

**US Seeks To Deepen Engagement With ASEAN Region – Obama
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 20 (Bernama) -- The United States is seeking to deepen its engagement with Southeast Asian countries as Washington views the region as a key element in its foreign policy, said President Barack Obama.

As such, he said, the US would strive to deepen its engagement with the people and institutions of ASEAN.

"The United States has to be in a partnership with the countries in the region for a shared future. Southeast Asia is a key factor in US foreign policy," he said.

Obama was speaking at a town hall meeting with more than 500 participants in the Young Southeast Asia Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) at a private university in Subang Jaya, near the Malaysian capital.

It was his first engagement soon after his arrival in Malaysia for ASEAN-related summits in conjunction with the 27th ASEAN Summit.

According to Obama, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal was one of the examples of partnership and engagement between the US and countries in the region.

The president, who is making his second visit to Malaysia, also spoke about the need to protect human rights and democracy in Southeast Asia.

He lauded Myanmar over the successful and peaceful conduct of its recently-held elections.

Obama said it represented a critical step towards a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic Myanmar.

The US president last visited Malaysia in April 2014.

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