



Regional Energy Cooperation and Trade in South Asia

CUTS, in association with the World Bank, organised a half-day seminar on 'Regional Energy Cooperation and Trade in South Asia' at Jaipur on May 17, 2016. The purpose of the seminar was to present and discuss the findings of a study on 'Regional Electricity Sector Cooperation in South Asia'.

The objective of the study was to analyse potential benefits of increased regional electricity cooperation and extra-regional energy trade; take stock of political economy and institutional issues that limit the scope for increased regional cooperation; and identify potential steps toward greater integration of power systems in South Asia.

Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS delivered the opening address by highlighting the potential, hurdles and benefits of regional cooperation within South Asia in the energy sector. This was followed by dissemination of



L-R: Shakti Sinha, Mike Toman, Pradeep S Mehta and Govinda R Timilsina

findings of the research study through presentations made by Mike Toman, Lead Economist and Manager (Environment and Energy), Development Research Group, World Bank and Govinda R. Timilsina, Senior Economist, Development Research Group, World Bank.

The findings of the study were then discussed amongst the

distinguished participants of the seminar, which was chaired by Shakti Sinha, Former Principal Secretary, Power Department, Government of NCT of Delhi. Other participants included sector experts like VP Raja, Geeta Gouri, Mahendra Lama, Anandajit Goswami, Shashi Prabha, Sucha Singh Gill and Surya Chandak, among others.

Competition: Why it is Important for CFTA?

CUTS conducted a seminar facilitated by United Nations Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa on April 25, 2016. The seminar delivered by Pradeep S Mehta was aimed at highlighting the importance of having a competition framework for the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa.

It has been indicated that competition and investment would policies be part of the second phase of the CFTA. As African Union Trade Ministers finalise the African CFTA by 2017, it is critical for competition provisions to be fully embedded within the CFTA agreements. Competition policy provisions provide clarity as well as serve as a safety-net against potential abuses of the CFTA by transnational corporations.

It was observed in the seminar that the formation of the CFTA would be a milestone achievement in providing a framework for national and regional coordination in the trade arena. The elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers under the CFTA offers African countries an opportunity to improve industrial capacity. However, the pace of the continental integration should not move faster than continental competition policy reforms. There is need for competition provisions at the continent level to act as a major complement to the current efforts. The seminar was well attended by participants from UNECA, UNCTAD regional office and the African Union Commission.



Integrating Regulatory Impact Assessment in Law Making in India

CUTS implemented a project on 'Facilitating Adoption of Regulatory Impact Assessment in India', with support from The British High Commission (BHC), New Delhi.

Under the project, a high level advocacy and dissemination seminar on 'Integrating Regulatory Impact Assessment in Law Making in India' was organised at New Delhi on April 21, 2016 in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, a premier research institution in public economics and policies.

Regulatory instruments such as policies, legislations, rules, regulations etc. have widespread impact, which affect multiple stakeholders in different ways.

Regulatory impact assessment (RIA) is a framework to consider potential costs and benefits of different regulatory options. It aids in choosing the option which can result in maximum net benefit to



L-R; Ajay Shah, Bimal Jalan, Pradeep S Mehta, Rathin Roy, Ashok Chawla and Arvind Mayaram releasing CUTS Publication

the society. RIA has been recommended for India as well. The objective of the seminar was to discuss the challenges to adoption of RIA, and design measures to address them. Key barriers to adoption of RIA comprise political economy challenges; and technical and human capacity. Consequently, focused panel discussions with experts and practitioners were organised at the seminar.

The seminar witnessed participation from Bimal Jalan, Former Governor, Reserve Bank of India; Ashok Chawla, former Chairman, Competition Commission of India; Ajay Shankar, former Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion; Arvind Mayaram, former Finance Secretary, among others.

The seminar also witnessed release of advance copy of CUTS Research Report on 'RIA in Insurance Sector: Facilitating Investments and Enabling Access'. It also marked the completion of the project.

www.cuts-ccier.org/BHC-RIA/

Quality of Service for Mobile Internet in India

CUTS CCIER has been working with IIT Delhi, on a project to assess the Quality of Service (QoS) for Mobile Internet in India. It is perceived that the quality of mobile internet services in India is neither good and nor are consumers provided with QoS, as advertised by operators. Operators provide limited information on parameters like speed and data limit, while information on other factors, such as latency, jitter, etc., which influence QoS, is barely disclosed. Thus, the study tried to assess consumer perception about their mobile internet services.

The survey under the study revealed that though consumers keep QoS as a rationale for choosing their mobile internet services, yet the satisfaction levels on QoS provided is fairly low. For the regions of Rajasthan, West Bengal and NCR the satisfaction levels were 24, 45 and 52 percent respectively. Even for the satisfaction *vis-à-vis* tariffs, the figures were 15 (Rajasthan), 28 (West Bengal) and 26 (NCR) percent. This narrates that the quality of mobile internet services is definitely unsatisfactory.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) had released QoS regulation for wireless internet services

in 2012, followed by an amendment in 2014. The regulations enlist minimum benchmarks on technical parameters and guidelines for the operators to comply with. Operators are mandated to furnish a monthly performance report, on specified parameters to TRAI, which is further collated for a quarter and published by TRAI on their website. Consumers were unaware of such reports as operators do not release them in public domain and there is very low awareness on reports by TRAI.

The survey highlighted that 40, 46 and 85 percent of respondents from West Bengal, Rajasthan and NCR, respectively, knew about TRAI being the regulatory body for telecommunication. As a result, the knowledge about QoS parameters was low: for West Bengal (35 percent), Rajasthan (7 percent) and NCR (19 percent). Despite poor QoS, there are no penalty provision by TRAI on the breach of QoS benchmarks by operators. 95, 99 and 97 percent of respondents from West Bengal, Rajasthan and NCR, respectively, said there should be penalty provisions.

www.cuts-ccier.org/QOSII/



Green Growth and Energy Transformation in Rajasthan



CUTS in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) organised a roundtable discussion on 'Green Growth and Energy Transformation' at Jaipur on April 30, 2016. The purpose of the discussion was to bring together all the relevant stakeholders such as regulators, policymakers, academicians and other experts on a common platform to share and exchange ideas that would help move towards adoption of green growth strategies in the state of Rajasthan.

Roundtable Discussion

In the backdrop of the roundtable discussion, it was concluded that Rajasthan should look into the areas of rural electrification and solar roof top. To further this cause and examine related issues, the project aims at establishing a seed community comprising experts from academia, government, business, civil society, think-tanks and media, amongst others. More than 25 participants took part in the discussion.



Meeting with Committee on Environment

It was also proposed that CUTS should engage with the Committee on Environment, Rajasthan Legislative Assembly. In light of this, CUTS officials met members of the Committee on June 08, 2016 and shared the idea behind the Grow-Get project with them. Following the meeting, it was decided that CUTS would undertake research on commercially viable and technically feasible ways of adoption of Renewable Energy plants (both on- and off-grid) in rural as well as urban areas in Rajasthan.

Additionally, CUTS would look into the subsidy pattern and other financial mechanisms as well as community-based models for providing electricity in rural areas of Rajasthan. It was also agreed that CUTS would prepare a working paper in consultation with the Committee on Environment, Rajasthan which will focus on specific issues related to energy and environment.

www.cuts-ccier.org/Grow-GET

Advocacy

CUTS Comments on Revised Regulatory Reform Bill

NITI Aayog has been leading the mantle on design of the Regulatory Reform Bill (Bill). The Bill seeks to establish a uniform regulatory architecture for public utility regulatory agencies. In April 2016, NITI Aayog suggested some changes to the existing draft of the Bill, and sought stakeholder feedback. CUTS provided its observations on the revised draft of the Bill, as well as few of the changes suggested.

CUTS suggested that the committee of Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition of the Lok Sabha and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India be retained for nomination of independent members of selection committee for members of the regulatory agencies. NITI Aayog had proposed to replace the committee with committee comprising Cabinet Secretary, CEO NITI Aayog, Law Secretary and Secretary of concerned ministry. CUTS observed that potential delays can be addressed by improving the efficiency and fixing accountability to ensure decision making within a prescribed time period.

The revised draft also proposed to do away with consumer protection as one of the core objectives of the regulatory agencies. CUTS noted that consumer protection should be at the core of any regulatory action. Consumers are the most vulnerable set of stakeholders, and it is for their benefit that the regulations must be designed, implemented and enforced. Thus, it was suggested to retain the objective.

CUTS has also suggested that the regulatory commissions get their budgets directly from the Ministry of Finance on the recommendations of the Parliament rather than line ministries to maintain an arms' length distance. Alternatively, the regulatory commissions could be located away from their line ministries and accountable to another Ministry, such as the case of Commission on Railway Safety being under Ministry of Civil Aviation and not Railways Ministry.

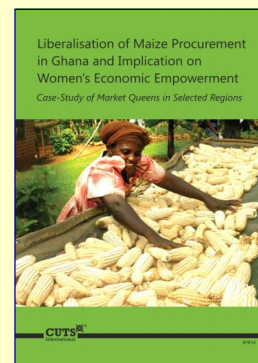
www.cuts-ccier.org/pdf/CUTS_Comments_on_Revised_Regulatory_Reform_Bill.pdf

Liberalisation of Maize Procurement in Ghana and Implication on Women's Economic Empowerment Case-Study of Market Queens in Selected Regions

The study presents analysis of liberalisation of maize procurement in Ghana and implication on women's economic empowerment. Specifically the study examined the activities of market queens (MQs) and their contribution towards women's economic empowerment and employment opportunities, price setting mechanisms, types of support provided by MQs to the farmers, support of the state and perception of MQs on the effect of the introduction of the commodity exchange in Ghana.

[www.cuts-ccier.org/CREW/pdf/](http://www.cuts-ccier.org/CREW/pdf/Liberalisation_of_Maize_Procurement_in_Ghana_$ _Implications_on_Women_Economic_Empowerment.pdf)

[Liberalisation_of_Maize_Procurement_in_Ghana_\\$ _Implications_on_Women_Economic_Empowerment.pdf](http://www.cuts-ccier.org/CREW/pdf/Liberalisation_of_Maize_Procurement_in_Ghana_$ _Implications_on_Women_Economic_Empowerment.pdf)



Pivoting Indian Manufacturing Policy Differently

The vision of the new government with its 'Make in India' campaign is to create a manufacturing hub in the country which would, in turn, help transform the Indian economy. However, at present, there are various barriers, including inadequate infrastructure, utilities, labour laws, uncertainties associated with policies, regulations as well as corruption which make doing business in India challenging. Thus, the manufacturing policy needs to be evaluated in light of the present challenges and available resources to enable firms to compete effectively while working with the advantages of their inherent structures.

www.cuts-ccier.org/pdf/Pivoting_Indian_Manufacturing_Policy_Differently.pdf

Advocacy through Media

Make in India: Governance is the key

The Asian Age, May 31, 2016

Pradeep S Mehta

In the context of a nation, organic change is always in the making. It is slow but steady, whereas sudden paradigm changes happen when either organic churning reaches the tipping point or a strong leadership takes charge.

www.pradeepsmehta.com/article-Make_in_India_Governance_is_the_key.htm

Right path to a sustainable future

The Hindu Business Line, May 26, 2016

Pradeep S Mehta

India needs to grow 10 per cent a year for the next one and a half decades if it has to become a \$10-trillion economy and get rid of poverty. This was the central message of a recent presentation made by Amitabh Kant, CEO of NITI Aayog, to the Prime Minister.

www.pradeepsmehta.com/article-Right_path_to_a_sustainable_future.htm

Create a benchmark for quality education

The Asian Age, May 23, 2016

Pradeep S Mehta

At two separate public events recently, Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant laid great emphasis on health and education. India, he stressed, cannot register high growth for long without a good education (and healthcare) network; and for a good education system to develop, we must pose a challenge for states and assess their performance on a real-time basis.

www.pradeepsmehta.com/article-Create_a_benchmark_for_quality_education.htm