

Implementation of environment projects

Kim calls for public support

By Jack Herft

No government is able to implement programmes with only the help of public organisations and funds. The active participation of citizens must be sought, UNDP's Resident Representative in Colombo Y. Y. Kim said yesterday.

Inaugurating the meeting of the South Asian Co-operative Environment Programme at the BMICH, Mr. Kim said in undertaking any of these programmes, whether it be prevention of the depletion of forest cover through efficient use of fuel-wood, or resurrection of a traditional water lifting device, a public awareness campaign should precede.

The South Asian Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) is holding a five-day workshop to discuss activities and future plans to protect the environment. Its 10 member countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Burma. (Burma, is however not participating in this programme).

Mr. Kim said, "The governments of these nine countries, although belonging to less affluent countries with many basic problems of their own such as over-population, poverty, social insecurity and economic imbalance, have come together in a commitment which is of great concern — the environment.

"SACEP is a programme of the countries of South Asia for and by themselves. No fairy godfather has set up SACEP, determined its structure or institutionalisation and no big donor has come in to create it or cushion its initial steps.

"It is a programme wholly by South-Asian countries."

He said he hoped the workshop would not be just another discussion or a 'talkshop'.

"It is for your representatives to consider the relevance of your recommendations and projects in the light of each country's need. Consider the priorities against the environmental background of each country and then consider the money to be spent on each project and whether it is worth the effort to implement it."

SACEP Director Dr. Leslie Herath said this workshop

was the first ever organised to discuss programmes and projects by member countries, for implementation during the coming years.

Dr. Herath explained that three missions visited these countries last year. There were 11 projects for discussion. The projects were integrated energy saving domestic stoves and fuel wood systems; environmental education and information; environmental legislation; environmental clearing house services; demonstration plant for rice-husk-ash cement in Sri Lanka; demonstration plant for feed blocks from agricultural residues in Pakistan, environmental assessment of investment promotion zones at Katunayake and Biyagama; environmental assessment of proposed high gas based fertiliser plants in Gujerat and Maharashtra; manpower development programme for environmental assessment and other candidate projects suggested for study in the field of environmental assessment.

All member countries though poor themselves have contributed funds for institutional support, he added.

(Picture on Page 8)