

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3863
ANSWERED ON:17.08.2001
WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
K. FRANCIS GEORGE;TUFANI SAROJ

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

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- (a) the issues likely to be raised by India in the forthcoming 4th WTO Ministerial Conference proposed to be held at Doha in November, 2001;
- (b) whether the Government are considering to give special emphasis to the matters relating to agriculture in the said Conference; (
- (c) whether India opposed the fresh round of multilateral trade talks; (
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; (
- (e) whether the experts of Indian Council of International Economic Relations Research has suggested the Government to demand for a fresh talks in the proposed meeting of WTO Minister level to be held in Doha (Qatar); (
- (f) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH)

(a) to (d) : The Fourth Ministerial Conference of WTO is scheduled to be held from 9th- 13th November, 2001 at Doha, Qatar. The main issue which the Government propose to raise relates to the difficulties experienced by the developing countries in implementing the Uruguay Round of Agreements. These concerns which have come to be known as `Implementation Issues`, fall broadly into three categories. The first category relates to the inherent imbalances and asymmetries in some of the Uruguay Round Agreements. The second category is the lack of sincere implementation of various provisions of the WTO agreements by the developed countries. The third category relates to the non-implementation of special and differential clauses contained in various WTO agreements in favour of developing countries. As a result of these difficulties, the market access gains expected by developing countries from the Uruguay Round of Agreements have not materialized.

India is of the view that Doha Conference should basically review the work relating to the resolution of implementation related concerns, assess the progress and give policy directions for the ongoing mandated negotiations in agriculture and services, and mandated reviews. During the Conference, India proposes to press, inter alia, that the food security and livelihood concerns of the developing countries must be taken care of in the ongoing negotiations in agriculture. No new issues should be pushed into the agenda of the forthcoming Ministerial Conference unless there is convergence of views amongst the WTO membership. This convergence of views could come about only if implementation issues are resolved, contentious `non-trade` issues are kept off the table and the developing countries are convinced of the need for inclusion of any new item into the WTO agenda and how it is going to benefit them without curtailing their domestic policy options.

(e) & (f) : Some experts who met at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations(ICRIER) have expressed their opinion that the commencement of a new round of multilateral trade negotiations focussed on market access issues in agriculture, services and industrial products is in the best interests of both India and the international community and that the Implementation related issues can be resolved only in the context of a new round of negotiations. They have also expressed that sooner India declares her support for a new round, the greater will be her influence in setting the agenda for negotiations. However, India's consistent position has been that the mandated negotiations on Agriculture and Services and the mandated reviews of several WTO agreements, the ongoing work in various Working Groups and subsidiary bodies, the work relating to the accession of over 30 countries along with the work programme for the resolution of `Implementation Related Concerns` of developing countries by themselves constitute a large enough agenda for the WTO and there is no need to further overload it, as it may be unsustainable for WTO. Moreover, India has been emphasising that the `Implementation related concerns` of the developing countries should be resolved upfront in terms of May 2000 decision of the General Council of WTO without linking it with any fresh round of negotiations. The position is being closely monitored for appropriate action so as to get the best outcome in our national interest from the Doha Ministerial Conference