

Climate change threatens SAARC economies

BIGYAN ADHIKARI

COLOMBO, June 2: Experts said climate change has directly affected the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of South Asia which is also highly dependent on agriculture.

Sanjaya Basistha, director of Climate Action Network- South Asia referring to the World Bank's estimation said a rise in temperature by two degree Celsius dragged down the GDP by five percent in the region .

He was speaking at a seminar on Trade, Climate Change and Food Security in South Asia, organized by South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka.

He said farm contribution hovered around 22 percent in South Asia's economy.

"The collective efforts among the member countries are necessary to resolve problem of increasing effect of climate change in the regional economy," said Basistha.

Posh Raj Pandey, Executive-chairman of SAWTEE stressed on the need to formulate internal and regional trade policies in line with the multi-lateral trade policy. "We can benefit more if we make internal and regional trade policies to match the multi-lateral trade policy," he said.

Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, Environment Minister of Sri Lanka said South Asia suffered the most from the impact of climate change.

"Almost of all nations across the world are more or less affected by the effects of climate change. South Asia region is the one that has been affected the most due to its rich biodiversity," Yapa said.

Saman Kalegama, director of Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka observed that major challenges of the region were trade imbalance and food insecurity. "Widening inequality and poverty couldn't be reduced due to the impact of trade imbalance and food insecurity in the region," said Kalegama.

Referring to the imposition of ban on exports of food grain by some of the member countries in the region during the food crisis of 2008, Kalegama underlined the need to forge intra-regional cooperation to fight the food insecurity.