

Monday, 20th January 2014

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Daily News

Sri Lanka's National Newspaper Since 1918

Saturday, January 18, 2014 (All day)

LOCAL

New IWMI information system to enhance water management in Sri Lanka

Rasika Somarathna



President Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday launched a new hi-tech information system developed by the **International Water Management Institute (IWMI)**, that promises to enhance water management in Sri Lanka.

The new Sri Lanka Water Resources Information System, as the new initiative is called was launched by the President at the Institute's head office at Battaramulla. The new system provides facts, figures and maps on trends in water availability, use and quality among others.

Prior to its launch the President was given a detailed briefing by IWMI experts on how the system works and its benefits.

The IWMI experts said the tool is available free online and is the first of its kind for helping scientists and policy makers in Sri Lanka to accurately monitor the dynamics of the country's water resources. It also provides a secure platform for cooperation among all the agencies involved in water management to share their data.

While noting it was a great honour to welcome the President to the IWMI head office to formally launch the new system, IWMI Director General Jeremy Bird said, "While many parts of Sri Lanka have an abundance of water resources, huge areas experience water scarcity and hence competition among the users for people's individual needs and livelihoods, food production, industry, tourism as well as the country's stunning wild life.

He added, growing threats from climate change will intensify that competition, which means that it is more important than ever to manage water resources efficiently and sustainably. Tools such as the information system play a part in supporting Sri Lanka's continued development, economic growth and future prosperity.

The objectives of this information system are, providing a clear understanding of the status and trends of the country's water resources, providing a web-based interactive information and mapping portal for exploring data, information and maps related to water resources and Producing a water resources assessment for Sri Lanka at various scales (river basin, administrative boundary, etc.)

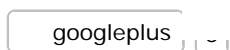
Some of the key information the system will provide is, Water availability, the quantity of available water resources, Water quality, Governance and management, Disaster and risks: Information on risk-prone areas to identify different potential natural disasters that could take place and Climate change (Climate change has long-term impacts on precipitation, temperature, rise in sea level, and, thus, has an impact on the overall quantity and

quality of water resources).

The new system could be accessed through; <http://slwater.iwmi.org/>

The IWMI is a non-profit scientific research organization focusing on the sustainable use of water and land resources in developing countries. It is headquartered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, with regional offices across Asia and Africa. IWMI works in partnership with governments, civil society and the private sector to develop scalable agricultural water management solutions that have a real impact on poverty reduction, food security and ecosystem health. IWMI is a member of CGIAR, an international consortium of agricultural research centers.

Yesterday's event was also attended by Ministers Susil Premajayantha, Dinesh Gunewardene, Sarath Amunugama, Nirupama Rajapaksa, Geethanjana Gunewardene, Kaduwela Mayor G.H.Buddhadasa, other dignitaries and IWMI staff.



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