

Economic power base shifting to Asia, Sri Lanka well placed to match regional development - Premier

By STEVE A. MORRELL

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said Sri Lanka's geographical placing in the Indian Ocean was distinctly an advantage to foster progress and development.

Roads, the railway system, infrastructure for industrial development, and pointers for sustained continuation for economic advancement were in place. The government's job now was to fast track available resources to ensure progress is achieved in context with current trends of economic development, he noted.

The premier was speaking as the chief guest at the Annual Sessions of the Institution of Engineers Sri Lanka (IESL) on Friday.

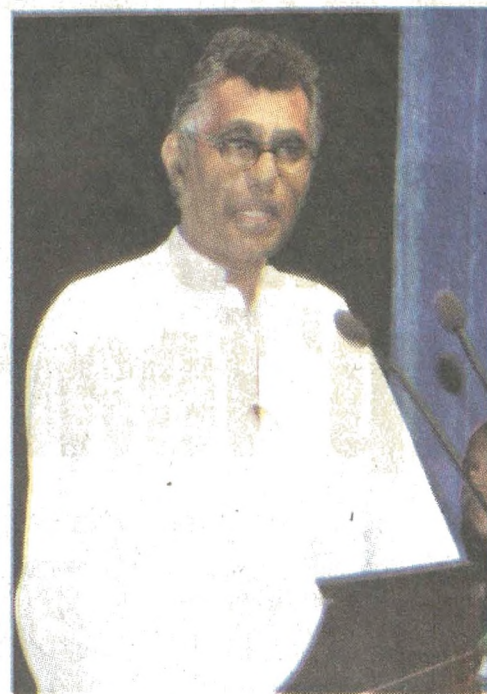
"We would look forward to what the engineers of this country could do to assist us. If you have any areas of support, you might need talk to us", he said.

"The Mattala Airport, the Hambantota harbor, development of the Galle harbor, and our future plans would also include Trincomalee harbor development to enhance the advantage of Sri Lanka's strategic placing in the Indian ocean, the Prime Minister said.

Development being implemented is physically observable taking cognizance of current needs of the country, its population, and future strategies to match needs necessitated by such growth, he noted.

"Thanks to the foresight of engineers, for example Wimalasurendra, at that time, who implemented the advantage of hydro power, we built dams to harness our waterways to give us the advantage of continuous hydro power. The strong resource of water we had continuously was being wasted. But now we are making use of this resource because of good planning implemented at that time", the premier stressed.

"Sri Lanka's future based on industrial development and agricultural progress are simultaneously



Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka
(Pics by Ranjith Wimalasiri)

recognized as indispensable for progress. Both areas of such progress take into consideration the human resources we have, including the factor of education our young people are exposed to", Wickremesinghe said.

The government of the President Sirisena and the policies already implemented bear relevance to progress that could be observed and implemented, he said.

Guest-of-honor, Minister of Megapolis Development, Patali Champika Ranawaka, said there were vital gaps that had to be recognized



Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe
addressing the sessions

for implementation of national development. By 2030, stemming from sustained application to development and centered on professional dialogue the development goal set for 2030 is now within reach.

Such development was sustained on three pillars; the economy, happiness of the people and soil. Development envisages technical capability, and national research. They also include long term development plans structured on technology and national research, he said.

Opening of the Techno City at Homagama last

week by the Prime Minister was one such key factor that bore relevance to our needs.

Technological development has to run parallel to national progress. The Science Park concept is now implemented. Within that sphere, technological seats of learning are Moratuwa, Sri Jayewardenepura, and Colombo Universities, he said.

"It could be said we are now on the highway to technical growth that would telescope productivity and allied growth in sync with such progress. The diverse spectrum of cloud technology would enhance productivity into a single geographic zone, the minister observed.

"The economy would grow. The megapolis implementation is now in progress. We have addressed urgent needs and you will find implementation is ongoing", he said.

Special Guest, Executive Director, Center for Livable Cities, Singapore, Khoo Teng Chye, pointed out that Singapore was a collective slum 50 years ago.

"We have no natural resources. We have no water. We have to import our water. The Singapore river water cannot be consumed. But we have progressed, thanks to our then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Our country has now transformed into a modern city. Our population is only about 5 million, but irrespective of our comparatively small numbers, our progress has been good", he noted.

President, IESL, Wimalasena Gamage, said the Institution's future plans would include private and public sector partnerships to ensure national development progress in meaningful terms. Additionally, as done hitherto, the IESL with their membership would ensure that national development would not stagnate.

He assured the Prime Minister and the government that engineers would support the government's future plans, and engineers would be a contributing factor towards such development.