

The

Rising Nepal

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No successful business in unsuccessful society

TRN Reporter

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Top Nepalese business organisations with support from GTZ/INCLUDE and International Alert organised a regional exchange programme with Business for Peace Alliance (BPA) and Ceylon Chamber of Commerce Sri Lanka.

The organisers at a programme Friday said the exchange programme aimed to facilitate regional experience sharing and stimulate discussions on private sector's po-

tentials and roles in inclusive economic development for sustainable peace building. The exchange programme also attempted to establish networks and build solidarity at a regional level between Sri Lanka and Nepal.

"Everybody should do what they can from where they are and from what they have for peace, and we as the private sector are determined to take our peace-building role forward," said Padma Jyoti, president of National Busi-

ness Initiatives, on behalf of the organisers. He further noted, "There is no successful business in an unsuccessful society and there can be no successful society without successful business."

A series of informal interactions and workshops took place in Biratnagar and Kathmandu between December 6-12. During those workshops and interactions, various impacts of conflict on business were discussed, such as extortion, abductions, and

threats as well as decline in investment opportunities and strained industrial relations. From Sri Lanka the Galle Chamber of Commerce and the Jaffna Chamber of Commerce shared their respective coping strategies in dealing with conflicts through their locally initiated peace-building mechanisms.

"The bigger the challenge, the greater the opportunity," said Dr. Anura Ekanayake, senior vice chairperson, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. "The

ongoing conflict has also given the Sri Lankan private sector a role to play of change agent in times of political instability and frequent strikes."

During the exchange programme participants emphasised building good relationships and trust with the employees of the society at large through conflict sensitive social responsible business practices. It is a long-term but nonetheless an effective approach to addressing labour disputes.

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of twelve kilograms of five 'Jyapu Pragya' respected Dr. years old rice was displayed Sumitra Manandhar.

BPA: No successful business in unsuccessful society

as well as conflicts withing the local community in which the business operating. The participants further emphasised that the private sector – as politically more neural force – could take a lead to facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships with the government, civil society, academia and media for advocating on economic dimension of peacebuilding.

Identifying and sharing common problems and challenges is critical for successful collective advocacy efforts. However, it is recognised that the private sector also needs to generate knowledge and better understanding of social issues and the root causes of the conflict. Furthermore, the image of businesses need to be improved by demonstrating that businesses care for society, for example, through strategic corporate social responsibility interventions. "Investing in people means investing in peace," said Manique Mendis, secretary-general of BPA.

If different business networks work together to lobby for inclusive economic development and peace, their efforts will be more effective. However, it is important to communicate also with members of the various business networks in the regions to include their concerns and regional needs. The programme also identified the constructive roles of Small and Medium Entrepreneurs (SMEs) in inclusive economic development and mitigating the impact of local conflict. "SMEs can help build lasting peace through training on skill development, entrepreneurial skills, and employment creation," said Pramila Rijal, president of Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Nepal.

The exchange also discussed the role of private sector in youth integration and employment generation in conflict affected societies. The role of the private sector in supporting youth from disadvantaged backgrounds were highlighted, though it will require also on behalf of the private sector to overcome preconceived notions on youth as 'trouble makers'. However, the participants agreed that youth can be a positive force for necessary social and economic change. A need for holistic policy on youth was seen as paramount for Sri Lanka as well as Nepal: "A conflict sensitive policy framework in needed to foster decent work and social equity for youth as well as society at large," said Deepthi Lamahewa, former CEO of Sri Lanka Youth Employment Network.
