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Massive campaign on to tame air pollution: Minister

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Minister for Environment and Forests Dr Hasan Mahmud Saturday said the government has initiated a massive campaign along with policy initiative and formulation of a new law to reduce air pollution, reports BSS.

"We are implementing a number of projects to control and prevent air pollution for protecting our environment," he told the 7th regional stakeholders meeting cum coordination meeting of Male Declaration on control and prevention of air pollution and its likely trans boundary effects for South Asia in a city hotel.

Co-coordinator of Climate Change Negotiation Team Dr Kazi Qholiquzzaman Ahmed, Director General of South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) SMDP Anura Jayatilake and Deputy Director of Regional Research Centre for Asia and Pacific, AIT, Thailand, Dr Jonathan Shaw, among others, addressed the meeting with secretary of the ministry of Environment and Forests Md Shafiqur Rahman Patwari in the chair.

Mr Mahmud said owners of the brick kilns have been asked to adopt new technology by June this year aiming to reduce air pollution.

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Brick kilns are responsible for 30 per cent air pollution in the country, he said adding 60 per cent energy of brick kilns will be saved, if brick burning is done using modern technology instead of traditional methods.

According to a recent study, Brick kilns are the most dominant source of air pollution in the country while vehicular emissions have been identified as the second largest contributor to air pollution.

There are about 5000 brick kilns in Bangladesh, which are largely responsible for air pollution, and increasing number of vehicles is creating concomitant pressure on air quality, it added.

Air pollution is caused locally but its impact may spread over the region Hasan said adding regional initiatives are urgently needed to cut air pollution.

Other speakers said in recent decades, a growing body of scientific research has demonstrated that air pollution has increasingly become a regional, hemispheric and even global phenomenon.

Air pollutants can react in the atmosphere and travel hundreds of kilometers from their sources of origin, having serious impacts on ecosystems and air quality in downwind areas and communities.

With increasing urbanisation and economic growth and a pressure of having world's one-fourth population, air pollution is an increasing concern in South Asia region, Qholiquzzaman added.

The South Asian countries should recognise the sources of major air pollution and then they should take initiatives in a coordinated manner to address air pollution issues.

In Bangladesh, about 132,000 premature deaths are caused annually due to air pollution, the speakers said adding indoor air pollution is responsible for 70 per cent premature deaths.

According to the World Bank, up to 10 per cent of respiratory infections and diseases in Bangladesh may be attributable to urban air pollution.

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