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Mahathir-WTO  
WTO MUST HAVE PROPER AGENDA, SAYS MAHATHIR

By: Mohd Kamel Othman

SHANGHAI, Oct 21 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is insistent that any new round of negotiations under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) require a proper agenda, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Determining the agenda is very important because if we don't have a proper agenda, it may be possible that some may bring in extraneous matters, things not related to trade.

"If that happened, it would have an adverse impact on poorer countries," he told a media conference here.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would make its views heard at next month's WTO ministerial meeting in Doha, Qatar which would consider the agenda for the next round of negotiations under WTO.

He said that at the APEC meetings here, there was a willingness to be flexible among the developed economies.

This was unlike in the past when Apec was very rigid, he said.

"They were always talking about market opening, market opening, market opening.

"But now, these things are not so prominent in the discussions in APEC and I am quite sure our views would be heard at the WTO," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would definitely support the next round of negotiations at the WTO if the agenda was acceptable.

But he also said that there were many promises in the previous global trade talks that have not been kept.

"We hope that the agreements reached at the Uruguay Round would be implemented even if we have to talk about the new WTO round. The previous agreements still remain valid and they should be implemented," he said.

When asked on the seemingly different attitude of the United States towards market opening, the Prime Minister said it could have something to do with the change in government.

"Obviously, government policies differ when the government is formed by different parties.

"The present government seems to be a little bit more concerned about the weaknesses of the developing countries and not too insistent that everybody complies with the same rules, regulations and practices so that the benefits can accrue (only) to the most competitive and most powerful," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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