

THE NORTH - SOUTH DIALOGUE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

by Ravi Prasad Herath

Environment, has been mankind's close friend in its timeless journey. Yet man through his ignorance has made a crucial contribution to the destruction of the environment. And this process of destruction has been undertaken very lightly ostensibly to satisfy man's basic needs.

Representatives of 115 countries will get together at Rio de Janeiro in Brazil seeking ways to slow down this process of waste and destruction.

The historic Earth Summit will attempt to analyse the harm caused by the developed countries to the environment and to identify a programme through which the poorest of the poor of the Third World can use the environment to ensure their survival.

It has now become apparent that the strategy recommended by the First World to Asia is one which entails the speedy sell off of the natural resources of those Asian countries to the industrialised world. This ensured the near total destruction of the teak forests of Burma the Sal and Deodar forests of India.

Indonesia too sacrificed its land at the rate of a million hectares per year.

If we in Sri Lanka do not take steps to come up with a responsible analysis as to how this tragic situation affects our country we will be committing a crime against future generations. So far Sri Lanka has been just one more name on the list of those countries which meekly implemented the anti-environment strategy imposed on them by the rich countries.

Let us postpone any inquiry into how much longer the world will progress. Of the 30 million species of animals and fauna that the scientists believe exist in the world, only 1.4 million have been positively identified by 1991. A great majority of them live in the developing countries of the tropical zone.

It is confirmed now that as a result of the present 'progress', living things are becoming extinct at a speed ten thousand times faster than man evolved. That is to say that 20,000 species are becoming extinct each year. In other words, because fifteen per cent (15%) of the living things in the entire world are in tropical forests, if the current trends continue unabated it will take only thirty (30) years for the annihilation of all those species.



Environment, mankind's closest friend in it's timeless journey

Table 1
Soil Erosion caused by Agricultural Lands

	<i>Tons per Hectare per Year</i>
(a) Wet Zone middle country (Peradeniya)	
Kind of soil: Red brown.....	
Old tea plantations	40.00
Tea plantations of good quality (with drains)	00.24
Up country mixed home gardens	00.05
(b) Wet Zone up country (Talawakele)	
Kind of soil: Red yellow.....	
Exposed tea lands with no weeds	52.60
One year old tea lands	00.07
(c) Mid Zone middle country (Hanguranketa)	
Kind of soil: Immature brown	70.00
Tobacco	38.00
Capsicum	18.00
(d) Dry Zone low country (Maha Iluppallama)	
Kind of soil: Red brown soil	
Sorgham/pigeon pea	21.3
Sorgham/pigeon pea with	03.90
Cotton	22.20
Cotton with	02.00
(e) Mid country Chena land	
Tobacco cultivation in land with 45% slope	200.00
New Chena cultivation, (Ratnapura Dist.)	
Yearly soil erosion for 40 years	100.00

(Source: 1986 Stocking)

Because Sri Lanka is a signatory to the Convention on Safeguarding the Earth, it is our duty as Sri Lankans to do what we can to prevent this wanton destruction of the environment.

Sri Lanka gained her political independence more than four decades ago. Yet so far there has been no sincere and responsible attempt to implement a programme of forest preservation.

At the UN Conference held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972 a Swedish delegate told the world for the first time about acid rain and about poisonous chemicals absorbed by birds and fish. As a result environment became a subject of contention in both the US and Canada. However, the United Nations did not have the opportunity to take any action to deal with this problem of the steady destruction of the environment.

The main reason for this might have been that the small states all over the world had been forced to adopt a peculiar way of life due to the cold war.

Soon population, science and technology, food, conversion of deserts into fertile land etc. became topics for discussion at the global level.

Today there is a prosperous North and an impoverished South. Most of the Third World countries belong to the impoverished South. This impoverishment was considered by the prosperous to be the natural order of things. Due to the prosperity of the North and the apparent happiness of the people there, (an impression conveyed by the international media controlled by the Rich North) the poor people of the South began to regard the North as a paradise.

The North also succeeded in instituting a ruling class in the Southern countries capable of controlling the masses suffering from poverty and a low level of education.

The entire phenomenon was common to the entire SAARC region. Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Philippines were among the countries which committed most errors.

The accepted theory was that it is better to hand over one's resources to others and became dependent on them rather than using one's own strength and resources to overcome poverty.

Accordingly, Indonesia felled trees on a million hectares per year and sold them to the developed world. The Philippines cleared the forests and planted cash crops for export.

Sri Lanka built roads through the Sinharaja Forest and allowed a developed country to exploit part of it.

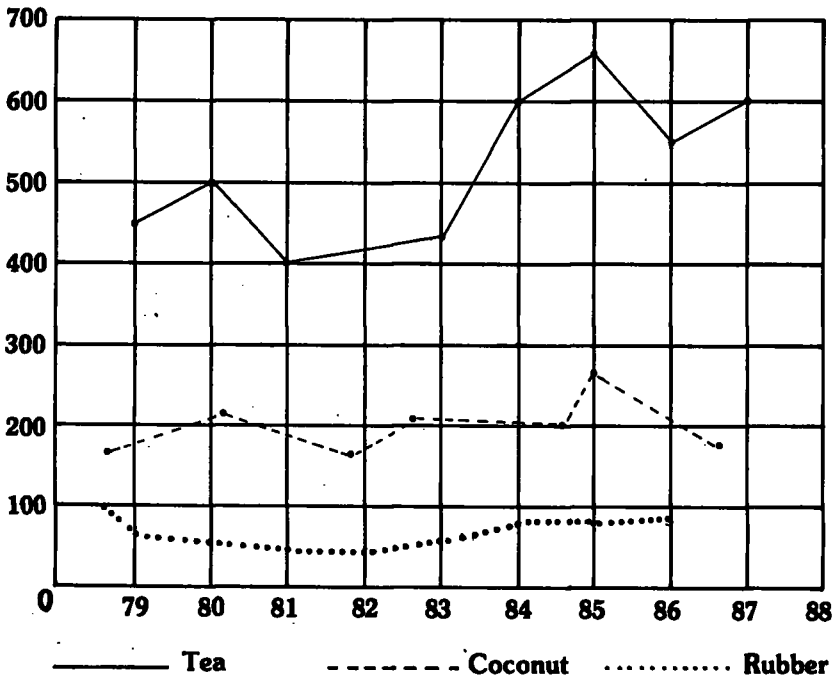
Indonesia was exploited by America as a source of timber for production of paper and by Japan as a source of plywood. The residents of Jakarta who lived near a natural forest were sent off to another island and their birth place was converted into a tourist centre for the Americans.

By the beginning of the 70's India was deprived of all its Sal and Deodar forests. In Sri Lanka 30 million acres of land were devastated within 25 years. The natural forest cover in areas 8,000 feet high and where the annual rainfall is above 200 inches had been brought down to 80% by 1980. Due to cultivation of potatoes the layer of soil in the Horton plains was depleted by several inches (see table 1 for soil erosion due to cultivation).

It was in this period that the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) pointed out that the speed of destruction of tropical forests had increased by 50%. Thus the people of the world lost 17 million hectares of land every year. The fact that a million families were settled in the Amazon basin and that as much as ten percent of the forest was destroyed by 1980 symbolized the ongoing tragedy.

Many poor countries have by now realised that their resources are being deceitfully exploited by the developed countries. A delegate from a poor

Table 2



Trends of applying fertilizers

Bedrich Molden, Chairman of the Committee on Institutional Problems, said at the September meeting — "These ideas which came into being with the end of the second world war must be changed now. The main challenges we have to face now are environment and development, poverty, prevention of North-South conflict, etc."

The former Secretary General of the UN Javier Perez de Cuellar said 'the United Nations Organisation came into being not just to settle disputes between various parties but to discover hidden abilities of different groups of people and to direct these towards development.

The delegates generally agreed that the UN also was responsible to some extent for the present sad state of the environment. Whether a new front must be formed within the UN to deal with the questions of the development and environment or not is the next issue that will have to be decided on.

country said recently at a Conference in Geneva that the United Nations should not give the slightest support to the Rich countries exploiting Southern resources. Allegations of such exploitation and proposals as to how this can be remedied will be discussed at the Earth Summit which will be held in June 1992.

Although the rehearsal for the June Summit (which was held in September 1991) was too lukewarm to evoke any high hopes, many people expect that institutions associated with the UN will be succeed in building a more fruitful relationship between development and the environment.

The majority of the delegates were of the view that time had come for the mankind to forget about the Cold War and to concentrate on the main factors that affect man's progress. The unreasonable exploitation of the Third World environment by the developed world is also a subject that will be discussed at the June meeting.

Already cities like Sevesso, Louisville, Michigan, Camdon and Bridesberg are being devastated by pesticides and chemical waste.

"Not only the Cold War, but the first generation of the UN too is now over"

Table 3

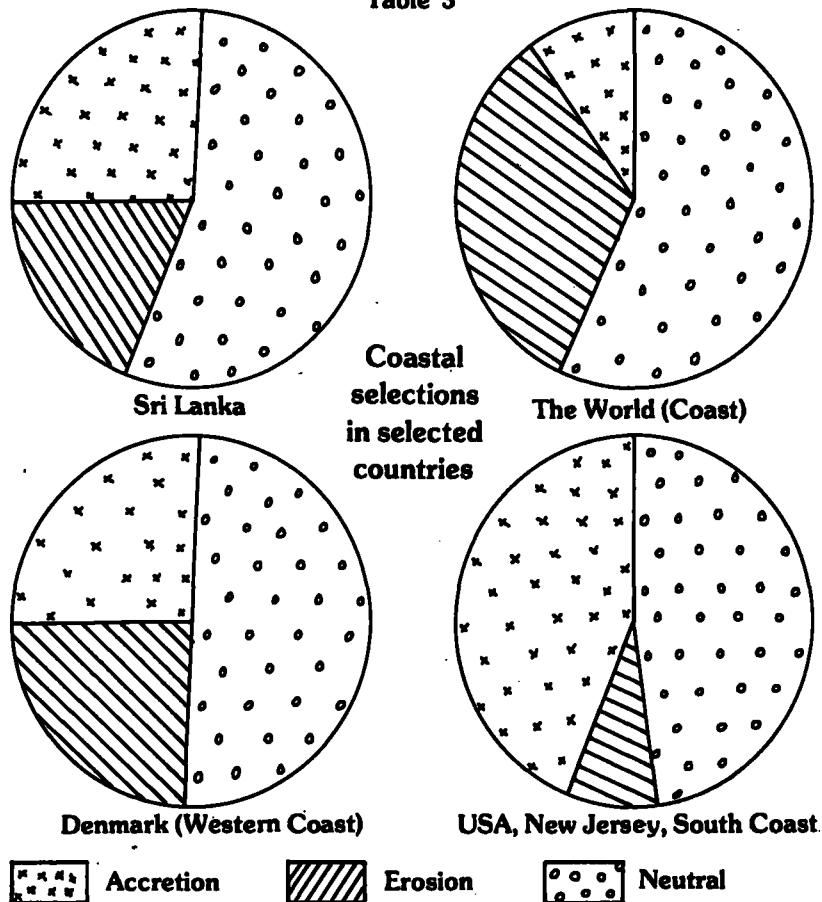


Table 4
Contribution to Environmental Pollution-Stocks
of Waste Matter

Section	District	800 ₅ Tons per Year	Amount of waste matter-tons per Year	Heavy Metal (tons)
Textile dye	Colombo	1,564	472	
Printing industry	Gampaha	1,629	492	
	Kurunegala	480	145	
Leather	Colombo	734	510	11
(Processing)	Gampaha	767	533	12
Distillers	Kalutara	421	492	

800₅ - Biochemical Oxygen Demand

The European Economic Community, Canada and the former Soviet Union, and the '77 group of developing countries appear to be lethargic or indifferent in this matter.

Another necessity would be to secure funds for the organisations active in this field and to work out policies.

The poor countries of the South have now lost confidence in institutions like the World Bank which act on the basis of principles like "one dollar for one vote".

Another group thinks that the Third World will benefit from a revised programme consisting of broadening the existing regulations and making use of the environmental resources at a sustainable level.

The Summit has already approved the appointment of an 'International Commission for Environmental Rights' composed of 15 independent specialists selected on the basis of merit.

This Commission will have the support of 600 environmentalists from 31 countries, and it is expected that these representatives of non-governmental organisations will demonstrate their capabilities. These members selected from the most active non-governmental organisations in the world will be appointed with the full consent of the UN and the member countries.

This Commission will inquire into complaints made by organisations or persons about violations of international conventions on environment.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl, of Germany stated on October 26th 1991 that he would persuade the seven major indus-

trial nations to invest 1.5 billion dollars in conserving the tropical forests. At the end of a tour of the Amazon forest he told Head of State Gilberto Mestrino that the conservation of the Amazon Forest would definitely be included in the agenda of the meeting of the G 7 meeting due to be held in Munich in 1992.

He said that France, Canada, Italy and the US are supporting him in this effort and that only Japan was showing reluctance to invest such a large sum.

According to the UN sources, the number of poorest of the poor in the developing world exceeds a billion. These

Table 5
Particulars of Earth-slips

Year	District	Location	Extent	Deaths	Damage to Property
1930	Kegalle	Talawila	Large	Not known	Not known
1947	Kegalle	Kadugennawa	Large	40	Not known
1947	Kegalle	Aranayake	Minor	Not known	Not known
1952	Nuwara Eliya	Udahewaheta	Minor	Not known	Not known
1957	Kegalle	Lower Kadugannawa	Large	05	15
1964	Nuwara Eliya	Walapane	Minor	Affected 17 families	
1970	Nuwara Eliya	Walapane	Minor	19	Not known
1973	Nuwara Eliya	Walapane	Large	13	Not known
1978	Kegalle	Kegalle	Large	03	10
1979	Ratnapura	Kuruwita	Large	05	10
1979	Kalutara	Bulathsinhala	Minor	Not known	Not known
1981	Kegalle	Yatiyanthota	Large	02	20
1981	Kegalle	Aranayake	Large	Not known	30
1982	Kegalle	Mawanella	Large	02	03
1982	Kandy	Pahala Hewaheta	Minor	Not known	Not known
1982	Ratnapura	Pelmadulla	Large	08	15
1982	Matala	Pansalathena			
		Palinda zone	Large	23	Not known
1983	Kegalle	Mawanella			
1983		Elengapitiya colony	Minor	Not known	15
1984	Kalutara	Bulathsinhala	Large	42	Not known
1984	Badulla	Haliale	Minor	Not known	02
1984	Badulla	Bandarawela	Minor	Not known	21
1984	Ratnapura	Embilipitya	Minor	Not known	21
1984	Ratnapura	Balutota	Minor	02	05
1984	Ratnapura	Kuruwita	-40 minor earth slips-		
1985	Nuwara Eliya	Norton Bridge	Minor	05	Not known
1985	Nuwara Eliya	(in town)	Large	Not known	40
1985	Kalutara	Matugama	Minor	Not known	Not known
1985	Kegalle	Warakapola	Large	10	03
1985	Kandy	Galagedara	Minor	Not known	Not known
1985	Kandy	Nawalapitiya	Large	04	10
1985	Ratnapura	Elapatha	Large	Not known	46

Source: Social Services Department.

ENVIRONMENT

people do not have the means to obtain the minimum amount of food required to avoid malnutrition. Of these 64% live in Asia, 24% in Africa and 12% in Latin America and the Caribbean islands. The UN says that in order to save these people the magnitude of their poverty, the reasons as to why the poor children are indifferent to education, the condition of the health services, and availability of pure water and sanitary facilities must be inquired into and understood. According to the data made available by the UN, about 1-5 billion people in the developing world do not have proper health facilities. Nearly 1.75 billion do not have uncontaminated water and 2.8 billion have no sanitary facilities. In the developing world 870 million adults are illiterate. About 150 million babies suffer from malnutrition and 240 million children are vagrants.

According to the UN publication, the reason for their failure to escape poverty and their permanent refugee status is that a majority of them have settled in barren and infertile areas.

Venezuela's unanimous decision is that "the North is concerned about the growth of population in the South". The population can be brought down only by economic relief and by raising the standard of education. It is obvious that this problem must be solved in accordance with practical human needs. For that purpose, an immediate transfer of technological knowledge and intellectual property rights to the South is necessary. This could perhaps remain only a dream until there emerges a society in the North which will be happy to see the people of the South using the resources of the South the way they want and for their own benefit.

The freedom about production processes which is over which the Third World needs the freedom to choose their own economic strategy as well as economic concessions. Still about eighty per cent of the institution responsible for the supply of goods and services required by the Third World are controlled by multinationals attached to the US, England, Germany and Switzerland. Sri Lanka too gets its requirements of milk powder, infant foods, detergents, sugar, medicines, textiles, footwear, sanitary goods, telephone services etc. through such multinationals.

Table 6
Recorded Floods of Sri Lanka

<i>River</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Peak discharge (cu.m.)</i>
Mahaweli Ganga	Randenigala	1955/56	1,642
Manik Ganga	Kataragama	1957/58	1,365
Yan Oya	Pangurugaswewa	1957/58	8,031
Kuda Oya	Kuda Oya	1978/79	1,852
Nilwala Ganga	Bopegoda	1943/44	1,692
Malwathu Oya	Kappachchi	1948/49	2,733
Maha Oya	Badalgama	1970/71	1,982
Kirindi Oya	Lunugamwehera	1966/67	1,354
Kelani Ganga	Glencosa	1966/67	3,794
Kalu Ganga	Putupaula	1946/47	2,547

Table 7
Sri Lanka's Surface Water Sources

	<i>Dry Zone</i>	<i>Wet Zone</i>	<i>Island (Total)</i>
Average annual rainfall	1,450	2,424	1,937
Average annual runoff	2.55×10^6	2.58×10^6	5.8×10^6
Rain water runoff percentage	35.8%	65.1%	40.5%
Flow to the sea	1.30×10^6	2.04×10^6	3.33×10^6
Percentage of total rainfall that flows to the sea	51.11%	78.83%	64.91%

Table 8(a)
Sand Deposits of Sri Lanka — Location and Capacity 1984

<i>Name of River</i>	<i>Number of Ferries</i>	<i>Number of Cubes removed in 1984</i>	<i>Total</i>
Kelani Ganga	181	222,771	43
Maha Oya	61	111,720	21
Gin Oya	2	79,445	15
Kalu Ganga	67	48,667	9
Daduru Oya	2	22,896	4
Gin Ganga	41	21,563	4
Nilwala Ganga	7	2,005	1
Sub total	<u>363</u>	<u>507,866</u>	<u>97</u>

Furthermore, when we look back at the haphazard journey we have made in regard to several fundamental problems, it becomes doubtful whether Sri Lanka had really paid sufficient attention to the question of population and development.

Even in 1981, 37 percent of 272,500 residents of Colombo did not have basic sanitary facilities. About 52 percent of them had pipe-borne water while the others had to use wells. As many as 10 percent used unclean river water or

Table 8(b)
Weather disaster Relief (Annual Expenditure Percentage)
Sri Lanka 1959-84

Time	Drought (Million of Rupees)	Floods (Million of Rupees)
1950-59	01-91	0.73
1960-69	01-09	0.38
1970-79	00-03	0.04
1980-85	88-80	6.35

Source: Social Services Department

Table 9
Pattern of Forest Life

Group	Specimen	
Flora		
Algae	896	
Fungi	1,920	
Lichens	110	35
Mosses	575	
Liverworts	190	
Ferns & Fern allies	314	18
Gymno sperms	1	00
Angiosperms	3,100	27
Fauna		
Land Snails	266	
Spiders	400	
Mosquitoes	131	13
Slister Beetles	15	20
Fish	59	27
Amphibians	37	51
Reptiles	139	50
Birds (Residents)	237	08
Mammals	86	14

unclean well water. At least five persons from each home, or 150,000 persons in the Colombo District were infected with water-borne diseases. The number appears to have increased by 20,000 now. Today only 375,000 persons in Colombo have pipe borne water. The position is still worse in the Gampaha District. About 60 percent of a population of 266,000 have no lavatories. About 25 percent use unclean rivers and ponds for water. This indicates that while in 1981 about 364,000 faced this problem, by 1991 this has gone up to more than 400,000.

Only 5 percent of the rural population has pipe-borne water. As many as 85 percent used wells and rivers. In the Hambantota, Moneragala and Matale Districts 30-40 percent of the wells have no protection at all. The people of the Moneragala and Hambantota areas almost entirely depend on water from tanks, ponds and rivers.

In Senegal recently there was great unrest due to the privatisation of drinking water spouts in streets. Even a glass of drinking water had to be paid for, and about 300,000 people in the rural areas of Doha had to fight against the National Company to obtain for drinking water. Instead of changing its stand on this matter, the ruling class is getting ready to

Table 10(A)
Banana Varieties in Sri Lanka

1. Age Viyaru	30. Nav Kesel
2. Ash plantains	31. Thiththa keli
3. Andun Anavalu	32. This Navari
4. Atamburu Anavalu	33. Dada kesel
5. Ata kesel	34. Diya kesel
6. Ambul	35. Diyathara
7. Ali kesel	36. Pushpa keli
8. Ata navati	37. Pisi kesel
9. Ambul horanavalu	38. Marthuwan
10. Kalu Anavalu	39. Marthuwalu
11. Kath Kesel	40. Mahadara
12. Kadul	41. Mahindara
13. Kan kesel	42. Meegon Anawalu
14. Kanannoru	43. Mondan
15. Kalu kanannoru	44. Rathambaia
16. Kalu kesel	45. Ratnavalu
17. Kithala	46. Rathu kesel
18. Kochchi	47. Rathinganga
19. Koli-kuttu	48. Ranel
20. Kalu navari	49. Rata Horanawalu
21. Kota suwanda	50. Ruk kehel
22. Gal Anawalu	51. Vandana kehel
23. Gira Anawalu	52. Vanduru Anawalu
24. Vathupalu	53. Sinhala Horanawalu
25. Val Vanduru	54. Sapu Antawalu
26. Val Suwanda	55. Suwanda El
27. Sapu Anawalu	56. Sudu Kannoru
28. Sinhala Anawalu	57. Sudu Navari
29. Mavari	

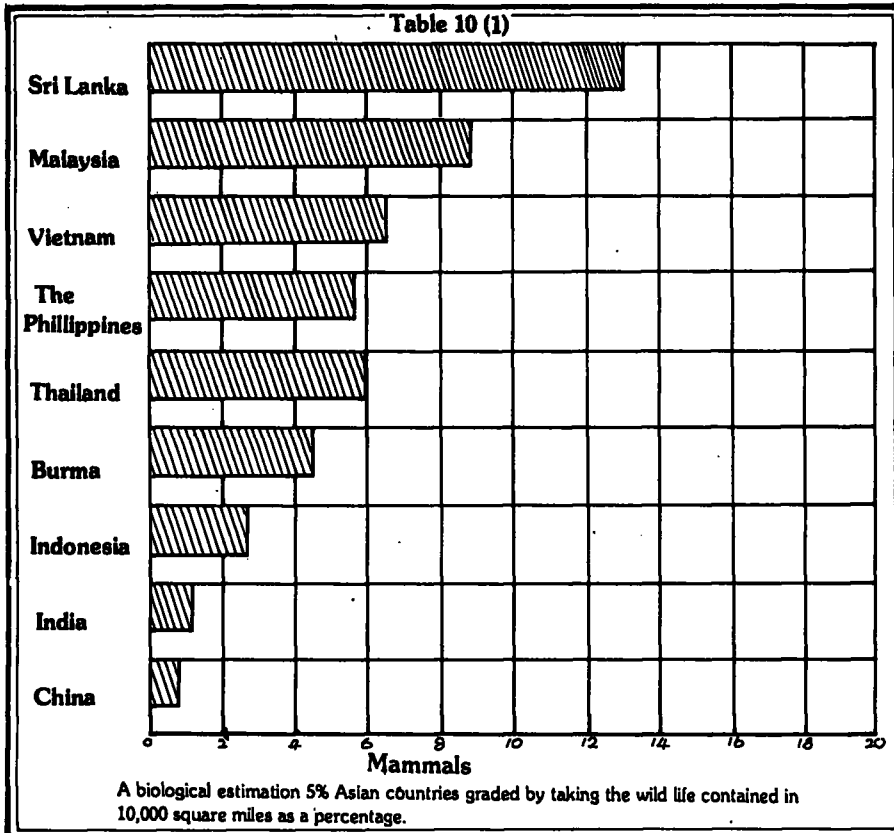
Source: Wanashi, (Nature) Project

separate 96,000 public wells and 21,000 wells where water has to be paid for.

A major factor that affects water is the soil. Almost one third of Sri Lanka's land area is subject to annual upturning of the soil. The Sri Lankan cultivators use about seven times more fertilizer than those in other countries of the region. This amounts to 124 kilograms per hectare. (The application of fertilizer went up sharply in the last decade).

The pollution caused by fertilizer leads to a dilemma. Due to the havoc caused by nitrates to the traditional patterns of agriculture in Jaffna and Nuwara Eliya, expectations regarding soil and surface

Cont. from page 7



water were destroyed. Excess of nitrate lead to intestinal disorders in children. Another area endangered by the application of fertilizer is the Moneragala district where sugar cane cultivation has absorbed 25,000 hectares. The result of this can be investigating the state of the seven rivers flowing through Moneragala.

Pesticides are used mainly in paddy cultivation. The amount of pesticides used went up from 1,200 grams to 1,600 in the period 1977-1983. The Sri Lankan cultivators are in the habit of using twice the amount of pesticides prescribed. (See table 2 for trends in fertilizer use)

The loss suffered by Sri Lanka due to haphazard use of fertilizer and pesticides has not become a subject of 'popular' discussion so far. Disposal of industrial waste is also indirectly connected with this.

The Hunupitiya fertilizer stores are located in the middle of an urban area. Due to inadequate storage facilities, empty bags are often left in the open within the premises. When these get wet during the rainy period, chemicals in them get mixed with rain water. As a result, ground water within a distance of

about a kilometre around the storage complex get polluted. This leads to various health problems including eye and skin diseases.

Due to this complex the Government has had to suffer an environmental loss of about Rs. 5 million during the past 20 years. Due to the pollution of ground

water, Colombo North Water Supply Board proposed to the Government that pipe-borne water should be supplied at a cost of Rs. 14 million.

The total of cement power/dust that escaped from the Puttalam Cement Factory amounted to 120-200 tons per day in 1985. A coconut plantation of about 3,400 hectares and, about 10,000 acres of land were devastated as a result. The loss to the government due to this waste of cement powder was Rs. 20,000 per day or Rs. 6 million per year. To prevent this loss it was necessary either to fix new EP machines at a cost of Rs. 30 million or to repair the old one. Another sum of Rs. 5.5 million was required for the water treatment unit to purify the water and for the construction of water controlling tower. (However the Government was unable to allocate money for this purpose).

If is not unusual today for industrial wastes, without any purification, to be allowed to flow into the nearest body of water. The waste from the textile and garment factories in Ratmalana and Moratuwa is quite enormous. The amount of waste they discard at a time is enough to affect 70,000 men simultaneously. It has been reported to the Central Environmental Authority that a part of this waste goes to the Kelani Ganga. The coastal zones are also destroyed due to the river water. (See table 3).

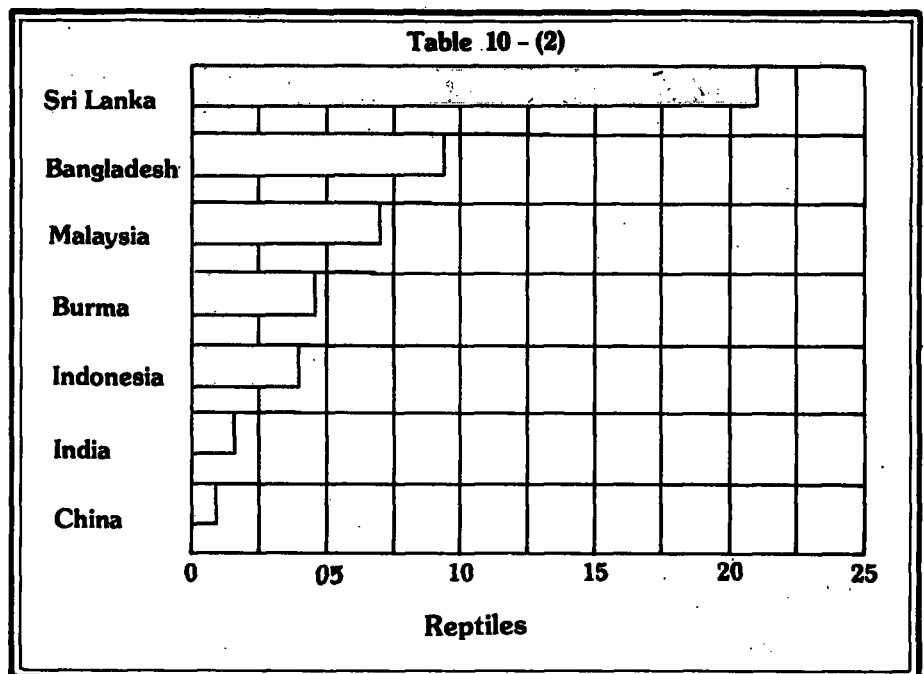
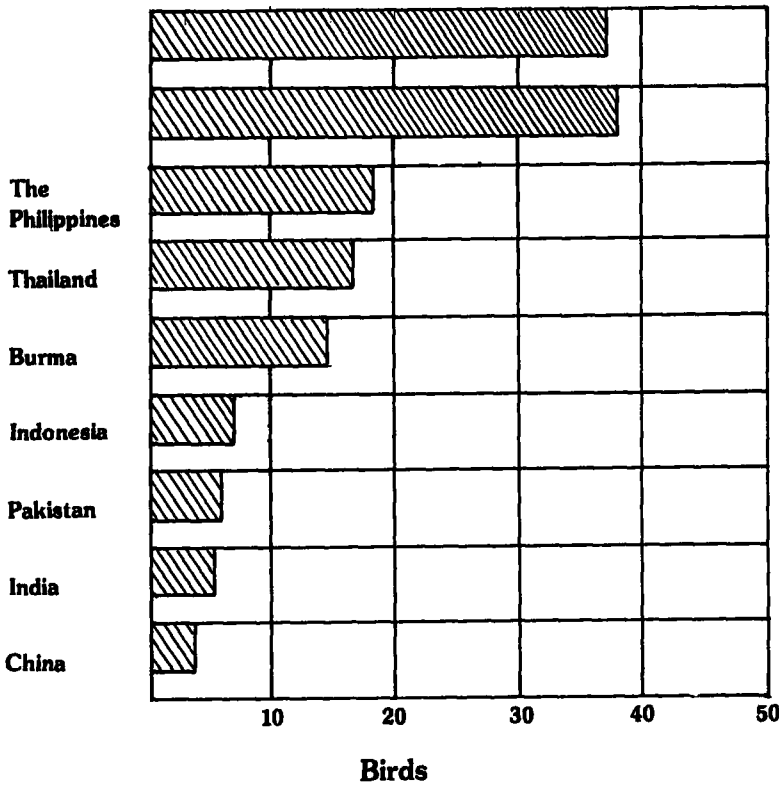


Table 10-3



more earth slips (See table 5, table 6 and 7 and table 8 (a) and (b)).

The masses are today condemned to live a life of uncertainty, with no rights over their surroundings. A foreign company had leased a forest in India to supply sports goods to a third country. When the company attempted to cut down the trees the people from the surrounding villages created a human shield around the forest to prevent it. This is an internationally celebrated case now.

Another disuse-inducing concept that oppresses the Third World is bio-technology and the lack of independence and freedom in regard to bio-chemicals in their entirety. As to who really has the rights over the abundant biologically important heritage of the earth which is threatened with extinction is a subject of controversy which will come up for discussion at the Earth Summit. (see table 9 - Sri Lanka's fauna).

If we accept the theory that a person or a country which identifies a chemical for the first time has rights of ownership over it, then the use of radium today

From 1963 upto 1975 there were only three industrial estates approved by the government. They were Ekala, Pallekelle and Atchuvely. At the end of 1970 three minor industrial estates were set up at Horana, Pannala and Lunuwila. In the Colombo district there are two industrial estates, viz. Ratmalana industrial estate and the Lady Catherine estate. (In the Gampaha district, Katuwana industrial estate is to be established shortly). The Government must come to an agreement with the industrialists concerned regarding the atmospheric and water pollution resulting from these industrial estates. (see table 4).

Women are specially affected by this destruction of the environment. An Indian delegate at an international conference protested that the Indian woman now has to walk miles in search of drinking water.

Officials who visit villages in certain parts of Sri Lanka have seen how temperature has gone up every year due to the drying up of springs as a result of 'reforestation' on the instructions of white advisors. This also resulted in

Table 10-4

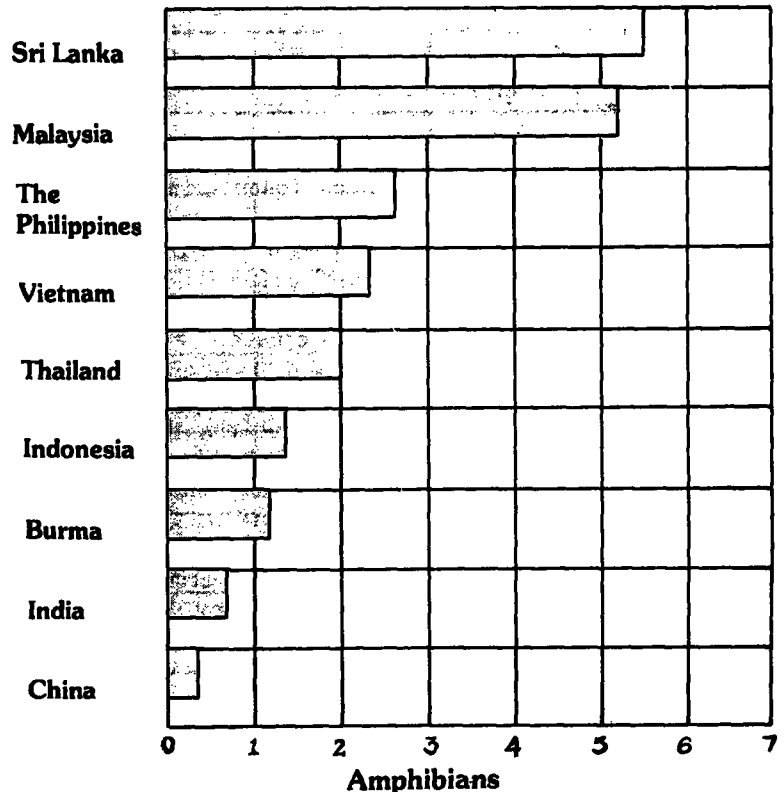
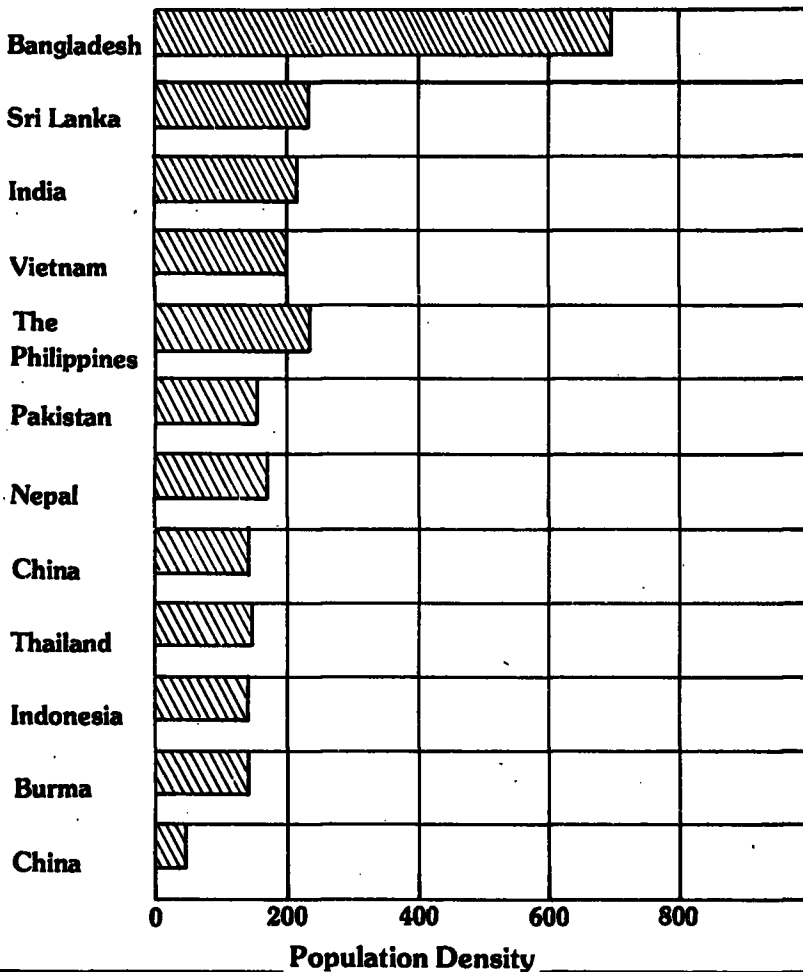


Table 10-5



soon as the sessions commence to express his government's protest. What every country whose development has been delayed due to environmental problems ought to do is to evaluate their environmental heritage, decide what they should do about population and development, and place their demands and conditions before the UN. (See table 10-biological evaluation of Asian countries in 6 parts). Otherwise we will become prisoners in the upper middle class trend of spending on seminars, discussions and workshops.

The local agencies (formed by the North), spend the money (given by the North) to discuss over and over again our problems (caused by the North) and hope for more aid the following year to repeat the same pattern.

These problems are common to most of the world. The effort made by the African countries to disregard unnecessary condition imposed by the rich countries and to fulfil their own aspirations through bold and courageous policies should really be appreciated.

In August last year, delegates from Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe met in Nairobi and arrived at a very important decision. The decision was not to depend on imported fuel and to have cookers using chemicals which are easily available in African countries for their people. They have set up 200 factories to make such small cookers and so far have produced about 500,000 cookers.

Although the US advocates 'international democracy' with great enthusiasm, it is in the US that a greater part of fauna and flora species are concentrated (the number of such species is between five hundred thousand to 8 million). They say that great results can be achieved from these specimens and their genes for agriculture, medicine and industry. For instance only three species of potatoes are cultivated and consumed in the world. But American researchers went to Latin America and found 300 species of potatoes.

The US is making a great effort through these researchers to discover food and drink that can withstand any condition so that it will be able to survive any future environmental crisis.

should be confined to the Curie family. (But even those who know nothing about the Curies perform scientific miracles with radium).

Although the genetic resources of the world are protected and conserved by ordinary people of the South, they are still being stored in gene banks controlled by the countries of the North.

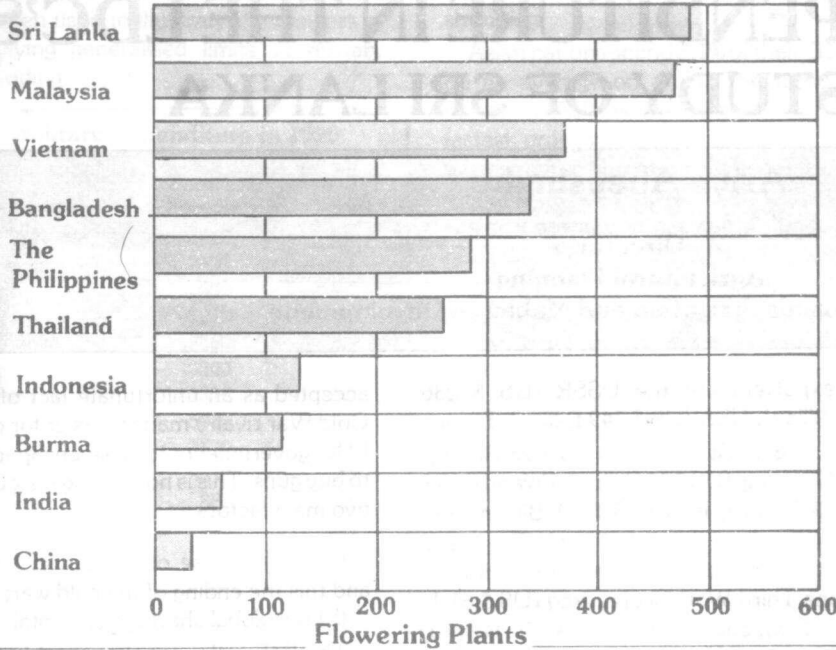
It is the scientists of the South who know most about the fauna and the flora outside the North. However the people of the South have no opportunity to gain knowledge about the atmosphere of their region. A great majority of the flora and fauna which are believed to exist in the world now, numbering about 30 million are in tropical forests. Scientists of the South have identified about 1.4 million species of fauna and flora.

Northerners documents this heritage without our knowledge and later accuse

us of causing the extinction of 20,000 species of fauna and flora, which are not known to us. Thus, although technology is located in the countries of the north, most of the fauna and flora of the globe are located in South. But ignorance of what we have is a great handicap. Because of this we are unable to tell the rich countries what the poor countries want. Accordingly the rich countries send chemicals and weedicides of inferior quality to poor countries, using theories about regional political problems, exchange rate and theories and evolved to persuade us to accept depression to force us to accept the unsuitable products with equanimity. Even the cry raised by the poor countries about the rising atmospheric temperature, damage to the ozone layer and great changes in the weather patterns, is being ignored.

The Zimbabwe delegate to the Earth Summit has already decided to leave as

Table 10-10



of (rain fed) land in the dry zone are ready for agriculture, or some other developmental purposes. (At present much of it is in the hands of the Government Forest and Wild Life Departments).

The wet zone forests have come down to 10 percent now. However, Sri Lanka has the distinction of having the most valuable forests in South Asia. (The next best rain forests are found in Madagascar are Sumatra). Yala and Wilpattuwa which are two of Sri Lanka's largest national parks are found in areas where agriculture is debarred (In Wasgamuwa and Uda Walawe there are about 2,000 families now).

As a percentage Sri Lanka still has a reasonable area of forests by Asian standards. It is 24 percent of the total area of the country. However this is not land that has been left with Sri Lanka's genuine welfare at heart. It is said that some of

NOTE - 11

The Food and Agriculture Organisation in New York says that the speed of destruction of tropical forests has increased by fifty percent in this decade compared with the last decade.

Thus the extent of land lost to the inhabitants of the world each year is 17 million hectares (This represents a land area equal to Austria, Denmark and Netherlands combined).

Accordingly the waste of forest resources, extinction of forest life specimens, unemployment and gradual desertification of agricultural lands have increased.

A special report on this situation is due to be discussed at the World Forest Organization which will meet in Paris at the end of this month.

24 countries have understood this danger and are now working according to a national plan of their own to remedy this situation in their countries.

It is significant that the meeting this time is to be held in Brazil. Clearing of forests around the Amazon area and settling of a million families there had meant the destruction of one tenth of the forest area by 1980.

The destruction of the Amazon forest proceeds at the rate of 400 miles per year. In Sri Lanka the forest area has dropped by 30 million acres in 25 years.

Under these conditions, about 3000 varieties of wild flowers, 450 kinds of bamboos and 170 kinds of orchids are in danger.

According to the UN, between 1990 and 2020, 15 percent of the species of flora and fauna will become extinct.

Troubled by these forecasts the rich countries using their management skills and scientific knowledge to discover the environmental heritage of the countries of the South. Although their efforts may be considered beneficial in the long term (if the forecasts of scientists are true), their effort at the moment amounts to 'stealing' of resources at a time when the people of the Third World are struggling for survival. While these rich countries are paying attention to environment and survival, they also take care always to renew a situation which will promote racism, war and political conflict.

Is it possible to heal the environmental wounds of the Third World by the kind of reforms proposed by the North? When the aims and the character of non-government organisations which wear various masks are studied it becomes obvious that they seek to serve only their own

self-interest; they are not interested in the welfare of poor countries.

If we are to save the existing resources of Sri Lanka it is necessary to have a proper understanding about them. (See note 11-Steps taken by a Sri Lankan project about the Earth Summit).

The Land Commission says that 2 million hectares on nearly 5 million acres

these forest lands are very good for agriculture. The forests in the wet zone are used for long term lakes, fuel (firewood) for adjoining villages, and to meet their food requirements. Even this view is expressed more by foreign organisations than by local organisations. It is the duty of Sri Lanka's the foreign experts can be erroneous and unsuitable for out country.