

By Carmel L. Corea

President Sirisena's inspiring comments at the UN have impacted people's debate on the construction of the Colombo Port City (CPC) renamed the International Financial City (IFC) – a project to be built reclaiming 269 hectares of land from the sea. However the extracting of sand from Sri Lanka's coastal waters

Environmental cost

This Chinese construction in addition to needing sand from our coast requires its inland granite as well. Large granite



How reliable was the FIA and SFIA?

Decimation of the fishing industry

Disheartened, helpless fisher-folk without any help to protect their centuries old coastal fishing industry have been questioning the government, for whose benefit their livelihood is being destroyed. For many centuries they have braved the seas to provide fish for the poor; the government has offered Rs.500 million to compensate their loss. The fisher-folk have

Suggestions to mitigate effects of climate change

Scientists have warned that as a result of climate change, its ravages of drought, floods and landslides on agricultural lands will result in their reduced food production. As sea level rises (due to melting glaciers), salt water will seep inland, adversely affecting coastal paddry cultivation, stated Prof. Jinadasa Katupotha, (Emeritus Professor), University of Sri Jayawardanapura. Evaluating these circumstances, it is prudent to invest and upgrade coastal fishing and develop coastal fish farming. The Fisheries Ministry should urgently provide better facilities for fisherman and educate them on best practices of sustainable coastal fishing. It is reported in the media that our poor children are increasingly suffering from malnutrition and the purchase of expensive deep water large fish is beyond the budget of the poor. By destroying the coastal fishing industry, the government is indirectly inducing the poor, to purchase frequently out dated cheap tin fish, dumped in this country from foreign lands. This is not a healthy option for the

Geopolitics, employment and health and safety

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has stated that the Chinese constructed International Financial City will provide employment to 83,000 people and would certainly be a boon for cash strapped Sri Lanka. It would no doubt provide jobs for people in all walks of society, and as a financial city it will no doubt attract the educated people of this country.

The burning question by environmentalist is how safe is this new International Financial City? Built by the Chinese developer its base sits on highly weathered Pre-Cambrian metamorphic rock, how long could this highly weathered metamorphic rock carry the massive weight of sand, granite and high rise buildings so attractively publicised by the developer?

On 14 April, 1615 the capital city of Colombo was devastated by an earthquake of magnitude 6.4(Mw). More than 2,000 people lost their lives and 200 houses were destroyed (Wimalaratne 1993). An earth tremor was reported in the southern city of Galle on September 27, 2016. Is the proposed massive International Financial City constructed on weathered Pre-Cambrian rock considered a safe habitat in case of an earthquake? Can it withstand the predicted increase in levels of sea water due to climate change?

The Port City/Financial City of Tianjin was in a similar location as the proposed International Financial City (IFC) situated next to the transshipment Port of Colombo. Chinese environmentalists warned their authorities on safety hazards of situating a densely populated city next to a transshipment port, but their warnings were not heeded. On the 12 August, 2015 the Port City of Tianjin exploded killing 173 people and wounding 797. Some 17,000 buildings were damaged, requiring a costly environmental clean-up operation.

The 2015 Tianjin explosion was a massive human disaster. Sri Lanka is now proposing to construct an IFC next to a transshipment port of Colombo. Is it fair to put the lives of innocent people at risk? Is Prime Minister Wickremesinghe justified in suggesting that 83,000 employees work in an IFC situated next to the expanding transshipment port, when it is an obvious health and safety risk. Can the government of Sri Lanka underwrite such a risk?

The Economist reports that China appears to have deep pockets with a GNI of US\$ 9 trillion. However the capstone of the world's financial pyramid in Basel, Switzerland – The Bank of International Settlement (BIS) which governs 58 global banks and guides and directs the centrally planned global financial system – has warned China in its Quarterly Report to wean its economy off debt-driven growth, before it is too late. The total value of China's outstanding loans is US\$ 28 trillion; its credit vulnerability is three times over the danger threshold. If China's debt bubble bursts it will also affect Sri Lanka's economy.

Possible win-win situation for all stakeholders

Instead of the costly environmentally destructive land reclamation of 269 hectares, as suggested by the Chinese developer, the IFC could be situated in a location within Sri Lanka's mainland - if it complies with health and safety regulations - and then connect it by speed rail to Colombo. It will cost less than US\$ 1.43 billion offered by China.

If that suggestion is unsuitable the developer could use its allocated 149 hectares in a location within the expanding Megapolis or other safe location on this island.

The Government could also develop its 120 hectare allocation, in a safe location within the metropolis or another location of its choice or even develop existing run-down sites.

It is advantageous for Sri Lanka to invest and develop its well established essential Coastal Fishing Industry and its Coastal Tourist Industry to their full potential in parallel to the proposed International Financial Centre.

The sand and granite construction mess adjacent to Galle Face could be carefully converted into park land, an air-lung for the city with attractive restaurants. This will increase the 5.7 hectares available at Galle Face Green for the enjoyment of residents and tourists as suggested by Mr. Ranil Senanayake, Megapolis Advisor.

In the current economically unstable world all stake holders involved in the IFC project would thus have an opportunity to develop their full work potential in a safe, healthy environment. Sri Lanka will then be on the path to achieve the President's intention... "to make the people of Sri Lanka one of the happiest among the world communities."

The writer is an environmental researcher

PRINCIPAL SPONSOR



PRINT PARTNERS



SUNDAY TIMES
LIFE ONLINE
WWW.LIFE.LK

RADIO PARTNER



විජය

7 වැනි පිටුවේ

චලදායී දෙයක් කළොත් අපේ දිනම රවත් දිනම

විජය

7 වැනි පිටුවේ

චලදායී දෙයක් කළොත් අපේ දිනම රවත් දිනම

විජය

7 වැනි පිටුවේ

චලදායී දෙයක් කළොත් අපේ දිනම රවත් දිනම

විජය

7 වැනි පිටුවේ