

Turkey in big way at Matara renewal

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Two countries with over 2,500 years of documented history have forged an alliance to become partners to rebuild the tsunami hit southern city of Matara, Sri Lanka. The Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was the Chief Guest at ceremony held at Midigama in Weligama to mark the commencement of construction of a brand new Model Township in aid of Matara City Renewal Action Programme (McRAP). This Rs. 557 million worth Model Township Development Project will not only provide modern homes for the tsunami affected families, but also offers them all infrastructure and public utilities including a Temple, places of religious worship, cultural centre, school, library, dispensary and a holiday bungalow. The Hon. Mangala Samaraweera, the Minister of Ports and Aviation, negotiated this first ever development project by the Turkish Government in Sri Lanka as yet another endeavour of McRAP.

The first ever visit of a Turkish Prime Minister to Sri Lanka, was made at a time that Sri Lanka is in need of such patronage most, while taking the centuries old Turkish - Lanka relationship into a new destiny. This has opened up a new chapter in mutual cooperation and understanding between the two friendly countries. In extending their sympathy and heartfelt feelings towards our country devastated by December 2004 Tsunami, the government of



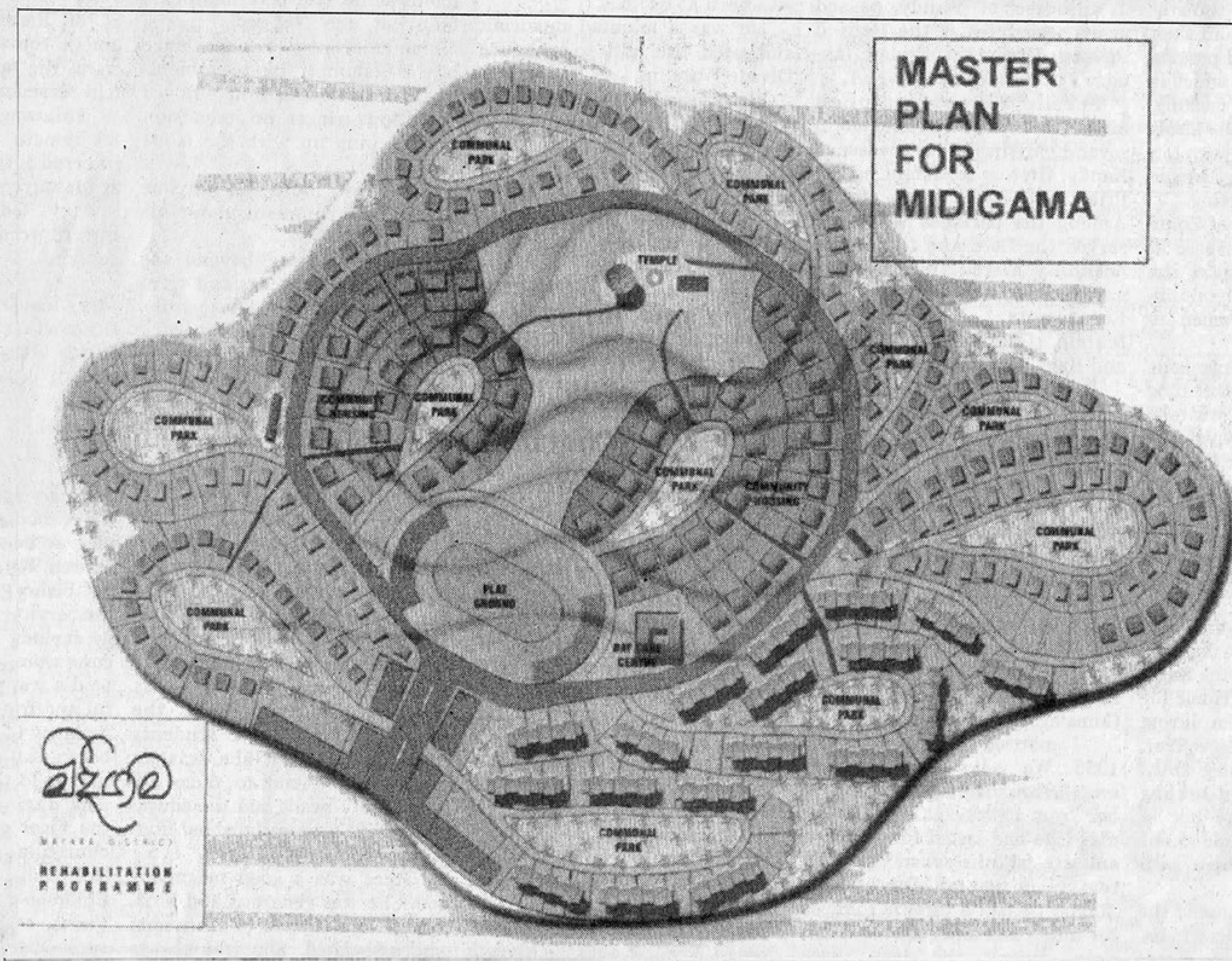
Turkish Premier
Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Turkey has generously offered a multiple shelter assistance package for the Matara City Renewal Action Programme.

The housing project launched on a 50 acre land at Midigama is going to be the first of its kind to the McRAP as explained by the Hankan Kary, Head of the Turkish Red Crescent Sri Lanka Mission.

An 84 member high-powered Turkish delegation headed by the Turkish Premier Recept Tayyip Erdogan, including Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin, Minister of State - Prof. Mehmet Aydin, Minister of Health - Prof. Dr. Recept Akdag and Minister of Public Works - Zchki Ergezen, and eleven members of Parliament, Senior government officials, Turkish businessmen and several media personnel were at Midigama, Weligama to grace and witness the foundation laying ceremony by the Turkish Prime Minister at midigama on February 10, in attendance of several ministers who represented the Government of Sri Lanka.

Council General for the Republic of Turkey to Sri Lanka Mrs. Barathi Wijeratne, was also present at the ceremony among many other



diplomats and foreign and local dignitaries. This ceremony was organized under the patronage of Minister of Ports and Aviation Mangala Samaraweera and it was followed by a public meeting which was addressed by many dignitaries including the Turkish Premier.

The fast developing modern Turkey was founded in 1923 from the Turkish remnants of the defeated Ottoman Empire by national hero Mustafa Kemal, who was later honored with the title Ataturk, or

"Father of the Turks". Under his leadership, the country adopted wide-ranging social, legal and political reforms. After a period of largely one-party rule, an experiment with multi-party politics led to the 1950 election victory of the Democratic Party and the peaceful transfer of power. Since then, Turkish political parties have multiplied, but democracy has been fractured by periods of instability and intermittent military coups (1960, 1971, 1980), which in each case eventually resulted

in a return of political power to civilians. During the recent past this country has undergone several political and administrative changes including the fighting against the separatist movement. In 1964, Turkey became an associate member of the European Community and is currently undertaking substantial legal and economic reforms in pursuit of full membership in the European Union.

The Turkey that brought here by the tsunami, is a country with a population of

about 69 million and located on the landmasses of two different continents.

Accordingly it occupies the southeastern parts of the Eastern Europe (Balkan Peninsula) and Northwestern Asia enjoying a unique geographical position to claim simultaneously both Asian and European status. Turkey is bordering with the Black Sea - between Bulgaria and Georgia, and bordering the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea - between Greece and Syria. It encompasses

780,580 sq. km of land, area and having common borders with several neighbouring countries such as Armenia (268 km), Azerhajian (9 km), Bulgaria (240 km), Georgia (252 km) Greece (206 km), Iran (499 km), Iraq (352 km), Syria (822 km).

Turkey is an earthquake prone country and several very severe earthquakes were occurred in recent times, especially in northern areas of country, along an arc extending from the Sea of Marmara to Lake Van.

Majority of the Turkish population is Muslim - 99.8% (mostly Sunni) while other 0.2% are mostly Christians and Jews and speak few national languages such as Turkish (official), Kurdish, Arabic, Armenian and Greek. Turkey was founded as the successor state to the Ottoman Empire on 29 October 1923 and has chosen that particular day as its independence day ever since.

During the recent years, Turkey has gained a rapid social and economic growth and transformation while still maintaining the status of a service oriented economy (58.5). However, the Republic of Turkey received a great contribution from the industrial and agricultural sectors to achieve towards this economic growth.

Turkey's dynamic economy is a complex mix of modern industry and commerce along with a traditional agriculture sector that ensures 40% of employment. It has a strong and rapidly growing private sector, yet the state still plays a major role in basic industry, Banking transport and communication. The most important industry - and largest exporter - is textiles and clothing, which is almost entirely in private hands.