JICA Assisted Feasibility Study on Light Rail Transit Line To Commence in January 2017

In response to a request from the Government of Sri Lanka, JICA conducted a scoping Mission in September 2016 for the Feasibility Study of the first elevated Light Rail Transit (LRT) line in Sri Lanka, from Malabe to the Colombo Business District.

The Feasibility Study will address key aspects such as current and projected traffic patterns, optimization of the route, economic viability, environmental and social impacts, inter-modal connectivity, implementation schedules and operation and maintenance systems.

At the conclusion of the Mission, the Minutes of Discussion were signed by Nihal Rupasinghe, Secretary, Ministry of Megapolis & Western Development as the counterpart agency for the Project, and Ms. Haruko Kamei, Director of South Asia Department, JICA HQ.

The approximately 25-km route which would be covered by the Feasibility Study runs through Malabe – Battaramulla – Rajagiriya – Borella – Union Place - Fort - Maradana and Kollupitiya. The final route would be determined from the Feasibility Study with special focus on inter-connectivity with other urban public transport modes such as Bus and Railway to enable the modes to complement each other instead of duplication.

Malabe to Fort is a high priority transport corridor as it is the one which connects the administrative capital to the business district in metro Colombo. The CoMTrans Master Plan (Urban Transport Master Plan for Colombo Metropolitan Region & Suburbs) study conducted with JICA assistance in 2012 – 2014 found that this corridor carries the largest number of vehicles and has the lowest speed compared to all other corridors. It is also the one major corridor currently not served by a rail based public transport mode.

**The route covered by the Feasibility Study runs through Malabe – Battaramulla – Rajagiriya – Borella – Union Place - Fort - Maradana and Kollupitiya**

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An elevated LRT system is the mode decided for the route, considering minimizing necessity for land acquisition, compatibility of technology across transport systems, flexibility to extend the network at-grade where possible and to facilitate competitive procurement. “Land transport systems and infrastructure are under the purview of many different Governmental agencies in Sri Lanka, and sometimes it may be difficult to coordinate among each other. But, this is a critical requirement to ensure the feasibility of such a project which could be one of the largest public investment projects in Sri Lanka. We should avoid not only physical conflict among different transport infrastructure, but also strategic conflict which could lead to reduced viability and inefficient usage of public funds. This is the challenge that Sri Lanka needs to overcome and we hope the Government agencies will come together towards the single objective of providing equitable, efficient, environmentally sustainable and safe transport to all citizens” commented Kiyoshi Amada, Chief Representative of JICA Sri Lanka Office.

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As evidenced by dynamic cities around the world, improvement and increased usage of public transport systems is the effective and sustainable solution to urban traffic congestion. As such, JICA is proud to partner the Government of Sri Lanka in realizing this flagship project in the Sri Lankan capital, which will bring economic and social benefits to the entire country.
The Urban Development Authority (UDA) of Sri Lanka and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) commenced a technical cooperation project to formulate the urban development vision and detailed urban plans towards the objective of enhancing the value and attractiveness of Kandy as a historic and touristic city, and realizing its unique socio-economic potential while preserving its ancient heritage sacred to Buddhists around the world.

Through the project, JICA will support UDA to prepare the urban development vision for the Kandy metropolitan area, detailed urban plans including urban design guidelines and regulations to protect and sustain the heritage city area and recommend sustainable systems and strategic investment proposal to implement the development plans.

“Kandy has a unique heritage and history which people from around the world gather to Sri Lanka to experience. Even more importantly, Kandy is a city very close to the heart of Sri Lankan people, for its significance to the Buddhists as well as other religions, and its importance in history as the last ancient kingdom. We look forward to sharing the Japanese experiences and lessons in developing such ancient cities in Japan, to help develop the true potential of Kandy. The key to successful development planning is mutual consultation and consensus-building with the many stakeholders, and we will make every effort to support UDA to do so in implementing the project” noted Kiyoshi Amada, Chief Representative of JICA Sri Lanka Office.

The Record of Discussion for the project was signed on 10th of October 2016 in Kandy by Dr. Jagath Munasinghe, Chairman - UDA and Toru Kobayakawa, Senior Representative of JICA – Sri Lanka Office in the presence of Hon. Champika Ranawaka, Minister of Megapolis & Western Development.
JICA extends capacity building support for Lankan Public Sector

The need for capacity building to ensure an efficient public sector and meet developmental goals is considered as imperative. As an active partner in Sri Lanka’s economic progress, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) supports the country’s public sector through invaluable resource building and competency skills. Through the Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development Scholarship Programme (JDS), funded by the Government of Japan, facilitated and implemented by JICA, young, talented and capable Lankan government officials are able to follow higher education opportunities at renowned Japanese Universities.

Extending the current cooperation under the JDS scheme, the successive Grant Agreement worth 231 million Yen (approximately Rs 318 million) was signed by Kiyoshi Amada, Chief Representative JICA and Dr. R.H.S. Samarathunga, Secretary to the Treasury, Ministry of Finance in June in a special ceremony at the Ministry following the signing of an Exchange of Notes between His Excellency the Ambassador for Japan in Sri Lanka, K. Suganuma and Dr. R.H.S. Samarathunga.

This Agreement between the Sri Lankan Government and JICA contributes further in supporting the facilitation of human resource capacity and institutional building activities in the local public sector, thereby simultaneously expanding and enhancing bilateral ties between Sri Lanka and Japan.

This year too, a joint committee under JDS together with JICA and Embassy of Japan has selected fifteen suitable Government officials and ensure their enrolment in Japanese Universities for two-year Master’s Degree Scholarship Programmes in fields including Public Policy and Finance, Economics including Development Economics, Business Management, Environmental Management, Disaster Management and Climate Change.

"We believe capacity development is central to the socio-economic development of any country and these programmes are of paramount importance in JICA’s continued engagement in the Sri Lankan development context. Through the JDS Scholarship scheme it is firmly believed participants will acquire expert knowledge, build professional networks and on their return take an active role in facilitating social and economic progress in the country," noted Kiyoshi Amada, Chief Representative JICA.

Since its introduction in 2009, the programme has already benefited 90 Sri Lankan Government officials with potential to play leadership roles who have followed these study programmes. It is envisaged that a total of 120 officers will receive scholarships during the co-operation period under the current phase.
To improve awareness of Japanese culture and increase quality of Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) broadcasting programmes, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed a Grant Agreement of Japanese Yen 52.6 million with the Government of Sri Lanka for the ‘Project for the Improvement of TV Programmes of Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation’ through the provision of 449 educational and documentary programmes to the SLRC in September 2016. The programmes will be subtitled and dubbed in Sinhalese, Tamil and English and broadcasted by SLRC which has outreach coverage to all areas of Sri Lanka. They are expected to be effective means to make audiences aware of Japanese culture and technologies. The programmes will also be of immense benefit to university students, researchers and language learners to improve their knowledge on Japanese rich culture. Moreover, Japanese educational and documentary programmes to be procured under the Project are guaranteed to be of the highest quality and will consist of insightful and valuable knowledge to the viewers.

Since 1979, JICA has been providing continuous support to the terrestrial broadcasting sector in Sri Lanka through grants, technical assistance and concessional loans. This project is expected to further enhance the understanding of Japanese culture in Sri Lanka and further strengthen the cordial relations between the two countries.

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Media Reps Get First-hand experience of JICA Supported projects in the Kandy District

The old adage ‘seeing is believing’ was once again proved beyond measure when a group of media personnel – representing the print, broadcast and electronic media - embarked on a journey of discovery to the District of Kandy to observe first-hand the progress of JICA-supported development projects in the area.

On 20 and 21 September 2016, the media team travelled to Kandy to attend a press conference on the development of the historical city of Kandy. The press conference was followed by a media tour to selected project sites to enable participants to gain an insight into project activities which helped the media team to build-up a close interaction with counterpart organizations.

The media team had the opportunity to observe the Greater Kandy Water Supply Project, Kandy City Waste Water Management Project, the Plant Genetic Resource Centre in Gannoruwa, Kundasale Waste Recycling and Compost Plant, Elderly Health Care Centre at Kadugannawa Hospital and they also had the chance to interview a JICA Volunteer who was coaching baseball to students at Kingswood College.

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Kandy City Wastewater Management Project

As a World Heritage site the city of Kandy is renounced for its beauty and the former capital of ancient Sri Lanka is a key attraction for tourists as well as locals. However, Kandy does not have a modern sewerage system and thus sadly behind the beauty of the city are heavily polluted canals and rivers. With the increase of population and amount of waste water, the quality of water in rivers and the lake is rapidly deteriorating.

JICA’s Kandy City Waste Water Management Project aims to tackle these issues all together. It aims to develop a modern sewerage system that reaches over 55,000 people. As the sewerage system is gradually installed, it is expected to improve the water quality of the famous Mahaweli river, one of the major water sources in the country. Improvement of its water quality in the upper stream will have positive impact for all down-stream areas.

The project will also provide improved sanitation in densely populated and low income areas in Kandy, through the provision of in-house sanitation facilities,
and refurbishment of public facilities. Introduction of improved sanitation will improve the sanitary environment of the entire community, and enhance the health of the residents.

**Greater Kandy Water Supply Project:**

The Greater Kandy Water Supply Project Phase 1 Stage II is funded by JICA and it is implemented to meet the high demand for pipe borne water in the Greater Kandy Area. Phase I Stage II of this project includes the construction of a service tank, pumping station, official residences, transmission and distribution lines and road rehabilitation.

**Kundasale Waste Recycling and Compost Plant:**

A strong advocate of sustainable development JICA sees solid waste management and sewerage as a very important component of environmental protection.

Through its development cooperation scheme, JICA is currently implementing multiple programs for solid waste management in Sri Lanka. These include working on ways to improve waste landfill sites, waste recycling and composting, monitoring water quality of major water bodies, data collection on solid waste management for improving and developing current techniques, raising awareness of issues and the compilation of a Strategic Master Plan for the Sewerage Sector.

For the first time in Sri Lanka the screw type composting plant was introduced and this pilot project was implemented by the Kundasale and Pathadumbara Pradesheeya Sabhas in the Central Province.

The objective of the Project was to establish a recommended recycle model of organic garbage and agricultural waste in the Kandy district area by producing good quality organic fertilizer and creating a value chain of organic fertilizer distribution using the screw type composting plant which is widely used in Japan.

The composting plant aims to produce organic compost manure from the garbage received from Kundasale, Pathadumbara, Gangawakorale, Poojapitiya, Panwila, Medadumbara and Harispattuwa Padesheeya Sabhas, and Wattegama Urban Council in the Central Province.

*A strong advocate of sustainable development JICA sees solid waste management and sewerage as a very important component of environmental protection*
President Hands Over Newly Constructed Maha Oya Water Treatment Plant to the People

His Excellency President, Maithripala Sirisena and His Excellency Kenichi Suganuma, Ambassador of Japan in Sri Lanka ceremonially opened the Water Treatment Plant constructed at Maha Oya under JICA assisted Eastern Province Water Supply Development Project on 19th October 2016.

Also in attendance were Hon Rauff Hakeem, Minister of City Planning and Water Supply, Hon. Daya Gamage, Minister of Primary Industries, Hon. Z.A. Nazeer Ahamed, Chief Minister – Eastern Province, Hon. Dr. Sudarshini Fernandopulle, State Minister of City planning and Water Supply, Hon. Dr. Anoma Gamage, Deputy Minister of Petroleum Resources Development, Members of the Parliament in the area, Kiyoshi Amada, Chief Representative of JICA and senior officials of the line Ministry and NWSDB.

JICA extended a concessionary Loan of 4,850 million Yen (Approximately LKR Million 6,300) for the implementation of the Eastern Province Water Supply Development Project. The project included implementation of two components namely Rural Water Supply component in all three districts Ampara, Trincomalee and Batticaloa for the benefit of 50,000 people and the Ampara District Urban Water Supply Component reaching approximately 210,000 people in the Ampara District.

The JICA-funded project was also instrumental in the expansion of benefits to the people by completing and connecting the other areas of the partially constructed components of the previous water supply projects due to fund limitations.

Beneficiaries under this project used dug wells for their water requirement before the project. Most of those dug wells contain high fluoride and phosphate. As a result of this JICA-assisted project people now have access to safe drinking water.

Mohammad who lives in Samanthurai and Siripala from Deegawapiya stated that their quality of life has been greatly improved thanks to the availability of safe drinking water. They appreciated the efforts of JICA in the conception and implementation of the project.
JICA Assists Sri Lanka to Gain Benefits of LiDAR Technology

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has once again come forward to support Sri Lanka to benefit from new LiDAR technology that has enabled the Creation of Digital Elevation Model (DEM) Enabling Disaster Resilience marking a landmark in sharing geospatial information.

LiDAR, which stands for Light Detection and Ranging, is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure ranges (variable distances) to the Earth. These light pulses—combined with other data recorded by the airborne system—generate precise, three-dimensional information about the shape of the Earth and its surface characteristics.

A LiDAR instrument principally consists of a laser, a scanner, and a specialized GPS receiver. Airplanes and helicopters are the most commonly used platforms for acquiring LiDAR data over broad areas. Two types of LiDAR are topographic and bathymetric. Topographic LiDAR typically uses a near-infrared laser to map the land, while bathymetric lidar uses water-penetrating green light to also measure seafloor and riverbed elevations.

LiDAR systems allow scientists and mapping professionals to examine both natural and manmade environments with accuracy, precision, and flexibility. For instance NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) scientists are using LiDAR to produce more accurate shoreline maps, make digital elevation models for use in geographic information systems, to assist in emergency response operations, and in many other applications.

The project commenced in February 2015 and will complete in December 2016. The objectives of the project are the Preparation of DEM Data and the Technical Transfer on DEM preparation and thematic map preparation. LiDAR survey has been carried out in 2,400 km² in Colombo & Gampaha Districts and 5,400 km² in other areas. Based on the survey data, the project produced the Digital Elevation Model at an interval of one meter and two meters to enable local hazard mapping.

When such detailed maps are available at local level it may help to reduce the casualties by using them for district level policy making. Such information also will help to inform the communities at risk in advance. So such analysis of LiDAR data by the survey department and sharing with agencies concerned is quite important to ensure the resilience of the country.

One of the remarkable output of the project was the technological transfer of various aspects of DEM data preparation to the Survey Department. As a result the Survey Department counterparts could present how these data can be transformed into DEM and various other forms. The Expert team of the project conducted a series of trainings in Sri Lanka and JICA donated necessary software and some equipment to the Survey Department to conduct their related activities more efficiently. The local trainings were followed by a training in Japan to further deepen the understanding. Currently the Survey Department is preparing a policy for sharing LiDAR data with the agencies concerned. The Surveyor General confirmed that the data will be shared with the government agencies free of charge for the work of interest governed by a Memorandum of Understanding while other agencies will be charged a minimal fee.

The introduction of LiDAR technology to Sri Lanka by the Japanese government is a milestone in the history of Survey Department and the advance technology would immensely help the institutions such as Road Development Authority, Irrigation Department, Airport and Aviation Services and the Disaster Management Centre.
Workshops for Pre-school Teachers Conducted by Volunteer Programme

JICA volunteers working in the Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) sector in Sri Lanka, conducted a series of workshops in collaboration with Ms Kumi Tsubokawa, JICA’s ECED Advisor, who was in Sri Lanka in September. These workshops were held in Kilinochchi, Polonnaruwa and Kuliyapitiya and proved to be extremely popular among not only the preschool teachers but also the officials and administrators of provincial ECED authorities of the Northern, Eastern, North Central and North Western provinces who all attended the workshops.

Ms Kumi Tsubokawa, conducting a workshop for preschool teachers in Kuliyapitiya.

During these workshops Ms Tsubokawa was able to share her expertise and provide many useful insights to participants. While the theme of the workshops was “Learn through Play”, which entailed various practical activities that participants had to engage in, the aim of the Program was to help build awareness on methods and concepts that promote child centered pre-school education.

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Ms Tsubokawa highlighted the importance of creating an environment in which children were happy so that learning could take place instinctively. Developing teaching methods in line with the characteristics of children, promoting creativity through observation, getting suggestions from children on games they like to play, teachers being friends of children, using material from the environment in developing teaching material, techniques of developing the memory capacity of children, and indirect introduction of mathematical concepts, rules etc were some of the aspects covered during these workshops.

A group of enthusiastic participants in a workshop in Kilinochchi.
Ms Tsubokawa stressed the need to include popular children’s games such as “run and catchers” in pre-schools, in order to make the pre-school more homely, and also touched on some important psychological aspects that teachers should keep in mind when dealing with children. She further explained the difference between pre-school education and primary education, and the importance of treating them separately.

JICA volunteers with the ability to speak the local languages, also conducted training sessions at these workshops, and introduced several fun filled practical activities aimed at developing the multifaceted skills of children. Volunteers also made presentations on the importance of personal hygiene - including statistical information on worldwide mortality rates resulting from neglect in this area, characteristics of 4-5 year olds; the teacher’s role as a teacher, mother and nurse; the objective of preschool education i.e. the development of the heart and attitudes, body and habits of children, and arts and crafts. Those who participated in these activities had much fun in the process of leaning important teaching concepts.

While some of the officials expressed their appreciation concerning the contribution made by JICA volunteers in terms of technical inputs and the improvements they have brought about, others valued the knowledge they acquired on Japanese ECED concepts and approaches which would be useful in conducting activities in their preschools. Presently, there are seven JICA volunteers working in support of the ECED sector in Sri Lanka.

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JICA Supports Historic National Policy For Elderly Healthcare

Though population aging is a universal phenomenon, it seems to be particularly so in Sri Lanka, which has the fastest growing Aging Population in Asia. Sri Lanka’s population above 60 years was around 6% in 1990. By 2000 it had increased to 9.2% and according to the 2012 statistics, has grown to 12.4%, doubling the 1990 figure. It is predicted to be over 16% by 2020, 28.5% by 2050 (an increase in comparison to 2000, matched by very few countries) and by 2100, predicted to be nearly 40%!

There is an urgent need for action to be taken to promote active aging and elderly health care. By 2041, one out of every four persons in the country is expected to be an elderly person.

Though Sri Lanka provides universal health care to its population, it is becoming increasingly important to address the issue of adapting the present system to catering to the caring needs of an increasingly old population. Of special importance is how changes to the health system can be made to support an aging population and facilitate continued improvements in healthy life expectancy to promote active aging of the elderly.

Therefore reorganising the health system has become important to provide for the human resources that would be required in this regard, strengthen its emphasis on primary health care, improve treatment of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and provide long-term institutional care of the elderly in the society etc. - A very big challenge indeed for the already burdened Health Care system.

Recognising this urgent need, the Young, Elderly and Disabled (YED) Unit of the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medicine (MoH) and the Rural Health Training Centre (RHTC) of Nagano, Japan has embarked on a very timely Elderly Care Project sponsored by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) which focuses on the following areas which are important to develop a comprehensive plan for Elderly Health Care.

Through this two-year project which commenced in 2015, the MoHNIM is concentrating on the development of a National Health Care Policy for the elderly, in-service training for existing health personnel, model hospital plan for an Elderly Friendly Hospital and facilities at Wattala, Nawalapitiya and Kadugannawa and a Model Community Plan in the Badulla District as an initial stage to meet the above challenges.

After discussions with all the relevant stakeholders involved in Elderly Care, a draft of the National Policy has now been completed. It was uploaded onto the Ministry website on 17 September and public announcements were placed in the National Newspapers on Saturday 17 September 2016, requesting public opinion on same.

Once these are taken into consideration the final version will be sent for Cabinet approval and is scheduled to be launched at a Ceremony at the Sri Lanka Foundation on 17 January 2017 marking an important milestone in the history of health care in the country.