

Dedication That Withstands

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With a career that expands over many years, H S N D Z Siriwardhane, Divisional Secretary of Tissamaharama Divisional Secretariat, is known as a dedicated and accomplished worker. Continuously seeking to further improve the work done by the Secretariat, he gathers strength from his renewing experience, guiding the people around him to perform their best.

Starting his career at the Bandarawela division where he worked as an Assistant Divisional Secretary for five years and Assistant District Secretary in Monaragala, H S N D Z Siriwardhane, Divisional Secretary – Tissamaharama was transferred to Tissamaharama in recognition of the work he has accomplished, by Shasheendra Rajapaksa, Chief Minister of the Uva Province. It has been two years since the relocation and he has encouraged all around him to adopt the attitude suitable for government officers. “Since we have an office and all the necessary facilities we can invest all our time for the sake of the people. We don’t prioritise our work according to the status of the person. We serve everyone in the same manner to the best of our ability,” said Secretary Siriwardhane, relaying his sentiments about the work ethics his office strives to follow. Each department and its staff are assigned specific duties who in turn try to solve issues within a minimum amount of time, aspiring to provide a reasonable response to the respective concerns of the people. Professing an immense sense of commitment all workers in the department, according to Secretary Siriwardhane, work around the clock to provide the best possible solutions or even lend a sympathetic ear to the issues that concern the people who come looking for help.

Believing in setting an example to inspire the workforce around him, Secretary Siriwardhane presents an agreeable and committed attitude, encouraging the workers to follow suit. Preferring to spend his time helping and working with others, he urges people to visit him anytime during the week. The Secretariat receives various types of work – some which can be done in a short amount of time while others may take longer. Nevertheless, “the work that comes to my tray, I don’t keep it for more than three days,” stated Secretary Siriwardhane. As his signature is necessary for all work, he tries to complete it in a timely manner to avoid any lags, with the helpful aid of his Assistant Secretary and the board.

In the recent years, Tissamaharama area has undergone major development with funds coming in from the Government, Provincial Council and Ministry of Economic Development. "To gain the approval for each proposition, we consult and discuss the priorities with the Hon Speaker Chamal Rajapaksa and Hon Namal Rajapaksa. They are the Provincial Coordinations Committee Chairman and District Coordinations Committee Chairman respectively. We prioritise. This year we invested in developing infrastructure," said Secretary Siriwardhane. Being in an area that places emphasis on agriculture, the Secretariat in 2011 strived to develop agriculture and irrigation while also looking into road construction. Secretary Siriwardhane made it a point to visit the field to observe the progress of the road construction, opting to withhold funds if the work proved to be unsatisfactory. Elaborating further on their conduct and the reason for the immense progress achieved, he said, "we work with discipline, striving for a great outcome." Apart from the above, work done under the Secretariat last year included building sanitary facilities for schools, building maternity wards, providing livelihood development aid for Samurdhi beneficiaries, conducting the Divi Naguma programme and starting home gardens, to name a few examples.

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The progress of the work is measured annually and "there is 100 percent progress as we try to utilise every cent we get from the government," affirmed Secretary Siriwardhane. As many people from the surrounding area are Samurdhi beneficiaries, they have benefitted immensely resulting in a reduction of poverty. "We always support them within the government's legal framework. Sometimes we face challenges, but we balance it and go ahead," he added.

Tissamaharama division as a whole exhibits many variations within the 796 square metres that make up about 1/3 of the Hambantota District. The Yala Park, a 56km coastal area ideal for rice and vegetable cultivation, a saltern, an airport, a fisheries harbour in Kirinda, navy, army and air force camps - all of these contribute to this variation. "We have a good accord with the police, the Provincial Councils and all other places. I don't think this kind of connection is there in any other division. As the head government officer in the area, I have good relationships with all these places," asserted Secretary Siriwardhane. He continued to praise the support given by each department citing various instances such as the quick response by the

police in capturing drug abusers around the area.

Non-governmental organisations are also lending a hand with the development of the area; for example, “with the support of Care International we have built structures for Grama Niladaris and Samurdhi Officials, one unit for each village. So far we have built eight,” said Secretary Siriwardhane. The money spent for this project was given by Care International with the occasional help of the villagers. Furthermore, the fields surrounding the area are cultivated both in the Yala and Maha seasons, with green grams being grown in the in-between period. “The farmers get more profit than from rice within 40 to 60 days,” he said, commenting on the venture. However, the cattle industry around the area showed some signs of suffering as the dairy farmers were not able to utilise the land according to their needs. Secretary Siriwardhane with the support of the Wildlife Conservation Department and LOLC is currently trying to solve this issue surrounding the dairy farmers by clearing land obtained. “We are doing this with the private sector, thereby not being a burden to the government. I am very happy with what we have done and even if I go from here that would be alright as I did so many things during my period here,” he disclosed. Also, in accordance with the Bim Saviya programme conducted by the government, the Secretariat has surveyed out lands and had presented permits accordingly.

With the new year the Secretariat has divided the year into two main parts, planning to concentrate on presenting land permits and ownership licenses to people and doing welfare work for their own officers in the first half of the year. The second half is dedicated towards development work, once they gain approval from the respective ministries. “We try to work that way and reduce the stress at the end of the year,” said Secretary Siriwardhane. “We try to do something different and help our officials work better, by conducting certain one or two day programmes,” he added.

The Secretariat has implemented the 5S concept, where all aspects of the work and structure of the office have been organised into a systematic and positive manner. A set of officers from each department form a Kavaya, or committee. “The Kavaya implements the 5S concept. There is only one Kavaya for each department,” explained Secretary Siriwardhane elaborating on how they utilise the 5S concept.

Furthermore, the Tissamaharama Divisional Secretariat under the guidance of Secretary Siriwardhane constantly tries to help the people that come through their doors. "If we do the right thing for people while staying within our system that is what is important," he said expanding on certain ethics that they have cultivated in the workplace. On Wednesdays the ladies at the office are encouraged to wear a blue coloured saree, introduced by the office, to tell the staff apart and a system has been created so that everyone has an identification card. Not stopping there, "we sometimes collect our own money to buy materials needed at the office," affirmed Secretary Siriwardhane citing purchases such as the TV and the DVD player, to play a programme educating the people on the functions of the Secretariat, grass cutting machines and water generators. "As a public office we do that for the institute and its future," he stated.

"If not for the support of Hon Chamal Rajapaksa, Hon Namal Rajapaksa and District Secretary R M D B Meegasmulla, this much achievement would not have been possible," he concluded.





