

## **A Call for Strengthening Environmental Laws to Re-envision a Circular Economy in the Coastal Built Environment of Sri Lanka**

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Sri Lanka, with a coastline of 1620 km, is home to numerous natural resources and important habitats across its coastal belt. It has achieved significant development and urbanisation in the recent past, especially due to the outward focused trade policies of the country. One outcome of such developments is the emergence of a circular economy in these areas, which is crucial in protecting the coastal environment while achieving sustainable economic growth. In light of that, the present study critically analyses the existing Sri Lankan legal frameworks and policies on environmental protection, interrogating their strength to address rampant environmental concerns in the coastal environment such as climate change and sea-bed pollution. It also intends to analyse the role such laws could play in assisting the process of transitioning into circular economic policies in the production and consumption sectors of the Sri Lankan coastal built environment. After conducting 3 semi-structured interviews with academics/researchers in the fields of environmental law and circular economy, and reviewing the related legal and policy frameworks, independent reports, case laws and news bulletins, the researcher has found that the policies surrounding the coastal environment remain legally unenforceable which can be resolved by merging them with the environmental law jurisdiction of Sri Lanka. However, it argues, *inter alia*, the absence of constitutional guarantees for a clean and healthy environment, procedural drawbacks, delays of adjudication, disequilibrium of the functions of judiciary and executive may either prevent or hinder the outcomes of such a merger. Further study suggests that new avenues of adjudication should be promoted through judicial activism. Furthermore, advocating public participation in safeguarding the coastal environment through public interest litigation demands attention, while incorporating international legal standards to the domestic system. Therefore, the study concludes that a robust legal framework on environmental law will assist in the process of transitioning to a circular economy ecosystem in the coastal environment of Sri Lanka.

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