

DIMO Commits To Protecting The Future Of Yala National Park



The Yala National Park is one of the oldest and best known national parks in Sri Lanka. Yala covers an area of more than 979 square km (97,880 ha). The multifarious ecosystems ranging from Moist Monsoon Forest, to Dry Monsoon

Forests, Semi Deciduous Forests, Thorn Forests, Grasslands, fresh water and marine wetlands, and sandy beaches possess a large number of important plant species and smaller animals.

The Yala National Park is the second largest and the most popular national park in Sri Lanka with over 900,000 visitors a year. Due to the popularity of the park as a destination for elephants, leopard sightings and much more, visitation to Yala by both local and foreign tourists has been on the rise. Over visitation has reached a critical level and this is now affecting the natural behavior of wildlife and obstructing their right to roam free within the park. Drivers have become indisciplined due to high competition among parties to give the best sighting for their clients. The deteriorating condition of Yala National Park was identified by Ranjith Pandithage who proposed a plan to provide law enforcement and visitor management activities within the park.

To carry out these activities, a brand new TATA Xenon was modified by DIMO and handed over to the Yala National Park authorities recently. TATA Xenon is a power packed double cab powered by a 3.0L Dicor turbocharged engine. It delivers a peak performance of 112HP and a peak torque of 300Nm. It has a payload up to one tonne, an all steel load body and Limited Slip Differential – for easy maneuvering over rough terrains. It is a 4WD vehicle with a higher ground clearance, making it the ideal choice for patrolling the national park.

The modifications to the TATA Xenon were carried out by DIMO Siyambalape – the modern service complex for TATA commercial vehicles. It was modified to suit the needs of park rangers and also to withstand the extremely rough terrain it may need to overcome if a situation arises. Moreover, the rear canopy was modified, special off-road tires were fixed, a powerful winch was attached and search lights were fixed to the roof. The Xenon was aptly branded as ‘RANGER ONE’ – the first official ranger vehicle.

The commitment and responsibility of DIMO is conveyed through the simple and eloquent tagline “Care for Nature. Preserve our Future” in the branding of the vehicle. The responsibilities of the Department of Wildlife Conservation includes assigning a team to conduct law enforcement and visitor management activities of the park whilst the Environmental Foundation is responsible for the coordination, monitoring and reporting of all law enforcement activities carried out with the use of the vehicle by the Security team. Chaaya Wild Yala came forward to supply fuel for the vehicle and to service and maintain the vehicle according to manufacturer’s

standards.

The vehicle handing over ceremony was held with the presence of the Minister of Wildlife Conservation Gamini Vijithamuni De Soyza, Ranjith Pandithage, Chairman and Managing Director-DIMO, Charitha Wijesekara, Secretary – Ministry of Wildlife Conservation, H T Rathnayake, Director General – the Department of Wildlife Conservation, Jayantissa Kahelpannala, Executive VP – John Keells, and Chithral Jayatilake, Assistant VP – John Keells, Rukshan Jayawardane, Director – EFL, Vimukthi Weerathunga, Operations Director – EFL, Vijitha Bandara, GM – TATA Vehicles, Mahesh Karunaratne, GM – DIMO Siyambalape and Prabodha Silva, Manager Business Development.

This is the first time a private sector organisation has been involved with the Ministry of Wildlife to carry out a project of this nature. DIMO believes that this would enable the officials to carry out their duties better and strictly enforce law and order inside the Yala National Park, allowing animals to enjoy their habitat and roam freely

