

Govt. has adopted national solid waste management strategy —Rukman



Environmental and Natural Resources Minister Rukman Senanayake addressing the Regional Training Course on MARPOL 73/78 Implementation and Enforcement Conference at Colombo Hilton yesterday.

Minister of Environmental and Natural Resources, Rukman Senanayake addressing the Regional Training course on MARPOL 73/78 Implementation and Enforcement at the Colombo Hilton yesterday said the coastal and the marine environment of the island is being degraded due to both land based and sea based activities such as disposal of domestic sewage, urban and industrial waste and oil from both commercial ships and shipping craft.

Minister Senanayake pointed out that in recognising the impact on the marine environment, the government has adopted a national solid waste management strategy. "The waters surrounding Colombo are faced with severe degradation caused by sewage, oil and other industrial pollutants being released into the sea through the city's canal system," he explained.

He further said: "First of all let me thank the International Maritime Organisation and the South Asian Seas programme for having invited me to be the chief guest at the inauguration of the Regional Training Course on MARPOL Implementation and Enforcement. This training is of special significance not only to Sri Lanka but to the entire South Asian Region.

Oil pollution of the seas has been recognised as a major environmental problem as far back as the first half of the 20th century. Accordingly, various countries introduced national regulations to control discharges of oil within their territorial waters. In 1954, the United Kingdom organised a conference on oil pollution which resulted in the adoption of the international Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil (OILPOL). However with the adoption of the IMO Convention in 1958, the depository and secretariat functions in relation to the Convention were transferred from the Government of United Kingdom to IMO.

The 1954 Convention, which was subsequently amended in 1962, 1969 and 1971, pri-

marily addressed pollution resulting from routine tanker operations and from the discharge of oily wastes from machineries both of which have been regarded as major causes of oil pollution from ships.

The Convention includes regulations aimed at preventing and minimizing pollution from ships - both accidental pollution and that from routine operations. These include regulations for the prevention of pollution by oil, noxious liquid substances in bulk, harmful substances carried by sea in packaged form, sewage and garbage from ships.

As you are aware, Sri Lanka as an island nation which is heavily dependent on its coastal zone that contains 1760km of coastal line. Coastal zone is an important area for our country as it covers almost 24 % of the total land area. This zone harbours 30% of the population and covers 65% of the urban area. It also supports 80% of the near shore fishing. Coastal zone is a critical habitat for sustained production of fisheries. Coral reefs and brackish wetlands are rich in biodiversity. With the declaration of the Exclusive Economic Zone in 1976, the country has the sovereign right over 534,000 sq. km. in the sea.

The coastal and the marine environment of the island is being degraded due to both land based and sea-based activities such as disposal of domestic sewage, urban and industrial waste and oil from both commercial ships and shipping craft. In recognising the impact on the marine environment the government has adopted a national solid waste management strategy.

The waters surrounding Colombo are faced with severe degradation caused by sewage, oil and other industrial pollutants being released into the sea through the city's canal systems.

We have a number of agencies that deal with the prevention of the marine environment form pollution. While the Central

Environment Authority which is a line agency under my Ministry has the overall responsibility in the environmental management of the country, the Marine Pollution Prevention Authority and the National Aquatic Resources Agency deals with activities specifically related to the marine environment. I am informed that the aim of this course is to provide participants with up-to-date knowledge on the application of MARPOL and to help ratifying the convention where necessary. I am sure that this training course will consider existing international regulations and guidelines for implementation and enforcement of MARPOL. The participants will also have an opportunity for an exposure to practical, administrative and operational experiences gained in other parts of the world. Additionally the course will foster the co-operation of the agencies and personnel responsible for its implementation in the countries of the region.

I have been made to understand that IMO in its continued support to the South Asian Seas Programme has in addition to this workshop, planned many country specific training courses in the coming months.

I am aware that the report of MARPOL Workshop held in Colombo in 2000, has made some specific recommendations with regard to the implementation of the protocol. I am sure that this workshop will keep these recommendations in mind during its deliberations.

I find this training workshop as timely and very important and wish to extend my personal appreciation to IMO for the support given to the most deserving region in the world.

I wish this workshop all success and thank all foreign participants for being here in Colombo. I wish your stay here will be pleasant and memorable. I hope that you will find some time to enjoy the nature and our treasured culture during your stay in Sri Lanka."