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## Sri Lanka: a new chapter

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Catherine Deshayes A new resort planned for Sri Lanka has particular importance - as it's the first of its kind since the end of the civil war and is to be constructed in the previously off-limits north of the country - in a bid to revitalise tourism... Sri Lanka is preparing for a new chapter of development and a resurgence of tourism following the end of nearly three decades of conflict.

The war-hit north of the country is now being rediscovered by foreign investors and developers after Tamil Tigers guerrillas were crushed recently by Government forces, paving the way for a phase of economic liberalisation. The conflict has cost the country dear in terms of tourism and the economy. Experts say that Sri Lanka's economic growth - which should have been eight per cent or more - has been hampered by the wars - stalling it at around four to five per cent. Tourism authorities have now announced plans to attract 1.5 million tourists per year by 2016 - this year 500,000 tourists arrived, which was higher than it has been in years. Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority Bernard Goonatilake has also announced an international campaign to attract tourists from the UK, France, Germany, Russia, the Middle East and India. It will launch next month. But, before a new rash of developments springs up to join the resurgence of tourists to the previously off limits North, industry bods are calling for a green revolution - one that will not ruin the environment and use up all of the country's resources. As well as encouraging more visitors, the Government hopes that Sri Lankan nationals, previously scared off due to the conflict, will return to their country and invest in its business and property sectors. The east coast is also being targeted for expansion, with hotels planned for the coastline, which boasts some of the best beaches in the country. Whilst the work is on to encourage tourists back to the country, it will be some time before they will be able to have full access to the parts of the territory that was out of bounds during the conflicts, as the Government is still trying to re-home more than 200,000 displaced people as well as restoring transport connections. Kalpitya resort Now, onto the resort I mentioned in the title. Tourism authorities have unveiled plans for a large new resort which, once built, will stretch across 4,000 acres and long stretches of untouched coastline in the north of the country. "We are sure that tourism will play a key role in regenerating the economy of the country and will in particular benefit the people of the north and the east," said Faiszer Musthapha, Sri Lanka's Deputy Tourism Minister. "We hope the Kalpitya project will be the first of many that follow the end of the conflict," he added. The development is scheduled to open in 2011. Courtesy: themovechannel.com