Need for Continued Assertiveness at the WTO

What is the issue?

\n\n

India should continue to resist attempts of the developed world to introduce newer issues and rather push with its long standing demands of the Doha Round.

\n\n

How did the 11th WTO ministerial conclude?

\n\n

\n
- 11th Ministerial Conference of the WTO held recently at Buenos Aires, saw fierce confrontations between the developed and the developing world.
\n
- As the WTO membership failed to agree to a ministerial declaration at the end of conference, the challenges that such a stalemate constituted needs analysis.
\n
- This was a consequence of the aversion of the US to any mention of three issues — development, multilateralism and Doha Round.
\n
- Notably, the US chose to block India's efforts at securing a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding for food security, for which a temporary clause is already in effect.
\n

\n\n

What were the new issues brought up?

\n\n

\n
- The current conference had few concrete outcomes and also news issues of fisheries related subsidies and e-commerce regulations failed.
\n

\n\n

\n

- **Fishing Subsidies –** WTO piloted intense negotiations, for prohibiting subsidies for illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
\n
- However, even basic concepts like the scope of subsidies that are to be prohibited, could not be resolved in the negotiations.
\n
- Hence, the negotiations were differed till 2019 ministerial, despite widespread concerns of the ecological impacts of subsidy aided irrational fishing practices.
\n
- Also, India must guard against any prohibition on subsidies that would constrain it from developing its any commercial fishing fleet in the future.
\n
- **E-commerce –** Despite the strong push to initiate negotiations on this issue, this was resisted by India and many African countries.
\n
- It was argued that discussion so these issues were to be taken in a not as negotiations but as a consensus building exercise for the future.
\n
- While 70-80 countries are backing these issues, India has been steadfast in opposing initiation of multilateral negotiations as it would dilute Doha issues.
\n

\n\n

How can be future be best approach?

\n\n

\n
- Commerce Ministry should institutionalise wide consultations in order to make a comprehensive assessment of the implications of WTO deals.
\n
- Also, considerable research is emerging that punctures the narrative of WTO negotiations on e-commerce being good for development.
\n
- India should take the lead in discussing such research with other developing countries, to bring greater awareness to the WTO forum.
\n
- India should work to build larger coalition of like minded countries who face issues that similar to that of India.
\n
- Odds now are more favourably staked than during 2001 Doha ministerial as multiple developing countries are in a position to question to US hegemony.
\n
- Hence, it is time to be assertive albeit with caution and clarity.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Business Line

\n