

PNG badly needs trade policy: Kwa

By BAEAU TAI

PAPUA New Guinea urgently needs a national trade policy to push export-driven economic growth under the Government's development strategy.

The trade policy must also outline the needed requirements for local manufacturers to access market overseas.

The country's lack of a trade policy was revealed by Dr Eric Kwa, a senior lecturer at the University of PNG during a day-long bilateral trade agreement seminar organised by the Business Council of PNG at the Crowne Plaza yesterday.

"Generally, there is no formal trade policy and this is the biggest task for the Government to work on.

"It is necessary so we know where we are heading and we know what to achieve in five to 10 years time," Dr Kwa told the seminar attended by business executives.

The National Government had national tariff reduction programme from 1999 to this year.

Mr Kwa pointed out the need to synergise non-tariff administrative arrangements for flow of

goods into PNG from Apec economies.

"There is no policy on this as yet," he said.

Reducing trade barriers under the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) trade agreement was focused on tariffs and not administrative barriers and contingency measure, Mr Kwa said.

He also pointed out the need for linkages between trade and the Government's development strategy.

"With the Government's export-driven economic growth policy, how will trade achieve for PNG. There is no clear trade policy to promote export-driven goals of the Government," he said.

Dr Kwa mainly spoke on "national policies and laws implementing the WTO agreements" and "possibility of reforms".

He said PNG's participation in international meetings and committing PNG to international obligations "is not automatic" because parties going to trade meetings have to get clearance first from the Foreign Affairs and Trade and Industry departments where the process is very slow.