



## Rainforest Protectors of Sri Lanka

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To:

Minister Champika Ranawaka (Ministry of Power & Energy)

Deputy Minister Wasantha Aluvihare (Ministry of Environment)

Director General, Central Environment Authority

Director General, Department of Wildlife Conservation

Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO

Cc:

President Maithripala Sirisena

Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe

### **Environmental Destruction in protected Sripada Sanctuary due to Illegal Mini-Hydro Project**

We wish to bring to your urgent attention, irreversible environmental damage caused to the protected Sripada Sanctuary, due to an illegal mini-hydro project being carried out within the reserve, blocking two of the seven waterfalls of Eli Hatha (ඇලි හත). This is a popular location for ardent hikers located approximately 2 km inside the reserve from the entrance to the sanctuary. The mini hydro power plant is being built at this UNESCO World Heritage site violating many environmental regulations. A dam is being built at the waterfall number 2 and the water will be diverted to a turbine. If this project is allowed to go ahead, two of the waterfalls will completely go dry. It is shocking to see this happening in a protected nature sanctuary and a UNESCO World Heritage site and certain authorities with powers vested to protect the sanctuary during previous administration being involved in the destruction.



Construction site inside Sripada Sanctuary (Eli Hatha)



Construction site inside Sripada Sanctuary (Eli Hatha)





2<sup>nd</sup> waterfall that will completely go dry due to the dam



Pipelines at construction site inside Sripada Sanctuary



The dam blocking the waterfall



The dam blocking the waterfall

As can be seen from the above recently taken photographs, irreversible damage has already been caused to the protected Sripada Sanctuary and World Heritage site due to this project. In addition to building dams within a protected sanctuary, large endemic trees have been felled down to clear pathway for pipelines. This is a complete violation of the Flora and Fauna Protection Ordinance 1937 (amended 2009) and Forest Ordinance 1908 (amended 1995). Amounting to 12,979 hectares, the Samanala Adaviya was declared as a nature reserve by a gazette notification in September 7, 2007 and is protected by the Flora and Fauna Protection Ordinance (FFPO). Section 3 and 6 of the ordinance strictly forbid any development activity in a nature reserve such as construction of permanent or temporary structures, deforestation, removal of plants, destroy fauna and flora or construction of roads. Samanala Adaviya Nature Reserve (SANR) is one of the five nature reserves in the country and is the richest in bio-diversity with the highest number of endemic species. Because of its exceptional importance, UNESCO declared SANR and the central hills in the country as a natural world heritage site in 2010.

The destruction of this habitat will have grave consequences for critically endangered endemics such as the "Sri Lanka Blue Magpie" (Appendix 1) and the "Sri Lanka Green Pit Viper" (Appendix 2) that inhabit this wilderness. Ill-informed decisions taken during the previous administration such as this is currently taking a heavy toll on our fragile environment. Therefore, we urgently request you to immediately stop the on-going construction and setup a highly academic and non-biased panel to investigate the destruction caused and submit a comprehensive analysis and recommendation with actionable steps to undo the damage. Further, review and cancel any other similar permits that may have been granted to certain affluent persons to destroy our protected nature reserves.

Thank you

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## Appendix

1. Critically Endangered Endemic bird "Sri Lanka Blue Magpie" inhabiting the project area



2. Endangered endemic reptile "Sri Lanka Green Pit Viper" inhabiting the project area

