376km of rural roads in Eastern Province rehabilitated with JICA assistance

“376km of rural roads in Eastern Province were rehabilitated through the JICA supported Rural Road Development Project in Eastern Province. Not only were we able to rehabilitate 61km more than originally planned within the same fund allocation, but also complete all the works one year ahead of loan expiry” said Mr. Sarath Abeygunawardane, Chief Secretary of Eastern Provincial Council in his opening remarks at the wind-up seminar for the Project held in Ampara on 30th May 2014. He extended his appreciation to the contribution made by Mr. Sunil Pulukkody, National Project Director from National Planning Department and the Provincial Road Development Department of the Eastern Province which implemented the Project, and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) which provided funding for the construction.

Mr. V. Karunainathan, Director of Provincial Road Development Department (EP) said, “We are very happy that we could achieve the objective of development of the local construction industry through this Project as well. The Project consisted of over 250 small scale contracts. This meant a huge amount of administration work for the PRDD and the EPC, but through this we could provide the opportunity to small businesses in the Province to participate in the development of their own area, and develop their capacity in the process as well”.

The Chief Engineers of the PRDD – Eastern Province acted as Project Managers in each District. In their presentations, they pointed out that this enabled them to improve the capacity of the PRDD staff, not only in construction supervision, but also in contract administration and project management. While appreciating the significant positive impact rural road rehabilitation has brought to the communities, they pointed out that there are still more roads in the Province which require similar rehabilitation.

“We consider this to be one of our most successful projects. The implementing agency was able to complete more roads than planned, in less time than expected. Also, by preparing the contract packages to facilitate participation of local small businesses, the maximum economic benefit could be accrued to the people in Eastern Province who suffered a lot of hardship during the conflict time”, said Mr. Hiroyuki Abe, Senior Representative of JICA – Sri Lanka Office.

JICA is one of the largest donors to the road sector in Sri Lanka. JICA’s current loan assistance in the sector includes the construction of the Outer Circular Expressway and rehabilitation of 350km of provincial roads in the Central and Sabaragamuwa Provinces. Construction of 6 medium scale bridges in the Eastern Province was completed in 2013/14 through JICA’s grant assistance. JICA’s 44th loan assistance package to Sri Lanka was signed
in March 2014 and includes financing for a new bridge across the Kelani river in Peliyagoda.