

November 28, 1950.

This release is issued by the information offices in the United States of the Governments of Australia, Canada, Ceylon, India, New Zealand, Pakistan and the United Kingdom. These Governments are members of the Commonwealth Consultative Committee on South and South-East Asia.

THE "COLOMBO PLAN" FOR SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Far-reaching proposals for co-operative economic development

A comprehensive six-year programme for economic development in South and South-East Asia is revealed today in a report published by seven member-countries of the Commonwealth - Australia, Canada, Ceylon, India, New Zealand, Pakistan and the United Kingdom. This programme is designed to raise production and living standards and thus promote economic and social stability in the area.

Development projects are blue-printed for India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaya, Singapore and British North Borneo. The plan attaches great importance to bringing in other countries of the area and to putting the whole programme into a world context:

"The need to raise the standard of living in South and South-East Asia is a problem of concern to every country in the world, not only as an end in itself, but also because the political stability of the area and its economic progress are of vital concern to the world."

The report shows how crucial this area is to a prosperous world trade. The effects of destruction and sacrifice during and since World War II have been grievous, despite the strenuous efforts already made towards recovery.

The area as a whole has 570 million people, of whom 446 million live in Commonwealth countries. With a rapidly growing population, the standard of living - already low - is in danger of falling still further unless rapid steps are taken now to widen the horizons of economic development.

The target of the six-year development programme is to increase land under cultivation by 13 million acres, to produce 6 million more tons of food grains, to increase by 13 million acres the land under irrigation, and to increase electric generating capacity by more than 1 million kilowatts.

The "Colombo Plan" - as it is popularly known - began in January 1950 at a meeting in Colombo, Ceylon, of Cabinet Ministers representing the Commonwealth countries. At a second meeting in Sydney, Australia, in May, the group decided that a start on the problem of relieving the poverty and underdevelopment of this area could be made by each country drawing up a realistic assessment of what it could do in six years on the assumption of co-operation both inside and outside the Commonwealth.

At a further meeting in London these separate programmes were brought together. The meeting undertook a careful study of the problem as a whole and of its importance to a peaceful world based on freedom and adequate living standards. The conclusions of the conference are presented in the report now published.

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