly strong in. It will reduce subsidies to state-owned enterprises abroad that make our businesses less competitive," he explained.

Russel described the TPPA as a strategic agreement, "the economic leg" and the "crown jewel" of the Obama Rebalance strategy.

Referring to the President's participation in the Apec summit in Manila, to be followed by his participation in the East Asia Summit and meetings with Asean leaders in Kuala Lumpur, Russel said: "We have invested in Asean, through President Obama's regular participation in the Summit, by sending a dedicated full-time ambassador, and through assistance to Asean."

Now in its tenth year, the East Asia Summit is the premier leaders' forum for discussing political and security issues.

"The Summit is a testament to Asean's convening power. It brings together the 10 Asean countries and eight dialogue partners, including the United States, China and India, for a wide-ranging discussion of the leading issues," he added. – Bernama, November 7, 2015.

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