

Obama, Najib to Address US-ASEAN Leader's Summit

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From Jamaluddin Muhammad

LOS ANGELES, Feb 11 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has been accorded the honour to address the US-ASEAN Leaders' Summit in Sunnylands, California, during the opening ceremony on Monday (Tuesday in Malaysia).

Malaysian Ambassador to the United States Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin said Wednesday (Thursday in Malaysia) that Kuala Lumpur was given the honour due to its role as the coordinating country for US-ASEAN relations for the 2015-2018 period.

United States President Barack Obama was also scheduled to give his opening remarks apart from Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong of Laos which is the current chair of ASEAN.

"Malaysia has an important role to play as a coordinating country for US-ASEAN relations," Awang Adek told Malaysian journalists at a hotel here.

He said this was the first time the US-ASEAN Summit was being held outside the ASEAN countries, thus signifying the importance of the relationship which they upgraded to a strategic partnership last year.

Awang Adek said total US-ASEAN trade was US\$212.4 billion (about RM892 billion) in 2014, an increase of 2.7 per cent compared to 2013, and American investment amounted to US\$13 billion (about RM54.6 billion) in 2014.

Substantiating further his point over the importance of the relationship in the economic area, he said the United States was the fourth largest trading partner of ASEAN as well as the fourth largest foreign investor for the 10-member grouping of Southeast Asian nations.

The fact that the two-day summit starting Monday would be held in Sunnylands, also dubbed as the Camp David of the West, showed how much importance Washington placed in its relationship with ASEAN, he said.

For the record, Obama had used the venue to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013.

Awang Adek believed that Washington would continue its policy towards ASEAN after the

term of the Obama Administration ended at the end of this year as the United States had a strategic interest in the region for economic prosperity, peace, security and stability.

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