

Road to Jaffna –Road to Reconciliation in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

As a result of the civil war in Sri Lanka, the entire road network and many bridges in the Northern and the Eastern provinces had been destroyed or rendered practically unusable due to armed attacks and negligence of maintenance for a long time. The Northern Railway from Colombo to Kankesanthurai (KKS) has been the most popular transport service to the North since the British era. Besides the thousands of passengers, the main transportation of goods, fuel, and the mail was by rail for a long time. Likewise, the Talaimannar railway service was linked with the ferry service between Rameswaram in India and the Talaimannar Pier in Sri Lanka. This railway service was very popular among the passengers of the two countries. However, the two railway lines were completely destroyed by the LTTE and they robbed the steel bars of the track to build their bunkers in the war period. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the reconstruction process of roads and railway networks in the former war affected areas and its affect to the community and reconciliation in the country. The primary and the secondary data were used for this study. The government believed that as seen from an economic perspective, the reconstructed and developed highways and railway networks would help to speed up and facilitate the budding development projects and in terms of peace they would help to reconnect all ethnic groups in the rest of the country with those in Northern Sri Lanka. With the help of the world financial institutions and donor countries the government reconstructed the road and railway network in the North and the East provinces and reconnected the entire nation with former war affected areas. It was observed that now people could travel from the South to Jaffna and Batticaloa by road very comfortably without any checkpoints, barriers or other hassles. The newly renovated highway and railway networks facilitate the conduct of passenger services well. Further, visits of the local tourists from the South have renewed the relationships between both races, which augurs well for reconciliation in the country.

Key Words: *Railway, Reconciliation, Reconstruction, War in Sri Lanka*

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