

12/07/00
Daily News

Sabaragamuwa CM warns sand excavators: Anguruwella bridge in danger of collapse

(Ratnapura Group Corr)

Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council has taken steps to educate the public and those engaged in the 'sand-supply' sector of the building construction field, regarding the environmental problems arising from the indiscriminate excavation for sand in the Kelani, Sitawaka, and Gurugal Oya, in the Kegalle district, according to a news release of the SPC.

This was a sequel to a decision made at the D.D.C. Committee, presided over by the Chief Minister Athauda Seneviratne, at Ruwanwella recently.

It had been pointed out that the main supply points for the sand required for construction purposes in Colombo and the suburbs were Thalduma, Ruwanwella and Anguruwella, by the authorities and that strong actions had to be taken against the sand excavation operation to save the

bridges from certain collapse. In the discussion that followed the Chief Minister had observed that thousands of people in those areas were depending on 'sand' for their livelihood. Despite the disastrous effects of the river-excavation for sand, a complete ban could not be enforced upon the 'sand-removal' operations as there was an equally grave human-problem coupled with it.

The only remedy for the situations was a systematic education of the public, on the gravity of the problem, to enforce self-discipline upon those engaged in the field.

A survey report on the subject had revealed that number of bridges including Anguruwella bridge were in imminent danger of collapse, due to the excavations at the foot of the concrete bases of the bridges.

That indeed was a grave matter, and some firm action coupled with reasonable

appeals both to the public and the excavators had to be made the Chief Minister had said.

It was decided that the excavators should be warned against excavation within 500 yards from the bridges and steps should be taken to pave the affected areas of the river bed around the concrete bases with stones in a bid to save the bridges as a temporary measure pending long-term renovation projects.

The Police and the Divisional Secretaries of the areas had already been instructed to keep the excavators from off the required distance of bridges.

In addition to the eternal vigil and supervision by the Police and the D.S. of the area, steps should be taken to impose 'a service tax' on 'sand-loaded' vehicles operating on the roads, the Chief Minister had said, the new release added.