

Home News

SAARC environment ministers due for confab

Environment Ministers of all SAARC countries except India will be in Colombo next week, to participate in a regional environment conference.

The Environment Ministers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will participate in the conference, while India will be represented by a "high level delegation", according to an Environment Ministry release.

The two-day meeting from January 20-21 will also be attended by the SAARC Secretary General and observers from international organisations. The Ministers are meeting as the governing council of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SALEP) of which Minister Rukman Senanayake is the chairman.

The South Asia state of the environment and the youth environment reports will be launched at the event.

The most important agenda item of the meeting is to finalise a work programme to follow up recommendations of the recently held World Summit on

Sustainable Development (WSSD) at the South Asian Sub Regional Level. Here special attention will be given to the Millennium Declaration and the WEHAB initiative, which provide the blue prints for future sustainable development agenda. The WEHAB initiative provides a framework for action on the following five thematic areas: Water and Sanitation, Energy, Health, Agriculture and Biodiversity.

The WSSD Plan of Implementation recognises the importance of regional, sub-regional and trans-regional action to promote sustainable development and calls for support for the development, enhancement and implementation of agreed regional development strategies, reflecting national and regional priorities. Therefore, SACEP plans to work in cooperation and collaboration with various other regional and sub regional entities in their future actions. Under this, the cooperation between SAARC and SACEP on environmental issues will be a priority item for discussion.

The Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation on the response to marine oil spills, South Asian Environmental Education and Training Action Plan, and the status of the implementation of the Male Declaration on control and prevention of air pollution and its likely trans-boundary effects for South Asia will also be discussed during this event. The International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) has recently established a partnership with SACEP for promoting coral reef conservation within the region and therefore, special attention will be given for further development of this initiative.

On the 20th January, the senior level officials of respective environment ministries will meet to consider and finalise the work programme of SACEP for the next biennium, which will be presented at the ministerial segment of the next day. Tyrone Fernando will officially inaugurate the opening ceremony on the 21st.