

Malaysia  
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supports  
new round  
of WTO  
talks

SHANGHAI, Sun: Malaysia will support a new round of World Trade Organisation (WTO) liberalisation talks only if a fair agenda for developing countries can be agreed, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir said this at the end of an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) leaders' summit here. "If we don't have a proper agenda, it may be possible that some (countries) will bring in extraneous matters, things that are not related to trade but which will have a bad effect on poorer countries.

A WTO ministerial meeting is scheduled for November 9-13 in the Qatari capital of Doha, but the venue is still uncertain amid security concerns about holding a major gathering in West Asia in the current climate.

While seeking to start a new round of talks, Mahathir noted that there were still "many unfinished promises" which had to be attended to.

Dr Mahathir also said the September 11 attacks had had a "profound effect on the perception and thinking of the world" in its rush for globalisation. He said the "shock" of the US tragedy would reduce "capitalism absolute, capitalism with its emphasis on unlimited greed".

This was reflected in the just-ended Apec forum where there was "a willingness to be more flexible" and to more concerned about the needs of developing nations, he said.

Dr Mahathir acknowledged there was a "different attitude in the US towards market opening and access" after last month's tragedy but this was partly due to the new administration of President George W. Bush.

"The present government seems to be a little more concerned with the weaknesses of the developing countries and not too insistent that everybody should comply with the same rules, regulations and practices." He reiterated that some countries should be allowed to protect their markets "at least for some time until they can grow". -- AFP