

THE NEED FOR DEVOLUTION OF AUTHORITY AND REGIONAL PARTICIPATION

Science City Corporation Concept of Devolution

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SRI LANKA trapped in a vicious cycle of power psychosis of leaders superposed on a fear psychosis of the masses has slipped down on the scales of economic growth to reach the bottom 10% of the poorest of the world's nations. Allegations and counter allegations thrown at each other by political leaders have brought about only increasing frustration among the youths who have risen up in arms against the very system of power transfers through the Westminster type Parliament.

The time has come, as appealed by the OPA and National Amity Movement last year, the Mahanayakas, Bishops Conference and other non-partisan leaders lately to ask the intellectuals, political leaders to re-examine the entire philosophy of development pursued over the last 40 years without being able to meet the aspirations of the people. New vistas are needed in the entire national drive towards economic regeneration.

In this context the clamour by the population groups most affected for liberalisation of segments of the economy from the clutches of centralised political planning, a process now termed

as devolution needs careful examination as a practical step in decentralisation of decision making.

The devolution cry mainly arise from Tamil ethnic population of the North who were affected by the central government policy implementation leading to stop-go-situation in the Northern agro-industrial economy, creating serious hardship to the farmer population giving rise to Tamil separatism. The marginalised deep South has risen in arms through left wing agitation for generations without serious impact on the politics of the country till recent times when the whole population has risen up in arms in rebellion.

Following the politico-economic struggle of the Northern Tamil sector, the devolution of authority has taken a character much influenced by the separatist psychosis of regional power groupings rather than economic demands of decentralisation of decision making. The results of negotiations of government with political groups of the North, introducing the unavoidable intervention of Indian politicians has led to the Provincial Council system of units for purpose of delegation of authority now incorporated in the 13th Amendment of the Constitution.

The demarcation of provincial boundaries by the British to suit the colonial needs of administration which is still carried over, has very little relevance to the economic development of these areas. The perpetration of the system has been the main problem that has to be corrected in a new strategy for economic revival.

The emphasis laid by successive governments over the last 40 years on agro-industrial strategies has clearly pointed to the need to concentrate decentralisation of administration to geographic zones based on watershed management and inter communication. A carefully thought out redemarcation of economic zones that leads itself to an efficient management of population activity is shown in the Proposed Regional Boundaries Map I. This follows clearly on the major Rivers System, Map II brought out by A. D. N. Fernando some time ago. Such sub-units for devolution of authority be termed Prefatures. Thus Sri Lanka would be divided into 8 Prefatures, each lending itself to a climatic zone of development. It may be noted that the above sub-divisions commands socio-economic and regional interests of the communities.

Each Prefature will have a population ranging from 1 million to 2 million, with a land area ranging from 5,000 square kilometers to 13,000 square kilometers. A close network of economic linkages between resources, activities, road and trading can lead to efficient development of

socio-economic projects through coordinaiton. A significant feature of the demarcation is that each Prefecture commands a stretch of the coast as well as the river valley and a population base. The 8 Prefatures are listed below and contain the main city centres listed against them:

IT must be emphasised that properly planned economic urban sub-sections within each of these river valleys would lead itself to the development of the agro-industrial linkages to enhance the benefits to the people.

The Science City Corporation concept of regional planned with R & D, Industry, sports, community, leisure facilities under each Prefecture can project the community demand into the 21st century by careful long term planning. See Chart 'A'.

Superposed on the 8 Prefactural development programmes, located at regional centres are 4 Free Trade Zones located close to the main ports of entry and exit to the country which control customs. The GCEC in Katunayaka and Biyagama near to Colombo have already developed. The Galle Industrial Zone at Koggala is under planning stage. Trincomalee FTZ and Yaipanam Kankesanthurai-Paranthan FTZ must be planned as a base for Industrial Zones in the North and East. This cater to the growing needs of large scale industrialisation and rapid growth in the neighbouring areas.

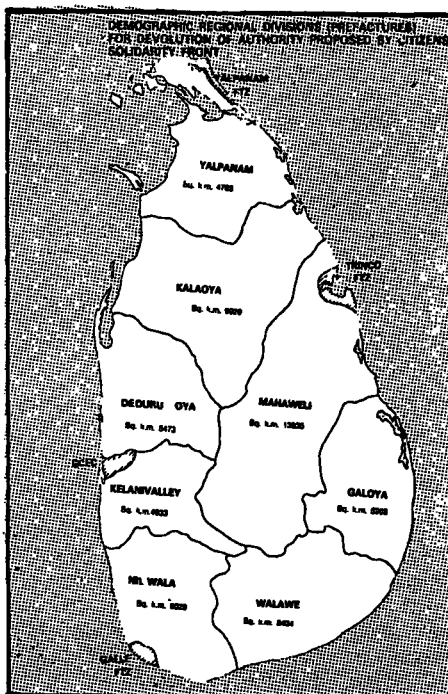
These four industrial zones would attract the labour, road networks and draw on the research and development potential associated with the technical and university institutions around these zones, apart from collaboration with the foreign business activity.

These proposals for development zones under the Prefecture system will take out any regional disputes among the ethnic groups. The inter-dependence will promote collaboration, cooperation and co-existence, a much desired change in outlook for a political stabilisation of the country.

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Chart A		SCIENCE CITY CORPORATION	
Approach	View Point	Subject of Re-organisation	Planing Concept
Promotion of Research Activity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of basic and applied research based on resource utilisation. International exposure. Establish Creative and technological communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination of University & Technical Institutions with R & D Centres. Socio-Economic research around multi-core network units. Community-Industry related research.
Re-organisation of Regional structures		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition of Agro-Industrial Zones, based on Human activity and resource utilisation. Coordination of population based activity Establish multi-core network in cities. Promote regionalism towards regional administration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimum use of population. Ease of migration, Inter-city network: Harmony between work place and living environment. Maximum security and sharing of social burden.
Industrial Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve basic industries with multi-core network. Forward and backward linkages for Industrial Zones at national level. Promote national and foreign exchange policy Rationalisation in the distribution of labour material resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New science based industry. Reorganise science facilities. Creative technological development. Science Parks and Service Parks. Job creation. Multi-core network structure. Positive link between R & D and society. High amenity based city centres. High compact city. Maintenance of optimum urban management.
New Urban Factories		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response to new urban trends. Conversion of old/new towns to urban network. Pluralistic development. 	

PREFACTURE	CITIES	AREA SQ. KM
1. Kelani	Colombo, Avissawella, Negombo Gampaha, Kegalle	4,933
2. Nilwala	Bentota, Galle, Matara	6,020
3. Walawa	Embilipitiya, Ambalantota, Wellawaya, Monaragala	8,494
4. Gal Oya	Bible, Ampara, Batticaloa	5,968
5. Mahaweli	Trincomalee, Mahiyangana, Badulla, Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya	13,935
6. Kata Oya	Kalawana, Anuradhapura, Horowpatana	9,920
7. Yaipanam	Jaffna, Mannar, Vauniya, Mutativu	4,780
8. Deduru Oya	Chilaw, Puttalam, Kurunegala	5,473



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soil conservation, forests, flood control, management of natural hazards etc. A watershed boundary always passes through sparsely populated areas unlike the existing Provincial boundaries which separate human activities at their most dense points.

Map 2 presents eleven sub-national units drawn on the basis of the watershed. Table 1 indicates the approximate area of each unit, the major townships and the river basins that fall within each designated region. We reiterate that the watershed region be given a fair trial in place of the present one. Unless we do so, we will be permanently trapped in our difficulties, faced with constantly explosive situations.