Six Decades of Japanese Assistance Accelerates Sri Lanka’s Growth

Sri Lanka’s annual growth of 6.4 percent over the course of 2003 to 2012 has made it an outlier in the region. The World Bank in its country report of May 2014 cites this and points out that large infrastructure investment, including post war reconstruction efforts in the Northern and Eastern provinces are necessary key elements for the country for it to transit to an upper middle income country.

Over the last six decades Japan has provided official development assistance (ODA) in a multitude of ways with a greater focus on infrastructure development projects that have contributed to the country achieving lower middle income status. More recently the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has targeted the development and reconstruction of the emerging Northern and Eastern provinces. Currently, the three focus areas of JICA’s support to Sri Lanka are infrastructure development for economic growth; social and economic improvement in emerging regions, and social infrastructure development to mitigate vulnerabilities.

JICA’s contribution to development in all these priority sectors has covered all provinces of Sri Lanka. These have included the building of roads and bridges, the port, the airport and assistance to strengthening electricity generation, transmission and distribution, water supply and sanitation and telecommunication etc. An important factor is that this assistance includes technical cooperation for efficient and effective management and use of these facilities and ensures that knowledge and skills are transferred to Sri Lankan nationals.

Some of the major contributions to Sri Lanka by JICA are:

- Colombo Sea Port
- Bandaranaike International Airport
- Southern Expressway and the Outer Circular Expressway
- formulating the urban transport master plan for Colombo metropolitan area
- Upper Kotmale Hydropower Station
- Kelanitissa Combined Cycle Power Plant
- Decreasing the power loss in transmission and distribution
- Construction of Sri Jayawardenepura and Matara General Hospitals and the Jaffna and Anuradhapura Teaching Hospitals
- Setting up the Healthy Lifestyle Center network, and project on non-communicable disease prevention measures
- Blood Bank
- Anuradhapura North Water Supply Project
- Assistance for geological survey, meteorological observation and weather forecasting, disaster warning, and landslide mitigation technology
Japan’s role as a development partner to Sri Lanka, commenced in 1954, with support for six Sri Lankan officials to visit Japan for a technical training programme. Since then, JICA has conducted various kinds of financial and technical assistance ongoing to more than 1,000 billion JPY equivalent to 1,300 billion LKR. Almost 1,000 Japanese volunteers have worked in the country supporting and strengthening human development. JICA notes with pride Sri Lanka’s impressive progress and achievements on this 60th anniversary of Japan’s official development assistance.

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*Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)* is the executing agency of Japan’s Bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA). JICA, the world biggest bilateral aid agency, works in over 150 countries and regions. In accordance with its vision of “Inclusive and Dynamic Development,” JICA supports the resolution of development issues in developing countries. In Sri Lanka, Japan has been providing financial and technical assistance since 1954 and is one of the largest donors to the country. On behalf of the people and the Government of Japan, JICA contributes to improve the lives of people in Sri Lanka.