

# Strong regional initiative sought

## *Experts stress SAARC summit focus on climate change impacts*

Himalayan News Service

Kathmandu, October 16

Experts have said that the 18th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit should focus more on implementing already made promises and strengthening the institutions to ensure availability of food for the population of the entire region in the context of agriculture sector taking a hit due to climate change.

Speaking during a programme titled 'Upcoming 18th SAARC Summit: Nepal's Perspective on Climate Change, Agriculture, Food Security and Disaster Risk Reduction', organised by the South Asia Watch on Trade Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and OXFAM today, Govinda Nepal, member of the National Planning Commission (NPC) emphasised on the need of a strong regional initiative to reduce the economic impacts of climate change.

"Floods, droughts and storms



Posh Raj Pandey, Executive Chairperson of SAWTEE, addressing a programme, in Kathmandu, on Thursday.

have been occurring frequently due to climate change, directly hitting the agricultural produce," Nepal said, adding, "Since a large number of the population in the region depends on agriculture for their livelihoods, the problem is not localised to Nepal, but affects all of the South Asian region."

Citing a study conducted by the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS), Nepal said agriculture, hy-

dropower and water resources are more affected due to climate change and hence have wider socio-economic impact. Nepal stressed on the need for a strong initiative in the SAARC summit, with an institutional mechanism to deliver on the needs of the vulnerable population of the South Asian region.

He further said that the SAARC summit should be utilised to convert commitments into reality rather than

decorative statements.

Similarly, Posh Raj Pandey, executive chairperson of SAWTEE stated that over the next few decades, there would be a drastic decrease in crop yields due to climate change and appropriate measures should be adopted soon to cope with such impacts.

"The poor are the most affected by climate change, which must be taken into account by all national and regional initiatives, including through policy measures," Pandey said highlighting that the SAARC initiatives towards reducing the impact of climate change are weak. Presenting an example of SAARC Food Bank and Seed Bank, Pandey stressed on the well functioning of institutions established under SAARC. Dhaka Declaration and SAARC Action Plan on Climate Change have spoken a lot about reducing the impact of climate change and ensuring availability of food.