

Experts urge promoting e-commerce

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The South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies (MoICS) organised an interaction programme titled 'E-commerce in WTO: Agenda for Nepal' here today.

At the domestic level, Nepal needs to strengthen its digital, legal and logistical infrastructure, in order to be capable of offering strong e-commerce services, pointed out Chandra Kumar Ghimire, secretary at MoICS.

"Nepal could use its vast network of postal services for improving the delivery of products nationwide."

At the multilateral platform such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), developing nations are pushing for formal negotiations related to issues of e-commerce, so it is necessary for us to be prepared for same, he said.

He also informed that the ministry has prepared a roadmap regarding e-commerce and submitted it to the Cabinet.

Posh Raj Pandey, executive chairman of SAWTEE, making a presentation on

the topic, pointed out importance of digital economy that amounts to 6.5 per cent of the global output. However, the digital divide between the developed and developing countries has left the developing countries less able to compete for the benefits accrued by e-commerce.

He raised the question on whether Nepal was prepared for multilateral e-commerce rules and how Nepal should improve its preparedness — legal and regulatory, infrastructure, human resources and finance, among others.

Toya Narayan Gyawali, joint secretary at MoICS,

insisted on the need of gap analysis in terms of trade logistics and infrastructure, legal framework, financial access and payments solutions, in order to prepare for domestic market as well as for multilateral negotiations.

Binod Dahal, chairperson of ICT Development Committee at Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, pointed out that tax hikes on internet announced in fiscal budget 2018-19 may not be helpful in promoting e-commerce.

Keshav Acharya, a senior economist, highlighted issues regarding interna-

tional payments settlement for Nepal, adding that the country should adopt as many reforms as possible, be it regulatory or logistical, to facilitate e-commerce.

Similarly, women entrepreneurs present at the programme also pointed out that limited financial literacy among women entrepreneurs as a major challenge. Also micro-, small- and medium-enterprises are promoting their products through social media pages but, they are not even able to promote their products due to problems with payments system, they said.