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GENERAL SIR JOHN KOTELAWALA DEFENCE UNIVERSITY 2007 - 2008

## **EASTERN PROVINCE IN SRI LANKA: A GOOD MODEL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

### **Democracy and Governance**

The Government of Sri Lanka has been consistent in its commitment to maintaining democracy across the country and thus undertook all necessary measure to bring about the most significant development in the Eastern Province by the establishment of Democracy via a pluralistic political process and restoring Civil Administration. On 10th March 2008 elections were held in nine (9) local Government electorates in the Batticaloa District, resulting in the establishment of the Batticaloa Municipal Council. Batticaloa's first Mayoress Ms. Sivageetha Prabakaran was thus elected.

After a lapse of nearly 20 years on 10th May 2008, Provincial Council Elections were held establishing the Eastern Province Provincial Council, electing Sivanesathurai Chanthirakanthan as Chief Minister. Ms. Prabakaran and Mr. Chanthirakanthan, members of the Tammil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikhal (TMVP) contested under the UPFA, the ruling Government party.

The Municipal Council and Provincial Councils are in the process of preparing relevant development activities for the respective regions.

Both Elections provided the space and opportunity to enable the people of the East to exercise their right to participate in a democratic process. This was just one of the many rights which was denied to these civilians for almost three (3) decades.

### **Civil Administration**

With the conclusion of the Local Government and Provincial Council Elections, there has been a smooth transition from military control to establishing civil administration in the Province. Furthermore there have been ongoing efforts on the part of the Central Government to provide the necessary skills and knowledge to all Public Officers, Local Government Members and Provincial Council Members, on their duties, responsibilities, good governance and legal obligations in order to build their capacity to deliver services and fulfil their obligations to the people of the East with efficiency and diligence.

Since the Government took control of the Eastern Province in July 2007, the Central Government began the process implementing development projects which laid the foundation for the establishment of the Civil Administration. For example, The Ministry of Constitutional Affairs and National Integration with the support of the Ministry of Public Administration through 3 Mobile Community Service Programmes issued birth and death certificates, marriage certificates, national identity cards, drivers licence, passports and land ownership documents to the citizens in the Province.



### **Infrastructure Development**

The Government of Sri Lanka has invested large sums of money and thus concentrated heavily on developing the infrastructure in the Eastern Province in order to have a significant impact upon the lives of the people both socially and economically. The Maga Neguma programme has seen the development of key roads and the construction of key bridges (for example the Manampitiya Bridge, Arugam Bay Bridge have already been completed while the Kinniya Ferry Bridge is under construction. The Oddamavadi, Verugal, Kayankerny, Ganagai and Upparu Bridges are also proposed to be constructed and financial allocations have already been made) enabling easy access/travel within the Districts and the Province as a whole.

Much emphasis has been placed upon rural electrification and this is expected to be a long term development, with work on-going.

### **Livelihood and Economic Development**

The Democracy and Pluralism in the Eastern Province has led to the boost in investor confidence and it is predicted that the GDP will grow in what has always been an area with potential to be most productive in the country. With the Government investing in key infrastructural projects such as roads, ports, bridges, electricity, health and schools the private sector has also begun to focus on the East.

The Government has always been keen to promote Private-Public Sector partnership to help boost the economy of the Eastern Province. As a result several large scale investments have taken place, having a significant impact upon several economic sectors. For example, Cargills Ceylon Limited in partnership with the Ministry of Nation Building and the World Bank will launch a Rs. 8000 million project to develop agriculture and livestock sectors with a buy back arrangement. This project aims to ease the problems of market access that is currently experienced by small and medium scale entrepreneurs across the country. Cargills is planning to focus on vegetables, rice, fruits, fish and milk, and with the buy back arrangement to avoid middlemen and thus the escalation of costs. As a consequence of this unique project, farmers are paid 20% more than the market price, and this minimum guaranteed price will help farmers plan their cash flows. This will reduce the burden on them and encourage the confident application of good agricultural practices like the use of fertilizer.

Hayleys Agro which currently has a presence in the Eastern Province aims to focus on driving advanced technology into the Province and thereby increasing productivity levels in the agricultural sector. The Company aims to train farmers in the use of biotechnology to produce high yielding crops such as banana, pineapple, strawberry and related fruits so that it can get the best from the rich soil quality of the Eastern Province. This project will enable the farmer community by promoting technology in order to get the best returns.

Micro Credit Financing has been promoted by the Banks and Chambers of Commerce on a large scale in the Eastern Province, to provide financial opportunities for all the citizens to engage in economic activities and uplift their living standards. Such opportunities have enabled the people to engage in a range of livelihood activities such as fisheries, agriculture, retail, dress making and furniture manufacture.



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Furthermore currently there are three (3) loans schemes for the development of Agriculture and related activities. These include "Krusha Navodaya" Special Loan Scheme which is implemented by the Lankaputhra Development Bank under the aegis of the Central Bank and Ministry of Finance. These loans are provided for the purposes of the processing of agricultural produce, farm implements, animal husbandry, micro irrigation systems and green house farming. Interest subsidy is provided and the rate applicable to the borrower is 8% per annum with a maximum repayment period of 3 years.

The New Comprehensive Rural Credit Scheme (NCRCS) is a short term agricultural credit scheme implemented by the Central Bank. This loan can be obtained for the purposes of cultivation of agricultural crops, pre-cultivation activities and post cultivation activities. It is provided for the two cultivation seasons (Yala and Maha) with an interest of 8% per annum and repayment within 270 days.

The "Kapruka" Investment Relief Credit Scheme is implemented by the Coconut Development Board using Government funds to develop coconut cultivation and improve livelihoods possible in association with the coconut holdings.

In addition to the above, the European Investment Bank Loan Scheme (EIB Loan Scheme) is operated in Tsunami affected areas and is provided to medium and large scale enterprises for the resumption of their businesses.

The Construction Sector Development Project (CSDP) is implemented by the Central Bank with the main objective of strengthening the financial and technical capabilities of private local businesses to effectively participate in construction and public works in Post-Tsunami reconstruction.

### **Health**

This is just one of the key sectors that the Government has focused heavily upon and funding from the World Bank was utilized in infrastructure development and capacity building projects such as Dehiattakandiya, Lahugala MOH, Padiyatalawa, Aranthalawa, Mandapathadi, Thurainaklavani, Pudukamam, Kokkadicholai, Unnichchai, Mankerny, Paddipolai MOH which were completed under the 180 Day Programme, whilst more than 200 projects relating to baby care units, maternity wards, endoscopy units, CT scanners and other equipment, renovation and refurbishment of hospitals and wards are ongoing. Some of these projects are funded by the Ministry of Nation Building and the others by the Ministry of Health. A significant achievement in the Health Sector is the Ampara Base Hospital being awarded the prize for the Best Hospital in the South Asian Region.

### **Education and Vocational Training**

The Government of Sri Lanka taking its social responsibilities very seriously has taken several key measures to uplift the education sector in the Eastern Province. These include re-building schools together with the Private Sector and Rotary Clubs, setting up of teacher training institutions and technical colleges such as Hardy College in Ampara



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Recent appointments of teachers in the Eastern Province will fill the existing vacancies. In selected areas such as Vaharai the teachers are provided with accommodation facilities.

Countries like Japan are inviting the youth working in public administration to participate in Young Leaders Programmes at Schools of Government and Local Governance in Japan, giving the youth of the Eastern Province invaluable exposure and experience required for rebuilding the conflict affected region.

In order to provide the people of the East with employable skills and training, the Ministry of Vocational Training with the assistance of USAID planned to increase the number of training centres by 19 and training programs by 48 in order to increase the intake of participants up to 9000 in the three districts. Thus six new vocational training centres are currently under construction at Central Camp, Ninthavur, Sammanturai, Akkaraipattu, Karaitivu, Kaluwanchikudi, where programmes began in June 2008. In addition on 23rd January 2008, the Marvell Sarvodaya Vocational Training Centre was also declared open.

The focus of the Ministry of Education is on early childhood education, primary, secondary and tertiary level education whilst the Ministry of Higher Education concentrates mainly on the Tertiary level education by improving the facilities of the South Eastern and Eastern Universities. These Universities expect to accommodate more than 1000 students across all three campuses for more than 25 study courses/degrees. The students are from all three communities.

### **Conclusion**

Since the Government's entry into the Eastern Province, it has acted with swift efficiency to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its people. Accordingly mentioned above are just a few of the measures adopted, all of which have contributed greatly to uplifting the lives of a conflict affected region. However needless to say, in the time span of one year, 3 decades of destruction cannot be reconstructed or rectified, therefore the East does have destroyed homes, roads, buildings, hearts and lives, but it is all now on the path to recovery, slowly yet steadily, due to the initiatives taken by the Government of Sri Lanka. The Government's development plan will ensure that the Eastern Re-awakening will be complete. The work is not complete unless the community are reconciled. This is the area now the government is focussing taking youth, women and children as sub sectors in re-integration and rehabilitation.

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