

Regional conclave on food security legislation begins

Himalayan News Service
Kathmandu, July 30

A two-day regional consultation on 'Food Related Legislation in South Asia' kicked off in Kathmandu today.

The forum is meant to facilitate discussions on challenges in achieving decent standard of living, including food security, increasing prices, climatic change, population growth and resources' scarcity in the region.

Forty people, including economists, lawyers, parliamentarians and former lawmakers from Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are participating in the programme.

Laying stress on the need to do a rethink on existing indicators of food security, Posh Raj Pandey, executive chairman of South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics & Environment (SAWTEE), said, "The issue of affordability is crucial. It will be imprudent to draft the law that a country will not be able to implement effectively."

Scott Faiia, country director for Oxfam Nepal, highlighted the objectives of the consultation, while Ziaul Hoque Mukta, regional policy coordinator, Oxfam, highlighted the need for a consolidated food security law that uses human rights-based approach.

All five countries pre-

sented their respective food security laws on the first day of the consultative meeting.

The reports highlighted features of legislative frameworks in all five South Asian countries and identified best cases model and challenges in each country's legislative framework.

Presenting Nepal's Country Report, Advocate Apurba Khatiwada said the food security law should incorporate a rights-based approach, acknowledging food as a fundamental human right upon which other rights and freedoms are based.

"Food insecurity should not only be seen as the failure of a state to make wise decisions regarding resources' allocation and market regulation, but also as a violation of peoples' rights," he added.

Today's session was chaired by former vice-chairman of National Planning Commission Dinesh Chandra Devkota and former deputy speaker Chitralekha Yadav, who emphasised the implementation of policies.

According to SAWTEE and Oxfam, the organisers, South Asia is home to the largest number of economically disconsolate people in the world.

Of the total population in the region, 17.6 per cent or 304 million are undernourished.