



OPINION IN LEAD

Nepal and Bangladesh brace for developed future

Despite the challenges of mitigating the loss of preferential treatment accorded to the least-developed countries (LDC), the graduation of Nepal and Bangladesh from the category is an important milestone in these South Asian countries' development trajectory.

In late February 2021, United Nation's Committee for Development Policy recommended Nepal, Bangladesh and Lao PDR for graduation from the LDC category. From 2026 onwards, these countries will lose their access to privileges and support mechanism entitled to LDCs.

During the five-year transition period, the countries will need to devise and implement policies so that they are prepared to cushion the possible fallout of these support mechanisms on their economies—especially with regard to exports.

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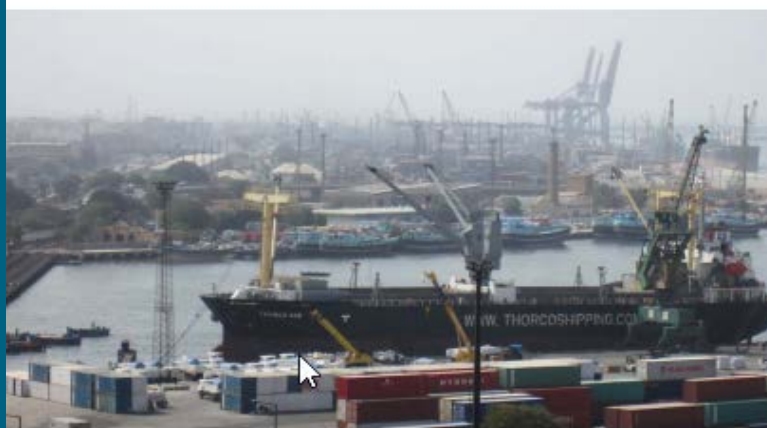
REPORT

Women's economic empowerment and gender equality in trade facilitation: the role of customs and border services

The report 'Women's economic empowerment and gender equality in trade facilitation: the role of customs and border services' by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) explores the ways in which women's economic empowerment and gender equality is integrated into customs and border agencies services, operations, and personnel management. Even before they confront customs agencies, women face a daunting array of barriers to starting and growing their businesses: unequal access to financial services; higher costs for goods and services, due to their smaller scale and unequal access to distribution networks; and lack of access to legal, marketing, information technology, and trade information. In their dealings with women traders, customs officers sometimes have high levels of direct contact, particularly where automation does not exist or is limited.

In this context, the report suggests that customs agencies can and should create work environments that are both more diverse (increasing

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WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY IN TRADE FACILITATION: THE ROLE OF CUSTOMS AND BORDER SERVICES

Final Report, December 2020

NEWS



South Asia set to bounce back but faces fragile recovery:...

South Asia's prospect for an economic rebound is firming up as the area's growth is set to increase by 7.2 percent in 2021 and 4.4 percent in 2022, World Bank said in its twice-a-year-regional update.

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Pakistan to import sugar, cotton from India, Pak Fin Min

Pakistan's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) allowed the private sector to import 0.5 million tonnes of white sugar from India and will also import cotton from India starting from end-June this year.

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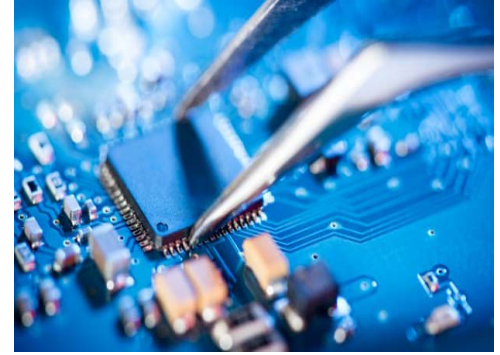
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India expects to start full-scale operations at Iran's Chabahar general cargo port it has built by the end of May, the country's shipping minister said in a boost for regional trade.

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Events

LDC Graduation: What's next for Nepal?

SAWTEE organized a webinar titled 'LDC Graduation: What's next for Nepal?' on 16 March to discuss the further steps necessary towards institutionalizing Nepal's LDC graduation in the next five years. The experts agreed that the potential loss from losing preferential market access when Nepal graduates from the category of LDC can be overcome by negotiating better regional and trade deals in the next five-year transition phase.

Mr. Lekh Raj Bhatt, Minister of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, pointed out that the graduation from the LDC category will allow Nepal to be considered a viable investment destination provided the country can devise an effective transition strategy for the next five years. To find more about the webinar, [click here](#).

Towards recovery: Women entrepreneurs coping with the pandemic

SAWTEE organized a webinar titled 'Towards recovery: Women entrepreneurs coping with the pandemic' to discuss the findings of the survey undertaken to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women entrepreneurs.

The participants in the webinar included women entrepreneurs, representatives from civil society organizations, policymakers and academia. The participants pointed out limited access to information for the women entrepreneurs that inhibits their ability to expand their businesses. Similarly, they also insisted that the difficulty in accessing finance needs to be addressed for enhancing women's participation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. To find more about the webinar, [click here](#).

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