

# **Report – International Webinar on “Regional Trade Agreements: Trends, Challenges and Prospects”**

**07.09.2024**

The International Webinar on “Regional Trade Agreements: Trends, Challenges and Prospects” was organized on 07.09.2024. The Programme consisted of two components: A. Panel Discussion (11 A.M. – 1 P.M.), and B. Paper Presentations (3 P.M. – 5 P.M.). The first component of the Webinar involved eminent academicians and practitioners dealing in the field of International Trade Laws. The Second component involved paper presentations by the participants who had submitted their abstracts pursuant to call for papers. Out of various entries received, total of 10 abstracts were selected for presentation in two parallel sessions (**Sessions – “A” and “B”**) running from 3 P.M. – 5 P.M.

## **Panel Discussion (11 A.M. – 1 P.M.)**

Participants of the Panel Discussion were:

Mr. Atul Kaushik, Advisory Council Center of Geoeconomics for the Global South COGGS; Prof. (Dr.) V.G. Hegde, Centre for International Legal Studies, School of International Studies, JNU; Prof. (Dr.) James J. Nedumpara, Professor & Executive Director, Centre for International Trade and Economics Laws – JGLS; Prof. (Dr.) Srinivasulu N.S., Professor of Law – NUJS; Mr. Sattwik Shekhar, Legal Consultant – Centre for Trade and Investment Law (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, GOI); Ms. Bhavna Mahadew, Lecturer in Law- University of Technology,

Mauritius; Dr. Kapil Sharma, Assistant Professor of Law – NALSAR; Mr. Utkarsh Mishra, Assistant Professor of Law – DNLU, Jabalpur.

The session began with the Welcome address and Introduction of esteemed panel members by Ms. Nimisha Sarma. After the Introductory session, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor (NLUO) – Prof. Ved Kumari underscored the significance of topic and welcome the distinguished panel members. Dr. Mayank Mishra then initiated the session by inviting **Mr. Atul Kaushik** to highlight the critical role of Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) in global trade and commerce. Mr. Kaushik highlighted the critical role of dispute resolution mechanisms having in background the incremental role of regionalism over multilateralism. He suggested that the contemporary mechanism of dispute resolution in international trade necessitates rejuvenation.

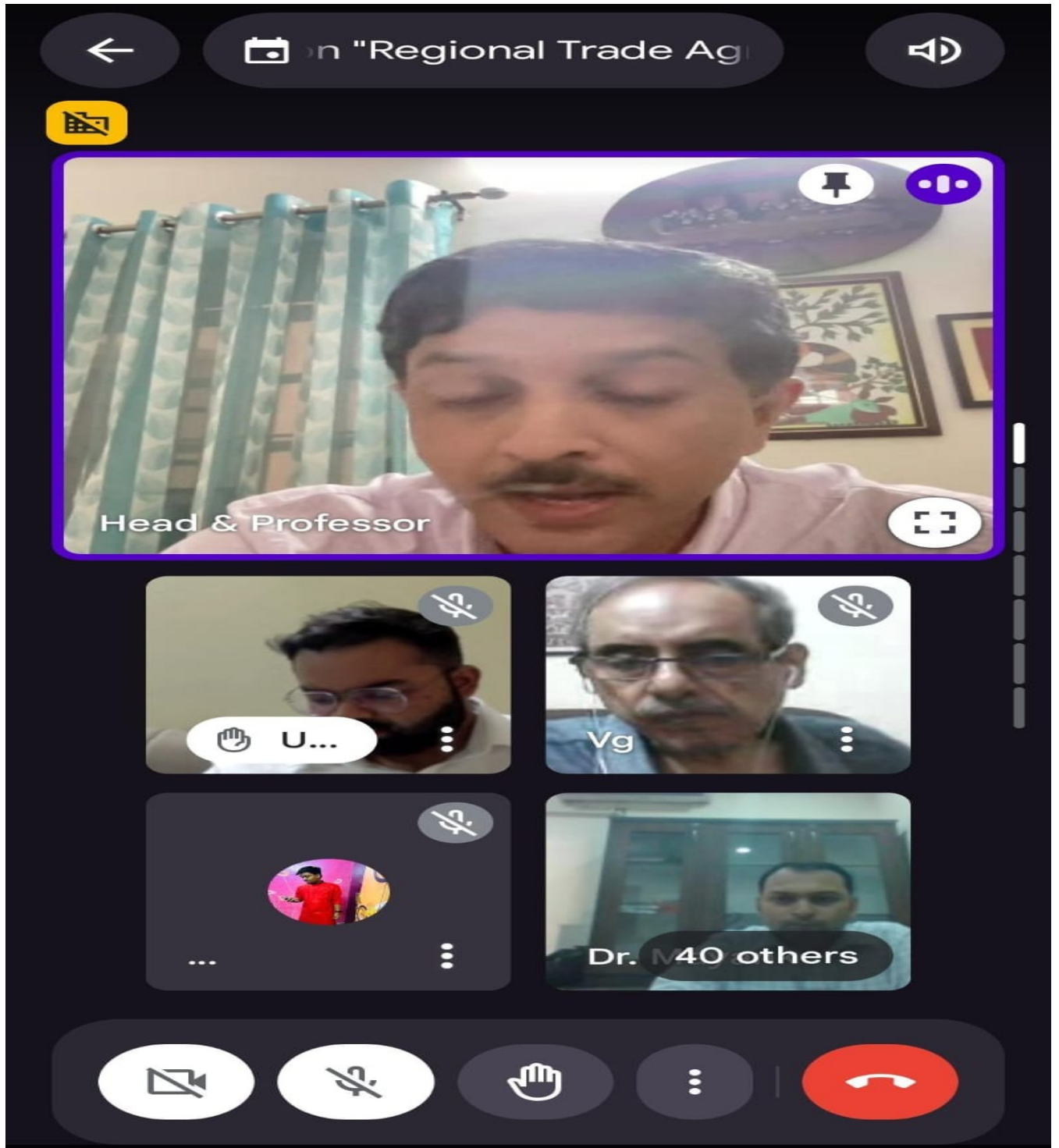
**Prof. V. G. Hegde** emphasized upon the serviceability of RTAs but we cannot be oblivious of the problems associated with them. He also emphasized upon their complementary/supplementary role in addition to the multilateral trading frameworks. **Prof. James Nedumpara** opined that RTAs are beneficial in their own way and he stressed upon harmonization of regulatory barriers throughout the system. He also pointed out that proliferation of RTAs is largely owed to Geostrategic purposes. **Prof. Shrinivasulu N.S.** was critical of the multilateral framework of global trade and WTO as an institution. Taking specific reference of IPR as a field, he underlined the failure of WTO as there is no growth of jurisprudence, weak dispute resolution mechanism and absence of objectivity in

the transaction of business. He urged that it is high time to look beyond the WTO framework now as such an institution is not serviceable to a great extent.

**Mr. Sattwik Shekhar** underscored the reasons for growth of RTAs as it is comparatively easier to form a coalition among smaller group of people (in RTAs) as compared to a bigger group (Multilateral Framework). RTAs follows the principles of like-minded countries coming together to foster strategically oriented regional trade and commerce. **Ms. Bhavna Mahadew** highlighted that the regional trade agreements of Africa are failing miserably, and they possess grossly disappointing track record. Design and implementation problem, political willingness, self-capacitation and limited potential to implement the agreements are some of the problems highlighted by the speaker. **Dr. Kapil Sharma** highlighted the significance of non trade agreements as it would enhance the inclusiveness of many multifold opportunities in the contemporary world. **Mr. Utkarsh Mishra** pointed out that RTAs are well recognized under the multilateral WTO framework itself paving the way for their roles in the international trade and commerce. He also elaborated on the concept of spaghetti bowl theory proposed by Jagdish Bhagwati in 1995 which theory highlights that having more RTAs would create a situation of confusion, complexities and a convoluted mess.

Overall, the discussion highlighted the positive complementary nature of the RTAs in addition to the multilateral framework wherein due to changing times, their inevitability in global trade and commerce was also underscored. It was also pointed out that regional strategic alliances and national interests plays a critical role in shaping up the vitality of RTAs in international trade.

After the Panel discussion there was a question answer session scheduled wherein the students and other participants engaged with panel members deliberating on the topic further seeking clarifications and elucidations.



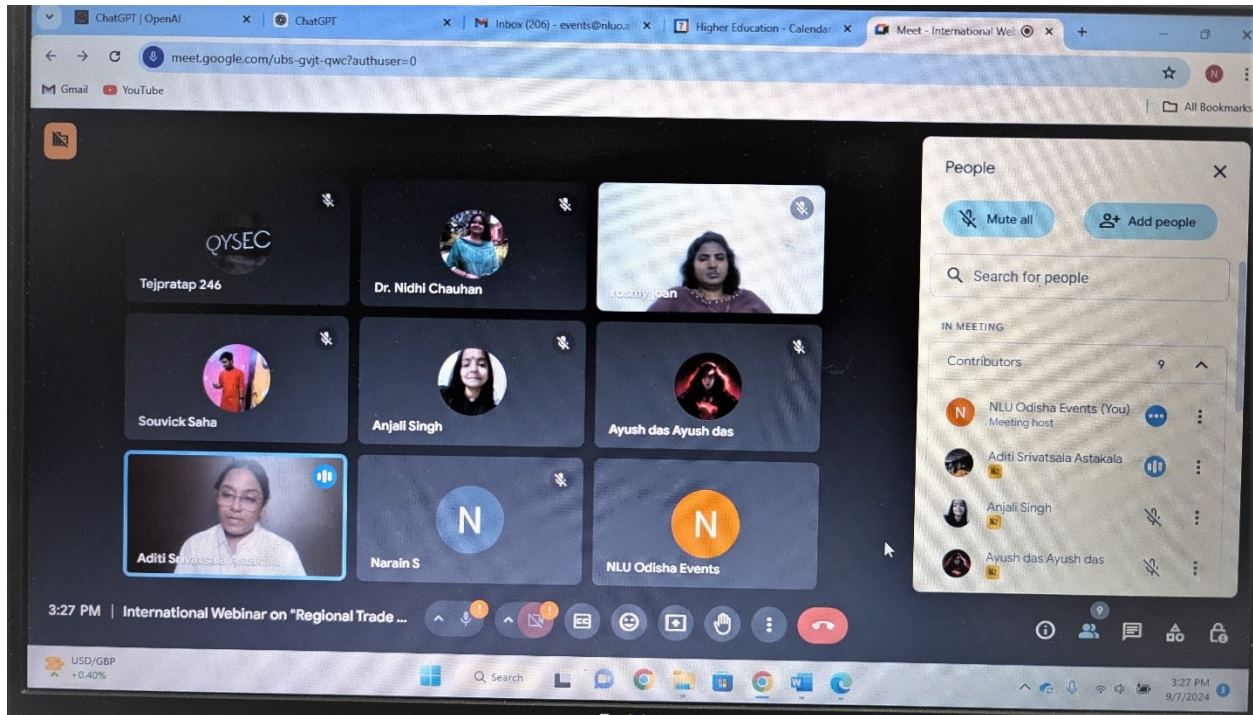
**Panel Discussion in Progress**

**Paper Presentations (3 P.M. – 5 P.M.)**

The First Session (**Session – “A”**) of “Paper Presentation” was Chaired by Dr. Rosmy (Assistant Professor – NALSAR, Hyderabad) Joan and Dr. Nidhi Singh (Assistant Professor – Madhusudan Law College, Cuttack). The session was moderated by Mr. Souvick Saha (Student, NLUO - Cuttack). In this session five papers were scheduled to be presented by the presenters. Following presenters presented their papers in **Session – “A”**:

**Mr. Tej Pratap & Aryan Raj** presented on “*Balancing Trade and Sustainability: The impact of Regional Trade Agreements on Natural Resources*”; **Ms. Aditi Srivatsala Astakala** presented on “*Navigating Sustainability: The role of regional trade agreements in natural resource management and environmental policy*”; **Mr. Narain S.** presented on “*Beyond Trade: The role of Non Trade Factors in Regional Trade Agreements and the Impact of RTAs on Peace, Cooperation, and Political Stability in South-South and North-South Contexts*”; **Mr. Ayush Das & Ms. Anjali Kumari** presented on “*Exploring the Opportunities: Enhancing Sustainable Development through Regional Trade Agreements*”; **Ms. Aswathy Arjunan** presented on “*Exploring the Opportunities: Enhancing Sustainable Development Through Regional Trade Agreements*”.

The chair provided their valuable comments and inputs after each presentation to the presenters to enhance the quality of their paper. The session was concluded by Mr. Souvick thanking the chair(s) and presenters for a successful presentation. Dr. Mayank Mishra on behalf of CITL - NLUO also thanked the chairs for giving their precious time and valuable inputs to the presenters.

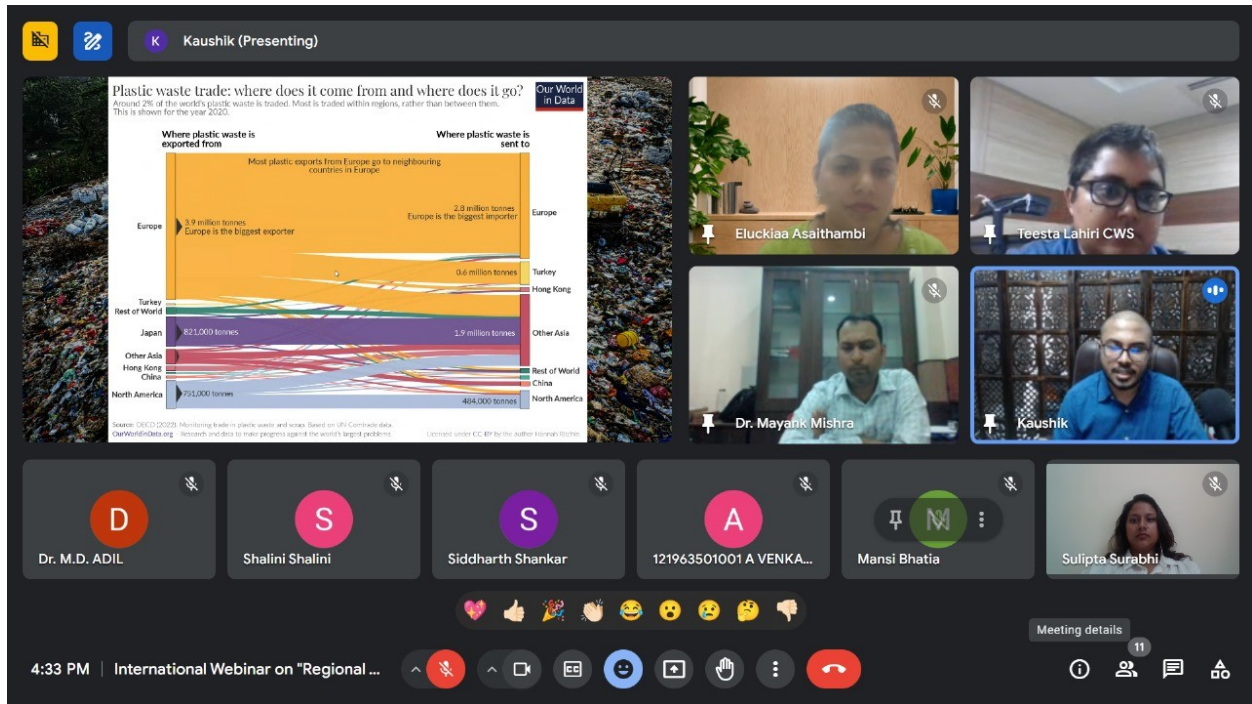


### Session – “A” in Progress

The Second Session of “Paper Presentation” (**Session – “B”**) was Chaired by Dr. Eluckiaa A. (Assistant Professor – NALSAR, Hyderabad) and Ms. Teesta Lahiri (Associate - Legal, Centre for WTO Studies). The session was moderated by Ms. Sulipta Surabhi (Student, NLUO - Cuttack). In this session five papers were scheduled to be presented by the presenters which are as follows: **Mr. A. Venkateswara Rao** presented on “*Contribution of Regional Trade Agreements towards the ecosystem of intellectual property rights in developing countries*”; **Dr. MD. Adil** presented on “*Regional Trade Agreements and their Impact on Environment*”; **Ms. Shalini & Ms. Arundhati** presented on “*The Blue Economy at Risk: Regional Trade Agreements and their impact on marine sustainability*”; **Ms. Mansi Bhatia** presented on “*Trade during turbulence: Impact on and of armed conflicts on Regional Trade Agreements*”; **Mr. Kaushik Das** presented on

*“Environmental Protection Implicit Regional Trade Agreements (RTA) Barriers and Development: Where next for Sustainable Development?”*

The chair provided their incisive and insightful perspectives on the topic after each presentation. The session was concluded by Ms. Sulipta Surabhi thanking the chair(s) and presenters for a successful presentation. Dr. Mayank Mishra on behalf of CITL - NLUO also thanked the chairs for giving their precious time and critical inputs to the presenters which would enhance the quality of research papers and provide a fresh perspective to the presenters.



**Session – “B” in Progress**