

India keeping 'fingers crossed' as WTO talks enter final lap

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Nairobi: India is keeping its "fingers crossed" as the uncertainty continues over the fate of the WTO ministerial meeting, with developed countries taking a hard line on issues of public stockholding and a special safeguard mechanism.

Although the talks have entered the final stage of the four-day ministerial, which began on Tuesday, consensus eludes on export subsidy and other issues of interest for developing nations.

There are also rumours that talks could be extended by a day to allow time to trade ministers to reach a workable solution.

With the blame game hotting up on social media, Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tweeted: "Indian team working positively in all negotiating track. Last night's negotiations continued till 3 am. India blocking WTO?! Disagree."

In a series of tweets, she later said: "Crucial day at Nairobi. Negotiations under way. Need to ensure Indian farmers/agri interests are safe. Undue haste in pushing select subject of interest worrying.

"A section branding India as blocking the WTO is motivated. My national interest important for me cannot be the privy of some countries for others to yield on cherry-picked issues.

Engaging positively for a good outcome. Fingers crossed!"

According to sources, while India is battling to save the Doha round, the US appears to be adamant on burying the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) on farm subsidies at the Nairobi ministerial.

India, they added, faces a struggle in protecting interests of farmers at WTO.

However, the host, Kenya, put up a brave front, saying there is "no crisis" and talks would conclude within the scheduled timeframe.

- PTI