

PRIME NEWS

Dewan Negara says 'Yes' to TPP

VOICE VOTE:

Next move is to sign deal, says Mustapa

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THE Dewan Negara yesterday passed the motion on Malaysia's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement.

The move came after the Dewan Rakyat's approval of the motion and paves the way for the government to ink the TPP come Feb 4 in Auckland, New Zealand.

The voice vote conducted by Senate president Tan Sri Abu Zahar Ujang at the end of proceedings lasting close to seven hours saw the voices from senators shouting "Yes" the loudest.

The voting took place after Minister in Prime Minister's Depart-

ment Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed gave their winding-up speech to points raised by the senators.

Parliament's Upper House has a complement of 67 senators out of the 70 full membership.

Speaking at the Parliament lobby, a visibly relieved Mustapa said he was happy with the conclusion and approval by the senate.

"I am happy that a majority of them voted for the TPP. Only three of four disapproved of it," said the minister.

He said the disapproval could be

due to fear that the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism would not protect Malaysian companies.

"There has been amendments made to protect hundreds of Malaysian companies with investments worth RM600 billion, abroad," said Mustapa.

He added that some of the Malaysian companies were Axiata, UEM, Sime Darby, Petronas, YTL, ASP Setia and TNB, among others.

Mustapa said the next move following the approval of the motion would be to meet other TPP nations to sign the agreement.

Following the signing of the treaty, Mustapa said they would focus on amending the necessary laws.

He said this involved 17 laws with 26 amendments, which needed to be done in the next two years.

Mustapa said they would also look at setting up an institute or committee to monitor the amendments and organise talks with rural folks to dispel their fears over the TPP.

"We need to be brave. We need to move forward for the benefit of the country."

Earlier, in his winding-up speech,

Mustapa said Malaysia was not a sheltered nation when it came to trade matters.

"We are not '*katak di bawah temperung*'. Malaysia is a global player. Malaysia is one of the most aggressive Islamic nations to push for an open trade market," he said.

Wahid, in his winding-up speech, reiterated that the Bumiputera interest would be preserved.

This is in regard to government procurement, state-owned enterprises (SOE), as well as investment and services.

"Not all government procurement is open to TPP companies. Procurement which exceeds the set value will be opened up," he said, adding that it involved three categories.

The first involved supplies with initial value of 1.5 million special drawing rights (SDR) or equivalent to RM7.5 million, which will be reduced to 130,000 SDR or RM650,000 in seven years.

The second category involves services with an initial value of 2 million SDR or RM10 million, which will be reduced to 130,000 SDR in a nine-year period.

The third, involving the construc-

tion sector, will see the initial value restricted to TPP companies to 65 million SDR or RM315 million, which will be reduced to 14 million SDR or RM70 million within 20 years.

"Many asked whether Bumiputera policy will be recognised forever?"

"Under the government procurement chapter, in principle, Malaysia can continue its Bumiputera policy in regard to procurement, when TPP is enforced.

"The policy space given to Malaysia is permanent and not tied to any transition period," he said.

On Wednesday evening, the Dewan Rakyat passed the motion, which saw 127 members of parliament voting in favour as opposed to 84 who voted against it.

Malaysia is one 12 countries that completed the TPP discussion on Oct 5 last year and is the only nation which had tabled the treaty before its legislative body for its approval to enter the international trade treaty. The other countries are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam.