

Oluvil Intntnl. Port to lend impetus to economy

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Southern breakwater in progress



by Shirajiv Sirimane

In its plan to give impetus to economic development in the Eastern region, Government is speeding up the building of the International Port in Oluvil. The project is scheduled to be completed on 30 September, 2010. The new harbour is to be set up as a fisheries and commercial harbour.

This would be in addition to the Colombo South Harbour expansion, development of Trincomalee, new Port in Hambantota and Galle Harbour that is to be converted to the region's first tourist harbour.

The Sri Lanka Ports Authority with a Danish company, is handling the construction work which is estimated to cost Euro 46.1 million. Discussions for the construction of this port went on for ten years and it was under the 'Nagenahira Navodaya' Programme that high priority was given to the project which will no doubt add to the economic infrastructure, the catalyst for the growth of the East.

During the presidential election held in 2005, President Mahinda Rajapaksa clearly stated in the manifesto *Mahinda Chinthanaya* that the port of Oluvil will be constructed and this is fulfilling one of its promises.

A breakwater with a length of 475 and 740 metres will be built in the first stage of the project. The port will also have the capability to cater to large ships with in-built tanks exceeding the eight-metre depth level mark.

The main harbour will be spread over 16 hectares and during the second stage of the project the depth level is to be increased to 11 metres enabling it to cater to larger vessels, weighing over 16,000 tons. The capacity in the main harbour is to be expanded to 24 hectares during this stage.

It would also have a basin for fishing craft and it covers a land area of 60ha in the first stage and 105ha in the second stage. The harbour basin would cover an area of 16ha of the sea and would spread 1.2km along the coastline.

Permanent building constructions, such as administration buildings and fish-

An artistic sketch of the proposed Oluvil Port construction work.

ery harbour activity buildings are in progress with the construction of internal roads, and access road constructions. Sheet piling and installation of the back system in Fishery Harbour Quay wall constructions are currently carried out and sheeting piling work in Commercial Harbour Quay Wall is also in progress. Land development works, land and marine dredging work of Fishery and Commercial Harbour and the construction of southern and northern breakwaters and internal groin are presently being carried out.

The acquisition and purchasing of lands for the project has been completed with compensation payments to 806 fishermen who lost their houses and lands been made through the People's Bank, Addalachenai. People in the area, who lose property for the project, will be compensated and Rs. 200 million has been released for this purpose.

The project will minimize the employment problem in the region and is expected to create over 1,000 direct and indirect employment by the year 2010 and another 10,000 employment opportunities by 2015. A comprehensive infrastructure development program will be launched parallel to the harbour construction project in the Ampara, Batticaloa and Moneragala districts. The project envisages over 10,000 job opportunities in the island's most underdeveloped areas increasing the buying power of the people.

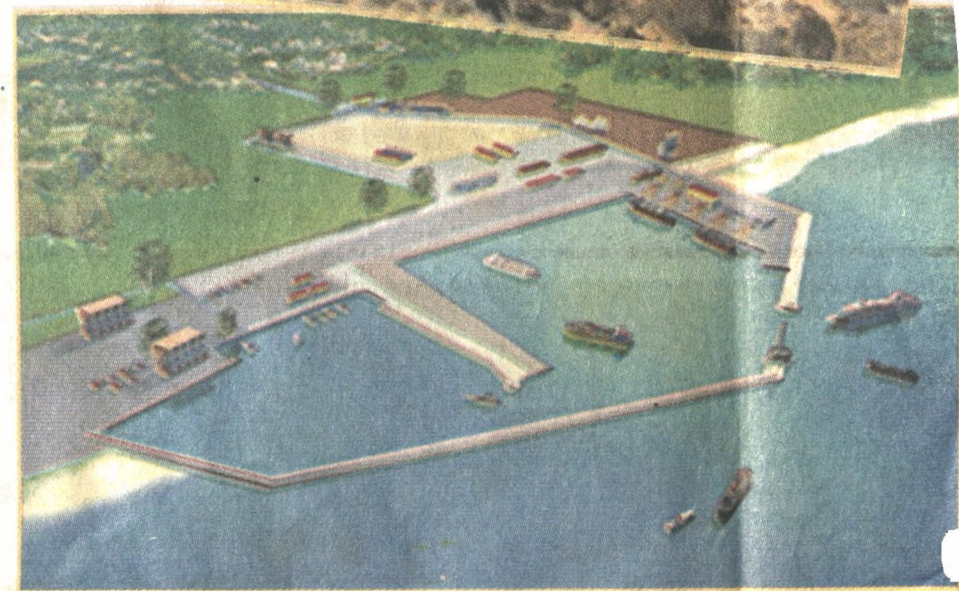
Cement, fertilizer and sugar industries will be introduced to the region via the new port while the fisheries industry will also be elevated.

Meanwhile, it is also expected to elevate the conventional cargo operations at the new port extending to facilitate a higher market to a number of regional industries. Minister of Ports and Aviation and Minister of Irrigation and Water Management Chamal Rajapaksa said that in addition to the development of network of roads connecting the port to neighbouring towns and villages, domestic airports would be developed in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara. These domestic airports will not only help boost the tourism industry, but also enable regional business personnel to fly to Colombo in approximately one hour's time.

This port will form the southeastern link in the developing chain of coastal harbour in the country and will provide more convenient and cost-effective access to and from the south eastern region for goods and cargo originating on the west coast.

With this development, people in the area would move up the ladder from being poor underprivileged towards being rich and moving towards a new era of prosperity.

Construction work of the port.



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