

Call for 'Save Mt Everest campaign'

HIMALAYAN NEWS SERVICE

2011-03-23 11:01 PM

KATHMANDU: Everest Summiteers Association (ESA), along with the government, Nepal Tourism Board, and Eco Himal will organise a 'Save the Mt Everest campaign'.

"Mt Everest is the highest peak in the world and recognised it as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is in Nepal but the country could not cash in on it," said Wangchu Sherpa, president of the association.

According to him, especially for struggling mountain communities, tourism is a key source of income, and Mt Everest, locally known as Sagarmatha, represents the crown jewel of Nepali tourism.

However, the increase in the number of visitors to the Everest region in recent decades has also brought serious strains and severe negative impacts around Mount Everest, as well as many popular trails in and around Sagarmatha National Park.

"Many activities aiming at solving the problem of solid waste have been conducted but there is still no functional waste management system in place," he said, adding that locals have less experience in handling such large amounts of rubbish in an environmentally sustainable way.

According to him, the overall goals of the project are to conserve and manage the rich biological diversity of Everest National Park (Sagarmatha National Park), emphasise on solid waste management and support and strengthen local communities towards biodiversity conservation.

"To make at least 70 per cent of the local residents aware of the importance and relevance of waste management and potential threats from climate change, sensitise national policies on waste management and code of conduct for locals and tourists are some of the aims," Sherpa added.

It is planning to collect approximately eight tonnes of garbage from Mt Everest and along the trekking routes of Lukla to Everest Base Camp, to set up 15 waste management plants, and operate and manage local institutions for waste management systems through 100 specially trained people.

The project enjoys full support of the government through the Ministry of Environment and Science, which will introduce new environmental regulations for climbing expeditions as well as for trekking groups to the Everest region as of spring 2011, according to the association that claims that there is a budget of \$780,000 for the project that will start from this April and runs till June 2012.

<http://thehimalayantimes.com/>