

Policy for Sri Lanka

Following the Singapore government's various statements about computer policy, other developing Asian nations are forming central bodies to co-ordinate the microcomputer revolution. MicroDecision reports on the steps being taken in Sri Lanka.

Computer Science and technology are advancing so fast that government can no longer dictate policy. On the other hand it is not possible to allow a laissez faire set-up," said Dr. Mohan Munasinghe, Chairman of the Computer & Information Technology Council (CINTEC), when he addressed a national symposium on microcomputer application for developing countries in Sri Lanka recently.

He said that the 10 member council of CINTEC was set up in May 1984 to advise the government on a firm computer policy. "CINTEC provides a co-ordinating service which would prevent wastage of scarce resources and help public and private institutions to fully exploit and reap the benefits of computer application. The idea is less control and regulation in preference to production, encouragement and co-ordination to develop initiative in this already thriving field," Dr. Munasinghe said.

CINTEC, assured of a modest investment programme by government, was confident it was going to improve the quality of life of the people both in Sri Lanka and other developing coun-



Dr. Mohan Munasinghe, Chairman, CINTEC.

tries. A major objective would be to analyse and plan rational needs for computers and computer-related resources. The computer in Sri Lanka, the CINTEC Chairman observed, was meant to enhance manpower at the skilled level and "there is no intention of displacing surplus unskilled labour." Rather, the computer will be applied to eliminate drudgery at the workplace and even at home, and "the lives of our people can be significantly improved by access to a large amount of information and better communications," said Dr. Munasinghe.

The CINTEC Chairman was critical of the growing number of computer schools in the private sector that "did not give the pupils their money's worth". He suggested the setting up of a Sri Lanka Computer Society - to be run as a private, non-profit-making organization which would regulate the courses in these institutions.

Asked if the government would standardize the varied computer ware now on offer, Dr. Munasinghe said that this was not desirable. "The

customer must be free to go to the vendor of his choice".

CINTEC was also concerned with the high duty on computer ware. Representations had been made to the Minister of Finance, who had (in his budget proposals for 1985) reduced the import duty on machinery from 7.5% to 5%, and dismantled all import duties and turnover tax on machinery used in industries - where 50% or more of the output was exported. Another matter that Dr. Munasinghe took up at the symposium was a very high mark-up on computer ware by vendors.

— Nalin Wijesekera.

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Seminar for managers

A seminar on financial management will be organized jointly by Sperry Computer Systems and DEW Management Advancement Consultants from 11th (Monday) to 13th (Wednesday) of March at the Ladyhub Hotel.

The three-day session will seek to give participants an in-depth understanding of how financial statements are constructed, to enable them to analyse the statements more perceptively.

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