



Keynote Address of Hon. Governor, Eastern Province
Rear Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama
at the Session on 06th November 2012
of Second Assembly of the Eastern Provincial Council



Eastern Provincial Council
Trincomalee.



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Hon. Madam Chairman,
Hon. Chief Minister,
Hon. Ministers,
Hon. Members of the Eastern Provincial Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I consider it is my privilege and honour to address the Ceremonial session of the second Eastern Provincial Council today.

Though it is customary to commence the first session of the council with my address, I had to postpone it to today, as it was necessary for the Provincial council to indicate its opinion on the Divi Neguma draft bill, within the stipulated time period laid down by His Excellency the President. I take this opportunity to thank the Madam Chairman for convening the Provincial Council today for the ceremonial opening.

On behalf of the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa and his Government, I take this opportunity to send my greetings and best wishes to all the elected representatives to the Eastern Provincial Council.

I believe that today mark a historical milestone especially for you, to the people of Eastern Province and to politics of Sri Lanka. Today as you are aware the people who were battered due to scourge of terrorism, who were under the threat of arms for almost thirty years are enjoying the dividends of peace and freedom. At a time when people are slowly forgetting the bitterness of the conflict, I do not think it is appropriate to remind you again and again of that miserable period we all underwent.

However it is my duty to remind at this special event and pay tribute to the leadership of His Excellency the President and the sacrifices made by our heroic Security Forces and the Police for bringing the peace what we are experiencing today. If not for His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa's exemplary leadership and for

the great sacrifices made by the security forces there could not have been the opportunity to have this occasion today.

The humanitarian operation which commenced in the Eastern Province at Mavil Aru anicut was concluded at Vella Mullivaikal lagoon in the Northern Province bringing the hope of peace to entire Sri Lanka. The people who lived for a long period under fear and suspicion, have now blessed with freedom to involve in their livelihood activities and trade without any interference from outside forces. When I came here on the 11th of June 2008, to address the first session of the first Eastern Provincial Council, the humanitarian operations were on going to liberate the Northern Province.

The Government a priority provided freedom and democratic rights to the people in the east expeditiously. The road blocks or sentry posts which were experienced in the past are not visible today. The political parties, who could not contest that provincial Council elections then due to fright from armed groups, did come forward this time to contest this election without any fear indicating that the people have received complete freedom and democracy.

Today there are no armed groups who kidnap children for terrorist activity, nor have to pay any ransoms from what you have earned through hard work to anybody. Youth do not disappear as was the case in the past. Although some people are reluctant to accept it is the true situation.

Geography

Eastern Province is located along the Eastern coast of Sri Lanka and to the North it is bordered by Northern Province, to the East by the Bay of Bengal, to the West by the North Central Province, to the South West the Central Province and to the South is bordered by Uva and Southern Provinces. The land extent of Eastern Province is 9,792 Square Kilometres and it about 16% of land extent of Sri Lanka. Eastern Province has approximately 390 Square Kilometres of inland waters. The long sandy coastline, the large extent of inland waters, a mix of forest and

agriculture lands and the world famous magnificent Trincomalee Harbour makes the Eastern Province special over other Provinces.

Population

As per the census carried out in the year 2012, the Eastern Province has a population of 1,547,377. It corresponds to about 7.6% of the Sri Lankan population. The population in the Eastern Province is a mix of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslims close to equal proportion and is an example of communal harmony.

Administration

The Eastern Provincial Council consists of 05 Provincial Ministries with 20 Departments to deliver the services to the people. Another 13 institutions are functioning under the supervision of the Chief Secretary. Appointment of officers, transfers and disciplinary control are exercised by the Hon. Governor through the Provincial Public Service Commission.

The Eastern Province consists three administrative districts; namely Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara and includes 45 Divisional Secretary Divisions and there are 1,087 Grama Niladari divisions. The identified development programmes in the District are carried out by the District Secretariats. The District Coordinating Committees of the respective Districts are rendering a significant support for the development and administration of the District.

Establishment of the Eastern Provincial Council

The Provincial Council system was introduced and established as a fundamental political solution to bring an end to terrorist activities carried out by armed groups, in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The North East Provincial Council which was established as a result was dissolved in 1991 after having functioned for short period of two years.

Since ancient times, the people in Sri Lanka had a civilized lifestyle, lived in harmony and peacefully with racial amity and there was a well-organized constitutional administrative system at National, Provincial, District and Divisional level since independence. However, the Provincial Council elections for the Eastern Province could not be conducted for 17 years in view of the adverse situation that prevailed in the North and East. Due to this, the people in the Eastern Province were unable to reap the benefits of developments, as the people in other Provinces.

In view of the judgment of the Supreme Court on the 16 October 2006, the North East Province was demerged into two separate administrative units as Northern and Eastern and Eastern Province started functioning independently from 01 January 2007. A Governor was appointed with the staff exclusively for Eastern Provincial Council and infrastructure facilities. The Eastern Provincial Council was established upon the first Provincial Council Elections on 10 May 2008 and functioned from 11 June 2008 to 27 July 2012 the period the people in the East were privilege to receive many benefits.

13th Amendment to the Constitution clearly mentions the sectors in which the Provincial Councils can exercise their legislative, executive, and financial authority. Similarly, the subject contents and responsibilities of the Provincial Councils and Central Government have been clearly classified. The matters to be attended by the Provincial Councils with the consent of the Central Government are also clearly stated under the Concurrent List.

I do not wish to repeat again and again to describe the development experienced by the Eastern Province during the last few years. It is not a secret that our Province received unprecedented development under the Nagenahira Navodaya Programme which is a concept of His Excellency the President. The Eastern Province which extends from Panama in Ampara to Thennamaravaadi in Trincomalee has seen a rapid development as never before.

It is my pleasure to state that the amount of money allocated for the development of the Eastern Province during the period from 2008 to 2011 was much more

than the money allocated during the entire period of 55 years from the regime of the 1st Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Hon. D. S. Senanayake to the former President, Her Excellency Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumarathunga. Rs. 53,000 Million has been expended during the period from 2008 to 2011 for the development activities of the Eastern Province by His Excellency the President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his Government.

Hon. Chairman,

The Provincial Council system was introduced with the 13th Amendment to the Constitution to bring in the Armed Groups to the democratic stream by devolving certain powers to the Provinces. However Provincial Council in the Northern and Eastern Province was dissolved within two years of first installed, whilst all other Provincial Councils functioned. The people in the Eastern Province were able to receive the full benefit of the Provincial Council System only after the first Provincial Council was installed for the East in 2008. It should be mentioned that though the Eastern Provincial Council was an infant in the Provincial Council system, it has achieved a tremendous progress when compared with other Provinces during the last four years. It is a great pleasure to mention that at present we have achieved tremendous development in spheres of socio-economic and cultural and I believe with your future support it will continue develop more effectively.

In the past, it took more than 10 hours to travel from Trincomalee to Ampara within the Eastern Province. Now the situation has completely changed with the mega development process of the infrastructure after the peace was established. Implementation of large scale development proposals have been already commenced encompassing urban development plans, tourism zones and road networks.

The tourism industry which was defunct due to the terrorist activities in the past has found a new life and booming in the Eastern Province. Due to the incoming foreign tourists from all directions to revel in the attractiveness of the Eastern Coast, the tourism industry of the Island has too received a boost. We have seen star hotels and resorts coming up in the East which were mostly confined to the south in the past. Tourist arrivals to the East has increased by about 80% and

since of late renown passenger ships have commenced calling in Trincomalee harbour.

The Agriculture and fishing industry forms a considerable portion of the Eastern economy and contribute substantially towards the national economy providing livelihood for a large number of families. The farmers who did not have access to their farm land and “chena” cultivation in the past are carrying out their farming activities freely. The fishermen too are free to engage in fishing in the Eastern Coast as almost all restrictions and fishing bans have been completely lifted.

Economic Development

Hon. Chairman,

After the establishment of democracy, the number of foreign and local investors moving towards the Eastern Province has increased rapidly and many recognized multi-national companies have likewise shown interest for mega investments. I am very glad say that several industries have already being setup at the industrial park at Kappalthurai. It is also observed that many plans are underway to construct a number of factories around the Trincomalee Harbour.

I wish to point out that the economy of the Province have been strengthening and numerous employment opportunities are been created to the unemployed youth in the Province through huge development activities carried out by the Ministry of Economic Development. The Coal Power plant planned to be established in Sampur as a joint venture with the Government of India is due to commence construction in 2013. Simultaneously, the Government has gazetted a Special Economic Zone around Sampur. It is anticipated that the industries in this zone will create thousands of jobs which will address the unemployment problem in the province effectively. The Eastern Province has been selected for “Deyata Kirula” National Development Exhibition for 2013 and this exhibition will be held at the premises of Hardy Technical Institute in Ampara district.

The benefits will be extended further to the people in the Eastern Province by the identified integrated district development programs launched under Deyata

Kirula. Accordingly, Rs. 3,579 million for Trincomalee, Rs. 3,061 million for Batticaloa and Rs 2,107 million for Ampara districts have been allocated for the projects identified by the Divisional Development Committees and recommended by District Development Committees to be implemented in 2012 and 2013. These development activities will be implemented collaboratively by the Ministry of Economic Development, respective Ministries, Provincial Council, Local Authorities, District Secretariats, Divisional Secretariats, Grama Niladaris and other rural and divisional level field and technical officers.

The improvements to China bay Domestic Airport in Trincomalee have already been commenced and expansions to Batticaloa and Ampara airports have been identified to be developed for domestic air travel. With these projects, our Province will experience tremendous development in the coming years and will be able to contribute effectively to the National drive to become the wonder of Asia. The contribution of the Eastern Province to the Gross Domestic Product in 2008 was 5.6% which has increased to 5.7% by 2011. The Per Capita Income of the Eastern Province was Rs. 236,920 in 2011.

Education

Hon. Chairman,

I wish to mention that there is a remarkable improvement in the education sector from 2008 to 2012, which was lagging behind during the period under the conflict. One of our major objectives had been for the Eastern Province to be an active partner in the journey of our nation to become the “Wonder of Asia” by improving the educational standard in the Province. A sum of Rs. 1,051.9 million has been spent during the period from 2008 to 2011 for various educational development activities to achieve this target. The Government allocated a sum of Rs.496.8 million for the year 2012 for improvement of the Educational infrastructure. The total investment for education infrastructure from 2008 to 2012 is approximately 1,548.7 million. In addition UNICEF and other organizations have provided substantial assistance through the line ministry for educational development in our province.

During the period from 2008 to 2011, 114 class room buildings were constructed and 60 water supply and sanitary projects were carried out to provide water to schools in difficult areas. In addition, we have provided 58 laboratories, 51 libraries, 16 Information Technology Centres, 09 teacher quarters, 08 aesthetics educational rooms, 04 activity rooms, 25 multi activity facility buildings and 467 computers and 652 school buildings were repaired. I believe that the shortage of teachers is one of the burning issues in our Province. The Eastern Provincial Council with the assistance of the Government has taken steps to minimize this problem and we have appointed 3,111 Tamil medium and 1,323 Sinhala medium teachers during the period from 2008 to 2011 to address the teacher shortage in the province.

I mentioned that one of our fundamental goals was to enhance the educational standard in the Province. In order to achieve this, we have constructed 34 new schools, upgraded 33 schools from year 6 to year 9 and 51 schools from year 10 to year 11. Also 56 schools were upgraded as Advance Level schools during the period.

Improving the human development by conducting programmes in the education sector is a long term investment for a country. By such investments the society will be benefitted by an educated disciplined patriotic population and the Provincial Council's main aim in the education sector for the next five years is to pursue the human development in par with the national targets.

Provision of education to all children in the school going ages and arranging education for the one's not going to school is one of our primary responsibilities. Further it is important to provide opportunities for special education to students who are physically handicapped and introducing Informal Education Programmes for the benefit of such children.

Identifying schools in difficult areas with shortage of teachers and introducing more and more teachers, proficient to teach the second language and IT to the education is another aim of ours. We expect such action will provide sufficient human development for Sri Lanka's future.

Agriculture

Hon Chairman,

70% of the population in the Eastern Province are involved with agriculture. Eastern Province was renowned as the granary of Sri Lanka in the past and again we have achieved this status by providing 24% of the paddy requirement of our country. Our aim is to increase it further.

There were 197,552 hectares cultivated in the year 2006 and a further 65,200 hectare had been added during the last few years. As a result the paddy harvest in the Eastern Province has increased from 0.742 million metric tons to 1.273 million metric tons.

Our agriculture provides 0.93% towards to Sri Lanka's gross domestic product. To increase it further should be another aim of us. For that purpose we have to increase the cultivable lands in the province. Further introducing good quality seeds improving irrigation and providing a good market to obtain a good price for the farmers for their products is another aspect we have to attend to. Another challenge we have to face is to bring in new technologies in line with the modern world and educating our farmers.

In order to enhance agriculture, the Government has developed 834 small and medium tanks in the Eastern Province and farmers who were affected by the conflict were compensated with subsidies and by various means. At the same time the Government had taken action to improve the deteriorating agriculture infrastructure in the Eastern Province as a priority. As a result we have seen an enhancement of all indicators in agriculture. Under Negenahira Navodaya a sum of Rs 2,104 million has been spent to put up infrastructures including paddy stores and rural agriculture institutions.

Fisheries

Eastern province is famous for its fishing potential. The restrictions which were imposed for fishermen during the period of the conflict had been removed by the Government. Use of multi-days fishing crafts and use of new technologies has

enhanced the income of fishermen and there is a demand for our fish products in the international market.

23% of the Sri Lankan coast line belongs to the Eastern Province and there are 834 tanks used for fresh water fish production. It is abundantly clear that there are further room to improve the fisheries production in the Eastern Province. The fresh water fish production which was at 6,540 metric tons in the year 2006 had been increased to 10,670 metric tons by the year 2011. Eastern Province provides 19% of the total fresh water fish production in Sri Lanka.

Livestock Development

Reawakening of the livestock sector is seen with the accelerated development in livestock sector with the liberation of the Eastern Province. Livestock provides substantial income for the rural population. As per the Central bank statistics the Eastern Province produces 30% of the meat requirement and 17% of the milk production of our country.

During the last two decades due to terrorist activity, the fresh milk collecting network was broken-down and the stock of animals got degraded due to poor management. The Government and the Eastern Provincial Council has clearly understood the potential of our province and have taken necessary action to improving the veterinary services. We are targeting to double the yield within the next five years.

Under the Negenahira Navodaya programme Rs 1,337 million was provided to construct 10 veterinary offices 09 milk processing centres 14 milk collecting and chilling centres and one institution for breeding of animals. As per statistics the Eastern Province produces approximately 64.7 million litres of fresh milk per year and 30% of it is sent to milk processing centres in the province. By employing good managerial practises and use of high yielding animals it is possible to improve the milk production with minimum expenditure which is the aim of the Provincial Council.

Although there were sufficient pasture lands for animals during the conflict period such lands have become less with the expansion of agriculture after the conclusion of conflict. As a solution the Ministry of Agriculture in the Eastern Province had initiated action to gazette pasture lands in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara district with the assistance of the Livestock and Rural Development Ministry.

Health

Hon. Chairman,

Our health services are in par with the national indicators and our mental health has even been better over some other provinces. Eastern Province has been one of the first to computerize the health department in Sri Lanka. The main aim of the provincial health service is to provide every citizen adequate quality health service at close at hand at the shortest possible time.

By utilising the physical and financial resources of the Eastern Province the provincial health services are planned to develop a healthy population who will be an asset to the future of Sri Lanka.

30 hospitals which were closed during the conflict were reopened with all facilities during the last four years. We have increased the health staff comprising of consultants, doctors, Nursing officers and paramedical officers from 913 to 1,081. Further 07 divisional hospitals were advanced to base hospitals in order to provide all citizens with adequate quality health services. During this period 23 ambulances were provided to these hospitals and there had been a considerable improvement in the health sector.

The future plans are to improve the existing maternity wards and to establish new wards where necessary. There had been a significant improvement of Ayurvedic services which are very popular in the province. Number of Ayurvedic centres has been opened with new qualified Ayurvedic doctors stationed.

Sports Sector Development

Eastern Province was famous for volley ball, soccer, basketball in the past and has won the national competition many times as per the available information. However due to the situation that prevailed competencies in the field of sports was distanced from the Eastern Province. However since of date our sports have made an impact at national level. During the last five years consecutively our province has won the Kabadi championship for males.

There had been an increase of medals won during the national sports festivals in the recent past. Whilst winning 04 medals in the year 2007, at the national championships, we have won 19 medals at the 2011 games.

Approximately Rs 54 million has been spent to improve sports facilities in the Eastern Province since 2008. The Government has planned to improve Trincomalee McHeyizer Stadium to become the provincial sports centre whilst Batticaloa Weber stadium and UC ground in Ampara are planned to be improved to become state of the art Sports Stadiums to conduct rugger, soccer, basketball, volley ball and swimming with separate facilities for physical training.

It is the intention of the Government to provide sports men and women in the Eastern Province all facilities to improve their sporting ability in par with other provinces.

The Independence Day celebrations which is celebrated at the highest level each year with the participation of His Excellency the President is planned to be held in 2013 in the Trincomalee district and the Deyata Kirula exhibition which is held during the same period is planned for Ampara district. I believe that the decision to have these two ceremonial events in the Eastern Province is due to the importance and the progress shown in the recent past.

As per our constitution none of the provincial councils can fulfil their ambitions on their own. It is necessary in most occasions to obtain the assistance and concurrence of the Government. As an example, funds required for the functions of the provincial council each year needs to be appropriated from the national

budget. It is a fact that none of the provincial councils, not even the Western provincial council collects sufficient revenue for this purpose. Similarly Central Government decides the cadre of the provincial public service. The provincial councils are also required to consult the Central Government or the Parliament when making statutes for the Province for the subjects coming under concurrent list.

The constitution has clearly demarcated the boundaries, administrative and financial powers of provincial councils. In order to carry out your responsibilities to the people who have elected you, it is necessary to study and understand the 13th amendment and the Provincial Council act.

Eastern Province is special among the provinces in Sri Lanka. It is a pride to all of us. The history reveals that the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people had lived peacefully and in harmony for centuries. Although there were certain misunderstandings and suspicious later on, it had now become history. We have seen again all communities living peacefully with cooperation among them as before. Being under colonial powers like Portuguese, Dutch and English for centuries and being subjected to natural calamities such as tsunami, cyclones, floods and the long conflict has made our people to suffer for a long period. Irrespective your religion, your race or the political party you are as per your designation are people's representatives. Your first priority should be to identify the thinking and the wishes and the expectations of the people in the Eastern Province and uplifting their living standards.

Although the conflict has ended, it is no secret that some countries are still hell-bent in destabilizing our country. As people's representatives I believe that none of you will subscribe or assist such movements.

I believe as members of the Eastern Provincial Council, you must be determined to assist in reconciliation effort of the Government and to develop our province to the level of other developed provinces. You have a great responsibility to guide the eastern province along with Sri Lanka's movement towards becoming a develop country in Asia. I wish you a very happy future.