

Climate change issue gets importance

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DHAKA: The magnitude and frequency of calamities such as floods, landslides, cyclones and droughts are subject to natural and artificially induced changes, among which climate change assumes a greater importance.

In order to raise regional awareness and enhance civil societies capacity along with media for innovative climate change adaptation and disaster mitigation, a regional Commonwealth roundtable conference is going to be held in Pondicherry, South India, on August 18-19 next.

The roundtable will focus on the role of civil society organisations and media personnel in communicating and promoting adaptation practices at the grassroots level, said a press release.

Civil society representatives and media personnel from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Malaysia and Singapore will participate the roundtable conference being organized by the Commonwealth Foundation and All India Disaster Mitigation Institute.

Sources said the roundtable will bring climate change stakeholders including policy makers, civil society organisations, academia, development practitioners and media personnel to a common platform where they will share their successes and challenges.

The roundtable will discuss issues including implications of the national action plans of the participant countries on climate change, enhance adaptation and risk reduction practices of the community and school level using local resources and knowledge, formulate concepts towards school safety and risk reduction strategies in Asian countries and development of an agenda for organising workshop/seminar by Asian network to be held during the 17th conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Malaysia in June 2009.

Besides, the roundtable will also discuss the outcomes in the upcoming commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting in St. Lucia and formalise terms of references for a steering committee to lead on the Pan-Commonwealth civil society and media network on climate and disaster risk in Asia.

Earlier to this roundtable, a three-day, seven-country Asian Commonwealth conference on strengthening the role of civil society and media in climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction was held in April last in Chennai, India where the participant countries, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Malaysia and Singapore proposed a Pan-Commonwealth network of civil society to encourage and ensure that Asia realigns economic growth on a 'green and clean' basis.

They reported a desperate need in Asian communities for clean air through the use of low-emission vehicles, solar energy for street lighting, cooling and other energy needs and cultivation of organic food to reduce the use of polluting pesticides and herbicides.

The participants in the conference agreed that polluters should not be allowed to get away with simply paying for polluting, but, should be require to prevent pollution.

The conference proposed that civil society in Asia should relentlessly engage business in finding ways to prevent water, land, air and vegetation pollution.

Besides, the civil society should educate citizens to demand such preventive measures and proposed that an annual Asia-wide citizen's list of top polluters and top pollution preventers could be a part of this effort.