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Environment

Climate caravan completes its journey through India and Nepal

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On the morning of 16 November 2014, the South Asia Climate Justice, Gender and Food Sovereignty Caravan attended by participants from India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sweden, New Zealand, USA, UK, Australia and Germany, crossed the India border and arrived in Kolkata in the evening of the same day

In the afternoon of November 18, National Hawkers' Federation, led by famous leader Shaktiman Gosh, welcomed the caravan with the participation of more than thousand people hailing from different sectors of the hawkers' community and an exchange of views meeting with leaders of Informal Sector Labor Action Alliance (Asangathito Khethra Sramik Sangram Manch).

There was also an evaluation meeting on the caravan activities in Bangladesh. The participants were divided into 4 groups on the basis of language. The outcomes of the group discussion were back to the plenary.

In the evening of that day the caravan started off for the border between India and Nepal and arrived in the afternoon of 19 November. Most participants entered Nepal except 18 participants who did not have the Nepali visa in their passport, because of a new circular by the Indian authority. Immigration officials advised them to fly as there is no legal barrier for this. Finally 8 persons out of 18 decided to fly to Kathmandu. The remaining 10 decided to go back to the country. They could have crossed the border but they did not want to break the immigration law. However, they chanted the slogan for a visa free South Asia which is more urgent in the context of climate change. Those who entered Nepal were warmly received by the grass-roots movements of Nepal at the border.

On 20 November in the morning there was a seminar in Kakarvitta, Nepal on Climate Change and Food Sovereignty. Dr. Keshab Khadka conducted the meeting while the ANPFA Vice-President presided over the seminar. Badrul Alam as the key leader of the caravan explained the aims and objectives of the caravan. Representatives from UK, Australia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Nepal also spoke. All explained the dreadful consequence of the impact of climate change in South and South East Asia as well.

Badrul Alam said that we have to have a strong solidarity among the movements in South Asia in order to realize the climate justice in the form of reparation from the industrially developed countries. He told the audience that the reparation is our right; based on the payment of historical and ecological dues, not on sympathy to the global south at all. He also criticized the developed countries where there is still no significance emission reduction although they are committed in doing so every year.

On the same day, the caravan arrived in Sharlahi, Kalikapur. Here the grass-root people gave the caravan traditional reception with the support of mother's community in Nepal and organized a roundtable. On behalf of the caravan Badrul Alam depicted the caravan's aims, objectives and goals. After the caravan there was dairy farm visit where the participants found milking cows, bio-fertilizers made of cow-dung, bio-pesticide, etc.

On 21 November 2014, in the morning the caravan left for Kathmandu. It is unfortunate that 7 out of 8 persons wishing to fly to Kathmandu buying ticket were intercepted at the airport immigration. They faced further loss of money with non-refundable air ticket. The caravan arrived in Kathmandu in the evening of 21 November 2014 and stayed in the National Agricultural Research Centre in Nepal.

On 22 November 2014 at 10:30 am a people's march took place to the venue where the People's South Asian

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Association for Regional Cooperation was taking place which the caravan's participants took part in, having already been warmly welcomed with floral wreaths by local participants. The People's SAARC takes place alongside the official SAARC involving the governments of the region which is taking place in Kathmandu from November 22-27

The caravan joined the inaugural function of the P-SAARC with Badrul Alam speaking as part of the inaugural panel. The Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Bam Dev Goutam were present. He explained the experience of the caravan in detail. He demanded the visa free South Asia in the interest of lasting peace and democracy within the region. Alam requested that the official SARRC demand climate justice from the northern developed countries for the benefit of climate affected people in the global south. He asked SAARC to strengthen the food and seed bank mechanism to ensure food sovereignty which will remove the hunger and poverty from South Asia which is home of one-fifth of world population.