

## Hayleys reawakening for Yapahuwa

**Top blue chip with extensive interests in exports and agriculture sets an example to others by renovating King Parakramabahu-built but now abandoned tank in Kattambuwwa**

Top diversified blue chip with extensive interests in exports and agriculture, Hayleys Group cut the first sod to what would herald a new awakening for the people of Yapahuwa.

Group company Hayleys Agro Products Ltd., (HAPL), on its own initiative would renovate and maintain the 19-acre Kattambuwwa Maha Wewa in the Yapahuwa electorate in the Kurunegala district. According to historical records the tank was constructed by King Parakramabahu the Great before he became King of Sri Lanka. The tank has not been renovated since 1941 when the late Mr. Parker, the famous irrigation engineer renovated it.

Hayleys Chairman Sunil Mendis said that the gesture by the company was on its own initiative as a value adding project to the community. Power and Energy Minister Karu Jayasuriya had expeditiously facilitated the project and was the proud chief guest at the ceremonial commencement of the renovation work. Over 70 families live near the tank and a moving scene was the participation of the entire village at the ceremony.

Hayleys considered it necessary to renovate the tank to hold full capacity enabling the farmers of Kattambuwwa to cultivate under irrigation in both the Maha and Yala seasons. HAPL would invest around Rs. 3 million to renovate the tank within three months and would form a partnership with the farmers and villagers to maintain it properly to ensure the tank continues to serve the needs of the village.

Hayleys would also introduce successful agricultural practices, help improve yield of agriculture as well as farmers to engage in high value crops. These would provide an opportunity for the village to improve its socio-economic conditions. The renovated tank would help increase the extent of paddy cultivation to 70 acres from the current 40. Another key objective of Hayleys initiative is to develop a sustainable and viable model for development and maintenance of neglected tanks in the country with private sector support. Considering its deep involvement in agriculture, especially in cultivation of high value crops and value added exports, renovation of a key tank is a natural gesture of Hayleys commitment to support agriculture. Hayleys is Sri Lanka's largest exporter of exotic vegetables and the only exporter of hybrid flower seeds.

It also has extensive interests in plantation agriculture in addition to being the largest exporter of coir fibre and related products. Hayleys is also a leading supplier of agricultural inputs such as agro equipment, crop protection products, fertilizer, seeds and veterinary products for the benefit of the farming community.

Power and Energy Minister Karu Jayasuriya said that this project of Hayleys is a model and all the other private sector companies should follow this example and help in the process of developing the remote villages. The Minister explained that the private sector has a great role to play in a country's development. He said that if the remote villages were developed the country would no longer have to depend on imports, as the domestic

production will increase. "This will also help the poor villagers to enjoy a better life style," he added.

Minister of Irrigation H.G. P. Nelson said that this is a gift to the people in the village from Hayleys. He lauded the company for maintaining a close rapport with the rural people. Minister of Paddy Development D.M. Bandaranayake also commended Hayleys for its noble gesture.

Kattambuwawa Farmer Organisation President P. M. V. Mudiyanse said that renovating the tank was something, which the farmer community was in need of for a long time. He said that two third of the villagers have paddy fields but they are unable to cultivate during the Yala season and with this timely project this problem has been solved. Mudiyanse said crops such as cashew are also being cultivated in the village. He said that cashew has been planted in 50 acres in the village. Renovation of the tank will help these plantations as well he said.