

Colombo’s First Highrise

Dilki Wijesuriya



A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Ceylinco Limited and L&M Construction (Pte) Ltd., Singapore on Friday, August 1 1997, for the reconstruction of Colombo’s first high-rise, the ‘Ceylinco House”.

‘Ceylinco House’ which stood for 35 years as one of Colombo’s famous landmarks was almost completely destroyed by the disastrous Central Bank bombing on January 31 last year. Deshamanya Lalith Kotelawala, Chairman of Ceylinco, addressing the gathering at the signing ceremony said that the sheer horror of the destruction and death caused by the blast is bound to remain in memory for the rest of their lives.

However, this has not deterred the management and staff of Ceylinco and ‘Ceylinco House’ will once again grace the skyline of Colombo, not as another giant sky-scraper but holding on to its own identity. According to architect Professor Lakshman de Alwis the new Ceylinco House would have a new shape and an extremely modern interior and exterior. It will also be slightly larger with the addition of around 27,000 square feet to the existing floor area, but the overall structure would remain the same.

The total cost of reconstruction is estimated to be around Rs 700-750 million and it is expected to take a year and a half for completion. M/s Scott Wilson and Kirkpatrick who are the structural engineers for the new building said that it took over an year to determine the exact condition of the existing structure, prior to rebuilding.

The chairman said that once the ‘Ceylineo House’ was reconstructed most of their city offices such as The Finance, Ceylinco Insurance and Airline companies would move back, occupying around 50% of the building. The rest of the floor area would be leased out. The new ‘Ceylinco House’ may also boast of pedes- trian walk-ways and a some modern apartments.