President Ranil Wickremesinghe envisions massive development project in Eastern Province akin to Mahaweli Development Project



President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe addressing a special Committee meeting drew parallels to the successful implementation of the Mahaweli Development Project during the 1980s, affirming a similar commitment to expediting the Eastern Development Project. He emphasized the imperative of fostering a conducive environment that reinvigorates the nation’s economy, stressing on the need to

engage India’s assistance for this endeavour.

Highlighting the strategic importance of the endeavour, President Wickremesinghe underscored the comprehensive vision for Trincomalee’s transformation into a multifaceted hub encompassing energy, transportation, maritime commerce, naval operations, aviation, industry, and tourism. He underscored the collaborative role of India in realizing this strategic program. These remarks were made during a special meeting presided over by President Wickremesinghe at the Trincomalee Air Force Base.

The session prominently addressed the meticulous administration of government and Mahaweli-designated land within the district. The President duly instructed officials to provide him with a comprehensive report encompassing land allocations spanning the period 2019 to 2023.

President Wickremesinghe asserted that land stands as the essential factor of the development trajectory. He highlighted the importance of vigilant management for the achievement of desired developmental objectives.

In addition, the President provided explicit guidance to cease the competitive establishment of religious sites. He advocated for a consultative approach in future undertakings concerning religious structures within the Trincomalee district. Decisions in this regard he said, should be reached in coordination with the governor, district political leaders, and relevant governmental authorities.

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President Ranil Wickremesinghe further commented, “The convened meeting today was dedicated to deliberating upon the developmental initiatives within the Eastern Province, with particular emphasis on the Trincomalee district. Presently, a comprehensive plan formulated by Surbana Jurong pertains to the Trincomalee district’s development, supported by an established agreement between Sri Lanka and India. It is vital that this accord is executed.”

The development strategy entails a meticulously crafted program aimed at the enhancement of the Kumana coastal stretch extending from Verugal Aru to Panama. This expanse is envisioned to be harnessed for the advancement of the tourism sector. Simultaneously, a blueprint is in place for the establishment of modernized agriculture within this vicinity and this model is intended to be extended to other areas within the Eastern Province. The active involvement of both the Mahaweli Authority and the Land Department is envisaged in these pursuits. Anticipating an evolution in Trincomalee's fishing, agriculture, and tourism sectors, the strategic goal is to elevate Trincomalee to a prominent commercial centre. Subsequent to this, the trajectory of development is envisaged to extend to Batticaloa and Ampara.

The resolution of land-related issues, particularly concerning Mahaweli-designated land, is pivotal for the advancement of these endeavours. Pertinently, the execution of the Trincomalee Development Plan encompasses the acquisition of land in accordance with the 1985 Mahaweli scheme. However, there have been instances of land parcels within the Eastern Province being gazetted without the requisite approval of the Cabinet. Observations have indicated an allocation of land to various religious sites. Consequently, there is a directive to halt the competitive proliferation of such establishments. It is paramount to engage in comprehensive discussions with the province's political leaders and religious dignitaries to reach judicious decisions in this regard.

Recalling the Mahaweli Development Scheme's implementation in 1985, certain lands bestowed by the Duke of Edinburgh have been designated as forests by the Ministry of Wildlife. While preserving the forested area at 32 per cent, it is envisaged that remaining lands should be harnessed for the country's developmental pursuits.

In the contemporary global landscape, nations such as Singapore and Dubai have strategically harnessed extensive land resources to propel their developmental pursuits. My recent visit to Singapore highlighted their interest in procuring rice from Sri Lanka. Notably, we had imported rice from them last year, and this year they are seeking rice from us. This underscores the need to establish modernized agricultural practices within our nation, thereby leveraging agricultural products as a means to fortify our global economic presence.

The expeditious realization of our development objectives hinges on the prompt execution of the Eastern Development Plan. I hold the expectation that unwavering

dedication to this cause will be demonstrated by all stakeholders, including government officials. In attendance at this crucial discourse were distinguished individuals, including Saman Ekanayake, President’s Secretary; Sagala Ratnayake, Senior Adviser to the President on National Security and Chief of Staff to the President; Senthil Thondaman, Governor of the Eastern Province; Kapila Athukorala, Member of Parliament for the Eastern Province; Vice Air Marshal Udeni Rajapaksa, Air Force Commander as well as other esteemed public representatives of the province and various provincial government officials.



President Ranil Wickremesinghe in discussion with Kapila Athukorala, Member of Parliament for the Eastern Province; Sagala Ratnayake, Senior Adviser to the President on National Security and Chief of Staff to the President; Senthil Thondaman, Governor of the Eastern Province; Saman Ekanayake, President’s Secretary; Air Force Commander Vice Air Marshal Udeni Rajapaksa, and other officials.