# Level 39

Posted on



**I had never seen a sea look so static. It had the texture of a vast canvas waiting for an artistic touch. The ripples of waves could be visible at the shore but only just. The looming clouds threatened rain and veiled heavily over the horizon, obliterating an enviable view of the mountain range in the farthest distance and the sun remained a fugitive. From here the trains seemed to move at snail pace and looked more like centipedes oozing over a lego-esque landscape. I was 158m above ground level and clearly having one's head in the clouds had serious repercussions.**

***Words Prasadini Nanayakkara Photographs Menaka Aravinda***

If there was one way to check if you are afflicted with vertigo this was it. Looking down from the rooftop of the World Trade Center, I figured I would rule it out as I

gazed down an endless free-fall along the glassy exterior of the East Tower from the safety of the rooftop boundary. From here I could pick and choose the notable and obvious landmarks that stuck out from a sea of concrete. The East Tower that stands more towards land gave a better view of the building landscape and offered a ‘which is which’ guessing game with buildings and roads till you are left confounded with the maze below. Towards the south of the tower, the Galle Face Green appeared a meager slip of greenery and the Galle Road seemed to stretch relentlessly into the concrete jungle. The roundabout offered a lazy past time and it occurred to me the vehicles seemed to move that much slower from above. Your eye can trace along the coastal edge as it takes shape of the Island.

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The famous Beira Lake appeared to be a steely interlude with its luminous surface amongst the manmade structures and could resemble a spatula with a little stretch of the imagination. The specks of kayaks streaming about did little to alter its icy stillness. The roads however contrasted with clamour and even from way up here the rumble of the buses could be heard. From the old Parliament to the right of the lake, the Lakehouse Building and the Fort Police Station towards the left could easily be spotted at a glance while the Superior Courts Complex stood out in the distance with its characteristic roof. Even further along was the town hall building visible straight across the Beira Lake. Swimming pools, parks, grounds, tennis courts, buildings of old and new merge awkwardly together, a collage of landscape and I suddenly had the vision of a patchwork quilt stitched together. As far as the eye can see, the fog grazed the tops of buildings and a mountain range could just be made out beyond. It is said that even Adam’s Peak is visible from up here.

In the opposite direction looking north, the Colombo Port with its hub of activity is in stark contrast with the adjacent stately quietude of the President’s House cloistered in a cloud of greenery. The port’s breakwater in construction arches into the sea and remains its only embellishment on a cold gray day. Towards land the buildings seemed to mob the landscape rendering a blur of structures only relieved by the main streets.

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As dusk fell, it was fascinating to see the gradual transformation. People ambled out of buildings heading home and as the clouds finally relented drops of rain, tiny heads disappeared under floating umbrellas. The heavens may have hidden its starry beauty that night but looking below, a galaxy was steadily materialising in amber and red glow. Vehicles in the distance could only be identified as two blinking orbs as they tailed one another along the roads. The port came alive with a sprinkle of lights and seemed to fuel further activity. Cranes lifted heavily back and forth and lights flickered on the decks of cargo ships as well.

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In spite of the foreboding weather, the wind remained a mercifully gentle breeze, something which could have been cause for trepidation this high above. The minutes had turned to hours, and with it the pulse of life had drifted out into the open…if I could I'd stay up here gazing upon its ever-changing character even as the cold drops tingled my face. Up here anything seemed possible.

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