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FROM THE EDITOR…….

"Roads make the civilizations." A famous and well-thought statement by the first Asian to win the Noble Prize for literature - Rudyard Kipling. As such, transportation is the key to success for the economic sustainability of any country. It is noteworthy that in Sri Lanka, railway transportation accounts for only 7% of land transportation. Though little, this mode has tremendous importance to the fragile socio-economic status of our island nation. Out of nine railway lines in Sri Lanka, the coastal line is the most important railway route. By 1895, the coastal railway line had been constructed up to Matara, and since then, there was no extension for nearly 120 years as with other railway routes, partly due to geographical reasons. Then in 2010, the construction of Matata – Kataragama railway track began with Chinese financial and technical assistance for helping people beyond Matara. This project consists of three phases with the first phase from Matara to Beliatta, which culminated in January 2019, with the transit of an S12 class diesel multiple unit making it the first train on a newly completed railway track. The 26.06-km long track hosts four railway stations with two substations, and importantly, the line hosts the longest railway tunnel at Naakuttigama in Kekanadura with a length of 610 m, surpassing Singhamalle (Blackpool) Tunnel between Hatton and Kotagala in the main line. Also, it has the longest railway bridge 170 m long over Nilwala River. The rail track has 12 bridges and passes over Nilwala, Walawe, and Kirama Oya. It also has the longest viaduct with over 1.5 km from Matara to Kekanadura. Low rise-mountains running North-South direction made the route technically difficult to be built. Importantly, what is depicted here is the understanding of geographical features of the land and selecting the best option for an engineering design thus creating a minimum disturbance to the natural environment and existing built environment. Although it may not be the cost-optimized solution, which may be viewed critically in our finance riding economy, it will ensure the minimum damages to the surrounding topography. The blending of nature and engineering is essential for sustainable development. In a world where the built environment has become notorious for creating significant threats to the human existence, engineering way of judging the nature is of extreme importance and is a good lesson for our engineering community.

Eng. (Dr.) P.A.K. Karunananda
BSc. (Eng.) (Hons.) (Peradeniya), MPhil. (Peradeniya), MEng. (Ehime), DEng. (Ehime), C.Eng, MIE(SL)
Editor, 'ENGINEER', Journal of The Institution of Engineers.