



On Sirasa TV
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Colombo, 18 June 2008

Looming water stress and water shortages: Mirage or reality? Find out on Sri Lanka 2048!

Sri Lanka receives an annual rainfall of 2,200 mm, nearly three times the world average of 750 mm per year. The country has 103 river basins, and over 12,000 man-made reservoirs that have helped store and manage rainwater for centuries. Inland water bodies cover 2,905 square kilometres (4.43% of land area), one of the highest such densities in the world.

Despite all this, can Sri Lanka face water shortages in the coming years? Why do scientists caution that more than a third of the country is already experiencing 'water stress'? What can we do to avert a full-scale water crisis?

With more than 50 laws and 40 government institutions dealing with different aspects of water, can we ever have an all-encompassing policy or a single authority to ensure rational management of our water resources?

These are among the key questions being raised in this week's programme of *Sri Lanka 2048* -- an innovative series of television debates exploring prospects for a sustainable future for Sri Lanka in the Twenty First Century.

This debate will be broadcast on Sirasa TV at 10.45 pm on Thursday 19 June 2008. It involves -- as panel and studio audience -- over two dozen Sri Lankans from academic, civil society, corporate and government backgrounds.

This week's panel comprises: **A D S Gunawardena**, Secretary, Ministry of Irrigation and Water Management; **Piyal Parakrama**, Executive Director, Centre for Environment and Nature Studies; **Tanuja Ariyananda**, Executive Director, Rainwater Harvesting Forum; and **Dr Champa Navaratne**, Head, Department of Agricultural Engineering, University of Ruhuna. The debate is moderated by Sirasa TV's versatile presenter Kingsly Rathnayaka.



The debate recognises that Sri Lanka faces growing water demands for use in households, industries, farming and hydropower generation. At the same time, there is a need to maintain a minimum flow to sustain ecosystems. Opportunities for further (sustainable) development of water resources are rare and costly, which makes it imperative to manage and (re)allocate existing water resources.

Water stress occurs when the demand for water exceeds the available amount during a certain period, or when poor water quality restricts its use. It causes deterioration of fresh water resources in terms of both quantity and quality. One hydrological model puts Sri Lanka's water stress level at 39.5 – the percentage of land area under severe water stress. What does this mean for the future?

Sri Lanka 2048 debates are co-produced by TVE Asia Pacific, an educational media foundation, and IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, in partnership with MTV Channel (Private) Limited. This TV series is supported under the Raising Environmental Consciousness in Society (RECS) project, sponsored by the Government of the Netherlands.

For more information on *Sri Lanka 2048* series, visit: www.srilanka2048.com

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