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100 million trees in 1988

As in previous years the Government designated the 17th September 1988 as National Tree Planting Day and the week following as National Tree Planting Week, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. The importance of National Tree Planting Day are

- (a) September is the birthday of the President and the Anagarika Dharmapala.
- (b) Generally speaking September is a month in which intermonsoonal showers are experienced in most parts of the island.

The National Tree Planting Day and Week this year coincides with the Year of Trees for South Asia 1988 as designated by the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme. The strategy this year consists of two parts:

- (a) Emphasis is on tree planting as well as after care.
- (b) Tree planting this year is to be transformed into a people's movement; thus public awareness and popular participation are given prominence.

With a view to replenish tree cover, minimising soil erosion and rebuilding the organic content of soil a concerted effort will be made on the planting of—

- (a) Stream reservations
- (b) Erodible steep slopes
- (c) Village forests
- (d) Degraded lands.

The priority action programmes that have been launched are—

- (a) Establishment of school arboreta
- (b) Planting of urban forests
- (c) Avenue planting of shade trees along streets and highways
- (d) Establishment of estate fuel reserves; and
- (e) Planting of medicinal plants and establishment of herbaria.

The tree planting programme has been decentralised in the following manner—

- (a) The main inaugural ceremony was held under the distinguished patronage of the President and the Prime Minister at 7.00 a.m. yesterday at the Vihare Maha Devi Park in Colombo.
- (b) Similar ceremonies were conducted throughout the island under the leadership of Ministers, Members of Parliament, Ministries, Provincial Councils, Departments, Corporations, District Administration, Non-Governmental Organisations, schools, estates, etc.

- (c) Public awareness campaign will be carried out through posters, banners, meetings and the media.

A large number of Rukshadana outlets will be established by public and private sector agencies and non-governmental organisations to collect plants from those who have and distribute same to those who do not have, free of charge.

Greater emphasis will be laid on after care i.e. protecting, watering and looking after plants, rather than planting itself.

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Secretary to the Prime Minister
and Chairman, Central Environmental
Authority.