

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
(DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE)

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2269
TO BE ANSWERED ON 01st JANUARY, 2018

WTO MEETING

2269. SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI:

Will the Minister of **COMMERCE & INDUSTRY** (वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्री) be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the World Trade Organization(WTO) with nearly 164 countries was conceived with an aim to reduce trade barriers, resolve disputes among member countries;
- (b) if so, whether a meeting of WTO was recently held in Buenos Aires to discuss the issues and if so, the details thereof and main issues discussed in the meetings;
- (c) whether WTO is facing major confrontation between the developed and developing countries on many issues including on agricultural subsidy, products for trade and e-commerce and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether these issues also came up for discussion and future roadmap chalked out in the meeting; and
- (e) if so, the details and the outcome thereof along with the concern expressed by India in the meeting in regard to trade on agricultural products, restrictions and subsidy?

ANSWER

वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सी. आर. चौधरी)

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
(SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY)

- a) The preamble of Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO), inter-alia recognizes reduction of tariffs and other barriers to trade as one of its objectives. Resolving trade disputes, arising when any member violates an agreement or a commitment made by it in the WTO, is also one of the core activities of the WTO.
- b) and c): The Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the WTO ('MC11') was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 10 to 13 December 2017. A number of issues including a permanent solution on the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes and other agriculture issues, domestic regulations in services, disciplines on fisheries subsidies, E-commerce, Investment Facilitation and Micro, Medium and Small Enterprises (MSMEs) etc. came up for discussions in the

meeting. However, no consensus could be reached on outcomes on many of the issues. India and other developing countries wanted outcomes on the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes and other agricultural issues, while preserving the special and differential treatment for developing countries. Some of the developed countries, however were not agreeable to the proposed flexibilities to the developing countries. They wished to advance issues concerning e-commerce, MSME, investment facilitation etc. India and some other developing countries were of the view that these new issues do not have negotiating mandate and, therefore cannot be part of any outcome in MC11.

(d)to(e): Ministerial decisions that were taken during the MC11 include a Work Programme on disciplines on Fisheries Subsidies with a view to arriving at a decision by the Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the WTO, in 2019. It was also decided to continue with the non-negotiating mandate of the existing Work Programme on E-commerce, as proposed by India. As was done in previous Ministerial Conferences, an existing moratorium on imposing customs duties on electronic transmission was extended for two years along with another moratorium on TRIPS non-violation complaints, which, *inter alia*, prevents 'ever-greening' of patents in the pharmaceuticals sector, thereby ensuring accessibility and affordability of generic medicines.

Ministerial Decisions on new issues like Investment Facilitation, MSMEs, gender and trade, which lacked a mandate or consensus, were not taken forward.

In the meeting, India made efforts to obtain a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes. On the issue of Agricultural Domestic Support, India was of the view that the WTO Agreement on Agriculture provides considerable flexibility to the developed members to provide huge subsidies and further, to concentrate these subsidies on a few products. This asymmetry needs to be addressed as a first step in agricultural reform without, however, shifting the burden of reduction of agricultural subsidies to developing countries.
