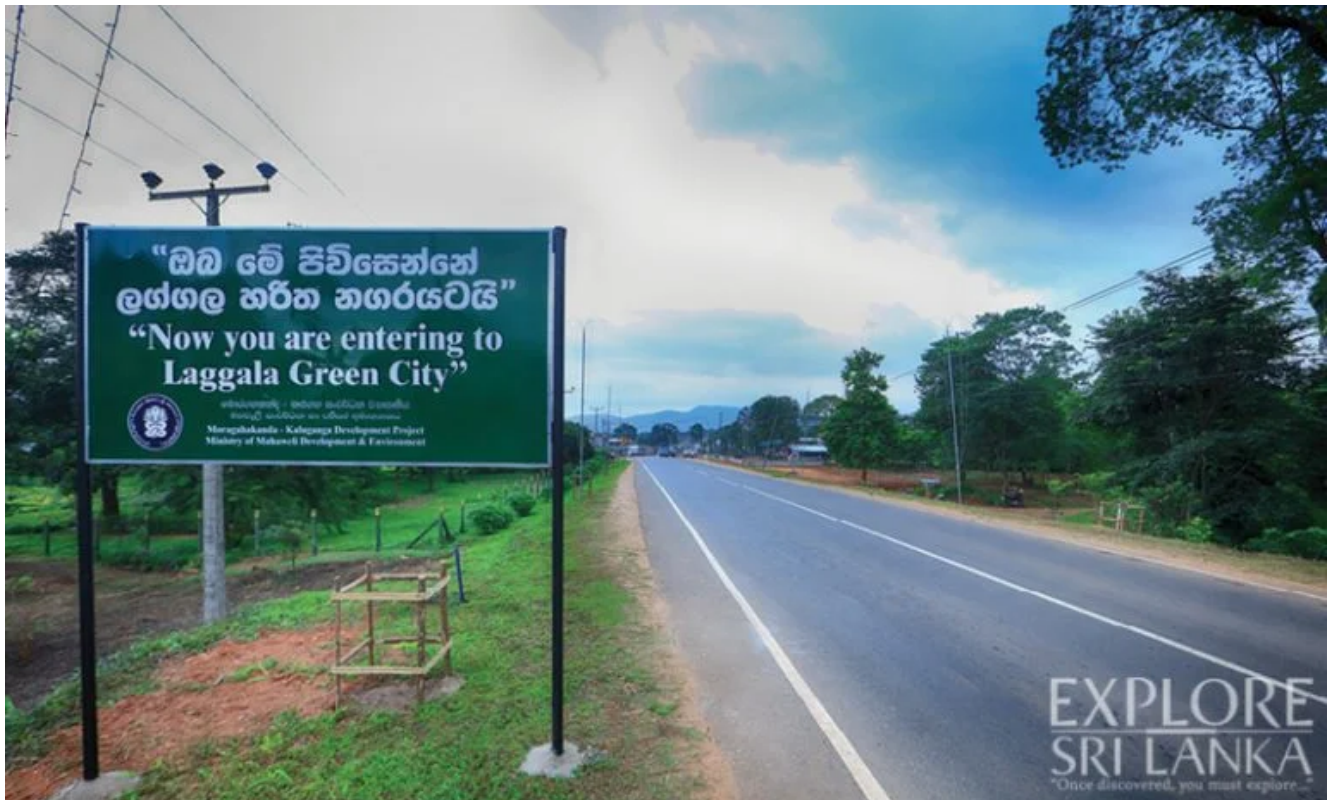


Laggala: The Green Town



Laggala, the newly opened town is designed according to an urban green park concept



Inundated with water, the old town of Laggala was submerged into the past. But hope rekindled as the new green town of Laggala was declared open by President Maithripala Sirisena, reflecting new beginnings and a promising future.

Words Roomini Wijayarathne

Photographs Menaka Aravinda and Anuradha Perera

We drove down the carpeted road from Matale to the newly established town of Laggala, and the roadside greenery and an occasional vehicle provided us company. At the end of a long drive, signs of constructions and new white buildings came into view, preceded by two pyramid shaped pillars built at the bridge spanning the Kalu Ganga.

The two pillars with engraved inscriptions upon them created an impressive gateway to the Laggala Green Town. Upon closer inspection, the inscriptions appeared to be of the legendary battle between Rama and Ravana in the history of Sri Lanka. It is believed that Laggala was the site of this final battle.



The vast Kalu Ganga reservoir and the colossal dam would enhance the lives of thousands of residents

We drove over Kalu Ganga and into the Laggala town, which was bustling with activity; of residents at retail stores, visitors having a snack at the food centre and more residents walking along the streets with happy smiles on their faces. It was, no doubt, owing to the official declaration of the opening of the town by President Maithripala Sirisena earlier that day.

The passers-by seem to hold a green plant in their hands; upon inquiry we found that the residents of Laggala New Town had been gifted a green plant to mark the ceremonious opening of their new home.

We cruised past the centre of the town along the immaculate driveway; we wished to witness the reservoir of Kalu Ganga before exploring the new town.

The Laggala Green Town, benefitting many residents, is a turning point in the history of the island nation as a green locale.

The road winded as we drove uphill to the gigantic Kalu Ganga dam over 200

metres long and more than 50 metres high. The pathway and the bridge were decorated beautifully with colourful flags to mark the occasion, but truly enchanting was the panoramic view from the dam. The expanse of water was vast, reflecting the blue sky dotted with the passing cloud. The blue of the water merged into greens that covered the countless mountain peaks visible in the distance.

A development project of great proportions, Moragahakanda-Kalu Ganga dam and the reservoir had been the cause for the old Laggala town to submerge entirely in water, displacing thousands of residents of the area. In order to provide them with a new beginning and to improve their life and livelihood, they were relocated to the new town and the residential area, a safer and a more beneficial place, building an environmentally conscious 'green town'.



President ceremoniously opens the Kalu Ganga reservoir. Ministers Sajith Premadasa, P Harrison and Members of Parliament are also present
Photo President's Media Division

The Laggala New Town seemed to be more than a replacement. We observed that it was constructed following a systematic plan; the main road, streets, and side streets were interconnected, providing ease of access, and all the Government institutions, retail stores, health care facilities and banks were located in close proximity. The Government institutions for example, 26 offices in total, were situated in a cluster, bordering the main road and within walking distance to each other. We later learned that the town was designed according to an urban green park concept and would see the installation of a solar plant that would power the

entire town.

The major community spaces such as the Divisional Secretariat, the central bus stand and the public playground were constructed along the main road and the resident spaces could be found away from the central town area.

The town, was still growing. There were houses under construction and green saplings were planted on either side of the main road. Grass paving on the sideways was recent and the buildings were freshly painted. Everywhere we looked we saw new beginnings; newly opened shops, the fully completed hospital, the public playground with grass beginning to grow in it, bore the markers of a thriving future.



Opening of the Laggala Town and Kalu Ganga reservoir is a realisation of the President's promise for a sustainable future

Photo President's Media Division

The new Laggala Green Town, benefitting many residents, is a turning point in the history of the island nation as a green locale. The declaration of the opening of the town by President Maithripala Sirisena is a realisation of a promise and it will continue to be a sign of hope for the future of Sri Lanka.



The Pallegama Central College is one of the five schools built in the Laggala Green Town.



The town's green square is surrounded by growing retail outlets.



The Divisional Hospital is fully functional despite being established recently.



The Police Station is an eco-friendly space.



The Central Bus Stand is located conveniently, providing easy access.