

Policy of Government, based on resources at regional level

17/01/02 Island
By Eng. A. T. G. A. Wickremasuriya

I was glad to receive from the Secretary to the Prime Minister a letter dated 30th May 2002, under the above title. This was an acknowledgement, thanking me for my article relating to the Development of the Resources of Sri Lanka, copies of which have also appeared in the Ceylon Daily News of 7.5.2002, and the *Island* Newspaper of 22.5.2002.

Since then a report of the speech delivered by the Minister for Economic Reform, Science and Technology, Deputy Minister Policy Development and Implementation appeared in the Daily News of 17th May 2002. It is titled:- 'Time to adopt to a new environment.' The speech was delivered to the Exporters Association of Sri Lanka on 3rd May 2002.

Environment

Before we can 'adopt to a new environment' we must first understand the present environment, identify the problems, causes, possible answers, and most meaningful course of action that need to be taken under short, medium and long term periods of time. These should be determined on the basis of priorities relating to

the needs of the country, which is faced with the adverse challenges of a changing environment.

What does environment mean? In the broadest sense it means:- surroundings, circumstances, influences. It can apply to several major fields of development of a country. In his speech delivered to the Exporters Association, the Minister has dealt with the economic aspects of environment. In doing so, he has quite rightly shown the link that has to be established between the local level and the global level.

"As such, then, globalisation is the challenge that we all have to face. We can view this in two ways. Either we can run away, frightened by the changes we are forced to make. Or, we can take globalisation as an opportunity. Look elsewhere in the world where countries have taken on the challenge and you will see countries where huge wealth has been generated and the lives of their peoples have been enhanced."

Natural Resources Conservation

The *Island* newspaper of Sunday 16th June 2002, has published the address of Mr. K. H. J. Wijedasa, advisor on Sustainable Development, at the inaugural

meeting of the Sri Lanka National Committee of International Union of the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) held in Colombo on the 7th June 2002. The address is titled:- 'Link between Natural Resources, Conservation and Sustainable Agricultural Development'.

To begin with let me state that apart from the academic qualifications he holds in geography, I have had the opportunity of listening to a valuable lecture he delivered at the Institution of Engineers, a few years back. The sub headings of his recent address are most appropriate to the subject now under consideration. Particularly so, under the sub heading *Eliminating the Root Causes of Environmental Degradation*. But he has failed to mention the adverse impact of the growing imbalance that exists between the surrounding seas and the coastal region of Sri Lanka. In the sector of agriculture in this region, Muthrajawela is just one example of the damage. Other sectors too like fisheries etc, relating to the socio-economic development of the country are seriously affected.

Challenges

As one who has been involved in Sri Lanka and abroad in the development of

the land and water resources during the past six decades, it is my view that the most serious challenge that Sri Lanka continues to face is caused by the growing impact of the energy of the sea that surrounds the island. Evidence of this fact is available in records of several well known bodies of science and technology, as well as the local newspapers. On request I will be glad to give the necessary references to any interested party.

For the present I shall quote the following excerpt from the opening sentences of my paper titled: 'Challenges of a Changing Environment, in the Development of Sri Lanka's Water Resources: Past, Present and Future.'

"Every physical feature of our earth is changing day by day and month by month. The change of some are so small that they take years before it can be noticed. Others are dramatic and often devastating. This applies to this part of the world, including Sri Lanka. There is enough evidence to show that the island's shape and form, as well as its waterways have kept changing from the distant past. The causes are partly natural, and partly due to human activities.

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