

Mega development drive in North



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by Dhaneshi Yatawara

Much of today's talk is on the mega development drive launched by the government to develop the Northern province. No one disagrees with the fact that the Northern province deserves all attention after a lapse of thirty years. In its effort to rise from the debris, left over by the devastating terrorism, the government has launched a mega plan to rebuild the Northern province parallel to the resettling of people.

Thus, came a massive plan making the five districts of the North to be the most developed parts of the country. "In fact the government did have plans even during 2004 to develop the Northern province, but unfortunately terrorists' activities totally sabotaged the plans. But now, at last, we are free to do our work," said Director, Information Systems and GIS of the Urban Development Authority (UDA), L. H. Indrasiri.

The UDA has launched a plan to rebuild the North under the consent of the

Presidential Task Force for Northern Development Chaired by Senior Presidential Advisor, Basil Rajapaksa M.P. In it lies the new regional capital to be set up in Mankulam and Jaffna to be developed as a national capital plus Vavuniya as the gateway to the North.

Regional capital

The government has identified Mankulam, in the North of Vavuniya, to be developed as the provincial administrative centre. Accordingly the Ministry of Urban Development and Sacred Area Development initiated a road map to develop the Mankulam Urban Centre taking all aspects into consideration to set up an efficient and a well constructed township.

"Development programs will be implemented in stages in relation to project packages on a priority basis with the government's resettlement program," said R. M. Ariyadasa, Director (Development planning - North and East) of the UDA. The entire process is carried out under the Ministry of Urban Development and Sacred Area Development by the UDA.

According to the Directors of the UDA, Indrasiri and Ariyadasa, Mankulam was selected as it could be easily reached by all five districts. Empowered by the Urban Development Act, the UDA has declared several areas located in the Mankulam area for the new regional urban centre.

Vannivilankulam, Ampalpuram, Kollavinkulam, Oddaruththakulam, Manavalanpaddarippu, Thachchadampam, Olumadu, Ampakamam, Mankulam, Pannikkankulam, Thirumukandi, Inthupuram, Kanakarayankulam, Kanakarayankulam North and Mannakulam are the areas selected under this plan.

Administration and commerce

"Mankulam will be the centre for all the administration while Vavuniya the trade and commerce centre," said Indrasiri. According to these officials agriculture, fisheries, education, administration, tourism and cultural sectors

will be developed in the new Mankulam city. The Mankulam regional urban centre will not be second to the Jaffna Metro Urban Centre.

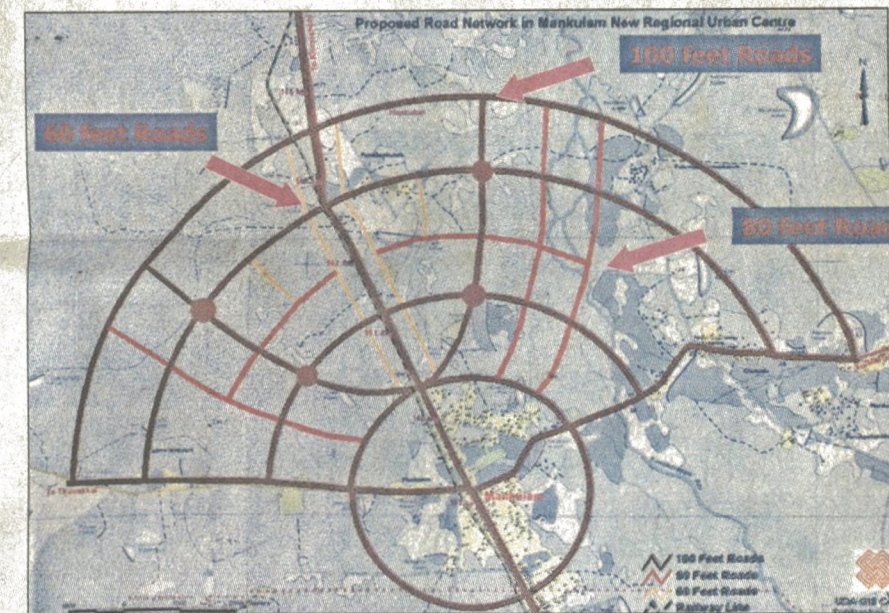
According to statistics around 5,000 people were supposed to be living in this area. "In the initial phases we plan to settle 100,000 people and we expect a population of 500,000 people by 2030," said Indrasiri.

In the initial phase from 2009-2010, 22,200 housing units will be required to settle a population of 100,000. Thus it has been decided to have 11,000 units in apartments of 105 ha, 5,000 units of twin houses in 209 ha and 6,200 individual units in 569 ha. Projects are to be undertaken by the private sector property developers.

Residential areas are demarcated in the plan where 5,000 residences are planned at the moment, to resettle people. In Mankulam the left and right sides of the A9 Road will be developed. Commercial and trade activities, banks will be set up on left side while on the right offices of Provincial Ministries, Provincial Council, Governor's office and official residences will be established. The main A9 Road and the railway track will be running in between the two sections with a buffer zone on either sides.

There will be fixed points to travel to both sides and the plan includes bus halts and resting places for the convenience of the people. Broad lanes and roads will be constructed with adequate walk ways and cycle lanes. The road network comprises of 100, 80 and 60 feet roads and an area with a radius of two kilometres from the Mankulam junction will be left untouched as they have been identified as the previous settlements.

"Those people who were living here for generations can come and settle down in their ancestral places if they are willing to resettle," Indrasiri said. The priority will be to build a Provincial Council Secretariat, police complex, courts complex, a transport terminal including Bus and Railway stations, Regional Prison Complex and open



Proposed Mankulam Regional Urban Centre

prison, regional sports complex, a Hindu religious centre, hospital complexes (Public and Private), regional Postal office, commercial and financial institutions and a regional police training centre.

Infrastructure facilities such as water supply, electricity, access roads, telecommunications, solid waste management, waste

recycling, sewerage, waste water treatment and rain water harvesting systems will be included in the plan.

The UDA plans to provide water to this centre using the Iranamadu Tank located towards North, Muthiyankaddu kulam towards the Northeast of Mankulam and Vavuni kulam on to the southwest of Mankulam.

Turning a new leaf

Mannar, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu districts will be developed parallel to the resettlement program. "The Mannar town is unclean. We have planned to renovate the town."

The main focus will be to renovate the Mannar Fort as it can be developed into a tourist attraction," Indrasiri added.



Demining in progress



Unloading heavy vehicles



Senior Presidential Advisor MP, Basil Rajapaksa inspects construction work. Northern Province Governor, G.A. Chandrasiri looks on.