

18/04/09 The Island.

SAARC focus on energy efficient lighting

By Don Asoka Wijewardena

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Energy Ministers' Forum has laid a special emphasis on establishing a Regional Centre for Energy Efficient Lighting. The State machinery of the SAARC countries have striven to light up their countries with clean and efficient lighting technologies.

It doesn't really matter whether we get light from the sun, or we produce it employing advanced technologies or inefficient mechanisms. It's the availability of light that matters to the end-receiver – just enough to light up homes, to carry out a few tasks or probably to help the kids prolong their studying hours. Providing light to all, particularly cleanly and efficiently has become a problem, but it can be analysed and resolved, Power and Energy Minister W.D.J.Seneviratne said at the Launching Ceremony of Regional Centre for Energy Efficient Lighting held at hotel Tag-Samudra recently.

Minister Seneviratne making



the keynote address said that lighting comprised a major share of electricity in South Asia, particularly in rural households. In Sri Lanka over 40 per cent of National Grid connected electricity used for lighting. Sri Lanka had also been experiencing very high evening peak in the system mainly due to lighting.

He pointed out that Sri Lanka was fortunate to be blessed with a high rate of electrification and 82 per cent of population had been supplied with electricity. Sri Lanka's target would be to ensure National Energy Security and achieve the goal of "Electricity for

All" by the year 2016. Sri Lanka would make every effort to increase the stake of the off-grid renewable energy by another 10-12 percent by 2016 and it was supplementary to the country's 45- 50 per cent of hydropower in the national generation.

Minister Seneviratne added that absence of electricity was a cause for rural poverty and increased electrification would thrust people above the poverty line. Studies have shown that there had been a strong correlation between the rate of electrification and the incidences of poverty and the higher the rate of electrification the lower the inci-

dences of poverty.

He said that the provision of lighting would help in alleviating poverty by enhancing quality of life, providing cleaner environment, increasing security and educational opportunities for children. Increased access to electricity would also encourage development activities in rural economies, leading to further improvements in living conditions. Sri Lanka was of the view that introduction, promotion and development of efficient lighting technologies were a dire necessity in the region. The Centre was established to facilitate this purpose and thereby would provide sustainable lighting in South Asian countries.

Minister Seneviratne emphasised that Sri Lanka was proud to have been able to establish this centre within Sri Lanka's Sustainable Energy Authority with the support of regional countries and the USAID. Sri Lanka was committed to make this centre a research hub for developing efficient lighting technologies in South Asia.