

SRI LANKA

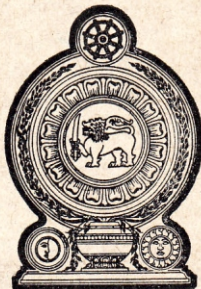
# Stamp

Bulletin No. 43

Commemorative Issue

Mr. D. J. WIMALASURENDRA

1975. 09. 17



Philatelic Bureau  
Posts & Telecommunications  
Department  
Sri Lanka

Ministry of Posts and  
Telecommunications,  
Duke Street,  
Colombo 1,  
Sri Lanka (Ceylon),  
17th September, 1975.

THE Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications will issue a commemorative stamp in honour of the late Mr. D. J. Wimalasurendra. In 1931, when the late Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike first entered the arena of national politics with his election to the State Council, to begin a career which laid the foundation for the political, social and economic changes that were necessary for the progress of our motherland, there was another personality of extraordinary accomplishment and experience, who in the retiring years of his life was also elected to the State Council, as the member for the Ratnapura constituency and whose particularly significant contribution was his assiduous championship of the cause of technological development as a necessary part in achieving those same goals of national independence, freedom and prosperity.

Devapura Jayasena Wimalasurendra was born in Galle on September 17, 1874. Young Jayasena received his schooling at Ananda College, Colombo, where he showed great aptitude in science and mathematics. In the early years of this century, when professionally qualified engineers were a rarity in Sri Lanka, he obtained Associate Membership of the Institutes of Civil and Electrical Engineers of England. He joined Faraday House in London for the examinations leading to the A. M. I. E. E. and was successful in the examination in half the time prescribed for the course.



In 1901, he was appointed as a junior assistant engineer in the department of Public Works. When the Department of Government Electrical Undertakings was established in 1927 he was appointed as the Chief Engineer and Deputy Director of the new department.

“ I began as an overseer and rose to the highest positions available to a Ceylonese ” he once said in the State Council. He was not speaking with a sense of vanity, but in order to emphasize that when he spoke of technological and industrial development he was speaking with the experience and intimate knowledge that he had gained as a public officer in the working of government departments in the fields of public works, irrigation, industry and even agriculture. The wealth of information he had, was brought into his contribution to the debates in the State Council. Speaking in 1932 on a motion introduced by him in the State Council for setting up of an Industrial Research and Development Committee, he referred to his close acquaintance with various parts of the country, during a period of 35 years of active service and in particular to information which he gathered when he toured the country in the company of a Boer prisoner of war from the Transvaal, a minerologist himself, prospecting for minerals and to the extensive investigations carried out by him for the establishment of water power possibilities in Ceylon. The story is told that in 1901 when the Boer prisoner of war saw the Aberdeen and Laxapana falls, he exclaimed to Wimalasurendra “ why do you look for gold under the earth when there is white gold in those water falls ”. Wimalasurendra well knew that it was hard for countries without plentiful electric power to become prosperous. Lacking in the coal or

oil necessary for generating electric power, Sri Lanka was fortunate in having ample water resources to generate electricity. Addressing the Engineering Association of Ceylon in 1918 on the Economics of Power Utilisation in Ceylon, he referred to "the need for the exploitation and development of the extensive sources of water power available and utilisation of them by rational generation and distribution to meet the large demand for cheap power in the country, both for traction and industrial purposes". He referred to the Aberdeen and Laxapana Water Falls, situated in the sources of the Kelani River as a principal source of water power. He said that "the river Mahaveli is the greatest asset we possess in this respect". That was a prophetic vision about the Mahaveli Ganga, which the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Government has now the good fortune to translate into a reality. In his address to the Engineering Association of Ceylon, Wimalasurendra emphasized the need for the establishment of a network of distribution mains—"main trunk Electric Roads"—as he called them, "passing through towns and industrial centres of importance, thus bringing to their very gates a supply of cheap power". "The provision of cheap power" he said, "is as great a need in Ceylon as in other parts of the civilised world. It ranks only second in importance to cheap food, with which modern conditions have indissolubly associated it. The development and utilisation of the thousands of horse power now running to waste daily in this country is a national requirement of immense importance". These are words reminiscent of the 12th century King Parakrama Bahu, but stated in the new context of modern science.



On his election to the State Council, with his engineering background, he appropriately became a member of the Executive Committee of Communications and Works, one of the seven Committees through which the executive powers of Government other than those relating to the Imperial establishment, Finance and the administration of the Law, were exercised by the Legislature under the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931. The "three British policemen" who were responsible for the three reserved subjects and who were members of the State Council without a right of vote, were not to Wimalasurendra's liking; nor was he slow in crossing swords in the State Council even with the Minister who was Chairman of his own Executive Committee, whenever he felt it was his duty to do so in the interests of the common people of this country. He condemned "the reactionary elements in the Executive Committee", who delayed the beginning of construction work on the Hydro-electric scheme. He referred to the short-sighted policy which has yielded time and again to big business and alien combines which have sought to frustrate his attempts to have the Hydro-electric scheme made a reality in this country. Speaking in the Council on August 26, 1932, he deplored that "this country is regarded as nothing but a field for the production of crude materials subservient to the manufactures of foreigners". He emphasized that with the raw materials available in this country and the provision of cheap power, it was possible to manufacture a large number of products, ranging from rubber tyres to textiles, porcelain insulators to fertilizers. He stood out against foreign control of the country's economy. Speaking on the Appropriation Debate in 1934, he referred to a proposal to sell the telephone system in Colombo

to an European company on the ground that it was running at a loss. "The suggestion having been made by a business magnate naturally we (the Ex. Co.) were going to accept the offer if there was any possibility of justifying the sale ..... unfortunately my duty to my country was greater than the kudos I was likely to receive from the combination of big businessmen with the result I could not possibly agree to the proposal to sell this to an outside concern. I maintained that being a national asset we should not only refuse to part with it but that we should adopt measures at once to put it on a paying basis".

Wimalasurendra placed his talents entirely at the service of his own country. But it was only in 1950, after this country was given a larger measure of political freedom, that it was possible for the first of the Hydro-electric schemes, the brain-child of Wimalasurendra, to be established at Norton. The scheme was based on feasibility studies made many years earlier by him for harnessing the Laxapana water falls. Wimalasurendra died in 1953, but he had, even though belatedly, the good fortune to see a beginning to the realization of those projects he had originated.

That it took nearly half a century to make this beginning underlines the relevance of changes in the social and political milieu for technological progress in countries such as ours. It is such changes that are envisaged in the principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution of 1972.



## TECHNICAL DETAILS

<i>Denomination</i>	:	75 cents
<i>Designer</i>	:	Albert Dharmasiri
<i>Colours</i>	:	Dark blue and Light blue
<i>Format</i>	:	Vertical
<i>Date of Issue</i>	:	75.09.17
<i>Size</i>	:	30 mm. × 36 mm.
<i>Printers</i>	:	Toppan Printing Co., Ltd. Japan
<i>Sheet Composition</i>	:	100 stamps per sheet
<i>Printing process</i>	:	Offset
<i>Paper</i>	:	One side coated paper suitable for postage stamps 104.7 g.s.m.
<i>Gum</i>	:	Special adhesive which is suitable for tropical climate

### Official First Day Covers

The Philatelic Bureau will provide a specially designed first day cover and arrange for a special cancellation.

### Terms of Sale

Overseas orders for the supply of the new stamps and first day covers should be addressed with full particulars to the Director, Philatelic Bureau, 4th Floor, Ceylinco House, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), and should be accompanied by Mail Transfer, International Money Order or Bank Draft payable to the Director, Philatelic Bureau.

