

## FROM THE EDITOR...

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In the scattered forest areas of Maha Oya in Ampara, the ancient remains of Rambakan Oya sluice canal still exist after centuries of isolation. This impressive twin canal system built with massive granite slabs each interlocking with each other has been restored for about 115 meters above the ground level. It is the longest sluice canal in Sri Lanka surpassing all others. Precise nature of interlocking arrangement of slab panels is envious to modern irrigation engineers.



Rambakan Oya is a tributary of Mundeni Aru, which flows from Padiyatalawa through borders of Moneragala and Ampara into Batticaloa district. Three major tributaries join together to form Mundeni Aru as identified by water resources engineers: Gallodai Aru, Maha Oya and Rambakan Oya. The Rambakan Oya has been dammed and surrounding area has been irrigated in the ancient past by King Saddhatissa (137-119 BC) and King Parakramabahu the great (1153-1186 AD). But only the ruins of this amazing canal remains today from the ancient times. Further, six major/medium reservoirs are located in the basin, namely, Tampitiya, Weligahakandiya, Borapola, Rugam, Kitulwewa, and newly built Rambakan Oya reservoir. Nearly 80 more village level reservoirs too exist in the basin. The total drainage area of the basin is 1355 km<sup>2</sup>. The average annual rainfall over the basin is 1,973 mm and the annual discharge to sea is about 757 MCM (Million Cubic Metres). Traveling another 800 m from ancient remains of Rambakan Oya, the newly completed Rambakan Oya reservoir is found. Construction of Rambakan Oya reservoir was started in February 2007 and completed in July 2013 with a cost of Rs. 3970 Million.

The Rambakan Oya reservoir project is a multipurpose irrigation project which is commissioned to find a solution to the drinking water issue and irrigation problems in the area. It is the 10<sup>th</sup> zone of Mahaweli Development scheme and located bordering Badulla, Monaragala and Ampara districts. The Rambakan Oya dam is an embankment dam of 1225 m in length and it was designed and constructed by the Sri Lanka Mahaweli Authority and currently functions under the direction of the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources Management. With the dam of height of 24.7 m and crest width of 7 m, it creates a reservoir of 56 MCM. The reservoir provides water to irrigate 4000 acres of paddy lands.

Some researchers have recently proposed the construction of two more reservoirs in the other two tributaries of Mundeni Aru. Gallodai and Maha Oya reservoirs can store 75 MCM and 80 MCM volume of water respectively to provide irrigation facilities to 8350 acres of new and existing lands. The existing two reservoirs, Rugam and Kitulwewa, in the downstream can be combined to have a storage of 56 MCM and serves a total irrigable area of 15,000 acres by introducing 7000 acres of new lands and increasing cropping intensities of existing 8000 acres of paddy lands.

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