FROM THE EDITOR…

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The need for efficient transport infrastructure is mandatory to achieve the socio-economic development goals of a country. The government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) identified the need for such improvement of the existing land-based transport systems. Through the National Master Plan for 2007-2017, GOSL has identified the Central Expressway Project (CEP) as one of the key expressways to be implemented in the future. CEP provides an efficient alternative to Colombo – Kandy (A1) and Ambepussa – Trincomalee (A6) roads. Further, it is aimed at developing the livelihood of interior provinces of Sri Lanka and enhancing the tourism industry in the country.

The former Northern Expressway Project (NEP) has been renamed as CEP and its first section (Stage I of CEP) commences at Kadawatha on Outer Circular Highway (OCH) phase – 3 and then proceeds up to Gampaha, almost following the earlier Colombo Kandy Alternative Highway (CKAH) for which a feasibility study had been completed in 2001. Gampaha onwards, CEP follows the same trace already being recognized for former NEP. Subsequently, the expressway will cross Mirigama, and Kurunegala while ending at Dambulla. The Kandy link will branch off at Pothuhera and terminate at Galagedara which is about 10km away from Kandy City. CEP has four stages; Stage I from Kadawatha to Mirigama (37 km), Stage II: from Mirigama to Kurunegala (39.9 km); Stage III Pothuhera to Galagedara (32.5 km); and Stage IV from Kurunegala to Dambulla (76.8 km).

The GoSL inaugurated Stage II of the CEP on the 15th January 2022. It connects the section from Mirigama to Kurunegala with a distance of 39.9 km. Stage II of CEP has five interchanges at Mirigama, Nakalagamuwa, Dambokka, Kurunegala and Yaggapitiya. Nearly 10 km (25%) of the section from Mirigama to Kurunegala has been constructed as a viaduct on reinforced concrete pillars to prevent flood damage. Sound barriers have been erected wherever necessary to prevent excessive sound effects from moving traffic. Further, the 31 km long Pothuhera-Galagedara stretch will have four lanes and four interchanges including Polgahawela, Rambukkana, Galagedara, and Pothuhera.

The most significant and contributing factor of the construction of Stage II of CEP is that it was fully constructed by utilizing the engineering expertise of Sri Lanka. Local engineering expertise was obtained from design to construction, supervision, and consultancy. Further, several new features have been added to improve the higher safety and environmental sustainability since the CEP crosses several environmental sensitive areas.

The Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka acknowledges the contributions made by all engineers involved in Stage II of CEP as it symbolizes the engineering ingenuity of Sri Lankan engineers. The completion of the CEP and its amalgamation with the existing highway network in Sri Lanka would create a new era in the transportation of Sri Lanka.

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