

RESEARCH OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES AT THE INSTITUTE OF FUNDAMENTAL STUDIES

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The Governing Board of the Institute of Fundamental Studies under the Chairmanship of H. E. the President approved the establishment of a Department of Environmental Sciences at the Institute of Fundamental Studies. The new department has, among its objectives, (a) the bringing together of Scientists trained in different disciplines to work on common environment related research programmes (b) to harness human resources from the academic institutions, particularly around Kandy, to develop an environment related research programme and to utilize the already available analytical facilities at the IFS (c) to identify and study environmental degradation problems and issues specific to the Sri Lankan situation and the management of these problems (d) to establish a data bank on environmental pollutants and contaminants and their health effects from studies carried out within and outside Sri Lanka (e) to contribute information and data to establish regulations and standards for environmental degradation management issues and the need for safety monitoring in Sri Lanka among policy-makers, students, industrialists and others.

The Ministry of Environment needs a large body of research data pertaining to the local situation to guide its policy. Unfortunately many of Sri Lanka's trained Scientists work in established compartmentalized fields of study and partly due to the lack of organized fields of study and partly due to lack of organized environmental units only a few are engaged in environmental studies which cut across several disciplines.

The Institute of Fundamental Studies with its problem-oriented approach has strong emphasis on multidisciplinary research. The new Department of Environmental Sciences was, therefore, established with this view and the Scientists now working in the department are those who have been working in a variety of disciplines. At present, the Department of Environmental Sciences is engaged in six projects, considered to be of national environmental importance, namely:

- (1) Element pathways and human health
- (2) Chemical modelling of aquatic environments
- (3) Aquatic ecosystems and impact assessment
- (4) Speciation of toxic elements
- (5) Dry Zone forest ecosystems and plantations
- (6) Land use and hydrology of the Mahaweli Basin

Fundamental research pertaining to the environment has been seriously lacking in Sri Lanka, and it is hoped that the above-mentioned research programmes of the IFS would fill this gap. Apart from the research aspects, the new Department will also undertake the training of postgraduate students of our universities and will also provide consultancy services in matters pertaining to environmental issues.

