

China appeals WTO ruling on books, audio-visual products

China lodged an appeal on Tuesday over a World Trade Organization (WTO) panel ruling which said its regulations on the import and distribution of books and audio-visual products are not in compliance with world trade rules.

The WTO's seven-member Appellate Body will now have two to three months to reinvestigate the US-China dispute, and it can uphold, modify or reverse the panel ruling, which was issued last month, the Chinese mission to the world trade body said.

The United States brought the case to the global trade watchdog in April, 2007, saying that China was not providing enough access for imports of publications and audio-visual products. The case involves publications such as books and newspapers, audio and video products including CDs, DVDs and games, and music downloading services.

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A WTO expert panel issued its ruling on August 12, largely upholding the US allegations, and it called on China to revise its import regulations so as to bring them in line with WTO rules and China's obligations in the organization.

The Chinese Commerce Ministry had expressed regret over the panel ruling, saying that "China has always fulfilled its obligations on market access for publications and the channels for foreign publications, films and audio-visual products entering Chinese market are extremely open."

China has imported approximately 500,000 titles of publications of all kinds every year since joining the WTO in 2001, as promised in its entry agreement, the ministry said.

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