



## Elephant Lodge:

### Sri Lanka eco-lodge on track for global award

Sept 08, 2007 (LBO) – A Sri Lankan eco-lodge built in the shape of an elephant has been nominated for a top slot at the World Travel Awards, its operators said.

KumbukRiver, in Okkampitiya in the Buttala is about 250 kilometres away from the capital Colombo and are among the eight lodges nominated for Leading Eco-Lodge in the World at the World Travel Awards to be held later this year.

"The first time Sri Lanka figures among the 'world's leading' classifications at the showpiece annual event which also includes awards by continent as well," KumbukRiver said.

"Sri Lanka is nominated for Asia's leading destination offering a ray of hope for the country as a nomination at the WTA receives the attention of the world media, especially in Europe and USA."

The 14-year old awards are made this based on votes of 160,000 travel agents in 200 countries. KumbukRiver says its nomination would be "a shot in the arm" for the tourism industry of Sri Lanka which has been ravaged by an intensifying internal conflict.

KumbukRiver says it has been internationally recognized twice before, and the other seven contenders are from well established firms.



The eco-lodge was conceived by the ad agency The 7th Frontier whose executives say they had no previous exposure to the tourism industry.

Two other Sri Lankan entities are recognized this year by the WTA – Jetwing's Ayurveda Pavilion has received two nominations, one under 'Asia's leading Resorts' and the other in the category of 'Asia's leading Spa Resorts' while Sri Lankan Airlines is named amongst Asia's best Airlines.

The 7th Frontier's Dinesh Watawana says that his team wanted to attract the world's attention to Sri Lanka when they masterminded an eco resort which features a 40ft elephant as

its primary villa, but were stunned by the news of its nomination.

"This is literally a story laced with blood and sweat and how this amazing eco-lodge took roots in an area not known for tourism and amidst huge strife and hurdles is a testimony to the spirit of youth in this country," Watawana said in a statement.

"True to our vision, the entire project was the handiwork of unemployed youth from the hamlet of Okkampitiya in Buttala who rallied around us".

