

WTO members prepare for 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12)

The 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) of World Trade Organisation will be held for the first time after the pandemic in Geneva from November 30 - December 3, 2021. The Ministerial Conference is the apex decision making body of the organization and it is attended by ministers and senior bureaucrats of the member countries.

The 11th Ministerial Conference (MC11) was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina during December 10-13, 2017. The Conference will hold discussions on major issues that are of special interest to developing countries, especially India. India and South Africa have already initiated the proposal for a temporary waiver of certain TRIPS obligations to allow pharmaceutical companies in developing countries to manufacture vaccines and other medical goods for treatment of COVID-19. Apart from this issue, there are other long pending issues that will be discussed at the Conference.

Some of these issues are: restricting government subsidy for unregulated and environmentally harmful fishing activities, regulating public stockholding of foodgrains, reducing high tariffs on agriculture products, including cotton. Considering that a large section of its coastal population depends on fisheries, India may demand exemption from any ban on subsidies to the fishing activity. India and other developing countries may insist on their right to hold government stock of foodgrains in the interest of food security.

Indian government may also block the extension of moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions at the forthcoming Ministerial Conference. Under the existing arrangement, WTO members are not allowed to impose customs duties on software, videogames, e-books, movies, songs and other creative goods that can be sold across border through online medium. Experts feel that with rapid progress in digitization, more and more goods, that were traded physically in the form of DVDs and CDs, are being traded through online medium (which is called electronic transmission). India, which has a large population that imports these goods through online medium, loses a huge chunk of customs revenue because of this moratorium on imposition of customs duty on electronic transmission. Therefore, India may block extension of this moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions at the 12th Ministerial Conference.

India may also play an important role in restoring the stature of the Appellate Body of WTO's Dispute Settlement System. This Appellate Body has become non-functional as all the seven chairs of this body have remained vacant since November 30, 2020.

Notifications

Press Information Bureau

Exports grow 45% in August 2021

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1751487>

India Pavilion at EXPO 2020 Dubai

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1751479>

India exports Ladakh Apricot to Dubai

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1751482>

APEDA partners with ICAR to boost export of millet products

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1751773>

BRICS countries to promote trade in professional services, genetic resources and consumer protection under E-commerce

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1752010>

DGFT

Inclusion of ports under Notification 20/2015-20 dated August 24, 2021

<https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/d4c4c6fc-fb11-4876-b8d5-c8c2175945df/Notification%2023%20dated%203%20Sept%2021%20-%20Eng.pdf>

Explanation for earlier notification with regard to import of gold

<https://content.dgft.gov.in/Website/dgftprod/7a44b205-030f-4051-8f67-ccd48fb45dfb/Notification%2022%20dt%2002-09-21%20Eng.pdf>