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MAHATHIR-WTO

A NEW ROUND WHEN AGENDA IS DETERMINED

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 16 (Bernama) -- A new round of talks under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) can perhaps be initiated in two years' time only when the agenda is determined, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir.

Speaking to reporters after officiating a conference on terrorism here today, he reiterated Malaysia's stance that there would be no new round of talks unless the agenda has been determined.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on the recently concluded WTO meeting in Doha, Qatar where delegates agreed to start a new round of talks.

It was reported that 2002 would be devoted to countries submitting their negotiating positions and offers in the various sectors covered by the round and actual negotiations would only take place in the next two years.

Yesterday, Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz who attended the Doha meeting told reporters that Malaysia would be ready to negotiate four new issues as agreed upon in the WTO, in two years' time.

The issues - investment, environment, competition policies and government procurement - were previously rejected by developing countries for not having the capacity to tackle them.

During the press conference, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not against a new round but did not want extraneous matters such as child labour to be included in the agenda.

"We want to talk about trade," he added. -- BERNAMA

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