

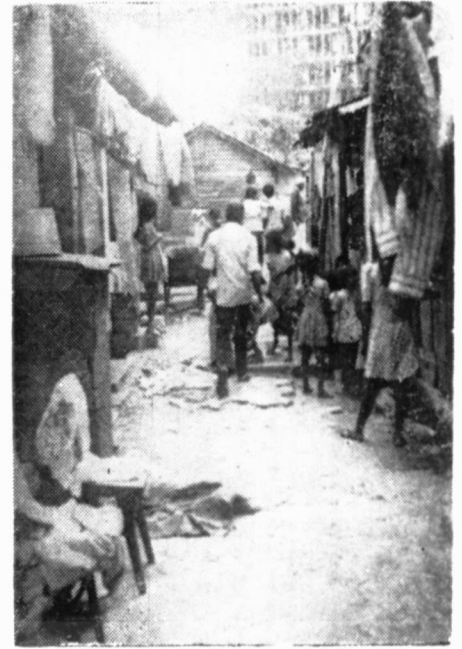


Polluting the Environment

Man has been found to be both the prime source of environmental degradation and also its prime victim. This stark fact has come out very strongly in the "developed" world where in most cities smoking incinerators, belching chimneys and exhaust fumes fill the air with carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide; and air and water pollution take their toll causing diseases and shortening lives. The cost in human suffering is incalculable; but the annual economic cost has been estimated at several billions of dollars.

Man and his environment are inseparably linked—the organisms which give

him disease, the vectors (such as flies) which help transmit disease are all part of an ecological system. It is the interaction of man and his environment which determines the incidence of disease. All aspects of human health and well-being within the living and working environment are directly linked with the stability and proper functioning of our surroundings. Unfortunately it has not been sufficiently recognised that many of our environmental problems stem from a narrow, single-purposed approach in public or private action that affects the human environment; whether in agricultural, industrial or urban development.



Air pollution (left), unhygienic water and drainage and congested living conditions in the heart of the city pose problems for the environment.



There appears to be a limited awareness among governmental and non-governmental authorities and the general public of the significance of this issue. The main reason is that the pollution of the environment has not been looked at as an immediate problem.

This is obviously a short-term approach which many of the "developed" countries have realised at heavy cost.

The cities of the Third World have fortunately been saved this fate so far though many of them are already beginning to feel the dangers of environmental pollution. In Colombo, though industrial pollution has not reached the dangerous proportions of the developed countries, the polluting of the environment of the poor through the water systems and the houses they occupy is higher. The pictures here illustrate some aspects of environmental pollution in Colombo.