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Launch of “WTO in South Asia”

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It has been found that regional integration is low in South Asia region which has, as a result of its large population, emerged as an important player in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the current negotiations under the Doha Round.

Nevertheless, the countries in the region face a formidable challenge in analyzing and synthesizing proposals and submissions made by other WTO members.

Keeping this in mind the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) organized the launch “WTO in South Asia”, a book edited by Dr. Saman Kelagama, the Executive Director of IPS and published by Sage publications, India.

Speaking at the book’s review, Trade Specialist for the UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo Dr. Biplov Choudhary said that previous studies looked at the subject from a WTO issues-based perspective but not from the country capacity perspective.

He also noted that, in this book, its contributors had examined the position of each South Asian country in the multilateral trading system as defined by the WTO and highlight various concerns they have on key WTO issues in agriculture, industry, services and development. He further said that the possibility of South Asian countries formulating a common position in the WTO negotiations is also explored in detail in this book.

The Minister of Export Development & International Trade Hon. Prof. G.L. Peiris was also present at this special moment. In his address the Minister said that Sri Lanka has achieved a high standard in the apparel industry for the last year the cause of which he attributed to Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). In the meantime, he noted that this book would be useful for academics, policy makers, civil society activities, undergraduate students of Development Economics and anyone with an interest in the WTO.