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Obama Visit Will Assure Malaysia Over South China Sea Dispute, Says Don

KUALA LUMPUR, April 24 (Bernama) -- US President Barack Obama's visit to Malaysia this weekend will provide assurance to Malaysia in terms of national security in regard to the territorial dispute over the Nine-Dash Line in the South China Sea, said the Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia.

"It think it will bring us assurance on the Nine-Dash Line in the South China Sea. Malaysia will not be pushed around by its big neighbours (on that issue)," its President, Professor Datuk Dr Woo Wing Thye, told reporters after a talk on "The US Pivot to Asia and Its Implications for the Region" today.

The talk was jointly organised by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute and the Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia.

The Nine-Dash Line refers to the demarcation line used by the Chinese and Taiwanese governments for their claims of part of the South China Sea.

The contested area includes the Paracel Islands, occupied by China but claimed by Vietnam, and the Spratly Islands, disputed by the Philippines, China, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Woo said Obama's visit would also keep the talks on the Trans-Pacific Partnership abuzz, adding the conclusion of the trade pact during the visit is very unlikely as Obama does not have fast-track authority from his congress.

"We are not going to see the completion of the TPP anytime soon," he said.

Institute of Strategic and International Studies Director for Foreign Policy and Security Studies Dr Tang Siew Mun said the visit would provide Obama a good opportunity to know Malaysia.

"The spotlight is on Malaysia and I think he will enhance the understanding of what Malaysia is in a positive sense," said Tang.

Obama is in a four-country swing through the Asia Pacific region.

One goal of Obama's stops in Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines is to demonstrate the benefits to America of deeper economic relations with the fast-growing region.

Obama will arrive in Malaysia for a three-day visit beginning April 26 and is due back in Washington next Tuesday.

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