



Largest deposit of pink quartz in South Asia is found in Namal Uyana



An ideal location for a geographer



Namal Uyana is known for its rich biodiversity

Diverse beauty

Jathika Namal Uyana



Ven. Wanasiri Rahula Thera

If you feel like enjoying the wonders of nature your choice may be a national park. Historical sites in Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura would be the favourites of an archaeologist. A landscape full of geographical changes would be an ideal location for a geographer to study the physical features of the earth.

But how would you feel if you could find all in one? I mean a single place which is important in three ways- environmentally, archaeologically and geographically! Sounds fabulous says our photographer who captured the beauty of the *Jathika Namal Uyana*, a forest reservation which is situated 7 kilometres away from Madatugama junction on the Colombo-Anuradhapura Highway, towards the road leading to Adiyagala, Galkiriyagama.

Namal Uyana is believed to be the oldest man-made forest in Sri Lanka. The forest reservation which stretches over an area of about 260 acres consists of the Naa Forest itself, the largest deposit of pink quartz found in South Asia, one of the largest beds of fossilized plants, an underground spring from which water spurts out from several different points in the Naa forest, and ancient ruins and temples. Also the forest is known for its rich bio diversity.

Ven. Wanasiri Rahula Thera who has been residing in a small kuti of Namal Uyana for the past eighteen years says that the pink quartz found here belongs to the prehistoric age and is said to have 550 million years of history. "Pink quartz from Namal Uyana has been used in the window fittings of Taj Mahal."

Despite being situated in the dry zone, the vegetation which is usually found in a wet zone forest too could be seen in Namal Uyana.

In fact both climatic conditions are found here.

"In Namal Uyana you can watch almost all the wild animals that are common to a forest except tigers and bears."

According to Ven. Rahula Thera there are about 10-12 elephants in the reserve. Twenty one species of birds have been identified. Also this is the home to seventy two varieties of herbs.

As the historical records reveal Namal Uyana first came to light during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. The king was said to have considered the present day border of Namal Uyana to serve as one of his main parks and had taken steps to plant Naa trees up to this end.

Ranawa, one of villages reclaimed by King Dutugemunu from his enemy troops in his attempt to unify the country under his control, is situated on the eastern boundary of Namal Uyana. During the period of King Dappula the area was considered as a human sanctuary.

Under the directions of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, the Ministry of Urban Development and Sacred Area Development has provided financial assistance of Rs. two million and a plot of land to construct a Secretariat for Jathika Namal Uyana in Dambulla town.

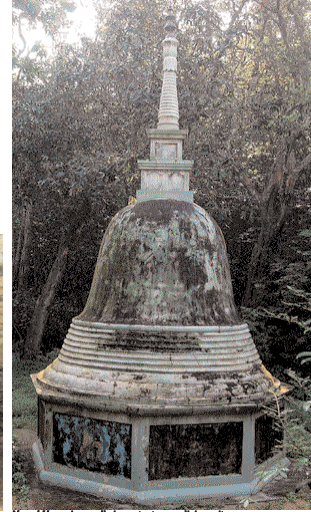
Also a donation of Rs. two million has been granted under *Magu Naguma* to construct the path that leads to Venerable Vānānāsi Thera's abode.

- Samangie

Pix:
Thilak Perera



The Naa (iron-wood) forest



Namal Uyana is equally important as a religious site



Namal Maha Saya