

Experts seek practical water, energy policies

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Experts emphasised on need to review and reinforce the energy and water cooperation in South Asia in a programme organised here today.

Addressing a workshop jointly organised by South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET)-Nepal, titled 'Rethinking water and energy cooperation', participants suggested for a review of existing cooperation modalities to share benefit for improved and quality lives of people of regional or sub-regional level through effective utilisation of water. They discussed political, economic and ecological dimensions of water cooperation in South Asia region and stressed on need to review Nepal's water and energy policies.

Presenting a thematic paper, Ajaya Dixit, executive director at ISET-Nepal, said that the impact of climate change is already visible in Nepal's water resources. Citing International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, he said that between 1977 and 2010, Nepal's icecaps have receded by 29 per cent.

Likewise, water reserve in springs in mid-hills has depleted, and at the same time, rivers have deteriorated into sewerage channels. Water-related disasters of recent times — such as western Nepal's 2014 flood caused by three

the erratic nature of the rivers.

Dixit stressed that our focus on river conservation has mostly centred on the Himalayan rivers. But bilateral and multilateral platforms need to consider water-sharing and management issues of rivers originating from the Mahabharata and Chure as well.

Commenting on Dixit's presentation, former deputy-managing director of Nepal Electricity Authority and CEO of Kabeli Energy Ltd, Sher Singh Bhat pointed out that the major problem in Nepal's hydrological management is lack of intra-sector and inter-sector coordination. As an example, he pointed out that licensing authorities grant clearances for projects without considering effects of upper stream projects on lower stream and vice versa and also how some hydropower projects could possibly adversely impact irrigation.

Kumar Pandey, vice president of Independent Power Producers' Association, opined that government sorely lacks policies for effective utilisation of water resources while developing multipurpose projects — hydropower, irrigation benefits, tourism activities (rafting).

Posh Raj Pandey, chairman of SAWTEE, said Nepal's inability to properly manage its water resources and energy potential has left it not only in power deficit situation but with a large trade deficit too. Nepal's increased dependency on India would translate to soaring payments deficit in