

SACEP in dire financial trouble

Cogent case for a Trust Fund

By Mallika Wanigasundara

SACEP, the fledgling, 10-nation South Asian Co-operative Environment Program which was formed last year for the protection of the region's environment is scraping the bottom of the barrel. It is in severe financial difficulties.

For the financing of its institutional set-up it is entirely dependent on the contributions of its member countries. All of them have pledged varying amounts of money, but some of these contributions have not been received upto date.

This situation has to be viewed against two facts: the member countries are all of them poor countries, and five of them are classified as the least developed. In addition, UN agencies have made it clear that they will no longer meet the institutional costs of organisations such as SACEP. But there will be no difficulty in garnering funds for professionally drawn up, viable projects.

Mr. K. H. J. Wijedasa, a member of the Sri Lanka delegation Chairman of the Central Environmental

Authority and Additional Secretary Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Construction, made an impassioned plea to member-nations to help SACEP overcome these initial financial difficulties. He was speaking at the meeting of the Governing Council now on at the BMICH.

He said that upto 1982 Sri Lanka, had made a contribution of

US dollars 110,000 approximately for the setting up of the institution and meeting its annual contributions.

UNEP had made a contribution of dollars 40,000 while Afghanistan (\$ 1500) and Pakistan (\$3000) had sent in their contributions. The contribution of Bhutan (\$ 1000) which was sent had got tangled up in some bank formalities.

Mr. Wijedasa also revealed that the Director of SACEP had voluntarily not taken his salary, and only the local staff had been paid.

He also made a cogent case for the setting up of a Trust Fund, which was one of the measures endorsed by the workshop which preceded the on-going meeting of the Governing Council.

Attempts made to tap financial support from Sweden and Denmark had not been successful so far, he said, but he called upon the membership to assist with the launching of such a fund.

He said that such a fund could yield interest to give SACEP stability and sustain the institutional set-up in the coming years.

A committee consisting of delegates from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and the Maldives was nominated to draft the resolution on the Trust Fund.