

Workshop on disaster risk reduction and climate change held in Guwahati



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The National Union of Journalists (NUJ), Assam Chapter and Gramya Vikash Mancha (GVM) on Sunday organized a state-level media workshop on “Disaster risk reduction and climate change” at Hotel Brahmaputra Ashok in Guwahati. The workshop which was supported by Actionaid, was organized with an objective to sensitize the media persons over the issues of climate change and disaster.

The workshop was attended by over 35 journalists from various places of the state and the region as a whole. The entire initiative was supported by the European Commission.

While Dr. Arabinda Mishra, director of Earth Science and Climate Change Division, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) & dean of Faculty of Policy & Planning, TERI University attended the workshop as the main resource person, Dr. Dulal Chandra Goswami, former head of the Department of Environmental Science of the Gauhati University also presented a paper in the workshop titled—“Changing climate and we—A northeast perspective”. Dr. Mishra while delivering the key note address highlighted the affect of climate change in the northeast region and said that the governments or the policy makers of the northeastern states must come up with state specific adaptation action plan to deal with the future situations that might arise out of climate change.

“There is a huge knowledge gap at local levels to understand the impacts of climate change. At TERI we have some regional climate models based on which we are trying to come up with future projections about the whole country. The projections indicate that the northeast region will have 3 to 4 degree temperature increase and that the region will have more rainfall in another 50 to 70 years. During the rainy season—June, July and August, there is a likelihood of at least 25 cm more rainfall in the region,” Mishra said while adding that these weather variations might have severe impact on various fields—agriculture, health and others.

“Climate change is all about developments and the future risks are uncertain. So, it is very important to have assessment of the impact of the climate change as impact assessment finally helps in policy making to deal with the situations,” he said and added, “However, we also need to have an integrated approach of human resources, environment and technology to have a local solution, which is missing now.”

Dr. Mishra also floated the idea of having a climate centre for the northeast in Guwahati or any other parts of the region to have these future projections of climate change—which could advise the policy makers right in time. “The northeast must frame adaptation action plan, with clear understanding of vulnerability to deal with the future problems of the climate change.

He also said that the climate change issue is not prominent in regional media. Media has a great role to play here by becoming a social auditor. “Media is a strong stakeholder, which has reach capacity to transform knowledge into information,” he said and added that media should always highlight the research findings over these issues.

Professor Dulal Goswami, who also attended the session, said that the northeast has become a place, where disasters are hitting the region one after another—while it is heavy draught in sometime, it is heavy hailstorms in some other place. “Erratic behaviour of climate has been observed in the region which was never observed earlier,” he said and added that we should increase our knowledge base on climate change and global weather.

Renowned environmentalist Goswami underlined the need to include the environment matters in policy for development and create an environment database in the state. He also stressed the need for developing an interface between high and low areas while formulating development policies.

In the next session of the workshop Soumyadeep Datta stressed the need for creating awareness in the micro level about climate change and its ill effects on the local people. He opined that local ecological security should be ensured to fight against the negative impact of the climate change. He pointed out that consumerism and conservation cannot grow simultaneously. He also outlined some positive aspects of the climate change.

After the panel discussion, the participants interacted with the resource persons. The entire workshop was conducted by Nava Thakuria, senior journalist and advisor to the NUJ Assam Chapter.

The meeting also adopted few resolutions keeping an eye to continue encouraging media persons to engage in the process of development. The meeting unanimously resolved to appeal the government and the concerned authority to help disseminating relevant information on various issues including climate change and disaster, and the NGOs and civil society groups to come forward with social commitment.

It also emphasized on the basic minimum facilities and exposure to the journalists such that they can play a pro-active role.

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