

India insists on tech transfer as key part of WTO talks on environment

GETTING READY. WTO prepares background note for Oct 10 meet of Committee on Trade & Environment

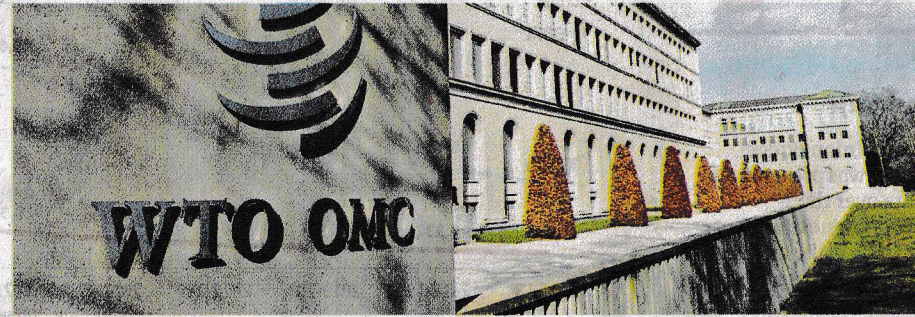
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India has pointed out that the WTO Secretariat's informal background note on 'trade related climate measures', which will be used for facilitating discussion at the Committee on Trade and Environment meet this week, should include 'trade and transfer of technology' as one of the levers identified by member countries for pursuing climate-related objectives.

The WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) is trying to take forward thematic sessions on tricky areas related to trade and climate change, including trade-related climate measures, as no clear mandate exists in these areas.

INDIA'S OBSERVATIONS

"It may help to clarify that the initiatives are plurilateral in nature and not all WTO members are part of these initiatives," India noted in its observations recorded in the annexure to



FOCUS AREAS. The WTO Committee on Trade and Environment is trying to take forward thematic sessions on tricky areas related to trade and climate change REUTERS

the report. In response to the background note that will be discussed in details at the WTO CTE meet on October 10, India further said that while it was correct to say that WTO rules provide space for countries to design and implement trade policies that are responsive to addressing climate change challenges, it was important to qualify that these policies should not be trade restrictive and should not constitute an arbitrary or unjustified barrier to trade.

The WTO informal background note observed that going by information in the

WTO Environment Database (EDB), the different types of trade-related climate measures or tools notified by member countries are in the areas of trade facilitation, government procurement, regulations and certifications, services, import tariff, subsidies, trade finance, food & agriculture, sanitary & phytosanitary measures, and internal taxation and climate pricing.

India said that the background note needed to clarify that members have spoken about other levers too such as trade and transfer of technology.

"While the WTO omitting this subject in policy recommendation in its own report was unfortunate, the subject very much remains under active discussions in TRIPS, WGTTF (working group on trade & technology transfer) and the CTE itself," it said.

India, and many other developing nations, have been vociferously demanding at various forums, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, that developed nations should transfer technology to help developing countries realise their climate goals.

The background note further pointed out that the CTE was the forum at the WTO for focused discussion on how trade and environmental measures could work better together to promote sustainable development.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEPS

Discussions and information exchange cover specifically low-carbon transition policies, such as environmental taxes and labelling schemes, sustainable natural resource management, environmental goods and services, and the environmental footprint of products and organisations, it said.

India, however, observed that while 'environmental goods and services' has been a historic topic of CTE discussion, but currently this is not an active CTE conversation. New Delhi has been opposed to the inclusion of environmental issues in the WTO as the matter is already being discussed at multilateral environment platforms and it felt that it is premature to discuss it at the WTO Ministerial Conferences.