



Mr. Chairman, Distinguish representatives from various countries of Asia and other regions of the world, and Mayors of our region and friends. Ladies and Gentleman, let me first of all thank, the Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan for extending an invitation to me to be present at this Asian Mayors Policy Dialogue for the Promotion of Environmentally Sustainable Transport in Cities Conference in Kyoto, Japan. As we all know that we have just stepped into the 21st century with problems from the past century and new problems of the present century.

As correctly stated in the concept Asia is expected to achieve significant economic growth during the 21st century. This economic growth will be accompanied by increased transport related service and activities resulting in many Environmental problems. Such as, vehicular air pollution, noise and traffic congestion inefficient use of energy resources, garbage non renewable fossil fuel and above all greater impact on public health.



Matale City's Bus Holding Places

We all agree that transportation is very necessary for economic growth of any country. But balancing these needs with the need to protect the environment should be at the heart of the concept of environmentally sustainable transport.

Ladies and gentlemen, I started my political carrier as a member of the Municipal Council of the historic city of Matale and later the Mayor of this beautiful city. During this period I had to solve number of problems. The most difficult one was traffic congestion in the city limits. To ease these problems we have built a highway, avoiding the city, for those vehicles, which need not pass through the city, street and I must say that it was a success. Secondly I was able to get the fullest co-operation of the residents in the town to widen the city streets to minimize the traffic- congestion.



Kiddies Park run by the MMC



Tree Planting Ceremony

To beautify the city, we have planted trees and herbal plants in the public park and along the streets. A separate park for children too has been built with all modern facilities. A new programme was introduced to collect garbage in the city. But with little income that we collect from the taxpayers, we are unable to install a garbage - recycling plant. I would very much appreciate if any country or the Mayor of a city who will help us in this venture.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The city of Matale is right in the middle of the hill country, surrounded by beautiful mountains and the longest river the Mahaweli flows through the central part of Matale district. To the north of Matale city - about 3 kilo meters - there is an ancient temple more then 2000 years old, where Buddhist scriptures were written on ola - leaves and this temple named Aluwihara Rajamaha Viharaya is world famous for its environmental friendly atmosphere. And to the further north, of Matale city is one of the eight wonders of the world, a rock - fortress named Sigiriya, built in the 5th century by king Kashyapa. This is the first planned city in the world with all facilities beautiful parks - city with large areas of woods and forest cover.



Aluvihare Buddies Temple Matale



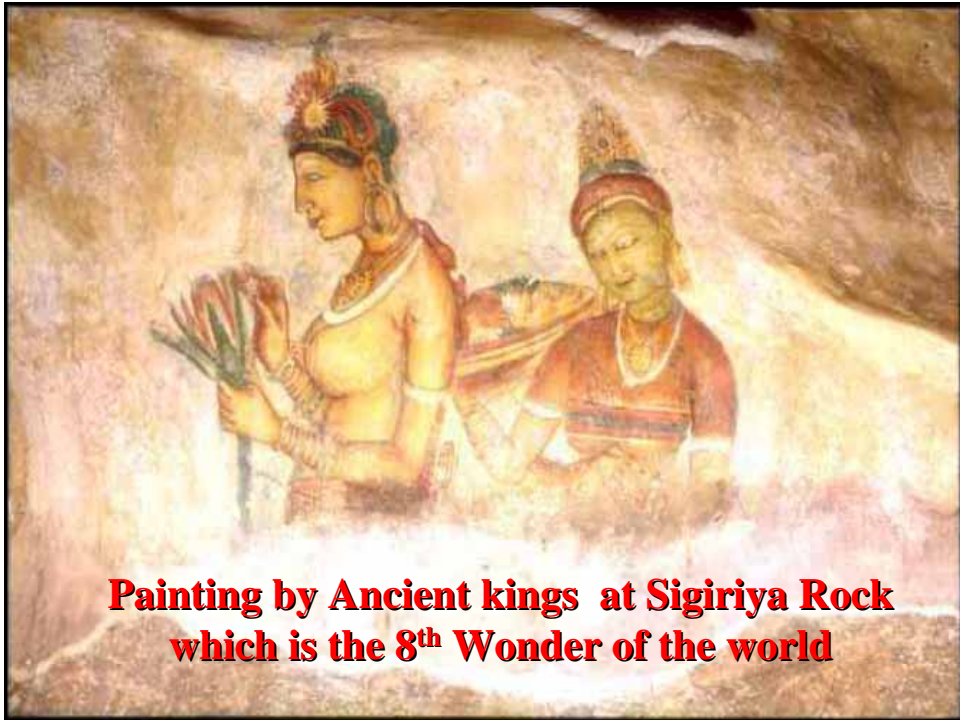
Paddy Fields



Vegetable Sales



Rock Paintings



**Painting by Ancient kings at Sigiriya Rock
which is the 8th Wonder of the world**

Matale is predominantly an agricultural area where farmers grow paddy, vegetables, fruits and specially big onions. To help farmers to sell their produce, and Economic Centre was started in Dambulla town, Where other agricultural products are exchanged. This town is called "non sleeping" town. because business is done round the clock for 24 hours of the day. As Dambulla is situated right in the centre of Sri Lanka, both farmers and traders find it easy to sell and buy their products. This centre has helped to alleviate the poverty problem in our country to some extent.

Our government has started a new programme "Gama Neguma" Building the Village to improve the standard of living of the villagers. Here we pay more attention to the infra structure , specially roads. We have introduced the concrete roads - ways to remote villages and it has been a very successful programme, because the things produced in village can now be transported to towns easily and this work is done with the participation of the villagers themselves.

As the President of the Sri Lanka Hockey Federation



Recreation activities too have been introduced to far off villages, where youths as well as adults could enjoy. The age - old traditional dancing, singing and other forms of activities are now been taught in government sponsored cultural centres. Volley ball, cricket and very specially hockey are very popular sports, in Matale. Matale is called the "Cradle Of Hockey" in Sri Lanka. and I am proud to say that I have been elected the president of Sri Lanka Hockey Federation for the second successive term.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Matale, the district I represent, is a multi - national and multi - religious one. Where Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers live like one family, enjoying their own traditional life styles.



Buddhist Temple



Muslims Mosque



Hindu Kovil



Christian Church

Although the majority of the people are Buddhists, there are Hindus, Muslims and Christians too. They have their own religious shrines and places of worship. They all participate in each other religious festivals and activities.

This I believe, Mr. President, should be the correct path for peaceful coexistence

With "Mahinda Chintanaya" - Mahinda concept of our President Hon. Mahinda Rajapaksha has given strict orders to maintain the greenery of the cities and towns to reduce the environmental pollution, and I must say that my town Matale is a green city and to keep it more beautiful and clean, we need the advice and help of the distinguish persons who are gathered here.



**His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka
Hon. Mahinda Rajapaksha**

As the Minister of Urban Development, it is my bounded duty to help the city dwellers to live a contended, healthy life without being subjected to the pollution of environment and other problems that the developing third world countries face today.

Finally, I appeal to all the distinguish guests to put into practice what we discuss here and to make our world a better, a healthier and a pollution free place to live in.



I thank you, all
Thank you Very much.

**Minister of Urban Development
Sri Lanka.**