

# Hassle-free delivery of goods delights Nepali importers

## POST REPORT

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**W**HEN India unilaterally imposed a double-lock system on Nepal-bound cargo at Indian customs at Kolkata port, worried Nepali traders had thought that it would create problems in the country's foreign trade. Now they say that the double-lock system has been a tremendous advantage for them as it has ensured hassle-free delivery of goods to Nepal.

lock system initially as they had to go through a further administrative step that could delay delivery. "It was a psychological fear which is now no more," said Sharma.

The Nepal-India Transit Treaty has stipulated a single-lock system which means that Nepal-bound third country imports enter via Kolkata with a one-time lock put on the container by the shipping agent or the carrier authorised by the shipping company. As per the transit treaty signed between Nepal and India, Indian customs officers post-

## DOUBLE-LOCK SYSTEM

According to the business community, the system has facilitated smooth transportation of goods without any additional cost. "The Indian authorities hardly check Nepal-bound shipments after they have been double-locked by India customs at Kolkata port," said Rajan Sharma, president of the Nepal Freight Forwarders' Association. "Nepali importers have not been burdened with extra costs nor do they have to face unnecessary hassles on the way."

Meanwhile, a study team of South Asia Watch on Trade, Economy and Environment (SAWTEE) expressed a similar view in its report on Nepal-India trade.

"During the interaction with Nepali businessmen, we found that the system has actually helped Nepal by ensuring quick delivery of goods unlike what was thought earlier with Indian police not checking cargo along the way," said Ratnakar Adhikari, chief executive director of SAWTEE, a non-government organisation working in the field of trade and economics.

"Most of those who are not benefiting from this system are people involved in tampering with shipments while they are en route to Nepal." Adhikari, however, said that despite the happy result of India's move, it is not the way India should deal with Nepal unilaterally.

Last year, India had imposed the double-lock system unilaterally to address their own concerns that containers headed for Nepal were being tampered with and that the one-time lock had been found broken many times to dump the goods in India. Nepali businessmen were uncomfortable with the double-

ed at the sea port shall merely check the one-time lock on Nepal-bound containers.

India had also been raising the issue of security because of tampering with Nepal-bound cargo, according to officials of the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies (MoCS). The government, which had tried hard not to allow the double-lock system to be implemented in the past, has now admitted that the system has actually helped to facilitate trade. "Once Indian customs seals Nepal-bound containers, they are not checked along the way, facilitating smooth delivery," said Naindra Prasad Upadhyay, joint secretary at the MoCS.

With India being flexible by agreeing to allow Nepal to use Visakhapatnam port too if it agreed to the double-lock system, traders have asked the government to start work to enable importers to use it. Most of Nepal's third-country trade is presently conducted through Kolkata port.

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