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G15-Ruggiero

ALL CONCERNS HAVE BEEN MET, SAYS WTO CHIEF

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 31 (Bernama) -- The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has adequate rules to meet the concerns of the developing world in pushing ahead for liberalisation, its director-general Renato Ruggiero said today.

"The rules are already there and able to meet all the concerns expressed," he said.

He was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's remarks yesterday that globalisation and deregulation undertaken by WTO would fail if no new regulations were introduced which were applicable to all nations.

Approached by reporters before his dialogue with trade and economic ministers of the G15 member countries here, Ruggiero said all concerns of developing countries surrounding the issue of liberalisation had been discussed.

One of the concerns raised by many developing countries was the problem of safeguards, he said.

"The problem of safeguards has been discussed and I reassure that there are already general and specific safeguards in the system," he said.

He said the issue of safeguards particularly in financial services liberalisation was discussed with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim when they met this morning.

Describing the meeting as "very good", Ruggiero said they also discussed problems and contributions of financial services liberalisation but not the currency turmoil plaguing the Southeast Asian region off late.

He said liberalisation of financial services could contribute a solution to the current financial crisis.

Expounding on how financial services liberalisation could solve the crisis, he said: "What we are doing is to try to create the condition through which foreign banks, insurance or international financial institutions can move or open affiliates in another country on the same conditions (with locals).

"This is a process which we consider as a gradual process and will bring new expertise, capacities and capitals," he said.

When asked on the liberalisation process of the financial services among developing countries, Ruggiero said the impression he got was that there was a commitment by every country towards liberalisation.

"No one has gone back and this is very important,

"I pay tribute to the thorough job of these governments for moving ahead and not remaining on the same point," he said.

He also expressed confidence that every country would be in a position to present their offers in the next few weeks. "The trend or mood is a favourable one," he said.

The negotiations for financial services liberalisation is due to conclude in December.

When asked for WTO's view on transparency in currency trading proposed by Malaysia in several international forums, Ruggiero said: "We have no views because we do not deal with the problems of capital account.

"We deal only with problems of trade and we are happy to remain on my competence in trade problems. I do not want to enter into problems which are not my responsibility," he added. -- BERNAMA

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