



Government refutes allegations made by various parties about lack of funding towards the Anuradhapura Poson Program

➤ Two State Ministries, one Department already allocated Rs. 28.8 million

Accusations have been made by various parties claiming that the Government will not contribute to the state Poson festival in 2023, particularly the Poson programs centered around the Mihintale sacred site.

This information was gathered through multiple sources, including the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs; Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils, and Local Government; Ministry of Defence, Sri Lanka Police, Anuradhapura District Secretariat, Ministry of Water Supply and Estate Infrastructure Development and Associated Newspapers Ceylon Limited.

In 1963, the Lake House Company initiated the 'Lakehouse Mihintale Aloka Pooja' under the guidance of Mr. Ranjith Wijewardene, aiming to serve religious and social purposes. Over the past 59 years, financial assistance has been provided for various activities such as Aloka Pooja, Sati Piritha, Perahara, and Chaitya painting.

During the Covid-19 period in 2020/2021 and in 2022, financial assistance was extended with amounts of Rs. 4.6 million, Rs. 2.3 million, and Rs.2.9 million, respectively. However, the Lake House Company has been continuously incurring financial losses since 2018, with a loss of Rs. 192 million in 2022.

Consequently, the management has notified the Mihintale Poson Committee that they cannot sponsor the programs this year due to these dire circumstances.

Venerable Valahangunawewe Dhammarathana Thera, the incumbent monk of Mihintale Rajamaha Viharaya, forwarded an estimate of Rs.17 million to the Secretary of the Ministry of Buddha Sasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs, specifically for the Mihintale Poson Perahara.

However, the Ministry Secretary, Mr. Somaratne Widanapathirana, responded that allocating such a large sum of money is not possible within the financial regulations imposed by Parliament. Instead, the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs have approved a sum of Rs. 3.1 million from its budget head allocations for the 2023 National Poson Festival.

Also, the Secretary presented a report of the expenses incurred by the Ministry for the Poson Mihindu Perahara held at the Mihintale Rajamaha Viharaya from 2019 to 2023. Accordingly, for the year 2019 a sum of Rs. 4,810,000, for the year 2020 Rs. 380,000, for the year 2021 Rs.940,000, for the year 2022 Rs. 2,150,000 had been granted by the Ministry for the Poson Mihindu Maha Perahara at the Mihintale Rajamaha Viharaya.



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Further, the Secretary also mentioned that there is a Cabinet decision to reduce the approved budget heads by 6% for all Ministries, but this reduction does not apply to the Poson program.

Secretary of the Public Administration Ministry K.D.N. Ranjith Asoka also said that an additional Rs.10 million has also been disbursed to the District Secretariats under the approval of the Anuradhapura District Secretary.

The National Water Supply and Drainage Board have agreed to supply 30,000 cubic meters of water for the drinking water and sanitary needs during the National Poson Festival. This includes the installation of pumps, extension of water pipes for Dansal areas, installation of 400 water taps around the Anuradhapura Sacred City, Mihintale, and Tanthirimale shrines, water supply by water bowsers, and extension of water pipes for temporary toilet systems constructed by Municipal and Local Councils.

The Water Supply and Drainage Board Chairman, Mr. Nishantha Ranatunga, stated that the cost of these water-related services, including the installation of water tanks and tap systems at gathering places and providing water to the tanks along the Perahara route for the elephants, amounts to Rs. 15.7 million (excluding VAT), which will be covered corporately.

The Ministry of Defence has deployed troops from the Armed Forces and the Civil Service Department (CSD) to construct the Anuradhapura Poson Zone, encompassing Mihintale, Thanthirimale, and Sanda Hiru Seya. For the proposed Mihintale Perahara on June 2nd, 384 soldiers and officers will be deployed.

Also, from 18th April to 31st May 2023, 146 Army soldiers and 30 Air Force personel have been deployed for various activities at the Mihintale Shrine.

The Ministry of Defence confirms that from May 22nd to 28th, 410 soldiers of the Army and 525 soldiers of the CSD have been deployed for the development of the Mihintale Sacred site and other tasks of the Poson program.

During the Poson Committee meeting held on May 24, 2023, at the Mihintale Raja Maha Viharaya and on May 25, 2023, at the District Secretariat office, Mr. J.M.J.K. Jayasundara, the Anuradhapura District Secretary, highlighted that several tasks were agreed upon with the involvement of District and Local Government institutions.

As part of these arrangements, the offering of afternoon alms to the 60,000 worshippers observing 'Sil' at the Uda Maluwa and Mihintale Shrine sites will be carried out with contributions from all the Divisional Secretariat Offices in the Anuradhapura District.

Furthermore, the Bank of Ceylon will provide the evening 'Gilan Pasa' for devotees who observe 'Sil' during the festival.

The Anuradhapura Municipal Council has already commenced the construction of 350 temporary toilets and the Mihintale Pradeshiya Sabha will establish 80 temporary toilets around the Mihintale sacred site for the sanitary convenience of the visiting pilgrims.



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Apart from this, the Department of Archaeology and the Central Nuwaragam Palatha Pradeshiya Sabha are working to provide sanitation services. With the intervention of the Regional Director of Health Services and the Director of the Anuradhapura Teaching Hospital, all Government hospitals will be operational 24 hours a day and the Old City Hospital will also be operational round the clock to provide emergency treatment.

150 officers of the Sri Lanka Police, 15 officers of the Sri Lanka Navy and 40 officers of the Civil Service Department and 140 officers representing voluntary organizations will be engaged in life-saving services during the Posen week to address emergencies.

In addition, with the intervention of the Sri Lanka Police, a patrol program and lifeboats have been deployed covering 26 lakes in the vicinity of Anuradhapura with five police officers at each location.

A special security committee consisting of Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police in the North Central Province, Deputy Inspector General of Police in Anuradhapura, Senior Superintendent of Police in Anuradhapura and Officer-in-Charge of the Mihintale Police Station have been appointed on the advice of the Inspector General of Police for the safety of the pilgrims and the implementation of the traffic plan.

The Sri Lanka Railway Department has also provided special transport facilities during the Posen week. Accordingly, 10 additional trains have been deployed and steps have also been taken to increase train commutes, the General Manager of Railways stated.

Meanwhile, the Anuradhapura District Secretary says that the Sri Lanka Transport Board and the Road Passenger Transport Authority will jointly operate a special bus service.

Thus, it appears that Rs. 28.8 million (288 lakh rupees) has been allocated for Mihintale Posen programs solely by two Government Ministries and one Department.

Apart from that, steps have already been taken by the District Secretariat, Divisional Secretariats, Municipal Councils and Pradeshiya Sabha to provide financial allocations for many other tasks and to provide the labour contribution of the Armed Forces.

In light of the foregoing, it is confirmed that the claims made by various parties alleging that the Government will not contribute to the State Posen Festival and other Posen activities centered around the Mihintale sacred site are false and baseless.

President's Media Division

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