

SAARC journalists shown nexus between trade, climate change and food security

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A two-day regional training programme of economic journalists from South Asian countries, jointly organized by South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Kathmandu, and Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), Colombo, was held in Sri Lanka on the broad theme of the training programme is "Trade, Climate Change and Food Security".

Highlighting the objectives of the programme, Dr Posh Raj Pandey, Executive Chairman, SAWTEE, hoped that the two-day training programme would enable the journalists conduct proper analysis of the interlinkages between trade, climate change and food security issues and explain that to the masses in simple terms. He was of the view that most economic reporting tend to reflect pre-judgement of journalists in their analysis, and therefore, this training programme would help the journalists get rid of that baggage of pre-judgement.

Dr Saman Kelegama, Executive Director, IPS, stated that most of the newspapers in South Asian countries tend to consider financial issues as the most important economic issue and provide maximum coverage for such news while trade issues receive relatively less attention. Highlighting the importance of trade, more so in the current context of its interrelationship with climate change and food security, he urged the journalists to give importance to trade issues as well. He stressed that while analyzing trade policy, its links with climate change and food security should not be overlooked. He also put forth his expectation that the journalists would benefit from the training programme and contribute to their respective country's preparations for the Ninth WTO Ministerial going to take place in Bali on 2-3 December 2013.

Ziaul Hoque Mukta of Oxfam lauded the role of the media as a major change agent and requested the journalists to translate complex and technical issues in simple language for common people to understand and help bring about required changes in the society.

Over the two days, experts from different South Asian countries interacted with journalists on a number of topics such as regional trade integration in South Asia, trade facilitation, services trade, non-tariff barriers, agriculture and food security, trade and food security, climate justice, least-developed country issues, among others. Sixteen journalists from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in the training programme.