

Journey Towards Becoming The Wonder Of Asia: The Ceremonial Intake Of Seawater Into The Hambantota Harbour



As Sri Lanka forges ahead to become the Wonder of Asia, one of the five centres that are being developed is the naval and maritime centre. Hambantota Harbour is a pillar stone towards achieving this goal and is a mammoth project that has created history in Sri Lanka

Heralding a new dawn in the maritime history of Sri Lanka, as well as creating new economic opportunities for people of the South and the entire country, President

Mahinda Rajapaksa inaugurated the 'Karadiyawara Mangallaya', the ceremonial intake of seawater into the Hambantota Harbour basin.

Water was released to the 17 metre deep inland harbour basin amidst chanting of Sethpirith by the Maha Sangha and in the presence of Prime Minister D M Jayaratne, Speaker Chamal Rajapaksa, Chairman Sri Lanka Ports Authority Dr Priyath Bandu Wickrama, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of Provincial Councils and other Officials .

This is the first time in history that a harbour basin, built inland, is filled with water through a breakwater. This completes the first phase of the Hambantota Port project, which will see international vessels arriving at the Southern tip of the country.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa expressed confidence that the Hambantota Port, which has now been named Magampura International Port will contribute much to the national economy benefiting not only the Southern people but also the entire country including the North and East.

The Port of Hambantota, will provide a gamut of services to function as an international naval centre. It will also be the largest port in the country with facilities to berth mega vessels. The Port is strategically situated at the closest point to the main shipping route that connects the East and West, with around 200 to 300 ships daily plying this area.

This Is The First Time In History That A Harbour Basin, Built Inland, Is Filled With Water Through A Breakwater. This Completes The First Phase Of The Hambantota Port Project.

The first phase of the Port will consist of two 600m general purpose berths, a 310m bunkering berth and a 120m small craft berth. It will also contain a bunkering facility and a tank farm which will include eight tanks for marine fuel, three tanks containing aviation fuel and three for Liquid Petroleum Gas. A 15 floor administrative complex is also under construction as part of the project. When completed, the port will have a 1.5 km long breakwater.

Adam will also be built to prevent flooding in nearby areas, while a seawall made of

interlocking concrete blocks will protect the port from high seas. It will also have the facilities to handle large scale port related industries such as handling and bagging of cement and fertiliser. The total project will be completed in four stages, with the first stage commencing operations in November this year, one year ahead of schedule.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa's address at the 'Karadiyawara Mangallaya'

Friends

We are aware that after many centuries Sri Lanka is ready to make a great and significant mark in the world. A symbol of this is the ceremonial intake of seawater to this great port today.

There were many obstacles to launching this great event in the history of our country. There were many who found fault with us. There was vengeful criticism of us. They blamed us for undertaking this project. They were determined not to let this succeed. They challenged us, and even sought to take legal action against us. But it is now time for all of them to open their eyes to see this reality. The soft rain that fell today and the water that comes into this port from the sea will wash away all that criticism and objections.

My dear sons and daughters

Throughout our great history there had been many famous ports around this land. The port of Tambapanni where King Vijaya landed was located on the Northwestern stretch of sea below Mannar. Those who arrived in our country for his marriage landed at the Mahathiththa Port also on the North western coast. On the Northern coast, at Point Pedro, was located the great Dambakola Patuna Port where the sacred Sri Maha Bodhi was first brought to our land. On the Eastern coast, below Trincomalee, was located the Lanka Patuna Port from where the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha was brought to our land.

After his many conquests abroad King Gajaba returned to the country from the Port

of Godawaya that is situated a within sight from Ambalantota. Ports and fords such as Kirinda, where Vihara Maha Devi arrived in the South were located in the former Magampura region. Apart from this, the Sri Lankan ports of Mantota and Gokanna are marked in the first map of the world drawn by Ptolemy. This is a cause for great pride to all of us who cherish our heritage.

My dear children

But for these great ports, the darkness that prevailed over many parts of the world, without development, would have been longer by many centuries. Our ports brought about greater links among the countries of the world and brought fame to our land. Similarly, our Motherland will shine in glory with this ceremonial seawater intake that will fill this new great port. This is a great leap forward to be linked with the international economic system.

Friends

In order to pay due tribute to those heroes who brought freedom to our land there is a responsibility thrust upon us to ensure an independent economy in our country. It is in order to build this independent economic order that the Mahinda Chinthana seeks to build five great centres of progress in our land. These centres include seaports, airports, power and energy, trade and commerce, and knowledge. These five fold centres of progress will enable us to join the international order to build a national economy that adds to the strength of all communities in our land. It will be an economy that will add value to education and learning, talent and our own national thinking.

We must accept that we finally and forever broke away from the defeatist mentality among Sri Lankans on May 18 last year. This is another day that revives such feelings of pride and victory. Every drop of water that fills up this great port should dissolve and wipe out the feelings of weakness and inability that once prevailed among us. Therefore, it is not seawater that will fill this port, but the future prosperity of our nation. From this port will emerge our true economic independence! This a great symbol of our moving away from the days when we said

we are unable to develop for lack of funds, to a time when we can show how the country can be developed through our own strength.

Friends

In the ocean that we see around us hundreds of ships sail past us every day. These ships that come from the Middle East and African region and others from South East Asia and Oceania sail past us within our sight. A large number of ships that sail between the Indian Sub-continent and the West are also among these. Through many centuries other countries were enriched by these ships. Recently, when I observed the passage of these vessels past our country, I saw them like heavy traffic moving on Galle Road.

The sea lanes near us were so busy. Some cannot bear to see this changing, with these ships coming here. Therefore, there were many who tried to delay the construction of this port, even by a single day. We must not forget that there are forces that are unhappy to see Sri Lanka join the other great countries of the world.

There are political groups and other organisations that use poverty for their own benefit. They do not like to see the eradication of poverty. They like to see our people continue to suffer in poverty. What they would like to see is continuance of suffering of the people as in the days of Leonard Woolf.

As in fighting a war, in building an independent economy too we must be ready to face many challenges. Having overcome all those challenges we were able to begin the filling of water to this international port within four years. We did this without a cut in power supply to the country. We did this while building the roads and expressways; while seeing to the progress of agriculture, providing the fertiliser subsidy, and ensuring food security.

We Must Announce To The World That This Is A Massive Technological Achievement Built In Sri Lanka. Therefore, We Will Not Anymore Be A Nation That Is Satisfied With Supplying Only Fuel And Water To Ships.

Friends

We must announce to the world that this is a massive technological achievement built in Sri Lanka. Therefore, we will not anymore be a nation that is satisfied with supplying only fuel and water to ships. This port must lead to the emergence of tens of thousands of employment opportunities. Today, and in the past, this has always been the expectation of the people of Ruhuna. Great politicians who love the country such as D M and D A Rajapaksa, who were born here in Magampura, had many dreams about this port and its benefits to the people. This is the realization of all those dreams.

Our Motherland is not a place to dump the waste and discards of other countries. We must transform our country as an economic centre that spreads the national brand name "Made in Sri Lanka" throughout the world. This must lead to Sri Lanka becoming an economic nerve centre. Today, in what is called the dry and harsh area of Magampura we are building an international airport, international conference and convention centres, international sports stadia, new railways, expressways and tourist regions. Not only the South, Hambantota, Monaragala and Embilipitiya but the entire Eastern region too will become a single vibrant economic region from these infrastructure developments. This development is not confined to a single region. It will help make the entire country one large economic zone.

We have now entered a period of massive development that is not only for this region but covers all regions of the country. In Colombo the sea is being filled up and a new port is being built. The Oluvil harbour will be opened in December. In the Puttalam area there is a huge power project and a tourism development zone. There is such a project at Upper Kotmale, too. Railways are being built to Mannar and Kankesanturai in the North and Kataragama in the South. Massive expressways are being constructed in both the North and East. Most of the work on the expressway to the South from the Katunayake International Airport is now complete. The day is not very far when a new large aircraft will land at the Mattala International Airport, as they do at Katunayake. We will soon develop the airports at Palali and Ratmalana too. Large bridges similar to those at Arugambay, Mannar and Katugastota are being built throughout the country. The hill country and Rajarata will be developed through necessary infrastructure to serve the needs of a modern economy. The irrigation works at Moragahakanda, Uma Oya and Deduru Oya are

under construction. Large irrigation reservoirs are being restored after nearly 1000 years. Similarly, several lakhs of acres of new land are being enriched for cultivation, in the North East and South, too.

In the past five years the poverty levels of the ordinary people have been reduced, inflation has been brought down and per capita income has been brought to the level of USD 2,000 US dollars. In 2005 the per capita income was USD 1,050. We achieved this in five years after waiting more than 50 years since independence. The development of villages was done in this period through the Gama Neguma and Maga Neguma schemes. The Government is now working towards a target of raising the standard of living further and increasing the per capita income to USD 4,000 in the next five years. While seeking to achieve this target, the Mahinda Chinthana - Forward Vision, is seeking to build a modern road network throughout the country, with a good market for the produce of the people, the provision of good education and health services, and to transform this land with a harsh environment into a land of sustainable growth, abundance in food and produce, and rich in the blessings of nature.

We are moving towards building a production economy where through agriculture, industry and varied services we will increase the revenue of the economy. Those in the Small and Medium Enterprise Sector and others in Large Scale Enterprise sector are being encouraged to produce all that is possible within the country. Our economic policies are being directed towards expanding employment opportunities to our youth through the development of skills and higher education. Special priority will be given to further develop the universities and technological education and training institutes that are located in areas outside Colombo.

We are now engaged in laying the foundation and building our future. Ours is the rising economy in Asia. This is our own vision. It is of our own construction. This new emerging economy will be enriched with a knowledge economy in addition to the physical and infrastructural facilities.

Dear children, this is your own future. It is an economy of a middle income country. It is my vision that you will grow up and spend your lives under economic conditions very different to those that I grew up in; in a country that has an economy that is

much more fulfilling and advanced.

Dear Children, This Is Your Own Future. It Is An Economy Of A Middle Income Country. It Is My Vision That You Will Grow Up And Spend Your Lives Under Economic Conditions Very Different To Those That I Grew Up In...An Economy That Is Much More Fulfilling And Advanced.

We are now preparing to do justice by the people who were subject to historic injustice by being treated as those living in areas considered through the centuries as being arid, harsh, uncongenial and poor. We do not make this a unitary state in terms of land only. By building a country that is equal in terms of progress and development we will give new meaning to being unitary.

We will build international relations both politically and economically. This port will symbolise our non-alignment and friendship with all. The step forward we take today as a nation will be one that will see international economic cooperation built through mutual trust, respect and friendship.

Friends

We must not forget that there are those who had to leave their places of birth and homes for the construction of this port. They took the decision about their land and homes, to cooperate with the decision of the Government, for the cause of development. We remember with honour that sacrifice they made with the concept of country before self. That commitment is also an investment in the future.

We must also thank all those who helped complete this great project nine months ahead of the target. Our gratitude must be extended to the former Minister of Ports, Mr Chamal Rajapaksa who steered this work. Special thanks is due to the Chairman of the Ports Authority, who I picked for this work when I was Prime Minister, and who has carried out this work with complete dedication to finish it nine months ahead of schedule. I must also thank all Sri Lankan and Chinese officials and technicians who helped make this a reality.

Friends

In the past this country was situated on the Silk Route. Our country was situated on the route between China and Southern Europe. The offer by China to build this port that was located in the old Silk Route is an act that reminds us again of our traditional friendship. I offer my heartfelt gratitude to our old and traditional friend. The trade relations between our two countries that were strengthened by the Rubber-Rice Agreement, contributes today to the further strengthening of rising trade in Asia, Tourism and Investment Relations. Many are the other friendly and neighbouring countries too that have contributed to our development in this manner. We look forward to expand our relations in tourism, investment and trade with those countries, too. All of them are partners in our development. We must express our thanks to them, too.

This Is The Time To Announce To The World That Through A Massive Development Such As This We Have Now Entered The Path To Being The True Wonder Of Asia.

This is a new port. It is a new port that renews the pride of the past in our nation. This Port, the Colombo Port, the Trincomalee Port and the Kankesanturai Port, all help to nurture our country. The maritime and naval economy that is built through this will lead to industries using new and varied skills, professional services, banking and financial institutions, and open new paths to take our produce to the world outside.

My Dear Children

Many countries that lagged behind us at the time we gained independence have now passed us and gone far ahead. But, we must not be prepared to copy those countries or work according to the development models of those nations. Similarly, there is no purpose in continuing to lament about our lost heritage. What we shall do instead is to surpass them and reach a stage of overall development they have not reached, and show new paths and possibilities to the world.

You are aware that travellers of fame have come to our country in the past. They described this country to the world in terms of praise as a Golden Isle or the Pearl of the Indian Ocean. We have now dug into the earth, broken great rocks, overcome inland and foreign threats, diverted the sea, and built a great port. This is the time to announce to the world that through a massive development such as this we have now entered the path to being the true Wonder of Asia.

Friends

We have freed this country by defeating the world's most ruthless terrorists. Similarly, we are now building massive ports such as this, international airports, expressways, giant power projects, and huge irrigation schemes.

Therefore, I wish to remind you of another great responsibility that you have. It is to produce a generation that truly loves the country and its people, is strong in ethics and good values, wise, respectful of what is good, and is courageous and brave. I call on all parents to raise their children as those who show Maithriya or loving kindness towards the country; who show respect to the temple, church, kovil and mosque. On this historic occasion I call our children to follow this example of your parents, follow the righteous path and take ownership of your Motherland.

I wish you a Prosperous Future!
May you be blessed by the Noble
Triple Gem!



