

South Asia Coral Reef Task Force launched

The South Asia Co-operative Environmental Programme (SACEP) launched the 'South Asia Coral Reef Task Force' recently to promote and support the protection and enhancement of South Asia individually, collectively, co-operatively.

It is also intended to encourage the judicious use of resources of the environment to alleviate poverty, reduce social economic disparities and improve the lives of the people.

SACEP is an association which came into being in January 1982 with the adoption of the Colombo Declaration and the Articles of Association of the eight member states, namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. In order to advance cooperation and coordination for the management of coral reefs and associated ecosystems in South Asia, SACEP has drawn its attention towards establishing a regional Task Force.

Sustainable use of coastal resources required that some coastal areas be retained in their natural state or as near to natural as possible. Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) are

such areas which the SACEP wishes to protect for any one or a combination of reasons for its high species diversity, biological activity, as an important ecosystem or habitat, as a sanctuary for sustaining or replenishing fish stocks, for its aesthetic value, and coastal protection for the communities exclusively dependant on the resources, said the Director General of SACEP Dr. Arvind Boaz.

The Coral Reef Task force will become the regional driving force relaying site based realities to policy-makers and facilitating policy changes in line with identified needs and national priorities. As a focal body for coral reef conservation, the task force will advise on strategies in response to the growing global environmental crisis and coordinate the implementation of policy and its adherence to the objectives of Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

The Minister of Environment Energy and Water of the Maldives, Ahmed Abdullah, Director, International Coral Reef Action Network Dr. Kristian Teleki and a large number of intellectuals from the South Asian countries participated.

4 *The Island*
Monday 6th August, 2007