STEWARDSHIP OF GEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND MINES BUREAU TOWARDS BLUE GREEN ERA

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The role of a modern Geological Survey is to generate and disseminate geoscientific information to use in development of the country and in monitoring any changes in the environment due to natural and man-made activities. Geology related base data is vital in order to fulfill this mandate.

Continuing the work carried out by the Geological Survey Department (GSD), the Geological Survey and Mines Bureau (GSMB) completed the basement mapping and published in 2014, a set of geological maps at 1:100,000 scale covering the entire country. Based on these maps GSMB recently compiled four maps at 1:250,000 that GSMB is proud to launch.

The rapid industrial development in the Country can adversely affect the environment. It is the duty of the GSMB to detect and monitor, among others, such changes in terms of presence and effects of chemical elements in the surface and sub-surface soil horizons and advise the Government well in advance of prevailing and/or impending adverse impacts to the environment. In fulfilling this duty, the GSMB commenced the Soil Geochemical mapping programme in 2008 and is indeed happy to launch the first Volume of the National Geochemical Atlas, the first in its 114 years of existence. This Geochemical Atlas constitutes a unique database that could be utilized by development project planners, particularly for mega projects, in their planning phases so as to avoid adverse effects on the environment.

It is of great coincidence that the entire southern half of this first volume whose area falls within the Southern Province whereas the NW and NE parts of the map sheet also include Sabaragamuwa and Uva Provinces respectively. Thus, this map is a timely asset to all Hambantota District related project planners. In the coming years, the Bureau will continue survey to cover the whole country.

As coastal areas of Sri Lanka are more populated than inland areas, a mapping programme titled "Quaternary Mapping Programme" at 1:50,000 scale to address their needs and uplift living conditions was also initiated in 2008. Considering the fact that south and southwest coast of the Island has the highest population density with intense developments activities, the mapping commenced with the Matara sheet. The programme

has now completed two more sheets, namely, Balapitiya-Ambalangoda and Kalutara which are also launched today.

All the above scientific publications are a result of dedicated longterm work by the Bureau. In addition to the data being used by the Bureau, it is noteworthy that all these data bases are available as open file for anybody to use in development work and in scientific research, subject to due process.