

Roads and bridges construction in progress in the East

By Don Asoka Wijewardena

The Ministry of Highways and Road Development under the guidance of Minister T B Ekanayake has shouldered a heavy responsibility to construct, reconstruct and rehabilitate the entire road network and bridges in the newly liberated Eastern Province under the "Renaissance of the East" Programme.

The Secretary of the Ministry of Highways and Road Development Sirisena Amarasakara spoke to 'The Island' on the ongoing development programmes launched by the Ministry.

Q: The Eastern Province was once a beehive of economic activity before the war. Since its liberation what has the Highways Ministry done to develop the province?

A: The Highways and Road Development Ministry has been entrusted with the responsibility to construct, reconstruct and rehabilitate the national roads and bridges in the Eastern Province. This project includes



Sirisena Amarasakara, Secretary of the Ministry of Highways and Road Development.

A and B class roads. We have already completed construction of major roads such as Siyambundawa- Ampara- Karaituw, Siyambundawa-Potuwil, Akkaraipattuwa- Batticaloa, Batticaloa-Trincomalee and Kanthale-Chilaw roads.

Q: The Highways Ministry has been a tower of strength to the Eastern Province. Can you elaborate on that?

A: Yes. Since the liberation of the Eastern Province, the Ministry has taken positive measures to develop and rehabilitate the devastated coastal areas of the province. During the British rule no bridges were constructed to extend roads, but the British had provided ferries. We have been entrusted with the responsibility to construct bridges in place of ferries.

Q: When do you expect to complete the entire development of road network and bridges?

A: The Highways Ministry has formulated a plan to complete the roads and bridges development project by 2011. We have already commenced the construction of Seruwila-Kanthale and it will be a major road network which links two provinces. The Batticaloa-Polonnaruwa road is nearing completion and Mannampetiya bridge has already been completed. The road link-



ing from Polonnaruwa to Valachchiema is also nearing completion.

Q: When roads and bridges are built in the Eastern Province, will the people benefit from them?

A: Of course. The Eastern Province will be a commercial hub when massive development activities are completed. The coastal areas of the province have been potential tourists attractions. The sandy beaches and famous windsurfing facilities are capable of attracting tourists and tourism can be promoted with the development of the Eastern Province.

Q: What are the other advantages of road and bridges development project in the Eastern

Province?

A: The goal of the government is to achieve overall development in the East. The Fisheries industry will get a boost with the development in the Eastern Province and the coastal areas of the province are gifted with all the fishing resources. The government is positive that when the road network is completed the fishermen will be able to transport fish to other areas and people in other areas will be able to buy fresh fish at fair prices soon. Improvement of the road network in the East and connecting roads to other areas of the country will be useful to improve agriculture and livestock.

**Supplement Co-ordinated by
Lahiru Dahnanjaya**