

Dutch Hospital Shopping Precinct

The Old Dutch Hospital is believed to be one of the oldest buildings in Colombo Fort. According to available records, it was built during the rule of the Dutch (1656 - 1796). A Dutch map drawn in 1732 shows the hospital at its present site.

The Colombo Fort Police Station was in this building from the early 1980s to 1990s, earlier it housed the Colombo Apothecaries. During the colonial era, the Dutch hospital was established to cater to the medical requirements of the staff of the Dutch India Company. It was built near the harbour because it was convenient to transport patients from ships.

It suffered heavy damage in the LTTE attack that followed the Central Bank bombing in 1996.

On December 2, 2011, it was unveiled as a shopping arcade and dining precinct; its historical architecture was preserved to attract tourists.

Initially, the Tourism Authority took over the property and converted it into a tourist attraction while retaining its original Dutch architecture. Later, the Urban Development Authority under the De-fence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa took over the project and completed the renovation.

During the renovation, even though special attention was paid to preserve the original structure, it was modernised with state-of-the-art facilities. The shopping precinct consisting 12 stalls with a restaurant, a jewellery store, textile and handicraft stalls, was declared open as a high end tourist centre.



Nawala Wetland Park

The 'Wetland Park' built in Nawala was opened on January 12, 2013. The Urban Wetland Park known as 'Weli Park' was the brainchild of Secretary of Defence and Urban Development, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa.

The master plan for the Wetland Park was drawn up to control the seasonal floods in the city while setting up a beautiful environment for people to relax. The park is five acres of land and the cost of the project was approximately 81.6 million rupees.

The project commenced in June 2012, was a

joint endeavour of the Sri Lanka Army, Navy, Land Reclamation Department and Urban Development Authority.

It includes a 1.45 Km-long foot path for walking and jogging, play areas for families and a boat service by the Navy linking Diyawanna Lake in Battaramulla, Wellawatte canal. Small islets have been built giving a panoramic view to attract local and migrant birds. Plans are underway to establish soon a floating restaurant to the lake side. All the lighting arrangements for the wetland park and the walking pathway are supplied by solar power.



Walkways and Leisure Areas

The Independence Square walkway and leisure area was opened on the December 3, 2011.

On either side of the walkway are landscaped gardens complete with fountains, ponds, trees and flowering plants. The idea is to give the public yet another pleasant urban venue to gather, relax and stroll around enjoying the surroundings.

The spectacular walkway and leisure area adjacent to Diyawanna Oya Waters Edge premises in Sri

Jayawardanapura Kotte was declared open on February 23, 2012.

The area, earlier a marshland, was developed by the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development. The construction was undertaken by the Land Reclamation and Development Corporation with the assistance of Army, Navy, and the Civil Defence Force.



Diyatha Uyana, Battaramulla

Diyatha Uyana, the new dedicated horticulture sales zone facilitating the sales and marketing of local flora and tropical flowers at Battaramulla was opened September 15, 2012.

It comprises 84 floral outlets built in a breathtaking landscape and setting. The spectacular water fountain adds more beauty to the area. The project was carried out by the Sri Lanka Army, Navy and Civil Security Department personnel.



Colombo Race Course

The Colombo Race Course was for horse racing in 1893 and later it was moved from the Colpetty Race Course.

However in late 1941 when World War II began in the East, and subsequent to the fall of Singapore, the Royal Navy's East Indies Station was moved to Colombo, and the No. 222 Group of the Royal Air Force was based in Ceylon. When the order was given to construct an airfield at the Colombo Racecourse, Minister of Agriculture and Lands, D S Senanayake, who later became the 1st Prime Minister of Ceylon, was given the task of its construction. A single runway, the station headquarters and the officers' mess were set up in the bungalows in Cinnamon Gardens and were serviced by a newly established military hospital in the premises of Royal College Colombo. Two squadrons of the Royal Air Force were based at the racecourse.

The Sri Lanka Army too was at the racecourse buildings occasionally as a temporary garrison.

With time it lost its glory with only state functions and ceremonies being held occasionally.

Gradually the place was neglected and with the Colombo's changing skyline it became an eyesore. This 27-acre prime land in Cinnamon Gardens in Colombo had been abandoned for nearly half a century.

In 2012, the 6th Engineer Services Regiment and the Central Engineering Consultancy Bureau renovated the Grand stand and the Colombo Turf Club building. The remaining grounds were redeveloped into Sri Lanka's first international grade Rugby Union grounds. The redeveloped Colombo Race Course was ceremonially opened on October 20.

It was renovated at a cost of 125 million rupees retaining its historical importance and architectural uniqueness. The refurbished Race Course mini stand comprises a pavilion, restaurants, a station shop, dress boutiques, sports, handicrafts and gifts shops.

The racetrack has been converted into an international rugby ground and the Grand stand also been completed. This will be the main international standards rugby venue in Sri Lanka.

Garden City Of The East

By Camelia Nathaniel

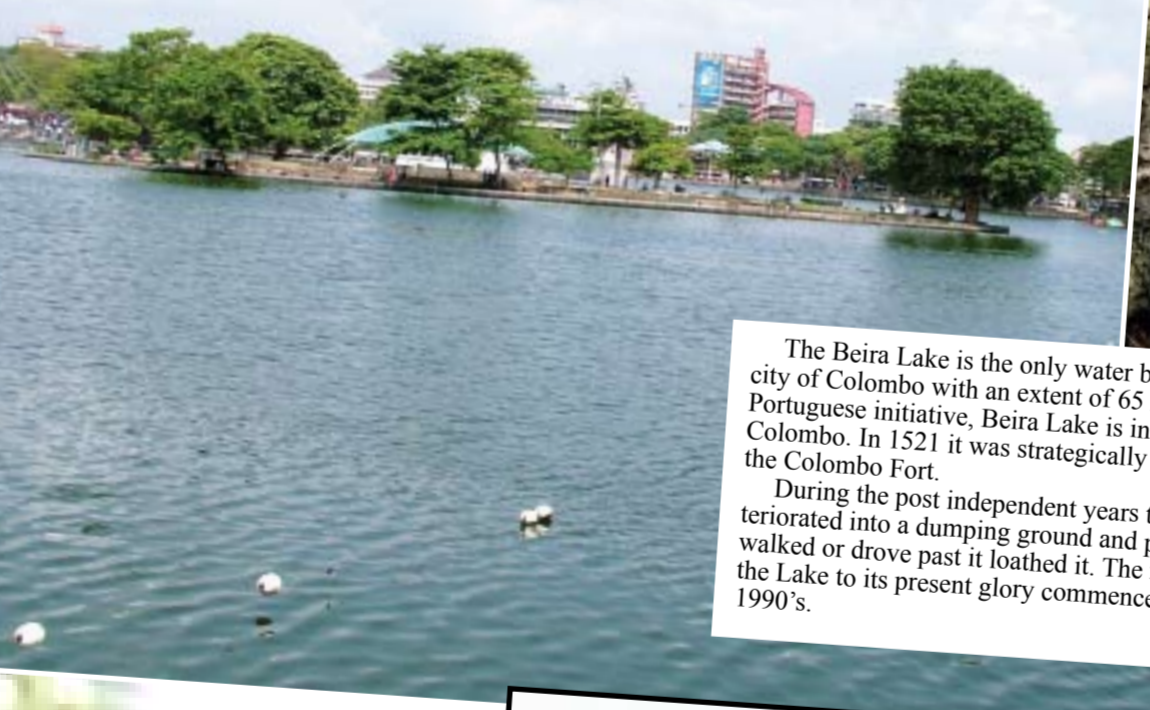
Of late, Colombo was being spruced up and the citizens now can enjoy a greener, cleaner city. To this end, the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development launched a mega-project to transform Colombo into a 'Garden City of the East' on May 29, 2012.

The Metro Colombo Urban Development Project (MCUDDP) financed by a concessionary loan amounting to USD 213 million aims to reduce flood risks, develop urban infrastructure, services, road networks and improve the environment in Colombo and its suburbs.

There are many colonial buildings all around Colombo, along with ancient temples, kovils, mosques and churches. Colombo is full of public spaces with great historical and symbolic value such as Viharamahadevi Park, old Victoria Park, and Independence Square. The Secretary of Defence's vision in developing the city spaces is to highlight our rich heritage. Several Colombo building renovation projects are now being implemented following these principles.

This week, In Trip features some of these projects, and delves into their history.

Beira Lake restoration project

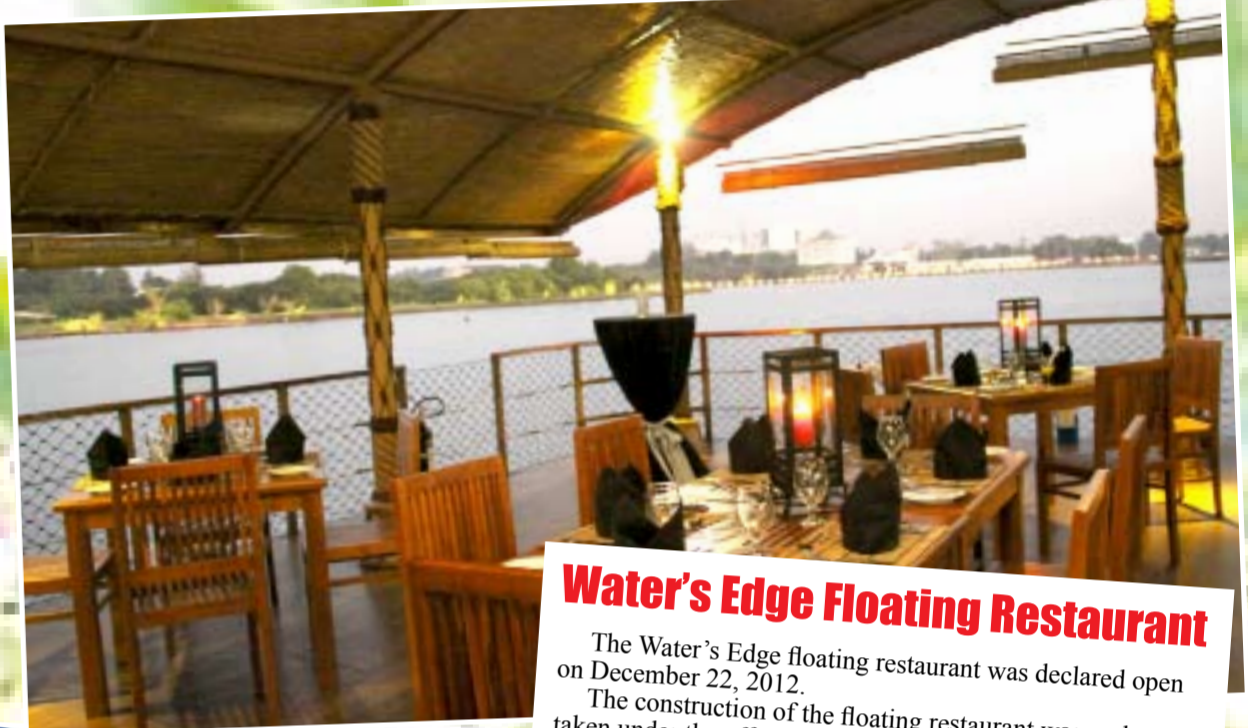


The Beira Lake is the only water body within the city of Colombo with an extent of 65 hectares. The Portuguese initiative, Beira Lake is in the heart of the Colombo Fort.

During the post independent years the lake deteriorated into a dumping ground and people who walked or drove past it loathed it. The restoration of the Lake to its present glory commenced in the early 1990's.

Considering the importance of rehabilitation of the lake as a public property, a master plan was prepared in 1996 by the UDA with the German Government.

The 'Beira Walk' is a pleasant recreational park for the whole family and 'Kala Duwa' the small island in the centre of the Lake provides a unique environment for Sri Lankan artists to display their talents where several restaurants and cafes are also in the vicinity.



Water's Edge Floating Restaurant

The Water's Edge floating restaurant was declared open on December 22, 2012.

The construction of the floating restaurant was undertaken under the offshore patrol construction project of the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) to a local plan. The restaurant can accommodate 36 to 55 persons. It is 51 ft in length and 31 ft in breadth. A Technical team of the Navy has been appointed to handle all mechanical issues with hotel crew for serving with a chef.

The restaurant functions on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 3.00pm to 6.00pm including three rides per day in an hour. Night rides are also available enabling tourists to experience the spectacular view of the city at dusk.

The floating restaurant also accommodates individual functions.



Vihara Maha Devi Park and Town Hall Restoration Project



Viharamahadevi Park was originally known as the Victoria Park. It was renamed in the 1950s after the independence to give it a Sri Lankan identity respecting to the mother of the great king Dutugemunu, Vihara Maha Devi.

This park, originally an area of 100 acres, is expanding on either side of Green Path or Sir Marcus Fernando Mawatha, and has now been

confined to a 45-acre land with many buildings such as the Museum, 'Aesthetic University', Mahaweli Centre, Tennis Court and various other buildings.

In the early 1990s one section of the park was used to construct the Open Air theatre for social gatherings and political meetings.

Work on the refurbishment of the Vihara Maha Devi Park will be carried out under the Metro Colombo Urban Development Project (MCUDDP).

Renovations to the park, a part of the project's redevelopment of the Town Hall area, will take place at a cost of Rs. 308.9 million.



Parliament Ground Diyawanna walkway

