



SMALL STATES  
CONFERENCE ON  
SEA LEVEL RISE  
MALE, 14 - 18 NOVEMBER 1989

# CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

No. 04

PUBLISHED DAILY

17-18 NOVEMBER 1989

## PRESIDENT GAYOOM CALLS FOR A UNIVERSAL CAMPAIGN

"We, in the Maldives, realizing the urgent need to have a multi-sectoral integrated programme of environmental management for the country, have recently formulated, with the assistance of UNDP & UNEP, a National Action Plan for Environmental Management and Planning in this country. This plan recognises the need to protect and manage our immediate environment as a first step in our preparation for the predicted sea-level rise". In a moving address which touched on wide-ranging aspects on the larger environmental issues, from action taken at home through the Commonwealth's ongoing contributions to "skeptics who say that

everything is fine, and will be fine", President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom of the Republic of Maldives stated in his keynote address to delegates attending the current sessions of the Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise" today at Kurumba Village.

"As we are all aware", said the President, "there is a growing scientific consensus, that within the next century, sea-level will rise at a faster rate than at anytime in history. Not withstanding various scenarios that gives one a sinking feeling, we in the Maldives are convinced that a universal campaign against the causes of climate change and global warming should be undertaken at once. But the Maldives is not going to be the only victim.

contd. on P.4

### "Rich Nations

### Learn Slow, Act Slower"

- Sir Shridath

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Sir Shridath Ramphal yesterday blamed the world's affluent nations for the rising pollution that is gradually destroying the environment in developing countries.

Addressing the opening of the "Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise", the Secretary-General singled out pollution as largely a by-product of wasteful life styles and harmful production processes in the industrialized world.

At the same time he also pointed out an accusing finger when he

contd. on P.5

## TODAY

The third Ministerial session of the conference will begin at 0900 and continue until 1300 hrs. At the session Ministers from Vanuatu, Trinidad and Tobago and the Maldives will present country papers. In addition Dr. Collin Woodroffe from University of Wollongong, Australia, Mr. Abdullahi A. Hersi, Acting Director of Science and Technology of OIC, and Mr. Alexandra P. Megalnikov of USSR State Committee for Hydrometrology and Prof. M.G.K. Menon, Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister of India will also present papers.

The fourth session of the conference will begin at 1500 hrs, followed by the closing session where the conference declaration will be finalised.

\*\*\*\*\*

### BBC's Chris

If 'Catch 'em Young' was the motto of the founding fathers of print and electronic media, like they first spotted Mark Twain (alias Samuel Clemens) on the river-boat down the Mississippi, London caught BBC's Chris Nuttal just in the nick of time, as he was walking out of the gates of University College, London with a degree in English literature in his shirt-pocket and, of course, news from University corridors that 'that guy, Chris, has a real nose for news'. Mind you, then only 21 years. And, so began a career in the media-first as cub reporter in a regional newspaper in Manchester, shifting hither and thither from weekly to a more important, wider-circulating daily for four years, until BBC's Home Service, seeing Chris' latent talent, snapped him up for a more enterprising career - a healthy

Will "Last Paradise" be "Lost Paradise"?  
says, Abbas

Leader of the Maldives delegation, Minister of Transport & Shipping, Mr Abbas Ibrahim, in his address of welcome to the delegates at the start of the conference, made some valuable remarks about the passing scenario in the Maldives:

In his own words, Minister Abbas said:

Tourist brochures and travel advertisements on the Maldives depict us as the last paradise. Sun drenched islands with pristine white beaches, unspoilt coral gardens underneath a clear blue sea and gentle waves caressing idly on the islands. It is said that in Maldives, you learn the art of doing nothing - peaceful, serene and far removed from the hurly burly of the industrial societies. While I would not want to detract too much from this beautiful scene, I think I

contd. on P.6

---

changeover from writing for the printed word to summarising the spoken word for 'BBC WORLD SERVICE - THIS IS LONDON'. Chris Nuttal, now 32 years, has since, never looked back. Rather, those who are acquainted with his genial, modest and unassuming ways, would agree that somewhere out there in the media world, newsmen of his caliber are being 'watched'. When BBC was on the look-out for a Colombo-based correspondent to cover Sri Lanka, while also overseeing the Maldives, Chris was the unanimous choice.

Right now he is in Kurumba covering the conference.

\*\*\*\*\*

## RORCUAL WITNESS THE DISCOVERY OF A NEW SPECIES OF LOBSTER

One international media group busily engaged in covering the small states conference is the 5-member Spanish TV group, Rorcual SA, an independent TV company based in Spain. "It was very fortunately a mere coincidence that we happened to be here while the conference is taking place and we are lucky and extremely happy to get the opportunity to interview some of the world's leading authorities, on sea level rise, climatic changes and submarine life, as it was an enrichment to what we have been doing here for the past 4 months," said the group's Director Mr. Francisco Saura.

The Spanish TV, whose 2 million dollar filming project, that will also take them to several coral chains of the world, is here to make a chapter for their ambitious 14-chapter documentary on World's coral reefs, beginning from the formation of coral polyps to the mammals around the reefs, it will also show the intertwined and the vital relationship of man and reefs as well and their dependence on each other for a shared life.

"I was very much impressed by the marine life, the diversity of fish and coral rich marine life here, when compared to the other similar marine environments," said Mr. Hobert the group's young scientist, who is also an under water photographer. He continued that it was very shocking to see almost all coral reefs and corals as deep as 20 meters, in the Maldives damaged, the greatest damage seen in the shallow water corals. As there was widespread uniformity in the damage, throughout Maldives, he thinks that the damage was caused by

natural causes, most likely the tidal swells that hit the Maldives island chain in 1987. This assumption is strengthened by the fact that some of the damaged reefs seen are quite far from the usual area of the fisherman and the divers.

Mr. Hobert however made a note of optimism: that young coral polyps have already begun growing on the damaged as well as the dead corals. And hence there is every hope that the Maldivian reefs will regain its previous beauty, although without any doubt the country is still one of the best diving spots in the world, a place where one could still get a historic opportunity, such as discovering or becoming a witness to the discovery of a hitherto unrecorded marine creature. For them it was the historic opportunity of becoming a witness to the discovery of a new species of lobster in Ari Atoll, the second and the newest tourist zone in the country.

### *Media Personnel Meet Islanders*

Yesterday, it was the media man and woman's day out. On the high seas to inhabited island, 'Hura'. At the Jetty, to say hello and welcome to his little land was Kaleifan, the Island Chief and the lone foreigner, Edriweera of Sri Lanka, teaching English to the little islanders who led the media personnel around. They had a hearty drink of 'kurumba' - the young coconut and then went lagoon-wards. 'Oh, what a beautiful sight! they said. And then back to the island resort of Kanifinolu for lunch.

# SIR SHRIDATH

## HONOURED

contd. from p.1

Many other countries represented here will have to bear the brunt of the ocean's onslaught a few decades from now and the stark truth is that no realistic solutions to our problems have yet been identified. Those recommended, even in the latest scientific literature available to us, may not be good enough", Said the President: "the alternatives before us can be summarised as follows: Accept what is going to happen; try coastal defenses; elevate the surface areas of the islands; retreat inland; migrate! If not impossible, the cost of implementing any one of these solutions for most of our countries would be as unmanageable as the environment itself".

### *Academy of Sciences for Small States Concern*

The Third World Academy of Science - an international body of scientists drawn from diverse fields - has taken up President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's concern for the environmental problems affecting the small states and is eagerly awaiting the outcome of the "Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise", now being held at scenic Kurumba Village.

Professor Cyril Ponnampereuma, Vice-President of the Academy, Science Advisor to Sri Lankan President and Professor Emeritus of the University of Maryland, U.S.A., who was in Kurumba for two sessions as an 'observer', told "High Lights" that the French Government had offered the Academy, financial material assistance to help set up sea-level monitoring stations in some of the small states, and

President Qayoom has awarded Sir Sridath Ramphal with "Nishan izzudeen ge izzath Theri Verikan". The medal was awarded to him to appreciate his services to the Maldives, the Commonwealth and the world, and in appreciation of his efforts to safeguard the environment and the security of small countries.

The medal was also awarded to thank the Secretary General for his services to the Commonwealth during the past 15 years.

Sir Ramphal left Maldives last night after a 2-day visit to participate at the ministerial meeting of the Small States conference on Sea Level Rise which began last Wednesday.

Another participant at the conference, Dr. G.O.P. Obasi, Secretary General of World Metrological Organisation, also left last night.

"Highlight" Wishes both "Bon Voyage".

\*\*\*\*\*

the Professor is anxious that Maldives should be one of the beneficiaries.

The Academy, being a political and devoted to the pursuance of the sciences, is the recipient of a substantial aid from the more affluent donor countries for ongoing Academy projects around the world. Professor Ponnampereuma said he had to leave the conference prematurely because of "prior commitments", but will be back, hopefully by month's end, to discuss the Academy's propositions with President Gayoom.

## "WAKIVANEE"

contd. from P.1

charged that 80 percent of all commercial energy generated in the industrialized world, including Eastern Europe, originate in rich countries.

He blamed these countries for the production of almost all the world's chlorofluorocarbons (CFC gases) that are helping to destroy the ozone layer.

Ramphal also made a pointed reference to the fact that developing nations are finding themselves in a position where they are being held responsible for global environmental problems they did little to create.

"The insensitivity of those who lecture you on environment but refuse to discipline their own use of cheap fuel causes inevitable resentment", he told the delegates at the opening session.

The philosophy of the industrialized nations, he said, comes across in that age old paradox: "Don't do as I do; just do as I say".

Continuing his criticisms of the rich nations, he lamented the fact that the recently-concluded international conference in environment in the Netherlands showed how slow the major industrial countries are to learn - "and how much slower to act."

At the 68-nation conference in Netherlands last week, the United States, Japan and the Soviet Union refused to endorse a specific timetable for curbs on emissions of carbon dioxide. Playing for time, the US maintains the position that further scientific study is necessary before binding controls could be imposed.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, says it does not have the funds to implement a policy to control carbon dioxide emissions.

Keep the phonetics and the semantics aside for a while.

Together at Kurumba Village, overlooking the sundown seas around us and amidst the warmth of friends - we all - we sorted out part of our problems on 'warming of our globe' and the 'rising of the seas! That done, its time now to get back home to our loved ones. Thus, as you leave Kurumba, we say to you one and all 'WAKIVANEE' - Goodbye, safe journey back to base, but more than all - Come back!

We've thought we've done the best we could as best we thought we could have. But then, none, nothing is the acme of perfection in everything we do. To err is human, to forgive is divine. This conference has re-awakened us to more realisations that tomorrow and the morrows will be safe for all of us, only if we can work out today, a cleaner, safer place to live in for humanity as a whole. Thank you for having come to our country for this Kurumba Conference, which President Gayoom has described as the 'starting point'.

Adhives Ziyaraiy Kuravvaane  
Kamah Ummeedhu Kuran - Hope  
you'll come back again.

## OFFICIE - BEARERS

The Republic of Maldives, whose delegation to the conference was led by the Minister of Transport and Shipping, Hon. Abbas Ibrahim, was unanimously elected Chairman. Leader of delegation of Brunei, Antigua and Barbuda, and Tonga were elected Vice-Chairman. The leader of the delegation of Mauritius was elected Rapporteur.

## Male' Tour

The conference participants went for a Male' Tour yesterday afternoon. In Male' the delegates were taken to a few places including the Islamic Centre, the coastal Defence Project site and to Kalaafaaru School where a briefing was given on the project. They also witnessed a silent demonstration by thousands of Maldivians in support of the government's efforts to protect the country's vulnerable environments.

At the demonstration, Hon. Lincoln Myers, the Minister of Environment & National Service, Trinidad and Tobago, and Ms. Bunny McDiarmid, the Green Peace representative took the floor on behalf of the conference delegates.

## Ministers Visit Fish Cannery

Ministers from Cyprus, Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, Trinidad Tobago and Vanuatu and Professor M.G.K. Menon of India, who are in the Maldives for the Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise, took a helicopter ride to the Felvaru Fish Cannery, Yesterday.

The Felvaru Cannery, opened on the 11th November 1986, is equipped with can making facilities and has the capacity to process 50 metric tons of raw tuna, per day. In addition, there is a fish meal plant with an input capacity of 30 metric tons. It is also equipped with a laboratory to check the standard of fish quality.

Fish canning first began in the Maldives in 1978, as a joint venture by the government and a foreign company.

\*\*\*\*\*

contd. from P.2

should warn you - with apologies to Shakespeare, that all is not quite well in the state of the Maldives, nor indeed in all similar states. Truly, if some environmental experts are to be believed, the last paradise is in danger of becoming the lost paradise. Therefore, the importance of this conference for the small states of the world and the Maldives cannot be over-estimated

"INTRODUCE

HARMLESS

SUBSTITUTES"

- KIRATA OF KIRIBATI

Hon. Babera Kirata O.B.E, senior Minister of Kiribati Islands in the Pacific, who was representing his Government, said that possible causes of the twin problems of global warming and sea level rise had been identified and the small island countries must be united in one voice against the continued use of the damaging substances to the environment.

Small states should urge developed and industrialised countries to quickly identify and put into use, harmless substitutes. Minister Kirata said that "although our actions, individually or collectively, may not materially affect the problem, as people, we are entitled to protection against all man-made activities which are believed to be destroying the planet that we all are part of". Mr Francis Ngalu, Senior Asst. Secretary to Minister Kirata was the other delegate.

\*\*\*\*\*