Memories of global trade negotiations

By Mr K M Chandrasekhar, Former Union Cabinet Secretary

According to the figures published by the World Trade Organization in 2016, while volume of world trade grew by 20.7% in 2015, dollar value of merchandise exports declined by 14 per cent largely owing to economic slowdown in China and a severe recession in Brazil. Services trade too showed a marginal decline. Expecting better demand for imported goods in developing Asian economies, growth of trade was estimated at 2.8 per cent in 2016, while it is expected to grow to 3.6 per cent in 2017. Robert Azevedo, the Brazilian Director General of WTO expressed the view that “WTO Members can take a number of steps to use trade to lift global economic growth from rolling back trade restrictive measures to implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.” He opined that more could be done to address the remaining tariff and non-tariff barriers in world trade.

When I dealt with global trade and the WTO in the Commerce Ministry as Joint Secretary and later in Brussels as Deputy Chief of Mission interacting with the European Commission and in Geneva as Indian Ambassador to the WTO, the effort of the developed world was to tear down barriers worldwide. The situation today is different. Not only has American President Trump formally declared that Washington would no longer be bound by rulings made by the WTO; he has sworn to “aggressively defend American sovereignty over matters of trade policy”. Britain has pulled out of the European Union, which means its presence in the WTO will now be independent, not constrained by the policies of the European Communities, which, in the past, represented all the constituents of the European Union.

India has for many decades been considered to be the stormy petrel of the WTO, the one country which opposed new areas into which the WTO and, before that, its predecessor organization, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) would attempt to intrude. It is not my intention in this piece to talk about the rights and wrongs of Indian policy from the days of the Uruguay Round to now. I intend only to mention some memories relating to Commerce Ministers of
Russia continued to be the world’s largest oil producer in January for the second consecutive month. Russia’s daily oil output averaged at about 10.8 million barrels in January, slightly more than 10.5 million barrels in December, according to data released by the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat).

A bill seeking to prevent US companies from outsourcing jobs overseas by “abusing” H-1B programme has been re-introduced in the House of Representatives and may hit Indian IT firms and professionals. Democratic Congressman Derek Kilmer and his Republican colleague Doug Collins introduced the bill aimed at stopping employers, that are awarded temporary visas through the H-1B programme, from using them to train workers in the US and then move those jobs to another country.

Oil prices slid to almost four-month lows, with Brent briefly falling below $50 a barrel, after data showed US crude inventories rising faster than expected, piling pressure on the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) to extend output cuts beyond June. The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said US inventories climbed almost 5 million barrels to 323.1 million last week, far outpacing forecasts of a 2.9 million barrel rise.

More than 100 countries launched the first United Nations talks on a global nuclear weapons ban in New York over objections from the major nuclear powers. Britain, France, Israel, Russia and the United States voted no, while China, India and Pakistan abstained. Some 123 UN members announced in October that they would launch the UN conference to negotiate a legally binding nuclear ban treaty, even as most of the world’s declared and undeclared nuclear powers voted against the talks.

The Cabinet cleared four supporting GST legislations, paving the way for their introduction in Parliament. The four supporting legislations – the Compensation Law, the Central-GST (C-GST), Integrated-GST (I-GST) and Union Territory-GST (UT-GST) – would be introduced as Money Bill, sources said. The GST legislations have been cleared by the Cabinet. These would be introduced in Parliament this week.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) likely find itself in the driver’s seat in the war against bad debt-closely monitoring big-ticket restructuring and even getting to decide the haircut to be taken by banks. These and other changes could be introduced by the end of this month by the government, formulated after a series of meetings between the central bank and finance ministry officials.

The Government of India has allowed bulk export of select edible oils. A notification issued, the office of the Director General of Foreign Trade, said, “Exports of groundnut oil, sesame oil, soybean oil and maize (corn) oil in bulk, irrespective of any pack size, has been exempted from the prohibition on export of edible oil.” This means a nine-year ban on their export has been lifted. Until now, export of select edible oils were allowed only in consumer packs of up to five kg each. This should mean better realisation for producers, improving their capability to pay more for oilseed. This could encourage more sowing by farmers.

A panel headed by finance secretary Ashok Lavasa, tasked with examining the 7th Pay Commission’s 7th CPC recommendations on allowance, might have its final meeting, followed by its report going to Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. The matter will then go to the Union Cabinet, on revised allowances for 4.7 million employees. Official said most of the work on the report was complete. “The panel’s work is in its final stages,” said a senior official. If the minister accepts the report, it will only be a matter of days before the Cabinet takes up the matter. It is understood the Centre wants to give the revised allowances from early 2017-18.

The thermal power segment feels the current rate structure for coal-based units does not encourage the adopting of better efficiency. They contend the categorisation into fixed and energy cost needs to be reviewed when the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) comes out with the next set of rate guidelines. And, CERC says it is looking at making energy efficiency a part of the rate regulations, given the increasing impetus on this. A senior CERC official told this newspaper that efficiency gains would find due mention in the next revision of the rate regulations, due 2019.

China faces the risk of youth disenchantment as property prices rise beyond their reach, a renowned Chinese economist said. “Regular country, wealth should be concentrated in the financial market, not fixed assets,” said Renmin University of China Vice President Wu Xiaochun at a media interview at the Boao Forum in the province of Hainan. Globalization is a reality for all countries, and is not a matter of choice, the People’s Bank of China’s governor, Zhou Xiaochuan. Zhou hopes to see clearer language on free trade and globalization at a G20 summit in July, the Chinese central bank governor said as the Boao Forum for Asia. This month, G20 finance ministers and central bankers dropped a pledge to keep global trade free and open in their communique issued after a gathering in Germany, acquiescing to an increasingly protectionist US.
It is not my intention in this piece to talk about the rights and wrongs of Indian policy from the days of the Uruguay Round to now. I intend only to mention some memories relating to Commerce Ministers of India with whom I worked.

As Incumbent Ambassador, and took over formal charge a couple of months later. Arun Shourie’s forte was the meticulous manner in which he studied issues and his capacity to go into intricate details, besides his total informality. At one meeting of Ministers, the Trade Commissioner of the European Communities launched a blistering attack on the Ambassador of Kenya, Amina Mohammed now the Foreign Secretary of Kenya who was the Chairperson at the recent Nairobi Ministerial Conference. The Kenyan Minister was not present at that time. Shourie turned round to me and asked, “Does she want me? I asked Amina, who at once wrote out some points which I passed on to Shourie. Shourie then came down like a ton of bricks on the European Trade Commissioner, Pascal Lamy and said, for a full twenty minutes lambasting him. Next morning, when his turn came to speak, he said again on the same issue with no holds barred. The African countries, at that meeting, realized that India was a dependable friend and they stood by us at the next Ministerial Conference in Cancun in Mexico.

The third Minister I worked with was Arun Jaitley. He had an immense capacity to absorb information very quickly and to articulate forcefully. At the Ministerial conference in Cancun, I could observe him growing in stature over four days. His ability as a lawyer fully revealed itself. He would get a briefing along with his morning cup of tea, and then, three hours later, he would be speaking with authority and mastery, as though he knew every aspect of the issue under discussion. At a big meeting one evening, attended also by a number of NGOs, Jaitley spoke for a few minutes, decrying the attempt being made by some countries to derail the development agenda of Doha. He was greeted with thunderous applause and after he spoke, Ministers from other developing countries, spoke up, courageously verbalizing the same theme. Later, the US Ambassador, Linnet Deily told me that she could visualize Jaitley speaking to people in the villages of India, under the light of candles and lanterns, holding them spellbound, with his voice and articulation. The Singapore issues disappeared from the WTO agenda at Cancun except for trade facilitation in which India had positive interests. Jaitley was followed by Kamal Nath, with whom I worked briefly before I moved back to Delhi. Kamal Nath, too, was a brilliant man, capable of holding his own in any negotiation, and he proved his abilities to the hilt in the negotiation of the so-called July Framework Agreement at Geneva.

Over the years, India had moved from a position of negotiation to one in which it chose to negotiate – and negotiate hard – on every issue. This coincided with the growth of the Indian economy and a growing share in world trade. The merchandise to GDP ratio was 38 per cent in 2014, as compared to an average of 13 per cent in the 1950s. The position that India will take vis-à-vis the WTO and the growth of global trade is thus of significant to the country particularly in the context of global political developments. I propose to discuss these issues in a re-assessment and re-adjustment taking place in the Commerce Ministry.

The opinions expressed in the article are entirely those of the Author.

K M Chandrasekhar entered the Indian Administrative Service in 1970. He spent the first 25 years of his career in Kerala, holding such positions as Managing Director of the State Civil Supplies Corporation, District Collector, Idukki, Director of Fisheries, Principal Secretary (Industries) and Principal Secretary (Finance). During this period, he was also Chairman of the Spices Board under the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India. Some significant career achievements during this period include: the establishment of Melon Stores for the first time; setting up Chamalan Falls and of Markets and Cinemas (Bazar) establishment of Monopoly, commencement of a scheme for enhancing capacities of fishermen using trawler boats, setting up of the marine enforcement unit; organising the establishment of the Spices Board by merging the erstwhile Cardamom Board with the Spices Export Promotion Council; organizing the first ever Spices Fair, which in subsequent years became the International Spices Congress, now a permanent and important feature of the world spice calendar. In 1996, he left Kerala as Central Government deputation and rose to the position of Union Cabinet Secretary. As Cabinet Secretary, he was Head of Civil Services and reported directly to the Prime Minister. He retired that position for four years. He retired from Government Service in 2011 at the age of 63, having served the Government for 41 years. During his 15 years tenure with the Government of India, from 1996 to 2011, he was Joint Secretary at the key Trade Policy Division of the Ministry of Commerce. As Deputy Chief of Mission in the Embassy of India, Brussels and the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India in the World Trade Organization in Geneva.

The High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was held at the UN Economic and Social Committee for the Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The meeting explored ways and means to enhance complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which is more commonly known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also identified priority cross-cutting areas that could serve as ‘catalysts’ in promoting such complementarities. The priority areas include resilience; infrastructure; sustainable consumption and production; poverty eradication; and sustainable management of natural resources. In his opening remarks, ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General for Socio-Cultural Community reaffirmed ASEAN’s commitment in building synergy and complementarities between the three Community Blueprints of ASEAN and the SDGs. The meeting discussed project ideas and proposals to explore how specific cross-cutting priority issues that contribute to both community-building and sustainable development could be effectively addressed within the 2017-2019 timeframe. Such proposals include Enhancing links with the Grass-roots to Promote SDGs; Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women; Reducing Disparities and Narrowing Development Gaps within ASEAN.
East: Government
West Bengal Water Resources Investigation and Development Minister Saumen Kumar Mahapatra said that the state government will not impose water tax on the public. “As per the government’s resolve to ensure free health services to everyone, we cannot impose water tax. Remember the other name of water is life,” Mahapatra said.

Bengal Birbhum Coalfields Limited (BBCIL), a joint venture of five states headed by Bengal, would explore underground coal gasification (to produce syngas) and plans to initiate downstream units such as fertiliser companies to set up units and buy the gas as feedstock. Syngas, or synthesis gas, is a mix of hydrogen, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide that are found in the seams and can be used as fuel.

After adding many a first to its premises Kolkata’s Eco Park is now thrown open its gate to an all organic herbal restaurant. Named Roof-Katha the restaurant has a rooftop organic garden and all the delicacies served at the restaurant would be made out of this garden produce.

North East: Government
Preparations are underway on a war footing for Namami Brahmaputra, the biggest ever river festival in India to be held in Assam, officials here said. The festival is set to be held across 21 districts of Assam from March 31 to April 4. President Pranab Mukherjee is likely to inaugurate the five-day river festival at a mega function to be held on the banks of the Brahmaputra river on March 31. Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama is expected to be present on April 2.

Other prominent guests who have confirmed their participation during the festival include Union Ministers Uma Bharti, Nitin Gadkari and Mahesh Sharma.

Kerala, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh are all set to join the government’s power distribution reform scheme Ujwalo Discom Yojana (UDAY). With this, the number of states joining the UDAY bandwagon becomes 25.

In its efforts to boost domestic and international tourist inflow in the state, Arunachal Pradesh, in north-eastern India, is keen to unlock its geographical attributes to promote the state as an adventure destination. Dr Joram Beda, Tourism Secretary, Arunachal Pradesh, stated that tourism in the state is at a growing stage and there is an intention to develop it as a premium tourism destination in the lines of Bhutan, by preserving the unspoiled nature and the rich tribal culture.

In an attempt to make people of mainland India aware about the culture and history of North-eastern region, Arunachal MP Ninong Ering has introduced a bill—The Compulsory Teaching of North-East Culture in Educational Institutions Bill, 2017—in Lok Sabha.

Industry Watch March 2017

India’s state-owned power transmission infrastructure developer has signed an agreement for $500 million debt financing to set up dedicated transmission lines for renewable energy projects. Last month, Power Grid Corporation of India (PGCIL) reported that it signed an agreement to secure $500 million of debt funding from the Asian Development Bank. A large portion of these funds are expected to be used to set up transmission lines dedicated for the transfer of electricity generated from renewable energy projects.

Energy Minister G. Jagadishwar Reddy said that Telangana is set to become the biggest solar power generating state in the country by the end of this year. Currently, Rajasthan, which generates 1,300 MW solar power, tops the list. As of now, Telangana expects to have an installed capacity of 1,456 MW of solar power by April this year and that is expected to touch 2,000 MW by the end of this year. The state has set itself a goal of generating 5,000 MW of electricity from solar power in the next few years, he said.

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Major fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) players will soon be able to sell their products via 250,000 common service centres spread across rural India, with the government facilitating the move in view of an ever-increasing demand for such items in villages. Common service centres (CSCs) are points in villages where the government provides a host of services related to ration card, birth certificate, railway ticket booking and money transfer, etc. These centres also train people in using digital services.

The Supreme Court, has asked all the automobile manufacturers to furnish details regarding unsold Bharat Stage-III (BS-III) vehicles. It further said that based on those figures, it will decide whether to allow the automakers to sell these vehicles after March 31, 2017 or not. The Court has also directed Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) to provide details of number of BS-III compliant vehicles produced in the country from December 31, 2015 till date.

India’s ambitious plan to develop Chabahar port in Iran has hit yet another snag—over what is being seen as an invitation to an arm’s-length delay on the part of Iran to seek a $150 million loan from India. Eight months have passed since the loan agreement was signed for the port’s development, but the Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) is still awaiting completion of an application from the Port and Maritime Organization of Iran with instructions to disburse the amount. According to the agreement, the contract will be activated from the date the loan has been disbursed.

While demand for cement has had its ups and downs each quarter, the one thing that remained constant is concern over petcoke—a key input material for cement companies and a highly polluting fuel.

Cement
The government has instructed banks to enable internet banking across all accounts by March 31 and mandatorily link them to the Aadhaar number to facilitate digital payments and online transactions. The measure has been approved at the “highest levels” in the government, and is aimed at facilitating digital payments across the banking system.

The Minister of State for Finance told legislators that, the Indian banks had underlent loans of ₹147.33 billion (Rs. 9.64 lakh crore) as on December 31, 2016. According to the data from Reserve Bank of India, the banks’ stressed loans at September end were Rs. 8.97 lakh crore in total. Stressed loans are comprised of bad loans and rolled over or restructured loans. However the Union Budget 2017 did not have much to offer the stressed loan laden banks. Gov’s provision of Rs. 10,000 crore, set aside for infusing equity into public sector banks, and its reassurance of infusing a greater amount of funds as per requirements, has in eventuality fallen short of expectations. PSBs plagued with bad loans, require greater capital allocation from the Govt, considering the fact that it is next to impossible to raise money from markets, on account of low valuations.

The Indian Railways is taking a huge step towards the preservation of water from the state. Melbourne based Manohar University’s Institute of Railway Technology (IRT) signed an agreement with DFCCIL (Delicate Freight Corporation of India Limited), a state-owned corporation in India to assist with the establishment of a new research and development institute in India. The agreement was signed on March 16, 2017 in New Delhi, India. The research institute, SIRESTA Special Railway Establishment for Strategic Technology and Holistic Advancement, will impact the entire Indian railway system, with the outcome of the research making significant advancements in the field.

Pharmaceuticals

Indian pharma exports have increased 5.6 per cent to ₹43.57 billion during October-December period in this financial year over the same quarter previous fiscal, as per the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council (Pharmexcil) data. The pharma body, which works under the Union Commerce Ministry, expects the rise in exports in the second half of this year to more than compensate for a marginal decline in the exports during April-October period.

Billionaire metals maven Anil Agarwal made a surprise bid for as much as 13% of British mining giant Anglo American Plc for $2.4 billion, a move that will give him afoothold in the door of the $23 billion conglomerate, which is larger than his Vedanta Resources. It also gives him a piece of De Beers, the diamond powerhouse owned by Anglo American. State-owned iron ore miner NMDC Ltd. is in discussions with Vietnam-based Masan Resources to acquire a “considerable stake” in its Nui Phao polymetallic mine, sources close to the development said. The mine, which has rich reserves of tungsten mineral, is located in Thai Nguyen province in Northern Vietnam. At present, India mostly imports tungsten for its domestic requirements due to high production cost of the metal. Recently a team from NMDC visited the plant and held initial discussions with Masan Resources. NMDC is interested in acquiring a considerable stake in the mine as Ministry of Defence has also expressed interest to buy the metal from NMDC. A decision will be arrived only after a due diligence.

The Union cabinet in a meeting approved the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (Public-Private Partnership) Bill, 2017. With the clearance, the institutes will soon have the power to award degrees. The Ministry of Human Resource and Development is also planning to declare them as institutions of national importance.

Aviation

Oil and Gas

Roads and Railways

IT and telecom

Textile

"The ministry of textiles is implementing Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (ATUF) with effect from January 13, 2016, for a period of 7 years. Under ATUF, there is a provision of one-time capital subsidy for eligible benchmarked machinery at the rate of 30% for agriculture and technical textiles segments with a cap of Rs 30 crore and at the rate of 10% for weaving, processing, jute, silk and handloom segments with a cap of Rs 20 crore."

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Andaman Food Pro
3 March 2017 | Port Blair

Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India and Indian Chamber of Commerce with the active support of Department of Industries, Andaman & Nicobar Administration jointly organised the Andaman & Nicobar Food Pro on 3rd March at Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The event witnessed the presence of dignitaries like, Mr Ramesh Verma, IAS, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Andaman & Nicobar Administration; Mr Genesh Dutt Sharma, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India; Mr Ajit Anand, Director, Department of Industries, Andaman & Nicobar Administration; Mr Anjan Kumar Das, Director, Department of Agriculture, Andaman & Nicobar Administration; Mr Girish Angra, President, Andaman Chamber of Commerce & Industry; Dr S Dam Roy, Director, Central Islands Agricultural Research Institute, Port Blair; Dr Srinivas, Head of the Department, Central Food Technological Research Institute; Prof R Jagannamohan, Senior Scientist, Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology; Mr Hemant B Songadder, General Manager, NABARD and Mr Avinash Norman, Technical Officer, Coconut Development Board. The Indian Chamber of Commerce strongly feels that a concerted effort needs to be carried out, in order to highlight growth opportunities and create an adequate understanding and appreciation of the business environment in ANI by highlighting the key enablers.

ICC Odisha Health Care Summit cum Expo
8 March 2017 | Bhubaneswar

Indian Chamber of Commerce Odisha State office organised the ICC Odisha Healthcare Summit Cum Expo on 8 March 2017 at Bhubaneswar. The objective of the conference was to bring together government officials, hospitals and allied healthcare industries including pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and IT industry among others under one umbrella to discuss relevant and key issues pertaining to the prevailing healthcare scenario in Odisha.

Dr J K Tripathy, Director, Public Health, Government of Odisha was the Chief Guest at the Conference. Other eminent dignitaries who addressed the inaugural session of the conference were Mr Sudhir M Digigkar, Regional CEO, Apollo Hospitals; Dr Gangadhar Sahoo, Dean, IMS & SUM Hospital; Dr B C Das, Advisor, KIMS Hospital and Dr Sallu Mohanty, VP & Unit Head, AMRI Hospitals, Bhubaneswar. Mr Rupak Barua, Chairman, ICC Healthcare Committee & Group CEO, AMRI Hospitals delivered the welcome address. Inaugurating the seminar the Chief Guest said that Odisha has made tremendous progress in terms of key health indicators such as reduction of infant mortality from 75 to 51 in the years 2005-13 and maternal mortality rate from 303 to 222 in the year 2006 to 2013. The conference was attended by more than 130 delegates from various fields who brought with them rich experience and insight to the conference deliberations.

5th India International Potato Expo & Bengal Food Pro
9-10 March 2017 | Kolkata

With an aim to enhance the production of good quality potato and processable variety for processed industries and also explore the global market by exporting surplus potato, the Indian Chamber of Commerce organised the IPF for the fifth time during 9—10 March, 2017 at Kolkata with the active support and participation of Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India; Ministry of Commerce & Industry; Government of West Bengal; Government of Gujarat; Government of Tripura; MIDH; NABARD; APEDA; Niti Ayog; CPIR and corporates like R P Sanjiv Goenka Group, ITC, PepsiCo, and others. The event was structured to bring together some key elements of the potato industry, elements where value addition and quality are of importance for business success. The event was a two-day exhibition cum technical conference along with International Buyer Seller Meet and Potato Growers Meet.
The event witnessed the presence of dignitaries like, Dr Sanjeev Chopra, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal; Mr Rajesh Sinha, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Marketing, Government of West Bengal; Mr Pradip Kumar Majumdar, Adviser to Hon’ble Chief Minister for Agriculture & Allied Sectors, Government of West Bengal; Prof Swapna Dutta, Vice Chancellor, Visva Bharati University and Summit Chairman; Dr S K Chakrabarti, Director, Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla; Dr D D Patra, Vice Chancellor, Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswa Vidyalya, West Bengal; Dr R K Singh, Head of Department – Seed Technology, Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla; Mr A K Raybarman, Chief General Manager, NABARD, Kolkata Regional Office; Dr P K Pramanick, Director, Horticulture, Department of Food Processing Industries & Horticulture, Government of West Bengal; Mr Goutam Mukherjee, Project Director, Sufal Bangla, Department of Agricultural Marketing, Government of West Bengal and others. There were about 40 stalls in the two day exhibition put up by Department of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Marketing and Department of Food Processing Industries, Government of West Bengal; Gujrat Agro Industries Corporation Ltd, Department of Horticulture, Government of Tripura; National Horticulture Board, NABARD, CPRI and Corporates like PepsiCo, Jain Irrigation Systems, Coromandal, UPL, Tata Chemicals, Allround Vegetable Processing Machines, Scalar Trading Companies, SBI, Syndicate Bank, National Seeds Corporation and others, who displayed their product, technologies, and services during the exhibition.

There was a farmer/grocer meet which witnessed the presence of around 1000 farmers per day from West Bengal and other participating states. There were two technical sessions which were organised over two days.

North East Business Summit
9-10 March 2017 | New Delhi

Indian Chamber of Commerce organised the 11th North East Business Summit on 9 and 10 March 2017 in New Delhi. The North East Business Summit has been a flagship initiative of the Indian Chamber of Commerce since 2002 to facilitate Investment, highlight strengths of the NE region and business opportunities which North East has to offer.

The 11th NEBS aimed to display the strengths, potential and initiatives of the NE, promote investment in the region and also focused deliberations on strategic areas like infrastructure and connectivity, agriculture-horticulture, food processing, service sector and energy to highlight the investment and business opportunities in these sectors as well as ease of doing business in the NE states and address the key issues. The main objective was to take the North East to investors. On the side-linelines of this Summit, B2B and G2B meetings were held.

Anurachal Pradesh was the Partner State to 11th North East Business Summit and a large delegation led by Mr Taru Talo, Director, Department of Industries, Government of Anurachal Pradesh participated in the Summit. The first day of the Summit was graced by dignitaries like, Mr Alok Kumar Srivastav, IAS, Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim; Ms Aruna Sundaranarajan, IAS, Secretary (E & IT), Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India; Mr Ramesh Abhishek, IAS, Secretary, DIPP, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India; Mr Naveen Verma, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of DoNER, Government of India; Mr Pawan Kumar Bajaj, Managing Director & CEO, United Bank of India; Mr PVSN Murty, CGM (NE Circle), SBI; Mr Satyajit Ganguly, Managing Director, ONGC Tripura Power Company Limited; Mr D M Rao, General Manager, Project Development, GAIL (India) Limited; Mr Sudhir Kumar, Deputy General Manager, DGH, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India.

On the second day the key personalities who addressed the Summit were Dr Jitendra Singh, Hon’ble Minister of State (IC), Ministry of DoNER, Government of India; H E Lt Gen Nibhay Sharma PUSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd), Hon’ble Governor of Mizoram; H E Mr Padmanabha Balakrishna Acharya, Hon’ble Governor of Nagaland & Anurachal Pradesh; Mr Ravi Capoor, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Industries and commerce, Government of Assam; Ms Pooja Kapur, IFS, Joint Secretary (ASEAN Multilateral Division), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India; Mr J P Meena, IAS, Special Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India; H E Salahuddin Noman Chowdhury, Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh.

During the Plenary session an MoU was signed between ICC and Mall Chamber of Commerce & Industry in the august presence of H.E Konomba Sdbibe, Minister of Small and Medium Enterprise and Private Sector, H.E Nankoro Yeah Samake, Ambassador of Mali to India.
Mega Build Indonesia 2017
16-19 March 2017 | Indonesia

Indian Chamber of Commerce under the aegis of Ministry of Commerce, Industry of India had set up the ICC India Pavilion at Megabuild Indonesia with a number of booths representing Indian organisations. There were a total of 46 companies that participated through Indian Chamber of Commerce. ICC had taken a space of 240 sq m.

Interactive Session with Canadian Urban infrastructure development
17 March 2017 | Guwahati

Indian Chamber of Commerce, in association with Canadian High Commission organised a Round Table on International Financial Institutions driven Urban Infrastructure opportunities in Assam on 17 March 2017 at Guwahati. The objective was to have an interaction between Government of Assam and Canadian companies led by Government of Canada focusing on urban infrastructure and Smart City related opportunities in Assam. Around five to seven key Canadian companies participated in the interaction along with two Trade Commissioners from the Government of Canada and a Trade Advisor from Government of Alberta. Government of Assam was represented by top officials from Department of Finance, Urban Development, Power, Guwahati Jal Board, Guwahati Municipal Corporation, Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority, Guwahati Smart City Development Agency, Assam Urban Infrastructure Investment Program (AUIIP), Prime Minister AwasYojana, AMRUT Assam etc.

Training programme on Essentials of HR Legal Compliance
17 March 2017 | Kolkata

Indian Chamber of Commerce organised a one day training programme on The Essentials of HR Legal Compliance for its members and non-members at ICC Main Committee Room on 17 March 2017. Organisations are facing challenges to develop proper safety management system where behaviour based safety is a major part of HR. BBS is about integrating behavioural technology into the company’s management safety system. Behavioural technology is the system and process for applying the laws and principles that govern human behaviour. The objective of applying these laws and principles is to achieve behaviour change. The major objective of an effective behaviour-based safety process is to make safe behaviour a habit. The above concepts are critical for changing unsafe habits to safe habits and for changing an organisation’s safety culture. It is the vital duty of responsible professionals to understand the significance of behaviour-based safety and implement the concerned practices and procedures in order to manage the safety management system in the workplace. Mr. N.C. Banerjee and Dr. Ruma Basu Gomes from Consultivo Academy were the trainers for the programme. 26 participants from various industries actively participated in the course.
ICC & Tax Connect Academy organise Workshop on GST

17 March 2017 | Kolkata

On 17 March 2017 at ICC Auditorium, Kolkata a workshop on Getting GST Ready was organised. The total number of participants were 200.

Mr B K Mallick, Commissioner, Central Excise & Service Tax, Durgapur Commissionerate was the Chief Guest. The workshop was also addressed by Mr Siddhartha Murarka, Chairman, EIRC, ICSI; Mr Ashit Kumar Chatterjee, Head-Taxation, India, Timken India Limited; Prof T K Chatterjee, Mentor; Tax Connect Academy, Chief Corporate Officer, Legal & Corporate Affairs, DIC India Limited; Mr Vivek Jalan, FCA, LLB, CIDT (ICAI), Partner; Tax Connect Advisory Services LLP; Mr Arun Agarwal FCA, Partner; KN Jain & Co; Ms Shivani Shah, FCA, Proprietor; Shivani Shah & Associates; Mr Dharmesh Parekh, Chief Technical Officer & Senior Vice President, NSDL e-Governance Infrastructure Limited; Mr Abhijit Dutta Head, Certified Partner Business Group, Tally Solutions Private Limited.

The participants at the workshop were financial controllers, finance managers, accountants and accounting staff involved in the preparation of GST returns. Staff from IT operations, sales, logistics and administration from various organisations.

Bihar Food Pro

18 March 2017 | Patna

Indian Chamber of Commerce in association with Ministry of Food Processing, Government of India organised a Seminar Bihar Food Pro on 18 March 2017 at Patna.

The objective of this seminar was to appraise food processing fraternity about the different government schemes, incentives and handholding. This initiative was also to inform them regarding modern technology for adaptation and the grey areas in food processing as opportunity.

The inaugural session was followed by two technical sessions: 1) Opportunities in Food Processing Sector with Low Cost & Efficient Technology and Make in India Initiatives; and 2) Financing in Food Processing Sector.

7th National Legal Summit 2017

18 March 2017 | New Delhi

The 7th National Legal Summit-2017 was inaugurated by Mr Suresh Chandna, Union Law Secretary, Ministry of Law & Justice, Government of India; Ms Pinky Arand, Additional Solicitor General of India; Mr Debayan Mandal, Chairman ICSI National Committee on Legal & Corporate Affairs and Partner Fox and Mandal and Mr Dinesh Chandra Arora, Secretary ICSI.

Speakers Mr Suman Nayak, Partner, Desai & Dhananj; Mr B Sai Chandravadasan, Managing Director, Sand Legal Services Private Limited; Mr S Ramaswamy, Founder Medha Advisors & Chair, General Counsel Section, Indian National Bar Association & Founder Medha Advisors; Ms Shamitha Ghosh, Sr Associate, Fox & Mandal and Mr Raja Karia, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co; Mr B Sai Chandravadasan, Managing Director, Sand Legal Services Private Limited; Mr S Ramaswamy, Founder Medha Advisors & Chair, General Counsel Section, Indian National Bar Association & Founder Medha Advisors; Ms Shamitha Ghosh, Sr Associate, Fox & Mandal and Mr Raja Karia, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co.
enforceability of multi-tier clauses, enforcement of arbitration agreement against non-signatories under enforcement of contract act, insolvency and bankruptcy code was covered by Mr Alok Dhir.

which has the data of companies that fall under the central labour laws. Each business unit enrolling, thereby will be allotted a specific number to process a unified labour law return. This scheme will help in providing a boost to the economy and ease in governance along with effective management of business setups.

2nd North East Sports Conclave
21 March 2017 | Shillong

The Indian Chamber of Commerce organised the 2nd Edition of North East Sports Conclave at Shillong, Meghalaya on the 21st March 2017 in association with North Eastern Council, Ministry of DoNER, Government of India. The Summit focused on the scope and potential of Sports in North East, highlighted the inadequacy in sports infrastructure in the region and discussed various corrective measures and laid emphasis in the strategic plan to address the need for a differentiated approach for sports according to the potential needs of each sport, discussed the roadmap and how to create an environment where sports become a viable career option for the youth of the NE region.

Mr Ram Muivah, Secretary, North Eastern Council, Dr Subhash Basumatary, Director, Sports Authority of India, Mr Rohit Singh and Mr Miliang Ming Sawmy, on the dias during the sports session.

Book Launch Programme of Mr Shantanu Guha Roy at MCR
20 March 2017 | Kolkata

The book has tried to give an in-depth account of the targeted destruction of Jignesh Shah’s business empire; a scam of about 5600 crore NSEL payment crisis and how an innovator has been killed. The book is about a journalist’s painstaking account of how entrepreneurship and technology led innovation, capable of breaking market monopolies and creating a new order and thousands of jobs, can also suffer at the hands of those who are actually responsible for facilitating their growth. Mr Roopen Roy, Past President ICC, Eminent Business Consultant & Founder of Sumantranara and Pallav Gupta, Head-Taxation, ITC Limited were among the dignitaries who attended the book launch.

Mr Rama Chandola, Union Law Secretary, Ministry of Law & Justice, Government of India addressing the audience in the inaugural session.

Eminent Speaker on Redundancy of Laws impacting Industry: Mr Ashish Chandra (Sr. Vice President, Legal & Corporate Affairs and Partner Fox & Mandal) and Mr Sarjey Dagiar, Advocate & Managing Counsel, Legaist Advacates & Solicitors in the session on redundancy of laws impacting industry focused on eradication of redundant labour laws and practices. They also discussed about the single window scheme, where the central ministry
India Build Excon
23–24 March 2017 | Mumbai

The construction industry of India is an important indicator of the development as it creates investment opportunities across various sectors. Construction sector plays a pivotal role in the economic growth of a nation, especially in an emerging one like India. The market size of Indian construction industry is around Rs 248,000 crore ($37.6 billion) and it currently employs a workforce of nearly 32 million, the second largest sector after agriculture. The Government of India aims to increase production and export from the Indian manufacturing sector by inviting more foreign investors to source produce from India. Construction is selected as one of the 25 sectors included in the initiative and therefore, the growth of this sector is inevitable in the years to come.

Against this backdrop, Indian Chamber of Commerce with the support of the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India organised the India Build Excon Reverse Buyer Seller Meet (RBSM) in Mumbai during 23 – 24 March 2017. The objective of organising such a RBSM was to create a need for a mutually beneficial relationship to have sustainable growth in trade and economy to strengthen not only diplomatic relations but also to strengthen the economic relations.

India Build Excon RBSM provided a meaningful platform to the visiting international delegates to get an insight on the growing capabilities of the Indian building and construction industry. There were 52 international delegates from ten different countries viz; UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Sudan, Morocco, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The focus sectors of the RBSM were building automation, building interior finishes, coatings, sealants & adhesives, construction tools, electrical systems, flooring, ceiling, walling & other interior finishes, furniture & furnishings, textiles, kitchen, bathroom & related surfaces, fixtures, fittings & accessories, lighting, metal & steel, plumbing & water technology, roofing, cladding & glazing, security & fire protection, solar energy, windows, doors & sun protection systems etc.

Integrating BIMSTEC
23 March 2017 | Agartala

Indian Chamber of Commerce with the support from Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, organised the conference Integrating BIMSTEC 2017: Interplay of overlapping Sub-regional forums in South and South East Asia in Agartala, Tripura on 23 March 2017. The 4th sequel of this annual flagship event of ICC was held in commemoration of the 20th Year of BIMSTEC. Presence of BIMSTEC Secretariat added a new dimension to the entire programme. A message from H.E. Ambassador Sushmit Nakadala Secretary General, BIMSTEC Secretariat was read out by Mr Kunzang Tshering, Director (Bhubaneswar), BIMSTEC Secretariat during the inaugural session of the conference. Mr Manik Sarkar, Hon’ble Chief Minister of Tripura kindly graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and inaugurated the programme. Mr Sarkar during his deliberation, emphasised more on the actual outcome and implementation of the policy level directives adopted by participating countries. Especially, for countries like India, he said, the mission of BIMSTEC Secretariat must be supported by political will to translate into reality. Mr Prashant Agrawal, Joint Secretary (BIMSTEC & SAARC), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India quite rightly pointed out that among fourteen priority areas of BIMSTEC nations; India is the designated country for transport and connectivity.

Many other important government dignitaries and internationally acclaimed experts took part in the day-long deliberations and actively engaged themselves to churn out important takeaways from the intense brainstorming that followed. Most prominent amongst the scholars who attended the programme included: Prof Suthiphand Chirathivat, Executive Director, ASEA Studies Centre, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand; Prof Imtiaz Ahmad, Executive Director, Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS), Sri Lanka; Prof Shinichi Nakabayashi, Director, Asian Development Bank Institute, Tokyo, Japan; Mr David Sinato, Chief General Manager, EXIM Bank of India; Prof Gurudas Das, Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology, Silchar, India; Mr Joseph George, Senior Research Associate, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific South and South-
Indian Chamber of Commerce along with Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India had organised India Pavilion at SIPREMIUM 2017 at Seoul, Republic of Korea from 23 – 26 March, 2017. Near about 50 Indian companies participated from various sectors like giftware, home ware, handicrafts, textiles, ceramics etc. The 4 days event consisted of exhibition, business to business meetings, business interactions etc.

H.E Mr Vikram Doraiswami, Hon’ble Ambassador of India in Seoul, Republic of Korea inaugurated the India Pavilion at SIPREMIUM 2017, Seoul on 23 March 2017

India Pavilion at Sipremium 2017
23-26 March 2017 | Seoul

Indian Chamber of Commerce in association with LNMisha College of Business Management organised a seminar Transforming India: Developing to Developed on 25 March 2017 at Muzaffarpur, Bihar. The conference would be the convergence of Startups India & Digital India, establishing their importance in institution building that leads to the transformation of India into a prosperous nation.

The objective of this initiative was to create cognizance about the various new initiatives of the Government and to prepare the people for the journey of transforming India. This conference was to develop a platform to share best practices and innovative ways in creating a new journey towards transforming India.

The Inaugural Session followed by two Technical Sessions: 1) Impact of Startups and Their Social-Economic Contribution; and 2) Bridging The Digital Divide Through Digital India.

Transforming India: Developing to Developed
25 March 2017 | Muzaffarpur

The event was about the promotion and awareness about new technologies in food processing sector. The prominent Speakers were Mr Amenba Yaden, Hon’ble Parliament Secretary, Industries & Commerce, Government of Nagaland, Mr Imkonglemba, IAS, APC, Commissioner & Secretary, Agriculture, Government of Nagaland, Mr Alan Gomme, IAS, Secretary, Horticulture, Government of Nagaland, Mrs Hushii Sema, IAS, Commissioner & Secretary, Industries & Commerce, Government of Nagaland, Mr A Chakraborty, General Manager, NABARD, Dr Gouram Das, Assistant Professor, IICPT, Guwahati, Mr Luyang Manager Marketing, NERAMAC, Mr Parmesh Pratim Barogaih, Deputy Manager, State Bank of India. Number of people attended were 90 who were mainly food Producers, Food Processing Machinery Manufacturers, Packaging Machinery Manufacturers, Traders, Retailers, Research Scholars, Industry Representatives from Food Processing Industries and Government officials.

Nagaland Food Pro
25 March 2017 | Kohima

ICC Calcutta Foundation Lifetime Achievement award to Mrs Sudha Murty
25 March 2017 | Kolkata

Writing The Award consisting of a trophy, citation and a cash award of Rs 2.5 lakhs was handed over by Mr S.K. Birla. Earlier recipients of the award have been Pt Ravi Shankar, Prof Amaitya Sen, Prof Jagdish Bhagwati, Dr R.K. Pachauri, Mrs Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Mr. Ganesh Pyne and Shri BM Khaitan.

ICC Calcutta Foundation Foundation Lifetime Achievement award to Mrs Sudha Murty
25 March 2017 | Kolkata

References/sources: Leading business newspapers and magazines, economic journals, newsletters and web portals.

The news is compiled till 25 March 2017.