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## Five years of development - Vavuniya District



■ The Government plans to expand the corporate area of Vavuniya from the 3,133 hectares to 11,840 hectares from 2009 to 2030

# Vavuniya, the future economic hub

by Dhaneshi Yatawara

People have now settled down in their original lands rebuilding their homes and now its time to herald a new plan for Vavuniya development. For those innocent people who fled from Puthumattalan seeking protection from the Government troops temporary shelter was provided in Vavuniya until they returned to their homes. Now with the resettlement process on full swing there are less than 74,616 people sheltered in the Welfare centres in Cheddikulam, Vavuniya where most of them are freely moving in and out of the welfare centres to attend to their jobs, see friends, family etc.

As soon as the de-mining is completed in the villages people will be resettled. To the Government which is strictly considering the safety of the people to be resettled de-mining is essential and de-mining has no shortcuts," Northern Province Governor Maj. Gen. G.A. Chandrasiri said explaining the vital issue in the resettlement program.

### Resettlement

Within Vavuniya district 151 persons of 43 families were resettled during August 2009 and in October 2009, 9,962 persons of 3,104 families and another 10,809 persons of 3,755 families in November 2009 and in December 2009 3,057 persons belonging to 693 families were resettled. With the addition of recent figures a total of 23,979 persons have been resettled in Vavuniya district. Vavuniya resettlement is nearing completion. Thus, Vavuniya now has more space and time to develop and expand as the gate-way to the Northern Province.

Being located in between Anuradhapura and Jaffna along the A-9 Road Vavuniya was considered an important urban centre playing a greater role in the development process. As the capital of the district the city has easy access from by both rail and road from Colombo and other major towns. Kandy, the central capital of Sri Lanka

is 90 kilometres away from Vavuniya while from Colombo there is a distance of 250 kilometres. Vavuniya is directly linked to Jaffna in north, Trincomalee in east, Mannar in west and Anuradhapura in south. And it is just 55 kilometres from Anuradhapura.

In 1883, when Sri Lanka was divided into five provinces and Vavuniya was included in the Northern Province. Vavuniya town was upgraded as an Urban Council in 1964. Vavuniya Urban Council area was declared under the Urban Development Authority Law number 41 of 1978 as an Urban Development Area in 1979 by Gazette Notification No. 38/16.

### Economic hub

The present Urban Council covers an area of 3,133.6 hectares. And today Vavuniya is the second order service centre of the Northern Province.

According to the Urban Development Authority, Vavuniya town has acquired the second position in the Northern Province on the basis of existing population pattern and future potential. Jaffna acquires the first position. Considering all these facts the Government has to rethink in restructuring Vavuniya as a city centre.

Therefore, to create a conducive environment economic activities in the Northern Province, today the Government is keen on having a large scale physical development in Vavuniya. "In order to meet this challenge the Urban Development Authority (UDA) was directed by the Ministry of Urban Development to prepare a development plan for Vavuniya urban area on the instructions of the Presidential Task Force on Re-settlement, Development and Security," said UDA's Director of Information L.H. Indrasiri. The land use details were worked out by the GIS Division of the Urban Development Authority using VHR satellite images in September 2009. "Vavuniya town as district capital has the main administrative offices within its limits and as a distribution centre for

food, fertilizer and fuel. It is also the main financial centre with public and private banks established in the town," Indrasiri explained.

### Population and land increase

In a previously plan Mankulam was to be developed as administrative capital of the Northern Province to accommodate a population of 500,000 in 2030. Hence, Vavuniya Urban Development Area can be developed as second order Urban centre with the current population of 80,000 which expected to be doubled in 2030.

The Government plans to expand the corporate area of Vavuniya from the existing 3,133 hectares to 11,840 hectares from 2009 to 2030 giving more space for trade, commerce, transportation and administration along with a 24 hour uninterrupted water and electricity power supply. "This is a long-term development plan to be implemented phase-wise," Indrasiri said.

According to the UDA statistics collected during the planning phase the Vavuniya Urban Council area covers an extent of 3,133.6 hectares within its declared limits.

The population was approximately 75,175 in 2009. "The area will be more urbanized with the new developments such as improvement of infrastructure facilities and regenerating services that will come up with the North Development Programs," Indrasiri added. Consequently with this development trend, it is expected that the population growth rate for the area will be 1.5%. Thus, the new plan has identified the services and facilities that should be provided to fulfil the needs of the projected population of 112,578 in the year 2030.

### More housing units

The Vavuniya Urban Council area had a total amount of 8,139 houses in 2007 and the housing need was estimated to be around 8,700. Hence, by 2030, 4788 additional housing

units are needed, it is estimated.

The transport Ministry signed an agreement with an Indian Government company, for the reconstruction of the railway track from Omanthalai to Pallai. The Ministry sources said the 90 km rail track will be constructed at a cost of USD 185 Million. It will have six crossing points between the two stations.

The construction is expected to be completed within 30 months. Once completed, the track will bear a maximum speed limit 120 kmph.

### Agriculture

The Northern development took another step yesterday with the Government earmarking 50,000 acres of rice cultivation at an estimated cost of Rs. 350 million. According to Agriculture Development and Agrarian Services Ministry this plan is to be implemented in time for the Yala season in March.

The programme aims to embrace all the five districts, namely Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Vavuniya and Mannar, and would increase cultivation by several fold from 80,000 MT.

Agriculturists expect a surplus that would help put an end to rice imports during the latter half of 2010. The drop in production is attributed to weather patterns that resulted in the harvest being delayed.

### Agrarian

The successful paddy cultivation and the black gram cultivation in the hinterlands will make Vavuniya active. Vegetables of the Southern districts and dry fish of Northern Districts are brought to the Vavuniya market and taken to other areas. Due to the disturbed environment, the threats from the LTTE terrorists, these activities were gradually absorbed by the dedicated economic centre at Dambulla. The economy of Vavuniya still remained agrarian. 37% of total land in the proposed Vavuniya Urban Development Area will be used for agricultural activities.

As the UDA has identified the most common feature of the central area of the city is the scattered government owned functions which includes all levels of Government offices, related residential facilities, stores and warehouse complexes etc.

Thus, the new plan focus on increasing the land area for commercial, residential, institutional needs to diversify the economic base of the town. The existing land used for commercial activities will be restructured to curtail the unnecessary traffic and pedestrian congestion. Conservation of environmentally sensitive areas such as forest, agriculture lands, water resources etc is a major sector of the fresh plan for Vavuniya development.

### Phase-wise

"These Development projects are expected to be implemented phase-wise as short-term, medium-term and long-term," Indrasiri added. However, taking the immediate needs of the area into consideration, some of the long term planned projects can also start now as implementation of those projects would take a longer time. Transport terminal, and rehabilitation of tank network, widening of roads are some of such projects.

As a town beautification project two linear parks are planned for Thandikulam, joining the agriculture farm site and in the railway station area. Four religious areas are identified to be developed into sacred areas which include the Madukanda temple, St. Anthony's Church and the Mosque and the Kovil located at the town centre.

The new plan includes low and high density residential zones, such as mixed development, commercial, industrial, institutional, tourism, utilities, commercial agriculture, environment conservation, recreational and a special zones.

The UDA has completed the task within a short period of time in keeping with the national and regional policies, play by a more development-oriented role in the regions.

Vavuniya development area in relation to DS Divisions



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