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IRESA - INITIATIVE OF RIVER ECOLOGY IN SRI LANKA: FROM SCIENCE TO APPLICATION

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Sri Lanka (6-10° N, 80-82°E) is an ecologically very diverse region, drained by 103 river systems. Although ecological research on reservoirs had started early, rivers and streams were almost ignored. There has been no adequate attention to functional relationship of the aquatic fauna and to the dynamics of their environment. Up to now, basic research in stream ecology and especially its application is only fragmentarily developed in Sri Lanka.

A research project on Initiative of River Ecology in Sri Lanka: From Science to Application (IRESA) is planned as a co-operation between the University of Innsbruck (Austria), the University of Kelaniya (Sri Lanka), and the Institute for Limnology of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. This research partnership shall lead to long-term, sustainable cooperation between the institutions in Austria and Sri Lanka. Specifically, IRESA will facilitate scientific exchange between universities in river ecology, encourage student exchange between Sri Lanka and Austria and initiate seminars and workshops at scientific and public levels.

The major milestones of IRESA would be, (a) Investigation of tropical river ecosystems with a special focus on explaining trophic interactions in relation to catchment properties (land use, catchment and riparian vegetation, riverine landscape), environmental dynamics and human impacts; (b) establishing river ecology at the University of Kelaniya; development of a platform for science and education; and (c) conducting workshops for presentation of results with the information and implementation at the community level

IRESA will provide important results to help to understand the functioning of running water ecosystems, enabling the human population to develop their natural resources for maintaining a sustainable economy, through development of ecotourism (involving *fish-watching*) and sustainable exploitation of ornamental fish for export market.