

PRESS STATEMENT

Malaysia and Free Trade: Pakatan MP's wishy washy positions on TPPA

Saturday 30 August 2014, by [PSM \(Malaysia\)](#), [SIVARAJAN A.](#) (Date first published: 15 July 2014).

Responding Tun Mahathir's criticism towards Najib's administration, reminding him to be strong and resist the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), Pakatan MP, YB Rafizi Ramli commented that he was worried opposition against the TPPA may extend to forms of free trade by "right wing elements" seeking to protect vested interests in the country.

Rafizi feels, Malaysia as a trading nation will be signing more free trade agreements (FTA) with other countries, thus a blanket opposition towards free trade in general would be detrimental to Malaysia's economy in the long run.

It is disappointing to note the PR MP's shallow analysis on the TPPA impacts on our sovereignty and economy. Opposition towards the TPPA is from various groups such as patient groups, workers unions, farmers, petty traders, students and many more far larger than some seeking to protect local bumiputra interest. From the 29 chapters being negotiated in the TPPA, only 5 to 6 chapters are on traditional trade matters, while the rest seek to control and dictate our local economy and policy space.

Malaysia has already a surplus trade with United State at exports worth nearly 26 billion USD, compared to imports from US about 13 billion USD without the TPPA.

The TPPA seeks turn the tables, so that we will be importing more products from US when import tariffs go down to zero. The intentions of US and its corporations is clearly spelt out through the negotiating chapters that seek to control our State Owned Companies, regulate government procurement, extend patents on medicines, demand fair and equitable opportunities as locals and allow their investors to sue our government in international arbitration courts.

Rafizi claims that the problem with TPPA is the lack of transparency. Does that mean that if he is shown the negotiating text, Rafizi will give his thumbs up to approve it? To claim that transparency issue is the key stumbling block to approving the agreement is very naive.

Many local, international organisations and civil society oppose the TPPA after having analysed the trend and the underlining intentions of US FTA's. The similar intention to install US economic hegemony in Asia Pacific region is at the crux of the TPPA. There are so many economic studies and articles both local and international dissecting the TPPA's pros and cons.

Instead of making of the cuff remarks on the TPPA, Rafizi should sincerely study these materials. He too would be convinced on the negative impacts of the trade agreement.

As a Member of Parliament on the opposition bench, unfortunately Rafizi does not seem to be proposing any alternatives to neoliberal economic model followed fanatically by UMNO- BN all these years. Pakatan whom wishes to take over Putrajaya from BN need to seek alternative economic models.

They have to move away from multinational corporations driven trade agreements to a truly people orientated trade partnerships deals among nations. Is Rafizi truly convinced that being pro trade and pro US is the only way to achieve economic growth?

The failure of the neo liberal economic model and global capitalism after the crisis of 2007-2008 has incited many nations to seek alternative economic models. Many countries in Latin America, being the pioneers to experience the disastrous outcomes of free trade agreements with US, have begun to shift their economic direction.

Lead by Venezuela, the Latin American countries are building a new trade block known as ALBA, (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) in opposition to the Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA) led by the US. ALBA is said to be prioritising essential goods and services for the people and not enhancing corporate power of multinationals. Latin America has found that it would not be possible to sign the FTAAS without violating their respective national constitutions and trampling on their people's rights. Recently President Rafael Correa of Ecuador has begun to reevaluate all its Bilateral Investment Treaties, terminating those that endanger national interest.

To take on a superpower like US and steer the nation into a truly alternative pro rakyat economic model requires courage and farsightedness. Unfortunately both BN and PR seem to be more like the two sides of the same coin 'kow tow' ing to US economic hegemony.

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