

PR on APTFF

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## UN forum spotlights digital trade facilitation measures to boost sustainable progress in Asia-Pacific

The 9th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) closed in New Delhi, India today with a strong focus on how digital and sustainable trade facilitation measures and practices can bring prosperity for the region.

Organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, India and Confederation of Indian Industry, the Forum discussed results of a new [\[untfsurvey.org\]](https://untfsurvey.org) Global Survey on the progress made by countries in implementing trade facilitation measures and how to address remaining challenges in this area.

Developed economies aside, the 2019 UN Survey results confirm leadership of several Asian developing countries in digital trade facilitation implementation, notably Republic of Korea and China in East Asia; Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand in South East Asia; Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation in North and Central Asia; and India in South Asia. All 46 Asia-Pacific countries in the Survey made significant progress in making trade easier and more transparent over the past two years, with countries in North and Central Asia, in particular Kazakhstan, making most progress. Cambodia was the best performing among the least developed country (LDC) included in the Survey. Pacific Small Island Developing States are lagging behind as they face particularly difficult implementation constraints.

Over 270 participants from more than 30 countries at the biennial Forum shared experiences and perspectives on different aspects of trade facilitation for sustainable development, including trade finance, cross-border ecommerce, paperless trade and innovative applications of emerging technologies.

“Amidst global trade tensions, regional cooperation to cut red tape and automate trade procedures is more important than ever. Making trade easier and faster at lower costs by expanding cross-border trade digitalization and the simplification of international trade procedures, will help all firms in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises,” said United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana in her opening remarks.

At the opening, India’s Minister of Commerce and Industry and Railways Mr. Piyush Goyal highlighted that the Government is working proactively to introduce a plethora of reforms including digitization of trade procedures as well as ensuring improvements in the trading environment with reduced turnaround time and transaction costs.

The joint Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019 launched by ESCAP and ADB at the Forum noted that aiming for full digital implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and enabling seamless electronic exchange of trade data across-border could cut transaction costs for the region by nearly 17 per cent. To accelerate progress in this area, all countries were encouraged to complete their accession to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.

The ESCAP-ADB report also highlighted the need to strengthen linkages between trade facilitation and trade finance, with financial technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence to be used to enhance the efficiency and availability of trade finance, especially for SMEs in the region.

“There is an enormous untapped potential in the rapidly evolving digital technologies. Emerging new technologies can help address long-standing issues of high transaction and processing costs, while mitigating the huge trade finance gap,” said ADB Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, Mr. Bambang Susantono.

Going forward, the Forum noted the importance of better addressing the needs of SMEs and other more vulnerable groups such as women and those working in the agricultural sector, noting that only very few countries in the region have customized trade facilitation measures to support these groups so far.

Three initiatives were awarded APTFF Trade Facilitation Innovation Awards this year. The International Plant Protection Convention was awarded for its work on the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS), PSA International Ltd and Global eTrade Services (GeTS) for enhancing digital connectivity for China-ASEAN trade, and Tuticorin CFS Association for its CoDEX: Container Digital Exchange.

ESCAP and IBM also signed an MoU on the sidelines of the Forum to conduct studies on how frontier technologies can be harnessed to make trade more sustainable and inclusive. This includes collaboration on TINA, a new online decision-support tool for trade negotiators from developing countries.

Source: [UNESCAP](#) / [Eurasia Review](#) / [Scoop.co.nz](#)

## Day One at the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum

ExportPortal 17 Sep, 2019

Export Portal CEO Ally Spinu is attending the APTFF, speaking on the importance of trade facilitation for mSMEs all over the world. Read this article to learn about what was discussed on the first day of this forum!

The Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) began on 17 September with a note from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in India. This is India's first year hosting this event, due to in part the current government's actions towards trade facilitation.

The minister of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in India, Mr. Piyush Goyal, opened the forum stating that "together, we build success." The minister was referencing the unification of the Asia-Pacific region for a tariff-free and barrier-free trade. The following trade agreements were actively discussed:

- ASEAN – the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is a regional intergovernmental organization comprising ten countries in Southeast Asia, which promotes intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and sociocultural integration among its members and other countries in Asia. The nations included are Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar.
- SASEC – The South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program, set up in 2001, brings together Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka in a project-based partnership to promote regional prosperity by improving cross-border connectivity, boosting trade among member countries, and strengthening regional economic cooperation.
- CPTPP – The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), also known as TPP11 or TPP-11, is a trade agreement between Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.

### Leaving No One Behind in Trade Facilitation: Identifying Challenges, Priorities, and Solutions

In this high-level panel discussion, Mr. Ali Ahmed, the CEO of Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute, said that "despite the government's efforts to digitize the trade process, the majority of the stakeholders remain behind, due to the lack of knowledge or education or lack of technology." This statement is something all policymakers and the world must keep in mind when looking to better facilitate trade.

Platforms like Export Portal are already putting this into practice, bridging the gap between the support current policy can provide mSMEs and what is needed to trade securely and successfully. Its comprehensive trade platform gives mSMEs and other stakeholders the tools they need to meet the digitalization process with more ease.

### Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific

In this session, Yann Duval explained sustainability from the point of view of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

“Sustainability has 3 main pillars: social, economic, and environmental,” Duval said. “Trade facilitation plays a key role in all 3 pillars.”

In the same session, Poul Hansen, the Chief of Trade Facilitation section of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), discussed the importance of strengthening the communication between public and private sectors, as well as the importance of eCommerce in trade.

An average of 97% of worldwide trade originate through eCommerce; therefore, no policymaker should ignore the enormous role of platforms such as Export Portal in the process of trade facilitation.

Mongolian Deputy Director General of Department of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Mrs. Battsetseg Tuvshintugs spoke on how trade facilitation can fall apart in practice. Mongolia relies on Russia and China mainly for transit of their goods. Despite the fact that these three countries have agreements to facilitate smooth trade, on the smaller or local government level, these rules are not respected and are largely violated. This creates bottlenecks for smaller exporters and can be disastrous and very expensive for stakeholders that do not have the capital to support delays.

This statement was met with loud applause for Mrs. Tuvshintugs addressing this. The ongoing issue of corruption and bureaucracy prevents mSMEs from growing and expanding like they should.

#### [Export Portal CEO, Ally Spinu, at the APTFF](#)

Ally Spinu, CEO of Export Portal, is attending the APTFF to speak at the Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for Regional Prosperity session on 18 September at 9:00 AM.

Export Portal’s trade goals align directly with the purpose of this session, as its international B2B trade platform is an affordable and all-encompassing solution for SMEs all over the world. The features that are available and being developed on Export Portal, such as the panel of experts (EP+), the educational hub (EPU), and data flow insights (EPI), provide SMEs with the resources they need to trade effectively on an international scale safely, securely, and efficiently.

Source: [Export Portal](#)

## Day Two at the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum

ExportPortal 20 Sep, 2019

Ally Spinu, CEO of Export Portal, attended The Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum and spoke at one of the forums. Learn about the sessions and takeaways from this forum – read more here!

The second day of the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) began with a session titled “Aligning trade facilitation with sustainable development goals: Good Practices in trade facilitation for SMEs, agriculture, and women.”

Mr. Melvin Spreji, head of Standards and Trade Development Facility Secretariat, opened the session talking about the Food industry and how fast the demand of food export is growing and how time is so contingent to the quality of this product when it passes the border. He spoke about the need for spending time on inspections but not jeopardizing the quality of food that crosses borders. He also spoke about a pilot program his organization, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) works on, called ePhyto.

An ePhyto is an electronic version of the phytosanitary certificate in an XML format. ePhytos are easier for countries (especially those with limited resources) to transmit for their exported goods and to receive for imported goods. This facilitates the trade of plants and plant products and improves access to food. The solution being developed by IPPC is intended to be compatible with existing border information management systems, and it is expected to build upon such systems where possible.

New systems like this, like Export Portal, are incredibly necessary to make trade both easier and more accessible.

### Digitizing, eCommerce, and Women-Run Businesses

At the same session, Mrs. Maria Cacareli discussed digitization and eCommerce, making it easier for women to enter the market. Online business, in general, helps women because they can avoid the discrimination that many women in developing countries still meet when conducting business with men.

In the Asia Pacific, the share of female internet access was 39.1 percent in 2017, compared to 47.9 of men. On top of that, only 38 percent of women have adopted smartphones in India, compared to 71 percent of men. By emphasizing easy-to-use online platforms like Export Portal, more women could enter the market and create sustainable businesses.

### Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for Regional Prosperity Session

Ally Spinu, CEO of Export Portal, spoke about the challenges we have discovered while integrating SMEs from developing countries into a B2B online trade marketplace. These challenges include a lack of knowledge and education for SMEs, which delays their integration into the digital world.

Spinu also discussed the importance of policymakers to collaborate with comprehensive platforms such as Export Portal. Together, they can help channel trade facilitation and educating the world about international trade. Many government administrations do not know enough about mSMEs – their needs, their challenges, and their support system. They are good at establishing various organizations for mSMEs, but the system is paralyzed due to bottlenecks, slow follow-up, and general bureaucracy. Data is critical for proper and timely decision making. The public sector has to pair up with platforms such as Export Portal to gain access to real data and direct access to mSMEs.

For this reason, Export Portal Invites experts and policymakers from all over the world to adopt an open attitude and collaborate with us in increasing the number of trading mSMES in their countries. Our expert panel, EP+, is a place for our users to have an open conversation with experts, gain knowledge, and help share challenges with the people who can create change.

Spinu closed with the reason why mSMES are essential to each country and economy: although mSMES are eight out of ten companies in each developing countries, they are the people that most likely invest back in their communities. mSMES expand job opportunities, build infrastructure, and invest in the education of youth.

### Facilitating Trade Finance for Inclusive Growth: Building Gaps Through Technology Session

At this session, Mr. David Rasquinha Rasquinha, the Managing Director of EXIM Bank, said that banks as an institution would look for better profit and lower risk. However, this doesn't always provide SMEs with options. He then encouraged governments to create different programs that incentivize financial institutions to issue credit to mSMES.

Mrs. Emily Chin, the Chief Product Officer Capital and Credit, discussed the importance of new technology, such as blockchain, that better integrates financial institutions into the supply chain. With the transparency this technology provides, financial institutions and banks can gain the knowledge, trust, and awareness to support the economy better. They are also able to track and secure their visibility on the product that in many cases is the collateral. There was a healthy debate about whether new and emerging technologies will solve the problem in trade finance, accessibility, or if they will develop a new challenge: cost.

There are submarkets and new-age financiers that are targeting SMEs. However, even if they apply, they may not qualify due to their short or non-existing credit, or lack of documents.

Mrs. Urachada Ketprom, Director of Standard Office, Electronic Transaction Development Agency (ETDA) from Thailand, discussed the importance of financial education.

"We need to teach mSMES to build their credit and credit History, Ketprom said. "This is a bigger issue than the availability of funds."

### Trade Facilitation for eCommerce: Emerging Innovations for Seamless Cross-Border Transactions Session

Mr. Ashotush Bajpai, Vice President of DHL, opened this session with the topic of exponential eCommerce growth around the globe. He also discussed the need for each government to create and nourish the ecosystem of handling the current and future volume of transactions that eCommerce generates. Due to this increased volume, DHL is experiencing issues with a lack of personnel and the right technology. This creates delays and negatively influences both buyers and sellers.

The Universal Postal Union (UPU), the union of all postal offices around the globe, has called on government representatives and policymakers to allow for expansion and support handling the volume generated by eCommerce transactions. This directly affects postal offices all over the world, specifically, those that cover more rural areas that would be otherwise be considered unreachable.

Ms. Hong Xue, the Director of Internet Policy and Law (IPL), discussed the oil of the modern age – data. She also raised the concern of countries not willing to share data for various reasons, such as political. Moreover, if countries are willing to share their data, they don't have clear documents about the requirements that one must meet for legal data sharing. She proposed that trade facilitation documents must include another chapter for clarifying the data exchange. Despite on-going regional trade agreements and single window data points being developed, if countries will not have a clear protocol about data sharing and data ownership, we will never be able to achieve the desired results.

The moderator of this session, Professor Somuk Keretho, Director of the Institute for Information Technology Innovation, Kasetsart UNIVERSITY IN THAILAND, was kind enough to introduce Ally Spinu and Export Portal from the stage. Spinu explained our innovative way to solve trade challenges within our blockchain-enabled platform.

Export Portal then reminded the audience that our portal's focus is SMEs, and we use Hyperledger-based blockchain technology to increase the security and transparency of B2B eCommerce transactions. This allows us to minimize fraud and has also significantly lowered the amount of time and the cost of transactions, enabling more SMEs around the globe to enter international trade. After all, the numbers don't lie: 97 percent of all trade transactions conducted by mSMES were done through eCommerce. We hope that by raising the number of mSMES and maintaining the same behavior, we will help the number of traded goods within the mSME sector to grow exponentially.

Overall, the panelists of this session discussed that the regulatory instruments of each country must adapt to new technology. They must also create easy-to-follow rules for eCommerce regulation. If the taxations or regulations are too harsh, this will work against the country. Due to new technology and the internet, people will find alternative, illegal ways to transact, which is not beneficial to any stakeholders.

### [The Importance of eCommerce for Global Trade](#)

UNCTAD states in one of their surveys that 57 percent of entire global trade is conducted via eCommerce, and this number is expected to rise to close to 80 percent in the next few years. Therefore, investing in eCommerce platforms and collaborating on the national level is very crucial for all policymakers and government agencies. This would be the response to the African delegation, which was asking how to minimize frauds, illegal trade, and lack of paid taxes for trade conducted via eCommerce.

### [The Future of Trade Facilitation on Export Portal](#)

The APTFF was a successful meeting of the minds concerning trade facilitation, and Export Portal is proud to have been part of it. Export Portal's whole mission is to facilitate trade for people all over the world, so seeing experts gathering to speak specifically on this topic is a significant step forward in creating the world we want to create.

Source: [Export Portal](#)

## Export Portal to Address Best Practices in Sustainable Trade Facilitation at the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum

Session on Facilitating Trade for Agriculture, SMEs, and Women to Highlight the Importance of Sustainable Development Goals

NEW DELHI, Sept. 12, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Export Portal CEO Ally Spinu will be adding her take on the alignment of trade facilitation and sustainable development goals at a session at the 9th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) in New Delhi.

"The Asia-Pacific region is a wealth of unexplored opportunities which lay deep in the communities of local businessmen and women that just need support in bringing their amazing products to the world to see and buy," Ms. Spinu said. "I am looking forward to this event and being a part of the change that will help local businesses from this part of the world sell their products globally. I deeply believe that shifting attention to developing SMEs is the major change international trade and local economies have been waiting for."

This year's APTFF will focus on how digital and sustainable trade facilitation measures and practices can bring prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. The forum will investigate opportunities from trade digitalization for sustainable progress of the area and challenges ahead in materializing such opportunities. APTFF will feature panel discussions as well as interactive and informative sessions. These sessions will allow participants to share experiences and perspectives on different aspects of trade facilitation, including trade finance, cross-border eCommerce and paperless trade, transit, innovative application of emerging technologies, and more. APTFF will bring relevant regional initiatives and implementation cases to each session, making it a unique opportunity to share knowledge and practical lessons. The forum will also include many side-events providing a more in-depth exploration of the pertinent trade facilitation issues.

"Agricultural products are the fastest category and industry growing within Export Portal, and I can say that is just natural that SMEs around the world are actively looking for new ways for selling their products around the world," Ms. Spinu said. "The role of innovative technologies such as Export Portal is crucial in helping these SMEs integrate within the world supply chain of food with ease and at optimal costs. I want to explain the current issues existing within SMEs' integration in international trade due to the high cost involved and how technology slowly but surely changes this."

Export Portal's trade goals align directly with the purpose of this session, as its international B2B trade platform is an affordable and all-encompassing solution for SMEs all over the world. The features that are available and being developed on Export Portal, such as the panel of experts (EP+), the educational hub (EPU), and data flow insights (EPI), provide SMEs with the resources they need to trade effectively on an international scale safely, securely, and efficiently.

The Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for Regional Prosperity session is co-organized by ADB, ESCAP, Ministry of Commerce, India and Confederation of Indian Industry and will be held on Wednesday, September 18, from 9:00 to 10:45 AM.

About Export Portal and CEO Ally Spinu: After personal experience with the difficulty of international trade, successful businesswoman Ally Spinu founded ExportPortal.com. Export Portal is a digital B2B marketplace aiming to be a comprehensive international trade hub for SMEs and their counterparts. Empowered by a proprietary blockchain technology, Export Portal prioritizes security, transparency, cost-effectiveness, and ease-of-use. Partners can confidently trade, network, and communicate with other verified companies and experts from all over the world.

Source: [PRNewsWire](#)

## Digital technology can help bridge trade finance gap, says ADB

New Delhi | Updated on September 17, 2019 Published on September 17, 2019

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is working hard with member countries to combat “digital poverty”, said Bambang Susantano, Vice-President, Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development.

While adoption of latest digital technologies will help bridge the trade finance gap, which is estimated at about \$1.5 trillion, care must also be taken to ensure that it is equitable and that all segments gain from it, Susantano told BusinessLine.

He was in the Capital to attend the 9th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2019. Susantano said that adoption of digital technology has two dimensions — while it would bring transparency, efficiency, and accountability in many things — it also had the potential to leave a portion of the population behind, resulting in widening of inequality, he warned.

“Digital poverty — unlike conventional poverty — will be a new form of poverty. We don’t want to see that. We want digital technology to be both efficient, sustainable, and also equitable,” he said.

ADB is trying to combat digital poverty through its interventions in the form of capacity building, providing guarantees, and better access to trade finance for segments such as SMEs.

“We will continue to focus on supporting our member countries on trade facilitation. This is a programme benefiting the member countries and especially enrich the bottom of the society that requires support,” he said.

Removing all barriers and providing more access to SMEs is very important for trade finance to become more inclusive, according to Susantano. “Because that is the area that people are having difficulties. Most of them are women. We are financing intermediary financial institutions to provide loans to this segment,” he said.

SMEs are facing information asymmetry, and this is a challenge that can be surmounted by the use of digital technology, reveals a new ADB-UN ESCAP joint report released on Tuesday.

“By providing guarantees to Letter of Credit (LC)-based loans from private banks, we can ease the barriers to SMEs in accessing trade finance. Digital technology will help close the trade finance gap in the market. Digital technology can facilitate predefined trade finance transactions by filling the gap on information asymmetry,” said Susantano.

Susantano also said that digitalisation, especially of the trade-facilitation process, will help India become more efficient and get integrated into the global value chain quickly.

Susantano said that ADB is now working on Customs, Immigration, Quarantine and Security (CIQS) to assist its member countries to facilitate seamless and frictionless trade.

### Well-positioned

With India already at the forefront in digital identification technology and processes, Susantano felt that the country had all the ingredients of emerging as an advanced nation by applying digital technologies not only in trade facilitation but also in many other sectors.

“Not every country in Asia-Pacific has embarked on the massive scale that India has on digital identification. This is a stepping stone for the next stage. You have potential to embark on more digital trade facilitation that will facilitate digital coverage (of goods) from origin to destination,” he said.

ADB officials felt that the report — Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019 — could be the basis on which India could work upon the trade facilitation process digitalisation in the coming days, and this could help in improving the country’s export competitiveness.

“The report not only identifies the magnitude of the trade finance gap, but also highlights that governments and sectors, along with ADB, can work together to help close the trade finance gap. We highlight the importance of digital standards, and legal entity identifier to facilitate KYC procedures,” added Susantano.

Source: [The Hindu: Business Line](#)

## ADB Warns Of 'Digital Poverty' Hampering Trade Finance

Posted on September 19, 2019

The Asian Development Bank, which ramped up the trade finance industry's focus on broadening access to small businesses after releasing a report that estimated the global trade finance gap now stands at \$1.5 trillion, has released new analysis warning of the impact a lack of technology will have on companies struggling to access such financing products.

In a joint report released this week with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), the ADP again urged world leaders to combine their efforts in addressing the trade finance gap.

"Amidst global trade tensions, regional cooperation to cut red tape and automate trade procedures is more important than ever," said ESCAP United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana in remarks made this week to open the Asia Pacific Trade Facilitate Forum, held in India.

Her emphasis on automation is key, according to the ADP's and UN ESCAP's "Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019," also released this week, which pointed to the role of technology in connecting businesses to trade finance products.

According to the ADB's Vice President, Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, Bambang Susantano, the risk of "digital poverty" looms large over SMBs.

"Digital poverty — unlike conventional poverty — will be a new form of poverty," he said, according to The Hindu Business Line reports this week, referencing businesses' lack of technological tools and resources that can facilitate trade finance. "We don't want to see that. We want digital technology to be both efficient, sustainable, and also equitable."

In another statement, Susantano pointed to the "enormous untapped potential in the rapidly evolving digital technologies" to address key barriers to trade finance, including "high transaction and processing costs."

### Beyond APAC

While the ADB and UN ESCAP's analysis focused on the Asia Pacific region, the latest analysis by PYMNTS reveals that the trade finance struggle is not isolated to the region. Indeed, U.S. small and medium-sized businesses are feeling the trade finance crunch as corporate customers continue to drag out payment terms.

As PYMNTS and Fundbox find in the recently released "SMB Receivables Gap: The Business Impacts of Trade Credit Playbook," young and low-margin small businesses are particularly affected by the B2B industry's reliance on trade credit and, subsequently, have the need to seek financing to manage cash flow. Those early-stage, low-margin businesses seek short-term financing nearly twice as much as small businesses that are more established and higher-margin, PYMNTS research found, with nearly 31 percent of early-stage, low-margin SMBs routinely experiencing a cash shortfall.

What's more, early-stage, low-margin SMBs — the ones that tend to have a greater need for financing — are also the ones that struggle most in search of that external capital.

“Financial institutions are more likely to extend favorable credit terms to [high-margin firms], given their healthy balance sheets, meaning these firms have greater access to credit and financing products but less need for them,” the report concluded, adding that more than 9 percent of established, high-margin companies don’t use any kind of financing product to manage cash flow at all. “Only a fraction of other types of companies are in this fortunate position,” the report noted.

Businesses of all types use a range of financing tools to manage cash flow while selling to their clients on credit and waiting for invoices to be paid, including credit cards and merchant cash advances. Nearly half of all businesses say they use a line of credit to cover cash flow gaps, the second-most popular financing product behind credit cards. The use of factoring — one kind of trade finance — is among the least popular.

According to the ADB and UN ESCAP, trade finance products including factoring, trade finance, reverse factoring, Export Import finance and more, are essential to not only ensuring the continuous flow of trade, but health flow of cash for businesses large and small. Technology, the organizations agree, is a critical component of trade finance access.

Source: [PYMNTS.com](http://PYMNTS.com) / [the traderszone network](#)

## Government may soon introduce National Logistics Policy to cut cost on goods transportation

As of now, the cost of transporting any commodity from one part of the country to another comes to 14% of the GDP.

Sep 24, 2019, 08:48 AM IST

Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA government may soon come up with a national Logistics policy. Sources have told Zee News that the same has been forwarded to the Union Cabinet, which is likely to approve it in its next meeting.

The motive behind bringing the national Logistics policy is to bring the cost on logistics to 9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As of now, the cost of transporting any commodity from one part of the country to another comes to 14% of the GDP.

Notably, a major reason for strong economy of countries like the US, China and European nations is low Logistics cost. In these countries, the Logistics cost is less than 5% of the GDP.

As part of the national Logistics policy, focus would be given on transportation of goods to different parts of the country without any resistance.

According to the proposals of the policy, a single-window clearance mechanism would be introduced to remove all hurdles in transportation of goods. Apart from this, warehouses and high-end godowns will also come up at major centres across the country.

The government has been giving more impetus to increased use of railways and inland waterways for transportation of goods. This move is expected to cut down the Logistics cost significantly. To facilitate this, the government has been working on developing adequate infrastructure.

Earlier this month, Minister for Commerce and Industry and Railways Piyush Goyal had said that all transport sectors of railways, civil aviation, roads and shipping would work towards bringing logistics costs below 10%

Speaking at the 9th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2019 in New Delhi, organised by Department of Policy for Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Goyal had said that the National Committee on Trade Facilitation was working proactively to ensure the improvement in trading environment with reduced turnaround time and transaction costs.

Source: [Zee News](#)

## Kale Logistics Solutions showcases end-to-end digital trade facilitation platform

Sept 16, 2019

MUMBAI, September 16, 2019: Kale Logistics Solutions, a trusted, global IT Logistics partner for Fortune 500 companies, is one of the key exhibitors at Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2019, Delhi, INDIA on September 17-18, 2019.

The Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) is the leading regional platform for the exchange of information, experiences, and practice on trade facilitation. The APTFF is been organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and a growing number of partners since 2009, including UNCTAD, WCO, and WTO. It is held biennially and attracts more than 250 participants from 30 countries.

Kale will showcase its next-generation framework of end-to-end Digital Trade Facilitation Platform encompassing all modes of Cross Border trade movement as well as the conventional Regulatory Single Window. This is a path-breaking and unique concept, which goes beyond the regular National Single Window (NSW) in operation currently in many countries. This innovative digital platform is the only Trade Facilitation solution in full compliance with the UNCEFACT Recommendation No. 33.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Vineet Malhotra, Director, Kale Logistics Solutions says, “We have leveraged our deep contextual knowledge gained from the Logistics industry and technology domain to build the most comprehensive Trade Facilitation Platform to address all digital trade requirements. The platform also harnesses the power of automation and Blockchain to intelligently enable Digital Trade Corridor framework, which connects exporting and importing countries digitally. It is all set to revolutionize the trade parlance with a connected community.”

Source: [The Loadstar](#)

## National Logistics Policy to soon be released, says Piyush Goyal

September 17, 2019

Aim is to bring down cost of logistics to lower than 10 per cent.

India will soon come out with a national logistics policy to bring down the cost of logistics to at least below 10 per cent, Commerce and Industry and Railways Minister Piyush Goyal has said.

Addressing the Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2019 in the capital, Goyal also said that the Government was on a national effort engaging with Railways, ports, shipping industry, airline industry and roads transport ministry to collectively work on a programme to bringing down the logistics cost.

This Forum, which is in its ninth edition, was held for the first time in India and jointly organised by the Commerce Ministry, ADB, CII and UN-ESCAP. The main focus of the Forum is on how digital and sustainable trade facilitation measures and practices can bring prosperity in the Asia Pacific region. On the occasion, Goyal launched ADB-ESCAP joint publication 'Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019' with a theme chapter of 'Bridging Trade Finance Gaps through Technology'.

Goyal said in his address that the implementation of GST in India has shown significant results particularly in terms of bringing down travel time to long distances through road transport with entry points becoming seamless (very few check posts). The efficiency of road transport has caused little bit of stress for the Railways, who are competing with far more efficient road transport system, he said.

### Logistics cost

"This is the kind of competitive spirit which will bring down logistics cost and encourage Railways to be far more efficient", Goyal said. Goyal expressed confidence that this collective effort along with more transparency will help bring down logistics costs to more affordable levels and help India's exports become more competitive.

Goyal said that the National committee on trade facilitation -- chaired by the Cabinet Secretary -- is working to make trade facilitation a reality. As many as 76 specific action points on trade facilitation are being monitored at the highest level, he said. Goyal also said that trade facilitation will find an important role in the new free trade agreements that India is currently negotiating and would enter into in the coming days.

He urged industry to come up with the problems on the ground and ask for better facilitation and suggest practical solutions to the problems that they faced. "It will be very difficult for the Government and bureaucrats alone to devise the best of mechanisms. Ultimately it is stakeholders on the ground who can best advise us as to how we should move forward. This is a Government that is a listening government", he said.

### Open mind

On increasing trade barriers affecting international trade, Goyal said that India was willing to look at them, if any, so as to eliminate or simplify such barriers if they are causing unfair disadvantage to international trade. He highlighted several countries were able to stall India's services exports through trade barriers.

"I believe this will have to be a collective effort both of India and other countries in removing trade barriers. Otherwise the automatic reaction is to do a counter retaliatory measure when countries introduce a tariff barrier. This will worsen the open architecture of free trade that the world is trying to create", he said.

Source: [The Hindu: Business Line](#) / [Fibre2Fashion](#)

## India to launch National Logistics Policy: Commerce Minister

SME Times News Bureau | 19 Sep, 2019

Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said that in a landmark move, the government is planning to launch a National Logistics Policy to reduce trade costs.

All transport sectors of railways, civil aviation, roads and shipping would work towards bringing logistics costs below 10%, he added.

Further, the National Committee on Trade Facilitation is working proactively to ensure the improvement in trading environment with reduced turnaround time and transaction costs.

The Minister was speaking at the 9th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2019 in New Delhi, organised by Department of Policy for Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

With the Government introducing a plethora of reforms including digitization of trade procedures and fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, India is on the pathway of achieving the goal of USD five trillion economy, said the Minister.

He highlighted the importance of adopting a collaborative and integrated approach at the Asia-Pacific level in combating the common challenges of rapid urbanisation, climate change, poverty, and inequality, among others.

Goyal reinforced the government's strong commitment to the 'Act East Policy' for integration of the Indo-Pacific Region.

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, while stressing on the importance of cross border digitisation stated that 'digital and sustainable trade facilitation needs to be supported as a source for good in the region and the world'.

She further mentioned that with trade being recognised as one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, it is the need of the hour to rationalize trade procedures, increase the adoption of WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement across the Asia-Pacific Region, and leverage e-commerce as the sector for the future.

Bambang Susantono, Vice-President, Asian Development Bank, noted the need to address the various regulatory and infrastructural bottlenecks being faced by industry.

He mentioned that in order to maximise economic penetration access to jobs must be ensured, availability of trade finance must be increased, and capacity development must be undertaken to streamline procedures and reduce non-tariff barriers.

He stressed the importance of trade finance for promoting gender equality and economic empowerment of SME's.

The joint ADB-UNESCAP "Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019: Bridging trade finance gaps through technology" was launched at the conference. Mr Kenichi Yokoyama, Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission, said that the digital trade facilitation agenda can be taken forward while providing the requisite infrastructure and regulations for greater interoperability and security.

Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, mentioned that the strong inter-ministerial consensus in India on expansion of infrastructure and adherence to global standards is commendable. He stated that CII is committed to the government's agenda of making the Asia -Pacific region more integrated and globally competitive.

Source: [SME Times](#)

## Digital technologies can facilitate access to trade finance in Asia-Pacific reign: report

DHAKA, Sept 17, 2019 (BSS)-Financial technologies, such as blockchain and artificial intelligence, can enhance the efficiency and availability of trade finance, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Asia and Pacific region, according to a report of ADB and ESCAP.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) launched 'The Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019' in New Delhi, India today, said an ADB media release.

The report highlighted the need to address the largely unmet demand for trade finance globally, estimated at \$1.5 trillion, of which 40 percent is from the region.

SMEs are the most affected as they tend to have higher rejection rates for trade finance applications, compared with larger firms, it said, adding that SMEs account for 45 percent of rejected trade finance transactions as their applications tend to incur relatively high costs for banks to comply with anti-money laundering and know-your-customer requirements.

Low credit ratings of counterparty banks and companies are other barriers restricting access to trade finance, it also said.

"There is an enormous untapped potential in the rapidly evolving digital technologies. Emerging new technologies can help address long-standing issues of high transaction and processing costs, while mitigating the huge trade finance gap," ADB Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development Bambang Susantono said at the report launch during the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum in New Delhi.

Technologies can help cut costs, eliminate manual documentation, and enable accumulated digital information on SME profiles for lenders to assess risks. E-commerce platforms and cloud-based invoicing can allow direct transactions between buyers and sellers, and blockchain technology and artificial intelligence can facilitate due diligence and payments for SMEs. These technologies offer solutions to improve efficiencies at various stages of international trade.

The report notes the digitalization process is far from complete. Challenges include the high cost of adopting some new technologies and the lack of international rules and standards covering digital trade. Fragmented digital technologies also make it difficult for all parties to be compatible and interoperable. Blockchain technology is not free of risks related to incorrect information input, cyber security, and operations.

The report supported three initiatives that can enable widespread technology adoption: Digital Standards for Trade initiative to develop trade ecosystem standards; Global Legal Entity Identifier system to issue unique identifiers for both large and small firms at low cost and help enhance transparency; and model laws on electronic transferable records, electronic commerce, and e-signatures under a UN system to help countries implement legislation in a concerted fashion towards digital trade.

It also called for governments to collaborate with private sector and other partners to expand technology adoption to enable cross-border trade financing. It highlighted the importance of reducing the knowledge

gap by improving awareness of trade finance products as well as building more databases to help SMEs tap trade finance.

The report featured the findings of a global survey by ESCAP on digital and sustainable trade facilitation that tracks the implementation progress on various trade facilitation measures related to the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement and ESCAP's UN treaty on enabling paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific. Very few countries have customized trade facilitation measures to support SMEs and women, with implementation rates of 36 percent and 23 percent, respectively.

"Cross-border trade digitalization will help all firms in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly SMEs, which are the most vulnerable to trade uncertainty. It could cut trade costs by 16 percent, but this will be difficult to achieve without closer regional cooperation," said UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. In 2018, it made commitments of new loans and grants amounting to \$21.6 billion. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members-49 from the region.

ESCAP is the regional development arm of the UN and serves as the main economic and social development center for the UN in Asia and the Pacific. Its mandate is to foster cooperation between its 53 members and 9 associate members. The ESCAP office is in Bangkok, Thailand.

Source: [Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha \(BSS\)](#) / [The News Today](#) / [The Financial Express](#) / [Devdiscourse](#) / [Associated Press of Pakistan](#) / [Marketscreener](#) / [ModernDiplomacy](#)