

Focus and Scope : Sri Lanka - Ampara District

Focus : Ampara District

The district which is in the shape of an irregular arc extends from the south eastern coast, almost to the middle of the country in a northwestern direction and occupies an area of 4,415 Km² with an estimated population of 752,000 for 2021 giving it a population density of 170.3/ Km². The district consists of 20 Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DSDs) and 503 Grama Niladhari Divisions (GNDs). Each DSD has at least one health facility. However, 28% of hospitals, 18% of Dispensaries and 11% of Maternity/Baby clinics are 5 or more km from a GND. The district is served by the Base Hospital -Kalmunai (BHK) and the Ampara District General Hospital (ADGH).

The BHK is situated in Kalmunai which is at the north eastern end of the district, bordered by the Indian Ocean to the east. The BHK is the oldest hospital in the region. It was built in 1809 by the British as a Leprosy Hospital. It developed to its current status as a base hospital in 1973 and was brought under the ministry in 2004.

Dr Chaturanga Vithanagamage started the orthopaedic unit as a clinic in 2021. Today it has a 24 mixed bed capacity with a dedicated theatre facility, clinics for adult and paediatric, computed tomography and fluoroscopy and Dr P. Kalaventhana is the present orthopaedic surgeon working at this unit-year 2024.

The unit manages all levels of musculoskeletal trauma (excluding associated vascular injuries-which are transferred) and the full spectrum of elective surgery including deformity corrections, arthroplasty, spine and arthroscopy. There are 2 full day elective lists and a daily casualty theatre. On an average about 20 cases are done per week. There is one fracture clinic and a paediatric orthopaedic clinic that sees approximately 150 patients that include about 5 CTEV babies.

The ADGH is located more or less in the middle of the district, i.e. more or less at the midpoint of the arc. The ADGH, the main hospital serving the Ampara district, started as a central dispensary in 1954 under the Gal Oya development project. In 1967 it was upgraded to a district hospital, then to a Base Hospital in 1974 and to its current status in 2001.

Dr. Bandujeewa. Piyasena, commenced operating in the casualty wards in 2004. In 2005, an orthopaedic unit with a single surgeon was established with a 24 mixed bed capacity. Dr. R. Vimalarajan is the present orthopaedic surgeon working at the hospital-year 2024.

The unit manages all levels of musculoskeletal trauma (excluding associated vascular injuries-which are transferred) and the full spectrum elective surgery, including arthroplasty, spine and arthroscopy. Currently, there is a daily casualty theatre and one-and-a-half-day elective list. On an average about 25 cases are done per week which include both elective and acute/trauma cases. There are two clinics per week which see on an average, 30 'fracture' patients, 75 general orthopaedic patients and attend to 5-7 Ponseti castings.

Scope: Land and the people...

The world famous Arugam Bay beach -still among the top 50 surf destinations of the world- is located ~75km south east of the ADGH. It is more or less the same distance south from BHK. A further ~ 25 km south is the Okanda entrance to the Kumana national park which occupies the southernmost part of the Ampara district. The Maduru Oya National park occupies the northwestern corner and is located ~ 100 km northwest of ADGH. The intervening area consists mainly of an expanse of paddy fields and their cultivation -the main livelihood of the population -is a legacy of an ancient civilization running back to the time of Buddha. The Deegawapiya temple (300.BC), venerated as one of the sixteen places (Solosmasthanaa) that Buddha visited during his three visits to Sri Lanka is located ~15 km east of ADGH. The lesser known Rajagala temple located ~ 25 km north of ADGH is of more historic importance as it is considered to be the place where Arahath Mahinda stayed before (and after) the historical meeting with King Devanampiyatissa (247 BC), which is the recognized turning point of our country. The Gal oya reservoir running from the Senanayake Samudra is located ~ 25km west of the ADGH plays a key role in supplying the water for the irrigation of this land.



Main Photo - Boats lining on the Arugambay Beach.
Starting Clockwise from bottom right:
Kumana National park - Hornbills and a lake at
sunset , Deegawapiya, Rajagala - Resting Place of
Arahath Mahinda and remnants of the Monastery,
Paddy fields as far as the eye can see, Boating on
Senanayake Samudra, Gal Oya leading to the
Senanayake Samudraya reservoir.

