

Mr. Wimal Weerawansa

**Minister of Construction,
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and Common Amenities, the
Republic of Sri Lanka**



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Honorable ministers, members, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today in the event of the first meeting of the regional slum upgrading working group. Today, urbanization is not synonymous with human progress. Urban slum groups are outpacing urban growth by a wide margin. Approximately half the world's population now lives in cities and towns. One out of three urban dwellers, nearly one billion people, are living in underserved settlements. In today's world nearly eight hundred million children go to sleep without dinner. Majority of these children live in urban and semi urban underserved settlements or in other words, crammed cities. Actually crammed cities are products of urban ruler dispirit which leads to the segregation of people from rural areas to cities for economic reasons. Urban base and create dependent economic policies promoted by international linden agencies help created the situation in most of the countries. This is further aggravated by internal conflict and worse. However, it is obvious that the efforts of the world community in solving the problem of crammed cities have not been successful. Yet the western world is pending trillions of dollars in wars which are against these very same communities. However in Sri Lanka we have taken courageous steps to change this worth scenario. Under the guidance of his Excellency the president Mahinda Rajapaksa (Name of Sri Lankan President) we could eradicate the terrorism prevailed in the country for more than thirty years.

After bringing peace to the country, the government of Sri Lanka is leading to impact on national physical development program throughout the country under the name "Mahinda Chintana" as the part of creating continuous climate for ethnic harmony, regional development, political, social and economic advancement to a progressive framework. Instead the mindset of "Mahinda Chintana" the development policy framework of the government of Sri Lanka has focused national priorities including housing and urban development. The right to adequate housing is one of the principals of the government of Sri Lanka. The government of Sri Lanka has currently the right to push it into its constitution. To facilitate this process, necessary policies and legislations have been introduced during the past few years.

Accordingly we asked the ministry of construction, engineering service, services housing and common amenities declare the operation of Janasevana National Housing and Settlement Development with the target of one million housing units. Of this target, forty thousand housing units are unconditional for the people who live

The challenge, faced by the existing government is to make the wonderful hope, given by His excellency the President, Hon. Mahinda Rajapaksha to transform Sri Lanka to the wonder of Asia, the precious wish of the land, a reality. The only wish of the Sri Lankan patriotic people is to see that this hope comes true. "A house for each Sri Lankan family" – The objectives of Mahinda Chinthana Forward Vision should be made true due to the fact that it is an essential factor to lift Sri Lanka as the wonder of Asia. Ministry of construction, Engineering Services, Housing & Common Amenities launches the operation of Janasevana National Housing & Settlement Development in order to make that noble concept a reality.

in urban underserved settlements we are deliberating here today. If I come to the urban sect of focusing on underserved settlements or slum and shanty settlements, one hundred and fifty thousand such housing units were designated within the Colombo metropolitan region. About 53657 of them were located within 1614 settlements in the city of Colombo. In relation to our stand point,



I firmly believe that this deprived community is a product of imbalanced economic strategies we adapted in the past. Previous enough negative consequences by introducing innovative national economic policies with breaking down the benefits of the new world and the economy to the widest segment of our society are the challenge a head. The mission of Janasevana National Housing and Settlement Development is to provide the ownership of an environment and culture friendly, power efficient, spacious unit of settlement for every Sri Lankan family, including people in underserved settlements. The Janasevana program is broken down into several sub-programs which focus on the needs of the Sri Lankan people and efficient solutions. With the lessons learned at history, Janasevana strategy plan has identified three fold housing programs for underserved settlements. First One: Janasevana “Sahasra Lanka” Housing Programme: This is an innovative market based voluntary re-housing program with the participation of the state, private sectors and the community who address the shelter problem of slums and shanty retail. This program will offer the urban-poor an option to trade off the land on which they live without title against a modern apartment constructed within the compact township. Second One: Janasevana human development program. This program aims the development of socio-economic and cultural competencies of said community to enter the city’s mainstream. Third One: “Nagamu Purawara” settlement upgrading program. This program is designed to upgrade the underserved settlements by providing basic or essential physical and social infrastructure for the people units. Such time they are given finer solution to Janasevana “Sahasra Lanka” Housing Programme.

Ladies and gentleman,

In answer to the good urban governance by strengthening of civil society, local partnerships and enabling the urban-poor, we are aiming our cities and urban places to manage informal hyper growth. Our government has also been successful in mobilizing and utilizing substantial volumes of foreign assistance towards the public investments as rapid and socio-economic development in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka wishes to harness international cooperation and assistance for the achievements of its public needs. Mobilization of housing tenants in rational development basic infrastructure provision, development of monitoring mechanisms, human resource development, renting of community based organizations are some important areas identified for international cooperation.

“Nagamu Purawara” aims at renovating the old flat houses in main cities of the island including Colombo. The second step of the Nagamu Purawara programme, commenced by His Excellency the president Hon. Mahinda Rajapaksha has been implemented now. Rs. 255M has been utilized for the year 2011. 3000 housing units will be renovated under that.