

Report of Dissemination Workshop

Improving India's Ease of Trading Across Borders *Opportunities and Challenges in Integrated Check Posts*



1. Background

CUTS International undertook a study for the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) titled “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 Wednesday, November 22, 2023, aiming to deliberate on and disseminate the project’s findings among key stakeholders.

2. Speakers and Participants

Shri Aditya Mishra, Chairman, LPAI, delivered the opening remarks. The panellists included Dr Prabir De, Professor, Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity, RIS; Ms Riya Sinha, Associate Fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress; Ms Nikita Singhla, Consultant, The World Bank Group and Mr Arvind Akashi, Manager, ICP Sutarkandi. Dr Veena Vidyadharan, Fellow, presented the key findings of the study. Apart from the speakers, senior officials from LPAI, Managers of different Integrated Check Posts and think-tank representatives attended the meeting. The concluding remarks were given by Ms Rekha Raikar Kumar, Member (Finance), LPAI.

3. Key Discussion Points

3.1 In his welcome remarks, **Shri Aditya Mishra**, Chairman of the Land Ports Authority of India spoke about the importance of ICPs in trade facilitation and highlighted challenges and opportunities therein. Operationalisation and reinvigoration of land ports is the top priority for the Government of India.

3.2 While presenting the key findings of the study, **Dr Vidyadharan**, highlighted the gaps in the existing infrastructure of eight operational ICPs (Agartala, Attari, Joghani, Moreh, Petrapole, Raxaul, Srimantapur, and Sutarkandi) and the two recent ICPs at Rupaidiha and Dawki. Some of the challenges that are common in the ICPs are those related to poor internet connectivity, facilities for staff, congested roads, inadequate plant and quarantine facilities etc.

3.3 The recent initiatives taken by the LPAI in improving internet connectivity, building approach roads, providing health and accommodation facilities for the staff and stakeholders within the ICP, ensuring fire protection and safety and generating awareness among stakeholders have been pointed out.

3.4 The study stressed the need for inter-agency coordination, development of gender-inclusive and ability-enabled infrastructure, constituting grievance redressal mechanisms/ complaints

committee in ICPs and gap analysis of counterpart/mirror ICPs across the border. For instance, the customs interface should be integrated with the Land Port Management Systems (LPMS).

3.5 Though the clearance time has been considerably reduced in Petrapole ICP with the launching of the Suvidha Portal, it takes about 4-6 days in Benapole- the mirror ICP on the Bangladesh side. This emphasizes the need for harmonised and more coordinated trade facilitation measures between the adjoining countries for smooth movement of goods across borders.

3.6 **Shri Akashi** stressed the importance of the development of the infrastructure at the ICPs to enhance trade. He also highlighted that awareness generation is crucial among the district and state governments regarding the recent and upcoming development of ICPs and their benefits. This is because land acquisition has been one of the most persistent challenges in the completion of regional infrastructure projects.

3.7 **Ms Singla** highlighted the need to consider how to reduce time and cost after the infrastructural development. She argued that the development of infrastructure at ICPs should be based on trade volume and dimensions and future estimations through a particular ICP. In addition, infrastructure development necessitates gender-related infrastructure aspects. She also mentioned that there needs to be greater clarity on the parameters used for scoring the quality of infrastructure.

3.8 She opined that the CCTV cameras serve purposes beyond mere security. These cameras can detect truck number plates with optical recognition technology and record the entire journey that the truck takes. Benapole has 375 cameras installed to automate the trucks' time structure. Ms Sinha reiterated the infrastructural development at ICP, along with trade facilitation measurements, needs equal consideration. Furthermore, the long-term impact of the facilities needs to be considered.

3.9 **Dr De** suggested adopting a comprehensive methodology to rank the ICPs. Performance monitoring with a world-recognized template will be very useful for this type of study.

3.10 According to **Ms Sinha** most of the delays at Land Ports are caused due to trade facilitation measures (75 per cent) rather than infrastructure (25 per cent). It is thus important to pay equal attention to infrastructural development and trade facilitation measures. Regional Cargo Tracking System (RCTS) is established in Zambia and Zimbabwe in Africa. This RCTS is only used in rail cargo in India. Harmonisation of processes across borders also entails the long-term impact of infrastructure. In this regard, she stressed for mutual recognition of standards between countries in the region.

3.11 In her concluding remarks, **Ms Raikar** emphasised the recent initiatives taken by LPAI such as LPMS, medical tourism and fire safety measures in the ICPs. She shared that LPAI is also considering a separate storage space for hazardous materials/chemicals in select ICPs. She suggested that the final report submitted to LPAI should capture these initiatives briefly.

