



The completely white washed Ruwanweliseya

# Labour of love

By RAVI LADDUWAHETTY

**A** Sri Lankan born 32 year old Ayurveda doctor, medical lecturer, author and researcher living in the German city of Cologne has undertaken to whitewash the Ruwanveliseya Chaitiya premises out of personal savings which could be succinctly and candidly be described as a labour of love.

Dr. Jayanath Abeywickrama, in completing this project, has also reached another milestone in that this is the first and only time that the annual white washing of the stupa has been completed well ahead of the stipulated time, which is usually Vesak. "It was with the joy of doing this great merit and to serve the pinnacle of Buddhism - the Ruwanveliseya and it was my ambition and target to com-

plete the project prior to cooking milk rice for the Sinhala New Year", he told Mirror Life in an interview at the site.

He said that this was one childhood ambition he had and believed that he could do the project at a time there was no one willing to do it or when there was a lack of funds. He had intimated his willingness to embark on the project to the Chief Prelate of the Ruwanveliseya Ven. Pallegama Homarathana Thera in March 2005, a full year ahead. Later the monk told him that there was no one to embark on the project and even funds were not available. He had visited the Ministry of Buddha Sasana four times and the Ministry too did not have the funds or a sponsor.

"This is indeed a momentous occasion for me where I

am doing this feat alone which will coincide with the 2550th Buddha Jayanthi". It is indeed poignant that I am doing this alone since King Bhatthikabaya did it 28 consecutive times while King Saddhatissa did it during the period after King Dutugemunu," he said.

The chronicles and philosophers believe that a good majority of the relics of the Lord Buddha are enshrined at the Ruwanmeliseya along with the relics of the 80 principal monks of the Buddha such as Arahants Sariputta, Mogallana, Maha Kashyapa, Seevali, Bhakkula and Angulimala. It is also said that there were 9.8 million Arahants who were worshipped by King Dutugemunu while he built the Ruwanmeliseya in 5th Century AD

### The project

The project was commenced on February 8 at an auspicious time and was completed on March 19.

### The operations

The white washing operations have been conducted by the 74 year old father D.A. Kumarasinghe and his two sons Kumarage Sumith (34) Kumarage Sampath (28) from Walallawita in the Kalutara District, who have conducted the job for the last 17 consecu-

tive years. The entire team had 60 members.

Kumarasinghe told Mirror Life that this was the first time that the Pesawalalu (Basal Rings) were cleaned which also include the scraping and the sand papering which took a mere ten days.

Kumarasinghe and his two sons echoed in unison that they had to weather many a constraint to combat the dust of the old chaitiya from going to their eyes while scraping the Chaitiya and the Eth Pawura. They were using medicine for their eyes without which they might have been susceptible to blindness.

They had battled the rain, the hot sun and strong winds. One of the main reasons which had catalysed the process had been the absence of rain and strong sun which were instrumental in the completion of the process in record time. Moreover, a miracle is that there was a shower of rain after the completion of the scraping and the cleaning of the Chaitiya, the four Pariwara Chaitiyas and the Eth Pawura which took all the dirt and the dust away without which huge water hoses from water bowsers would have had to be used. He described this as a monumental excise and added that they had made vows for protection.

"This was a gain excise where we had to the rope from our side we did the painting other hand a tremendous risk, braving the rain and the gods. We could even get off the bamboo," he said.

### Raw materials

Raw materials solidated Rs. 2.1 million included the materials used to make lime porridge" priced nine tonnes of sago, 100,000 ar, 625 kilos of the quartz Blue which other have consumed 50 substandard vari-

The parapet wall (wura) has also cost a fair share of raw materials where 338 tuskers individually pairs required 20 kilos of special black powder salt, 300 kilos of 16 litres of silver have been used to chains of the 338 of the Eth Pawura

Pix by Push Mathugama



Kumarasinghe and his two sons