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# 650 in Kota Kinabalu for 18th round of TPP talks

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The 18th round of negotiations for the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), which opened in Kota Kinabalu yesterday, attracted one of the highest number of participants since the talks were launched three years ago.

More than 650 officials from the 12-member countries registered for the talks, which will end next Thursday, according to the International Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti).

The grouping has Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, Vietnam and Japan on board.

Japan, the latest addition to the talks, has the largest delegation, apart from host country Malaysia, with more than 100 officials.

The world's third-largest economy will, however, only join the discussion table next Tuesday, when it officially receives the green light from the US Congress.

According to the US Trade Representative Office, the Congress was notified of its intent to include Japan in the TPP negotiations on April 24.

This means the US must give the decision-making body 90 days' notice before starting negotiations with Japan.

The stakeholder session on July



*Secretary-General of the International Trade and Industry Datuk Dr Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria briefing participants about Trans Pacific Partnership talks in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Pic by Saifullizan Tamadi*

20, which is held on the sidelines of the discussions, has attracted slightly more than 200 people from various interest groups.

Malaysia's chief negotiator J. Jayasiri, who is a senior director at the ministry, will chair Saturday's session, where stakeholders will be given opportunities to present their views and concerns.

The Malaysian AIDS Council, Malaysian Treatment Access and Advocacy Group, Consumers Association of Penang, Suara Rakyat Malaysia, Malaysian Trades

Union Congress, National Cancer Society, Association of Specialists in Private Medical Practice Malaysia and the Malay Economic Action Council have raised their concerns.

Jayasiri said the 21 working groups resumed discussions covering 29 chapters of the proposed plurilateral agreement.

Simultaneous discussions are taking place in Kota Kinabalu to achieve as much progress as targeted to achieve the October timeline set by the leaders of the grouping.