

Uma Oya multi-purpose project

SC orders completion of three drinking water projects

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The Supreme Court yesterday ordered the authorities to complete three drinking water projects targeting the people affected by Uma Oya multi-purpose project by February 28 next year.

The two-Judge-Bench comprising Chief Justice K.Sripavan and Justice Priyantha Jayawardena made this order consequent to a Fundamental Rights petition filed by the Centre for Environmental Justice, and four individuals, including M.D.P. Manatunga, residents of the Bandarawela area who have been

victimised as a result of the Uma Oya multi purpose project.

At a previous occasion, the Supreme Court ordered the Provincial Director of Agricultural in the Uva Province to take necessary steps to grant compensation for the farmers whose crops were destroyed by Uma Oya multi-purpose project.

The Supreme Court ordered the Mahaweli Development and Environment Ministry to complete its drinking water projects by February 28 next year.

The Attorney General had earlier submitted in Court, a copy of a Cabinet memorandum issued regarding the Uma Oya project.

The Cabinet memorandum submitted by the Mahaweli Development and Environment Ministry had identified the main socio-economic problems in the areas affected by Uma Oya project.

The Cabinet memorandum stated; the ingress of water into the head face tunnel which occurred on December 4, 2014 resulted in some socio-economic problems including drying up of wells, developing cracks in houses, damaging crops around the areas of water ingress into tunnel located in the District Secretariat areas of Bandarawela and Ella.

The petitioners claim that as a result of the Uma Oya project, not

only have their homes and crops been destroyed, but they have lost access to clean drinking water, citing this as a violation of their fundamental rights.

Secretary to the Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment, N. Rupasinghe, Secretary to the Ministry of Irrigation and Agriculture, the Central Environment Authority and the Attorney General have been named as respondents in the petition.

Deputy Solicitor General Parinda Ranasinghe appeared for the Attorney General. Counsel Ravindranath Dabare appeared for the petitioners.