



Rainforest Protectors of Sri Lanka

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To: President Maithripala Sirisena

Forest Conservation Department

Ministry of Environment

Central Environmental Authority

Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO

Requesting to deny illegitimate road construction proposal through Udawattekele Rainforest

We are deeply shocked to hear about a short-sighted and illegitimate proposal made recently by Plantation Industries Minister Lakshman Kiriella to construct a public road for motorists through Udawattekele Historic Rainforest Reserve in the World Heritage City of Kandy violating and making a mockery of all Environmental regulations in our country¹. Udawattekele Rainforest is an important Natural Heritage in the City of Kandy and protected for generations by our forefathers. While the Municipal Council cut down several large trees in the World Heritage City of Kandy in recent times, Udawattekele has stood as one of the last green space for both residents and visitors. It is also ranked as one of the must visit places in Kandy by several International travel companies.

Scientists across the globe agree that once a road is constructed through a Forest, the Bio-Diversity is severely affected. The forest deteriorates, pollution increases, wildlife is killed due to strikes with motor vehicles, the noise pollution drives the remaining wildlife out of the forest. Therefore, it is vital to keep public roads out of Forest Reserves. Further, the lake in the middle of Udawattekele Rainforest provides drinking water to the resident endangered wildlife such as rare fishing cats and mouse deer. A road will cut access to the lake and wildlife-vehicle collisions are imminent.

Many developed countries have recently transformed their cities to be green by reducing motor vehicles and promoting public transportation, cycling and walking through construction of greenways². Some large cities such as Paris has even gone to the extent of declaring carfree city-centre³ to reduce the hazardous smog and noise pollution. Unfortunately, our country is going backwards due to the failure of authorities to promote these initiatives while the rest of the world moves ahead. The World Heritage City of Kandy should definitely be on the top of the list for the concept of green & carfree city-centre.

Udawattakele was designated as a forest reserve in 1856, and it became a sanctuary in 1938. Section 3 and 6 of the Flora and Fauna Protection Ordinance (FFPO) 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. The public outcry against this illegitimate proposal is already growing. Many are disappointed to see Environmental destruction contrary to the 100 day programme⁴.

Therefore we urge President Maithripala Sirisena, Forest Conservation Department, Ministry of Environment, Central Environmental Authority and Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO to immediately take action to reject the above illegitimate proposal and take required steps to reduce motor traffic in the World Heritage City of Kandy and promote the concept of a Green City to address the traffic congestion in a sustainable manner.

Thank you

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Appendix

1. Kiriella proposes road through Udawattekele reserve

http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=122306

2. Green Cities

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_cities

3. Paris Aims for Car-Free City Center

<http://nextcity.org/daily/entry/paris-car-free-anaheim-disney-transportation-center-rail-line-funding-lima>

4. Reactions / comments by concerned citizens against the illegitimate proposal made by Minister Kiriella

https://www.facebook.com/groups/5269559599/10153238542804600/?notif_t=like

5. Udawattekele Sanctuary Historic Forest Reserve

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Udawatta_Kele_Sanctuary