Buy 'a ticket from the heart' and book a seat to Jaffna

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Govt kicks off two-year fund raiser worth Rs. 14 b with Rs. 1,000 'Uthuru Mithuru' tickets for restoration of Yal Devi link to Northern peninsula; First target is Rs. 400 m mobilisation in 3 monthsBy Nizla NaizerThe government this week launched an ambitious campaign to raise Rs. 14 billion required to construct the Yal Devi railway track from Vavuniya to Kankesanthurai (KKS) within the next two years through 'Uthuru Mithuru' – a ticket from the heart'.

The ticket which costs Rs. 1,000 each is valid for a one way trip aboard the Yal Devi from Colombo to Jaffna on any day once the train begins its 394 km journey, expected to take place within the next two years. Whilst Yal Devi can ply upto Vavuniya at present, the proposed extension project for a single line from Vavuniya to KKS in Jaffna is to cost Rs. 14 billion. The ticket campaign expects to collect Rs. 400 million in order to construct the track till Omanthai within the next three months. A further Rs. 1.8 billion is expected to be collected from the local population to reconstruct the track through the sale of these tickets. The Yal Devi fund has already netted Rs. 1.8 million but officials anticipate the contribution from the sale of tickets to be significant. The drive to involve the public in uniting the South and the North and to facilitate development under the ' Uthuru Vasanthaya ' programme will also provide token tickets at Rs. 50 to be circulated among schools in the country with support and campaigns by Department of Education. The Railway Department has already printed the tickets which are available at 173 railway stations and 161 sub-stations across the island. The advertising company behind the campaign, Triad Advertising's Senior Account Executive Ahamed Hassen explained that the tickets will be made available in supermarkets and key locations across the island in a few weeks. Speaking to The Bottom Line, Yal Devi Project Manager Major General Asoka Amunugama explained that the reconstruction of the Yal Devi track will take place in two stages. "In Phase One, we will be moving up from Vavuniya to Pallai approximately 103 km of track, while simultaneously work will be conducted on Phase Two from KKS downwards to Pallai, another 67 km, " he explained. As the Army continues to de-mine and clear the North, reconstruction of the track has already begun from Vavuniya upwards. Currently, the track has been extended up to Thandikulam and 4 km have been completed since the beginning of June as they expect to reach Omanthai within the next three months. The entire project will call on the efforts of the Railway Department along with the Army, Navy and Air Force. Yal Devi's new journey • First constructed 1900-1905 • Operations closed in 1990 Vavuniya to KKS • Distance 160 km• 17 stations • 12 sub-stations

• 2 major bridges • 224 minor bridges Sharing the journey • Army

De-mining, jungle clearing, earth filling compacting of formation, compacting ABC (Aggregate Base Course) layers • Air Force Application of ABC layers

• Navy

Provide passage for sleepers and rails

• Railway Department

Survey and layering, constructing bridges and culverts, metal ballast layering, laying of skeleton track, welding, alignment of track, provision of level crossings and construction of railway station. Courtesy: thebottomline.lk

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