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PHONE : 04735-202664

www.prd.kerala.gov.in, prdsabarimala2020@gmail.com

Appam and Aravana in reserve for Makara Vilakku festival

With only few days remaining for the Makara Vilakku, a great deal of preparation is going on under the direction of the Devaswom Board. The offerings, such as Appam and Aravana, will be made available to devotees as needed. The reserves are kept in store. Devotees attending the Makara Vilakku Darshana will have a banquet on the day at the Annadanamandapam. The Devaswom Board's Annadana Mandapam provides food to over thirty thousand devotees every day. Devaswom Executive Officer VS Rajendra Prasad said that the police have started work on setting up barricades at the places where devotees routinely stand to see the Makara Jyoti. In the Parnasalas the devotees make for Makara Vilakku Darshan are not allowed to cook for security reasons. The necessary steps will be taken in collaboration with the Fire Force and the Forest Department. The Devaswom Board also supplies medicinal drinking water and biscuits in addition to the water authority's kiosks to provide drinking water to the devotees. In addition to the existing staff, more temporary employees have been appointed. During rush hour, the duration of the darshan is given an extension in consultation with the Tantri. The Makara Vilakku this year is on January 15th.

(PR-201)

Increase in revenue at Sabarimala

Sabarimala has witnessed an increase of 55 percent this year compared to last year. This pilgrimage seasons a total of Rs. 162 crores had come in revenue. Devaswom Executive officer VS Rajendra Prasad said that the revenue during the Makara Vilakku festival also likely to increase. The counting of coins is progressing

at a fast pace and additional officers have been assigned for this. The Devaswom Board is also seeking the assistance of the employees working elsewhere in their spare time.

(PR-202)

More policemen as part of Makara Vilakku will be deployed: Police Special Officer

More than 150 police officers have been deployed to control the rush during the Makara Vilakku, said the Special Police Officer. Police officers working in two-shift jobs at the police station on Makara Vilakku day is given two hours of extra service. Special officer S Sujit Das said that the force will be provided with more police officials to control the devotees. This additional police force will be utilized to provide more facilities for pilgrims returning after the Makara Vilakku. Additional police services will be provided from Pandivalam to Malikappuram, through the Annadana Mandapam to Bailey Bridge, turning left at the top of the 18th step to the walkway through Kopprakalam behind the SO Office, and exiting the Jeep Road to Bailey Bridge. Since after Makara Vilakku after the Uchapooja there is no darshan, the devotees from Pampa will be restrained. The special officer said that the deregulation would be lifted after the Thiruvabharana procession reaches Saramkuthy. After the darshan of Makara Vilakku at the Pandivasalam and the Annadana Mandapam behind the Malikapuram, arrangements have been made for a smooth exit for the devotees. Devaswom's Assistant Executive Engineer and Special Officer visited the site. The maintenance of the barricades, the construction of the temporary barricade and the removable barricade have begun. Steps are being taken to set up the lights by the Electricity Board. Special security will be provided at Pandithavalam, Annadana Mandapam, Incinerator, Above Sharankuthi, Back of the UT, Behind Kew Complex, Behind KSEB, Koprakkalam where Makara Jyothi is easily visible.

(PR-203)

The Elephant Squad of the Forest Department is on duty 24 hours a day

The Elephant Squad of the Forest Department is active in providing security to the devotees visiting Sabarimala. The team, which includes more than 40 staff and doctors, is divided into different squads. Their service is available 24 hours a day. Section Forest Officers lead each team of four. The Elephant Squad has always been on the road from Nilakkal to Pampa, the traditional road through the Erumeli Azhutha and the Sannidhanam for Ayyappa devotees passing through Pullumedu. Each veterinarian's service is available with the Elephant Squad in Azhuthu and Pampa. Elephant Squad is present in all the routes that the Elephant Passes in Sannidhanam and Pampa. When an elephant was spotted, the squad arrives and drive it to the interior. The Elephant Squad has been assigned with rifles and ammunition. The elephant is then scared by firing crackers. Section Forest Officer VR Rajeev said that the presence of water is what drives the elephant out of the

forest. An additional 50 employees will be hired at different locations on the orders of the forest minister.

(PR-204)

A devotee died

A devotee died at Sannidhanam. The deceased is Manikandan (25), a resident of Valayar Naduvathi Colony, Palakkad. Hospital sources said the death had occurred before he was brought to the Government Hospital in Sannidhanam. The body of the deceased was taken to Pathanamthitta General Hospital.

(PR-205)

All set for Thiruvabharana procession: Devaswom Board President

The preparations for the Thiruvabharana (Golden Jewel) procession as part of the Makaravilakku festival have been completed, said Travancore Devaswom Board President N Vasu. He was speaking after inaugurating a meeting held at Pandalam Valiya Koikal Sastha Temple Auditorium to evaluate the preparations of the procession.

He said that with the cooperation of the government and various departmental officials, all preparations for the procession were completed and that any shortcomings would be addressed immediately. Pilgrims visiting the Makara Vilakku Festival will be provided with all the facilities. Facilities are provided at Sannidhanam, Nilakkal base camp and Pampa. Devaswom Board President said the KSRTC bus has also been arranged for pilgrims to travel.

During the meeting, the services of the police, health and transport departments and the municipality of Pandalam was evaluated. The respective departments were directed to address the needs of the Pandalam Palace Executive Committee and the Guru Swami who bears the Thiruvabharanam.

Members of the Travancore Devaswom Board Vijayakumar, Adv KS Ravi, Pandalam Municipal Council President TK Sati, Sabarimala ADM NSK Umesh, Adoor RDO PT Abraham, Disaster Management Deputy Collector R. Beena Rani, Adoor DySP Jawahar Janardh, District Medical Officer Dr.AL Sheeba, Pandalam Palace Executive Committee Chairman G Sasikumara Varma, members PN Narayana Varma, Pradeep Kumar Varma, Pandalam Municipal Vice Chairman R Jayan, Councilor KR Ravi, Asst. Devaswom Commissioner G Muralidharan Pillai, Administrative Officer RS Unnithan and Advisory Council President Prithvipal were also present.

(PR-206)

Charge Officials should perform their duty vigilantly: District Collector

District Collector PB Nooh has advised that the charge officers deployed at the viewing point of Makara Vilakku should exercise the duty with caution and care. The district collector was speaking at a training program held at the Collectorate Conference Hall for duty-bound officers at the Makara Vilakku vision centers.

Charge officers at the Makara Vilakku Sightseeing Center should ensure the drinking water, barricade, light, and ambulance before the Makara Vilakku. Charge officers should report to the District Disaster Management Office the developments before the evening of Makara Vilakku day. Ensure the Health Department has an ambulance, medical team, stretcher, and volunteers. Charge officers must ensure that the barricade system is secure. In case of any other accident in the viewpoints of Makara Jyothi, the Charge Officers should inform the District Disaster Relief Section and District Collector of Pathanamthitta in due course. Deputy Collector of Disaster Management Department Beena Rani headed the training.

(PR-207)

