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**MONITORING AND EVALUATION AT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
LEVEL - SRI LANKA'S EXPERIENCE**

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Sri Lanka has about three decades of experience in planning work. During the early years after independence, planning was given a great deal of attention. The mid-fifties saw the birth of a National Planning Council, a Planning Secretariat and a Ten Year Plan. Yet monitoring and evaluation of the progress on implementation of plans did not get sufficient prominence until about ten years later.

The creation of the Plan Implementation Division in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs in 1965 started a new chapter in the Planning process in this country. Within about two years of its creation the Plan Implementation Division started a quarterly monitoring and evaluation process which helped to keep track of the progress on the implementation of Government's Development Programmes.

The monitoring and evaluation work was aided by the Division's quarterly reports and the National Operations Room, which have gone through a considerable amount of changes over time. These changes were largely influenced by the general administrative arrangements that were available elsewhere (i.e. outside the Central Plan Implementation Organisation) to properly monitor development works and initiate follow-up action. Other factors such as the political philosophy, the experiences and monitoring in the recent and distant past also influenced the strategies of the Central Plan Implementation Organisation.

In view of these other factors that determined the framework under which Central Plan Implementation Organisation has been functioning in the country, it is desirable to judge its performance on the basis of its effectiveness within that framework.

The paper reveals that the Plan Implementation Division of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs was very effective in monitoring and follow-up work during the period 1967 to 1970.

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During the period 1971 to 1973, the importance and the effectiveness of the Plan Implementation Division was somewhat overshadowed by the large volume of work done and the influence exerted in other spheres by the Ministry of Planning.

The period 1973 to 1977 could be classified as a period when the newly created Ministry of Plan Implementation was trying to evolve an appropriate method for monitoring evaluation and follow-up.

Since 1977 the availability of other Government machinery at the centre to perform the role of co-ordination and follow-up work has reduced the Ministry's burden in such areas. The Ministry of Plan Implementation therefore, adopted as one of its major objectives, the creation of an awareness to development matters in the country and elsewhere. As an organisation which helped to spread development consciousness which kept the Government apprised of major bottlenecks and constraints to development, and which had the responsibility of performing the co-ordinator's role in selected areas, the Ministry continues to play a very useful role.