

December 15th news:

National:

Scorpene-Class Submarine Kalvari into Indian Navy

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi commissioned India's first modern conventional submarine, INS Kalvari, into Navy's fleet in Mumbai, a first in almost two decades. Kalvari is the first of the six Scorpene-class submarines handed over by shipbuilder Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL). The Navy last inducted a conventional diesel-electric submarine, INS Sindhushastra, procured from Russia in July 2000.

Bilateral:

India and Morocco Sign MoU for Enhanced Cooperation in Healthcare

India and Morocco signed a MoU for enhanced cooperation in the health sector in New Delhi. The main areas of cooperation are....

- Non-communicable diseases, including child cardiovascular diseases and cancer;
- Drug Regulation and Pharmaceutical quality control;
- Maternal, child and neonatal health;
- Hospital twinning for the exchange of good practices.

Economy:

WTO Summit ends in deadlock

The 11th ministerial conference of World Trade Organisation (WTO) ended in stalemate late on 13th December as member-nations failed to set aside differences on issues ranging from the role of the trade body as a multilateral institution to public procurement programmes for food security.

While a failure to produce a joint statement has precedents (there were deadlocks in Seattle and Cancun), what sets the Buenos Aires ministerial apart was the stinging criticism by a key member — the US — of the rules-based, multilateral trading system that the WTO represents.

The US refusal to pursue a permanent solution to the issue of public procurement — as committed by it, along with all others at the Nairobi ministerial in 2015 — also cast a pall over the sanctity of pledges made at the WTO.

The attempts by small groups of nations to secure work programmes or negotiating mandate on new issues like e-commerce, investment facilitation, micro, small and medium enterprises, and gender — spearheaded by the developed world — signals increasing efforts to secure “short-term plurilateral arrangements” within the multilateral WTO framework. For India, the conference ended without much gain or loss.

While its attempt to secure the lasting solution to the public stock holding issue was thwarted by the US, it successfully resisted pressure from various groups of nations to include new issues, such as e-

commerce, investment facilitation, micro, small and medium enterprises, and gender in the WTO's negotiating mandate without first concluding the Doha development agenda that is crucial to the interest of developing nations.

The only worthwhile agreement — a consensus on including a work programme on disciplines on fisheries subsidies with a view to arriving at a decision by the next ministerial in 2019 — at the latest ministerial was also in sync with India's position.

The non-negotiating mandate of an existing work programme on e-commerce will continue, as desired by India, among others, but no new issue on e-commerce was included in the agenda.

“Due to divergences among members, and a few members not supporting acknowledgement and reiteration of key underlying principles guiding the WTO and various agreed mandates, ministers could not arrive at an agreed ministerial declaration,” the Indian government said in a statement. The impasse also meant there is now no deadline to achieve the lasting solution to the public stock holding issue.

WB loan for SANKALP project

The Union Government signed US \$250 million loan agreement with World Bank for “Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion. The World Bank's financing arm International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) will provide this loan. The main objective is to enhance institutional mechanisms for skills development and increase access to quality and market-relevant training for the workforce.

SANKALP:

National Policy of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 highlighted the need of quality assurance measures such as building a pool quality trainers and assessors. SANKALP envisages setting up of Trainers and Assessors academies with self-sustainable models. Over 50 such academies are to be set up in priority sectors. DOT, MSDE has already made significant progress in this direction by setting up a number of Institutes for Training of Trainers (IToT) in public and private sector, offering training in over 35 trades. The schemes shall leverage such institutions for training the trainers in both long & short term VET thereby bringing about convergence. Additional trainer academies shall be set up on the basis of identified sectoral and geographical gaps.

Greater decentralization in skill planning will be ensured by institutional strengthening at the State level which includes setting up of State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs) and allowing states to come up with District and State level Skill Development Plans (DSDP/SSDP) and design skill training interventions to suit the local needs. SANKALP aims at enhancement of inclusion of marginalized communities including women. Scheduled Castes (SCs), Schedule Tribes (STs) and Persons with Disabilities (PWD) to provide skill training opportunities to the underprivileged and marginalised section of the society.

The schemes will develop a skilling ecosystem that will support the country's rise in the Ease of Doing Business index by steady supply of skilled workforce to the industry. The schemes will also work towards

increasing the aspirational value of skill development programs by increasing the marketability of skills, through better industry connect and quality assurance.

Sports:

Ban on Rajasthan lifted

The Board of Control for Cricket in India decided to lift the ban on the Rajasthan Cricket Association (RCA) provided former IPL chief Lalit Modi stays away from its functioning. The RCA was suspended by the Indian cricket board in May 2014 when ex-Indian Premier League (IPL) Commissioner Modi was re-elected its president.

India Becomes 1st Ever Team to Register Hundred 300+ ODI Totals

India become the first-ever team to register 300+ totals 100 times in ODIs, after posting 392/4 against Sri Lanka in Mohali on 13th December. This was also the 25th instance of India scoring 350+ in an ODI innings, second-most by a team after South Africa (26).