



From above the transforming landscape around the Diyawanna Oya

**I felt like a bird flying over the city, carefree, observing the happenings below. The city appeared more like a model with buildings neatly placed with greenery interspersed. □Nelum Pokuna, Town Hall, Diyawanna Oya, the Parliament complex in Sri Jayawardenepura and other unique elements that characterise this land seemed like frosting on a cake. □The city was getting a new look under the direction of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development. I was mesmerised by the beauty of this city I call home...**

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To me the city is not just Greater Colombo but also the area surrounding the Diyawanna Oya. As our chartered helicopter, a Bell 206 from Helitours left Ratmalana on a one hour flight and fluttered towards the interior, places that seem so far were now just a stone's throw away. Within minutes the highest legislature of this country, the Parliament was in my view. If I could jump up and down with excitement without pushing my companions out of the helicopter I would have done so, but as we were taking photographs the two rear

doors had been removed and my friends were harnessed on to the aircraft for safety while they took photographs with complete ease. Our pilot dispelled any fears that we may have had as he confidently manoeuvred the helicopter with experience. His confidence gave us confidence!

I could not believe that there were such lush paddy fields so close by. On one side there were paddy fields and on the other the newly built Japanese Friendship road winding along the Diyawanna from Madiwela to Battaramulla making a clear pathway through the land. □The neatly paved walking paths were somewhat visible from our 700ft height. Vehicles looked like dinky toys on the road and I felt like a giant watching from above. Mini islets with trees created a picturesque setting and it was apparent that landscaping work was still on going as heavy vehicles dug and moved back and forth. However, what we saw was absolute perfection...our country forging ahead.

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As we moved closer towards the Parliament I was fascinated by the sheer simplicity of the landscape. The white stupa of a temple glistened in the morning light and as we moved farther, smaller buildings became larger and multi-storey buildings became visible. Soon we were hovering around the new developments in front of Waters Edge. On ground it is somewhat a large area to walk but from atop we could see a neatly paved stretch, miniature in size that we could almost gather up in our hands and the roads adjoining seemed very much like a toy set. A place to walk, relax and enjoy oneself, the area surrounding the Diyawanna is a joy to see.

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My friend in front signalled to the pilot that we were ready to go on and with one expert move we turned around and headed towards the Greater Colombo area. I was astonished at the amount of waterways we have in Colombo and it was apparent that many were undergoing development work as was visible by the presence of newly dug earth. The city was definitely blooming.

[Mini islets with trees created a picturesque setting and it was apparent that landscaping work was still on going](#)

The crisp air was exhilarating and the landscape extended far and beyond. In the distance the subtle outline of mountains could be seen, and as we proceeded deeper into the city, the characteristic coastal belt of Colombo came into view. Activities in the Colombo Harbour had already begun and the terminals were visible from afar. The rising towers in Colombo seemed like Lego pieces that completed the picture perfect setting.

The Beira Lake glistened in the sunlight and the Seema Malakaya of the Gangaramaya Temple stood firm as a reassuring beacon of strength. Many who live or work in Colombo would not realise how green our city is and we should strive to keep it that way.

Soon Nelum Pokuna, the national performing arts theatre came into view, the petals of the lotus visible from above. Adjoining it was a large patch of green, which was the Vihara Maha Devi Park. The Town Hall stood tall and white glistening in the sunlight. Roads and roadabouts that look complicated on ground seemed simple and almost elegant from above. Independence Square was right below, giving us pride as we flew in close proximity to this national heritage. With landscaping work completed and walls no longer hindering the view the entire area was lovely to say the least. The National Archives was easily identifiable.

The grand National Museum was prominent as were the numerous sports grounds and swimming pools that shimmered like blue topaz in the sun. Another landmark, the BMICH was beautiful from above, its characteristic pillars and well manicured lawns creating an impression of stature.

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We fluttered towards the Race Course, a hub of activity a building of yore getting a new face. Amidst the green ground of the Race Course and Bloomfield, the hockey turf stood out dark and green. The Planetarium was a curious sight amidst the structures of the Colombo University.

It seemed as if we were suspended in air and from here I could almost see the entirety of the city... and how beautiful it is... then it is not surprising that Colombo is considered the cleanest and the most beautiful city in South Asia... well if it is apparent to me it should be to you too.

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