

Link development to environment, says PM

Prime Minister, R. Premadasa yesterday said that South Asia urgently needed an alternative development model and such model should be based on principles of self-reliance, popular participation and utilization of local resources.

The Prime Minister was delivering the inaugural address at the first Governing Council of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Program, (SACEP) at the BMICH yesterday.

Mr. Premadasa called upon the SACEP to address its mind on the possibilities of modifying the prevalent pattern of development and life styles to suit the cultural patterns and traditions on the region.

The Prime Minister, who stressed the importance of environment to development said: "It is still fully not realised that development and the process of development rests mainly upon the underpinnings of the environment. The environmental underpinnings of our economic systems have to be made secure. We have to provide evidence of being able to sustain present and future development. Otherwise economic dislocations and outright breakdowns would become the dominant feature in the years ahead of us".

"The environmental and developmental problems that we face are daunting. Our problems of widespread poverty and unemployment coupled with large and growing populations require fundamental and innovative thinking" the Prime Minister added.

Trade and Shipping Minister Lalith Athulathmudali, who presided, said that in their eagerness for development the South Asian countries should not sacrifice the environment. "Many developed countries raised the living standards of their citizens but damaged the environ-

ment. "We who are late in development must learn from the mistakes of the advanced countries. We must link development to environment. It would not be difficult for us to do that as our religions and culture afford an important place of environment" he said.

Mr. Peter S. Thacher, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP welcoming progress made by SACEP said: This council meeting is an example which we in the UNEP welcome not only because of its significance for the future well-being of the people of the region but as an example to encourage similar co-operative action in other regions".

Dr. Leslie Herath, Director, SACEP, traced the historical development of the SACEP and said a practical program of action should be drawn to benefit the region as a whole.

Eight countries participated— Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Iran, India, Pakistan and Maldives. (Text of P.M.'s speech on Page 9).

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