CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

MALDIVES A FRONT-RUNNER

says SIR SHRIDATH

Commonwealth Secretary-General Sir Shridath Ramphal made a very welcome brief inspection tour of the Conference area last evening, immediately on his arrival at Kurumba Village where he is expected to stay till the end of the Conference. Accompanied by Foreign Minister Fathul-la Jameel, Sir Shridath, better known to his Commonwealth colleagues as "Sonny", also took time to make a brief "stop-over" at the media centre and had a word or two with the local journalists present then.

Sir Shridath, who takes a very keen interest in environment issues and the security of small states, especially of those within the Commonwealth, will be addressing the opening session of today's Ministerial Meeting. He is making his third and most probably last visit to the Maldives as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. Miss Janet Singh, his Senior Executive, is accompanying him.

Speaking to newsmen on arrival, Sir Shridath said that what is happening here is beginning to attract international attention and that attention should, of course, move beyond just awareness to doing something to assist the small states of which the Maldives is now a front-runner.

"President Gayoom and his Foreign Minister Jameel's message (on the problems of small states such as sea-level rise and global warming) is forcing international attention and that attention is at last coming", Sir Shridath said.

Press Briefing

The second and final session of the Senior Officials meeting of the Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise was held yesterday. Of the three sessions, the first one concentrated on the draft resolution to be submitted to the Ministerial Meeting beginning today.

The first paper presented by Dr. Colin D. Woodroffe of the Department of Geography, University of Wollongong, Australia, was on "Salt Water contd. on P.2
Intrusion into ground water— an assessment of effects on small island states”. Saying that it was not clear as to what rate the sea level is changing, Dr. Woodroffe emphasised that the impact of sea level rise is only one of the consequences of climatic change predicted as a result of Green house effect in the atmosphere and noted that other consequences may include increased rainfall, increased hurricane range and frequency.

Prof P. Holmes of the Imperial College, who gave a short presentation as the request of Dr. Woodroffe, highlighted the need to consider the potential influence of a rising mean—sea-level in the context of other factors which causes coastal erosion flooding and particularly storm surger and wave conditions.

Next, Mr. James Titus of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency spoke on the implications of the sea level rise expected over the next century. Mr. Titus discussed ways in which the Maldives might respond to the problems.

Dr. Alasdair J. Edwards from the Centre for Tropical Coastal Management Studies of the University of New Castle-upon-Tyne, UK focussed on strategies for the future and the importance of coastal zone management in the context of sea level rise.

**TOMORROW**

Friday—the weekly holiday in the Maldives, is an open day for the delegates. A day to relax and take advantage of the numerous delights available to the visitor.

Except for a visit to Male’ in the afternoon to witness a demonstration organised by non-governmental organisations,
Lighter Moments

'Turn off the Taps'

One veteran environmental personality at the conference is the observer from Green Peace International Ms. Bunny Mc Dermitt who is here according to her on a "monitoring mission as well". She was one of the crew members of the famous "Rainbow Warrior" the ship which was sunk at the New Zealand harbour some years back, by the French secret service, while the ship was on a peace mission, which was for the French an "anti French mission" in the South Pacific. She said that she did not take or develop any hatred toward the French over what they did, but admitted that it was very hard not to be anti French.

Ms Dermitt who is incidentally from New Zealand said that the small states conference is very interesting in the sense that it is the first time where small and developing island countries of the world are discussing their threatened environment while the developed side of the world are as observers, here. She said the small states here are "victim countries" as they hardly did anything that had contributed to the dangers that we are facing as a result of the Green house effects. Thus there is a heavier responsibility on the shoulder of those developed and developing countries to help the world create a more benign environment, she said.

Regarding the sea level rise Ms Dermitt said "If you see your house flooded you don't begin mopping up the floor, the first thing you do is turn off the taps".

Deen on Defence

To move among the military maestros within the confines of the PENTAGON in Washington DC and then do a bit of shuttling to and from major U.S. cities, just to ascertain "what’s happening where" is just the right job for old crocks in the media profession - the time the veteran journalist feels that he’s done his bit for well nigh quarter century or more in professional world journalism including his country of birth.

That kind of sums up a fascinating career that Thalif Deen of Sri Lanka, but now well settled in the asphalt jungle of New York City has gone through in a world of his own, so to say. Thalif left his homeland and went in search, not of greener pastures, but in difference to a distant call "Go West, young man" and found his way into the UN sky-scraper. Thalif now works for the much sought after, high circulation "JANES'S DEFENCE WEEKLY" a serious-minded publication that probes the world’s military technology as well as military might. Right now Thalif is in town, covering the Kurumba Confab for a string of dailies and weeklies in New York, and, maybe a piece back home to his "alma mater" in journalism - the "Sunday Observer".

Thalif is no newcomer to the Maldives. He’s been in and out of the islands since 1975 - "a close friens of the Maldives".

Points to remember:
1. To reconfirm your air ticket.
2. To update provisional delegate’s list.
The Ministerial Meeting of the Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise begins this morning, at the Kurumba Village convention Hall.

At the official opening ceremony of the Ministerial meeting Sir Shridath Ramphal, the Secretary General of the Commonwealth and President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom will address the inaugural session. Among the special invitees will be Cabinet Ministers, Senior Government Officials and foreign diplomats in Male'.

In session I and session II, technical papers will be presented by Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organisation Dr. G.O.P. Obasi and two resource persons, Dr. Richard Warrick and Dr. Alasdair Edwards. Dr. Warrick would focus on the evidence of climate and temperature change and sea level rise and Dr. Edwards would concentrate his paper on coastal management in sea level rise.

The other item on the agenda is the presentation of some country papers.

Delegates would also hold discussions on the technical papers presented.

THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING BEGINS AT 0930 HRS TODAY.

"Eighty per cent of all commercial energy is generated in the industrialised world, including Eastern Europe; almost all the world's chlorofluorocarbons - the CFC's, those gases that are helping to destroy the ozone layer - originate in rich countries.....

The simple, and terrible, truth is that poverty and environment are inextricably linked in a chain of cause and effect. Problems of environment cannot be tackled in isolation from those national and international economic factors that perpetuate large-scale poverty....."

Sir Shridath S Ramphal at the Cambridge lectures "Our Common Future?" January 1989