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Sri Lanka designates four development zones

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12 April 2012
By Susan Cunningham
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correspondent

REPORT FROM SRI LANKA—The government has designated four areas throughout the country as special resort development zones. Only the 1,800-acre Dedduwa, east of Bentota, is in the accessible, developed southwestern coast. On the northwest coast is the Kalpitiya Resort Development zone. According to an HVS report last year, the government envisioned the area would host 17 hotels with 5,000 rooms and perhaps a golf course, a water park or a race course.

Dilip Samarasinghe, director of media and public relations for the government's Board of Investment said there had been "some talk" about such specifications, as well as casinos, but no final decisions have been made. Nor did he know if the other three zones would have special purposes or incentives.

The government is also offering long-term leases for tourism purposes on approximately 20 islands off Kalpitiya's 13-kilometer-long shoreline, Samarsinghe said. Two foreign companies, Sun Resort Investment Lanka and Qube Lanka Leisure Properties, each have leased offshore islands, according to HVS.

In the far northeast, the 500-acre Kuchchaveli zone is bordered on the south by Nilaveli, a traditional beach resort, and the harbor town of Trincomalee, potentially a cruise ship port. Challenges arise farther island, where the roads are still poor and large areas are still controlled by the military.

Midway down the eastern coast, the 150-acre Passikudah zone is also in a long-isolated area. Uga Resorts is already renovating an old hotel there and relaunching it this summer with 50 3-star Mediterranean villas starting at \$50 per night.

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