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Deep divisions persist in farm talksChina fears stir textile groups to seek own WTO pact
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EDITORIAL

LETTER TO EDITOR

WASHINGTON, Oct 5 (Reuters): Textiles and clothing should be removed from broader world trade talks aimed at reducing tariffs and dealt with separately because of the threat posed by China to other textile producers around the world, an international coalition said yesterday.

"We're not going to let any single country ... take over business from 50 or 60 countries around the globe and monopolise the textile trade," said Ziya Sukun, executive director of ITKIB Association USA, which represents Turkey's textile and clothing exporters in the United States.

Sukun spoke by telephone from Geneva on behalf of a coalition of textile trade associations in 55 countries called the Global Alliance for Fair Textile Trade, or GAFTT. US and Mexican industry representatives also were on the call.

The GAFTT coalition wants textiles and clothing excluded from steep tariff cuts that could be applied to other consumer and manufactured goods because of what they said were unique circumstances facing their industry worldwide.

That includes China, which many countries fear will dominate global textile and clothing trade following the end of an international quota system on January 1. Textiles include towels, sheets and a range of other fabric goods.

In addition, many poor countries that have preferential access to the US or the European Union markets in terms of reduced tariffs fear being hurt by a new world trade deal if all countries are given the same access.

Rich countries should examine ways to help poor countries such as Cambodia, Haiti and Sri Lanka with big textile sectors deal with the threat posed by China and other large Asian suppliers, said Viji Rangaswami, a trade associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Meanwhile, report from Geneva says: World Trade Organisation (WTO) states held talks on farm goods yesterday, but divisions remain deep between exporters and importers as the clock ticks towards a December deadline for a deal, officials said.

The United States, which is pressing the European Union and other importers to open up their

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markets, spelled out to the full 148-state membership proposals already floated in talks with a small group in Paris late last month.

The EU detailed its ideas on domestic support, or subsidies, but the United States gave no indication of what it was prepared to do in an area in which it is under pressure to make concessions.

The chairman of the farm talks, New Zealand ambassador Crawford Falconer, told members that he was heartened by the way states were talking numbers, but that much needed to be done to secure an accord in Hong Kong, trade officials said.

The farm negotiations are a crucial part of the WTO's Doha Round, with member states aiming for a broad draft deal at a ministerial conference set for Hong Kong in December.

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