

CUTS CITEE IN ACTION

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2023



EVENTS

Ease of Trading Across Borders *The Status of Land Ports in India*

CUTS International undertook a study for the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) entitled “Improving India’s Ease of Trading across Borders: Opportunities and Challenges in Land Ports/Integrated Check Posts.” The dissemination workshop was organised at the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI), New Delhi, on November 22, 2023, aiming to deliberate on and disseminate the project’s findings among key stakeholders.

Aditya Mishra, Chairman, LPAI, delivered the opening remarks. The panellists included Prabir De, Professor, Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity, Research and Information System for Developing Countries; Riya Sinha, Associate Fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress; Nikita Singhla, Consultant, The World Bank Group and Arvind Akashi, Manager, ICP Sutarkandi.

Veena Vidyadharan, Fellow, CUTS International presented the key findings of the study. Apart from the speakers, senior officials from LPAI, managers of different Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) and think-tank representatives attended the meeting.

Mishra spoke about the importance of ICPs in trade facilitation and highlighted the challenges and opportunities therein. Operationalisation and reinvigoration of land ports is the top priority of the Government of India.

Singla emphasised post-development strategies to reduce time and cost in infrastructure projects. She advocated for a trade volume and dimension-based approach, considering future estimations specific to each ICP.

According to Sinha, most of the delays at Land Ports are caused due to trade facilitation measures rather than infrastructure. It is thus important to pay equal attention to infrastructural development and trade facilitation measures.

In her concluding remarks, Rekha Raikar Kumar, Member (Finance), LPAI shared that LPAI is also considering a separate storage space for hazardous materials/chemicals in select ICPs.



<https://cuts-citee.org/dissemination-workshop-ease-of-trading-across-borders/>



40 Years of CUTS in Public Action

CUTS International organised an event entitled, "India's Economic Progress in the Current Global Economic Landscape" in New Delhi on October 09, 2023. The event was fourth in the series to commemorate the 40 anniversary of CUTS. Rajat Kathuria, Professor, Economics, Shiv Nadar University; Nagesh Kumar, Director and Chief Executive, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID); and Pradeep Mehta, founder and Secretary General of CUTS International, spoke at the event.



Congratulating CUTS on its 40th anniversary, Kathuria observed that it was a remarkable achievement for an institution to survive, sustain and contribute to policymaking for so long, keeping consumers at the centre throughout. He noted that "Indian economic policy always centred on producer interests. It was CUTS which brought consumer concerns to the forefront."

Discussing the implications of the successful G20 Summit, Kumar, recounted that the smooth passage of a G20 Leaders' Declaration itself marked a huge success, coming as it did on the back of repeated meetings where consensus had eluded the grouping.

<https://cuts-international.org/40th-anniversary/>

Innovative Finance for Climate and the Planet

CUTS International hosted a side event on "Creating 'Fund of Funds': Paving the way beyond the Loss and Damage Fund" at the Conference of Parties 28 (COP28) in Dubai on December 10, 2023.

Sajeev Nair and Sankalan Dey from CUTS participated in the event. Nair outlined CUTS's proactive role in initiating a global campaign entitled *Innovative Finance for Climate and the Planet* that aims to unite individuals and organisations under a 'Global Alliance for Leveraging Innovative Finance,' to create sustainable funds to combat climate change effectively.



The panel discussion provided critical insights into the complexities and challenges of climate finance, calling for innovative and accountable financial mechanisms to address multifaceted climate-related challenges that face developing countries.

<https://cuts-international.org/cuts-campaign-on-innovative-finance-for-climate-and-the-planet/>



EXPOSURE VISITS

International Maritime Governance and Cooperation Leadership Programme

Sumanta Biswas participated in the International Visitor Leadership Programme on Enhancing Regional Maritime Governance and Cooperation at QUAD conducted by the US State Department in the US from November 25-December 16, 2023.

The specific objective of the programme was to understand best practices in maritime governance with a focus on legal and regulatory frameworks, efficient organisational management, human resource capacity, emerging technologies, etc.

Furthermore, it examined how the US maritime agencies and other relevant stakeholders can enhance coordination to ensure cyber security, public health, disaster management, alleviate international crime, and other critical issues.



Assessment of New and Emerging Issues in ASEAN Plus One FTAs

Sanchita Chatterjee and Advaiyot Sharma, along with Shandre Thangavelu (Institute of International Trade, University of Adelaide), represented the Study Team undertaking the Assessment of New and Emerging Issues in ASEAN Plus One FTAs at the Regional Consultative Dialogue (RCD) in Luang Prabang (Lao PDR) on December 09, 2023. This Study has been commissioned by the Aus4ASEAN Futures Initiative and is being conducted jointly by CUTS International and the Institute of International Trade, University of Adelaide.

The team presented the preliminary findings of the Study and gathered feedback from the ASEAN Member States and the Secretariat. The focus was on understanding the priorities of ASEAN Member States in terms of positioning, readiness and development gaps *vis-a-vis* the identified New and Emerging Issues (NEIs). The strategy for approaching the remaining portions and the next steps in delivering the Study were also discussed.





Inland Navigation: Stakeholder Insights



Bangladeshi vessels halted at the Dhubri River terminal waiting for cargo to be uploaded

A team led by Professor Anamika Barua, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, visited Dhubri under the project 'Trans Path: Water Transformation Pathway' on December 12-14, 2023. The team comprised Sumit Vij from Wageningen University and Research, The Netherlands; Veena Vidyadharan, Fellow, CUTS International; Gitima Das and Jaya Shukla, Researchers from IIT Guwahati.

The purpose of the visit was to meet various stakeholders to understand pertinent issues related to inland navigation, particularly its impact on the local economy and environment. Further, the visit aimed to assess the feasibility of organising a living lab with all stakeholders on board. The team interacted with fisher folks, boat operators, private traders and Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) officials.

Since December 2019, the movement of stone aggregates from Bhutan to Bangladesh has become via Dhubri. During the financial year 21-22, 221 vessels loaded with 31068.34 metric tonnes sailed from Dhubri to Chilmari in Bangladesh. However, the recent hike in tariff rates following the privatisation of the terminal has severely impacted the trade from Dhubri.

The prolonged halts of Bangladeshi vessels due to dredging operations, delays in the transportation of commodities from the source to the port, absence of a conveyor belt, among others are escalating the daily expenses and the cost of trade. This has lessened the interests of traders in Bangladesh who are now reconsidering land routes for cross-border trade.

The field interactions also revealed that the upcoming bridge between the Dhubri-Phulbari will displace the boatmen plying between Dhubri and Phulbari/Hatsinghimari thereby affecting their livelihoods.



The team interacting with IWAI officials



PARTICIPATION

- Pradeep Mehta and Mihir Shekhar Bhonsale participated in the 8th World Investment Forum (WIF) organised by United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD) in Abu Dhabi, UAE on October 16-20, 2023. Mehta spoke at an event on "FDI, ESG and Inclusivity" organised by CUTS and International Labour Organisation at WIF on October 17, 2023.
- Rageshree Bose attended a webinar on "Transforming the Logistics Sector Across G20 Nations," organised by Rocky Mountain Institute on October 17, 2023
- Pradeep Mehta spoke in the Panel Discussion on "Outlook on the Indian Economy & Potential" at the 6th India Manufacturing Show 2023, in Bengaluru on November 03, 2023. He also spoke at the high level session on "e-Trade for all Leadership Roundtable: Unlocking Digital Trade for Inclusive Development" during UNCTAD E-Commerce Week at Geneva on December 05, 2023.
- Veena Vidyadharan attended a brainstorming session on a new early monitoring mechanism- "The Trade Sentinel" organised by The Centre for Social and Economic Progress, in New Delhi on November 21, 2023.
- Rageshree Bose, Bijaya Roy, and Deepmala Ghosh participated in a workshop on "Trade and SDGs" (online course), organised by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific-Institute of Developing Economies (ESCAP-IDE) on November 24-29, 2023.
- Sohini Nayak, Rageshree Bose, and Bijaya Roy attended the subregional capacity building workshop, "Supporting Policies on Low Carbon and Resilient Transport Infrastructure: *Promoting Multimodal Connectivity in the BBIN Countries*" organised by ESCAP with the support of the Government of Meghalaya on November 22-24, 2023.
- Veena Vidyadharan and Sucharita Bhattacharjee participated in Rivers, Rights and Resilience Forum (RRRF) organised by Oxfam Novib in Nepal during December 04-08, 2023. RRRF is a platform under the project Rivers, Rights, Resilience wherein project partners share the key learnings from the Ganga, Brahmaputra and Meghna basins and plan interventions for the next year.
- Bipul Chattopadhyay participated in various events:
 - "Inclusive Trade for Growth and Prosperity," organised by the NITI Aayog on November 06, 2023.
 - "1st Asian Conference on Triangular Cooperation," organised by the Fund for Triangular Cooperation with Asia, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), and the Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation on November 02-03, 2023.
 - "A Green and Sustainable Growth Agenda for the Global Economy," organised by the NITI Aayog, the International Development Research Centre of Canada, and the Global Development Network in New Delhi, on December 19, 2023.
 - "Measuring Economic and Human Development in the Anthropocene: Bringing Climate Change" organised by the Centre for Social and Economic Progress in New Delhi, on December 19, 2023.
 - "G20 and Sustainable Development Goals," organised by the Great Lakes Institute of Management in Gurugram, on December 21, 2023.
 - "Empowering Women in Logistics and Standardisation, Grading and Rating of Warehouses in India," organised by the Asian Development Bank, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, and the Warehousing Association of India on December 14, 2023.
 - "South Asian Integration: Trends and Way Forward," organised by RIS, on December 09-10, 2023.



Take the G20 Spirit and Success to WTO MC13

The Economic Times, October 16, 2023 • By Pradeep S Mehta and Advaiyot Sharma

The G20 has committed to working constructively to ensure positive outcomes inter alia at the World Trade Organisation (WTO's) 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13), scheduled to be held in early 2024. India has won much acclaim for steering the G20 ship, successfully reconciling and accommodating different positions. It must now show similar leadership as a bridging power at MC13, to ensure an outcome-oriented Ministerial.

<https://cuts-international.org/take-the-g20-spirit-and-success-to-wto-mc13/>

Let Multilateralism Win the Day

The Economic Times, November 01, 2023 • By Pradeep S Mehta and Advaiyot Sharma

The concluding paragraphs of the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration reiterated a commitment to the G20's continued operation "in the spirit of multilateralism, on the basis of consensus, with all members participating on an equal footing in all its events...". It was this very "spirit of multilateralism" which carried the day at the New Delhi G20 Summit. This spirit must pervade the functioning of the G20 and all other multilateral groupings in the coming years.

<https://tinyurl.com/2az46t3r>

Analysing the Fifth Indo-US 2+2 Ministerial

The Economic Times, November 25, 2023 • By Pradeep S Mehta and Sohini Nayak

The Fifth 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, 2023, between India and the US successfully captured the curiosity of the global community, ratcheting the bilateral 'comprehensive global strategic partnership' between the two large democracies. Foreign ministers of both countries have laid out a strategic blueprint of coalescing in multitudinous domains of converging interests. One hopes that in future, this would become a 3+3 dialogue encompassing the trade ministers as well, as trade is intrinsically linked to both foreign policy and defence policy.

<https://cuts-citee.org/analysing-the-fifth-indo-us-22-ministerial/>

G20 Embraces Women-led Development as Africa Joins the Table

Policy Circle, December 16, 2023 • By Sovini Mondal

A transformative idea took root at the G20 summit — a vision guided by the strength and resilience of women. "When women prosper, the world prospers," remarked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, emphasising that the economic empowerment of women fuels growth, and their access to education drives global progress. The genesis of this idea unfolded during India's G20 presidency, where a spotlight illuminated the imperative of tackling gender inequality and empowering women as leaders and equals in the process of global development.

<https://cuts-international.org/g20-embraces-women-led-development-as-africa-joins-the-table/>