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M'SIA WILL OFFER WHAT IT CAN IN ITA, SAYS RAFIDAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 28 (Bernama) -- International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz today reiterated that Malaysia would offer what it can on the US-initiated Information Technology Agreement (ITA).

She said she was happy with the Apec declaration on the ITA because it reflected the fact that although some countries were willing to conclude the agreement at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Singapore next month, there was now the flexibility to offer what they can and within a timeframe they could handle.

Given this fact, Apec members were not constrained by the year 2000 deadline, she told reporters after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the Second Industrial Master Plan here.

"So, they can just make whatever offer they are willing to offer. Of course, we hope that those countries that have already made their offers (at the negotiations) in Geneva do not to pull back the offers but continue to make those offers on the table," she said.

Referring to the US statement that it had achieved what it got at the Manila Summit, Rafidah said the Americans came wanting to have a paragraph on the ITA in the leaders' declaration.

"That was basic. Initially, they came wanting to have tariff reduction to zero completely for all products for the year 2000. That they did not get. What they got is working towards an ITA by the Singapore WTO meeting with substantial tariff reductions and countries are given the flexibility to offer what they can and within the time period that they can handle," she added. -- BERNAMA

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