
Madhu Feast on a grand scale in August

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All plans are afoot to hold the annual feast of Our Lady of Madhu on a grand scale from August 6, with Senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa MP, personally monitoring the arrangements for the convenience of pilgrims. A discussion was held at the Presidential Secretariat yesterday chaired by Basil Rajapaksa MP with the participation of the Catholic clergy and Government officials involved in facilitating the Feast through various channels to evaluate the progress of the preparations for the occasion. MP Rajapaksa instructed officials to finalise all pre-arrangements by the end of this month, including the upgrading of infrastructure facilities with the provision of other amenities to cater to the large number of devotees expected at this year's feast. The feast will last for 10 days from August 6 to 15. Around 500,000 devotees are expected at this year's Feast. "We are grateful to our heroic Forces for their great sacrifices to liberate this country entirely from the clutches of terrorism. "As a result, we are today able to hold the annual feast of "Our Lady Madhu" in a liberated nation," Rajapaksa said. He recalled that the previous annual Feast was held with difficulties with the fullest cooperation of the Security Forces that pushed back terrorists from the precincts of the church and the area surrounding the Madhu Shrine. "Our utmost concern is to complete the process of demining in an encircled area of one Km radius centering the Madhu Church by the end of this month. "The terrorists have highly mined the surrounding areas of the church premises and have planted other explosives while withdrawing from the area," Rajapaksa said. He added that up to now demining teams have unearthed 280 anti-personnel mines and 62 unexploded RPGs and mortar bombs. "We have called all demining teams which also serve in the other parts of the region to engage in demining in this area," he added. MP Rajapaksa calling for updates on the ongoing face lifting process in the area, requested all Government institutions to work in collaboration to make this event a success. He also provided across the table solutions to some parties who brought up several issues that needed to be addressed to streamline targets on deadline. Accordingly, the upgrading of road systems, providing water sanitation, medical and accommodation facilities to the large number of devotees arriving for the 10 day long Feast were brought to notice of the officials participating at the discussion. The Government has estimated Rs. 110 million to upgrade the road system including the by- roads that to lead to the Madhu Church. Rt. Rev. Rayappu Joseph said, "Sri Lankans irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity arrive for this annual feast to pay homage to the "Our Lady of Madhu Shrine", the first post-war Feast and the contribution of every single parity to make this event is highly appreciated". The meeting was attended by Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services Minister Rishard Bathiyutheen, Deputy Fisheries Minister Neomal Perera, Parliamentarians Dr. Jayalath Jayawardena and John Amaratunga and several other Ministers and Government officials including the Government Agent of Mannar. Courtesy: dailymirror.lk