

National Planning Dept. urged to take lead in SL's sustainable development agenda

By Shabiya Ali Ahlam

A stakeholder meeting on managing social and economic changes towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) this week pointed out it is imperative for the National Planning Department to take the lead in charting the path for Sri Lanka to fulfil the 2030 mandate laid out by the United Nations (UN).

While Sri Lanka is having a late start in this regard, the team that included senior economists, academics, legal officers and state agency officials, urged the National



Planning Department to play a greater role in realizing the SDGs by 2030.

"If we are to achieve the SDGs by 2030, we need to have collaborative efforts from all stakeholders. It is

unsure in Sri Lanka we are doing enough. The National Planning Department has to take the lead in this regard to ensure the targets are aligned with the national plan,"

stakeholders said. With over 485 institutions being identified as implementing agencies, it was reiterated the National Planning Department take up its due responsibility. According to the expert team, failing to do so will make it "difficult to move forward".

It was also stressed the relevant agencies step up their efforts in moving forward as Sri Lanka has not prudently spent the first year of the development agenda, which could lead to a lag in the coming years.

Although Sri Lanka, along with the other world leaders, endorsed the

sustainable development agenda, that is incorporated with 17 goals and 169 targets and agreed to implement it at national level starting January 1, 2016, the island nation is yet to kick off any proper exercise.

According to the Sustainable Development Secretariat, set up by the Wildlife and Sustainable Development Ministry to monitor the agenda, activities for the same have been identified but pending is the conceptualization of a monitoring framework.

Furthermore, it is also noted that budget 2016 and 2017 did not see

any specific allocation for the SDGs although the projects that fulfil some of the targets were listed.

While a number of issues would have to be ironed out during the implementation, it was stressed that the goals affiliated with education and healthcare would be the most challenging to fulfil.

The SDGs are incorporated of economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability, where the three core elements are required to ensure the benefit of both, the present and future generation equally.