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WTO must listen to views of poor countries, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the way ahead after the breakdown of world trade talks is for the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to accept the need to listen to the problems of poor countries.

He said developed countries must take into consideration the views of developing countries in order to reach an agreement.

"They wanted to decide to their own advantage. I don't think we can agree with that," he said when commenting on trade talks at the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancun, Mexico, which ended on Sunday without agreement on any of the issues on the table.

Amidst tightened security on the last day of the meeting, Trade Ministers could not reach a consensus on several major issues.

Speaking to reporters after closing an international conference of Muslim young leaders, Dr Mahathir said developed countries wanted to open other subjects when the initial ones were not implemented.

"We cannot open new subjects when we see no results from the previous agreements reached in WTO," he said.

He said rich countries wanted a say in Government procurement but this would result in developing countries facing difficulties in building their economies.