

Second Meeting of
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Country Report – Sri Lanka
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Introduction:

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian ocean extending from the southern tip of India having an area of 65,610 sq.km., with a large numbers of smaller islands around the main island, and having population nearly 20 million. Sri Lanka can claim a long history of civilization based on irrigation and agriculture over 2500 years. Geographical Names play an important role in Sri Lanka as in any other country, in terms of historical, cultural, economical, administrative, ethic, religious, linguistics points of view.

Activities on Geographical Names:

Topographic map series of one inch to one mile scale was prepared and completed in 1924 by the Survey Department of Sri Lanka being the National mapping and Surveying organization. This map series contain all the geographical names that are in practical use at the time of preparation of the map series in respect of place/village names, natural and manmade topographical features, administrative areas, etc. This map series consist with 72 maps to cover entire country. Later, a Gazetteer has been prepared in the office of Geography, Department of Interior, Washington D.C in June 1960 containing official standard approved by the United States Board on Geographic Names, as well as unapproved variant names based on the said map series. This Gazetteer contains about 29,600 entries for places and features in the country.

After Sri Lanka converted itself into the metric system of measurements in 1982, a new topographic map series was prepared on the scale of 1:50,000 and there are 92 maps in this series. The topographic data in this map series is also available in digital vector form as a topographic vector database for GIS applications and digital mapping.

Another series of topographic maps and topographic vector database is being prepared on 1:10,000 scale expected to be having 1834 map sheets of which 488 available as printed maps and a total of 1368 available in the form of topographic vector database as of today. The balance is under compilation.

These databases are designed to contain many layers, of which “Places”, “Admin” and “Hydro” layers contain the names as an attribute. Another development towards Geographic Names is the publication of “Village list” available on Provincial basis and is used mainly for Cadastral Survey purposes.

Activities on Standardization on Geographical Names:

We have made a significant progress in the field of Standardization on Geographical Names by obtaining the approval in principle from the Cabinet of Ministers to establish a committee for Standardization of Geographical Names in Sri Lanka under the Chairmanship of the Surveyor General and are now in the process of appointing permanent staff and the members to the committee. The standardization committee will consists with 10 members from different disciplines such as Ministry

of Home Affairs & Cultural Affairs, Department of Archeology & National Languages, Academics of Universities of University Grants Commission and senior staff of Survey Department.

Survey Department has established separate branch for Geographical Names and National Spatial Data Infrastructure. This branch is in the process of compiling all available data sources of place names into Geo databases. Mainly information from following data sources will be available in these Geo databases for standardization of geographical names.

1. Information of Administrative boundaries of all levels.
2. Place names of 1;10,000 scale Topographic database
3. Place names of 1;50,000 scale Topographic database
4. Place names of 1 inch to 1 mile Topographic maps
5. Place names in Village lists published on Provincial basis
6. Census done in 2013 by the Department of Census and Statistics

We are considering the circumstances of publishing all place names in a Geo portal and getting public views in support of standardization of Geographical names.
