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**Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs**  
**Report on Shakthi TV Eid-ul-Fitr Programme**

24th May 2021

Due to rising COVID-19 infections and guidelines for places of worship from the Ministry of Health, the Wakf Board of Sri Lanka did not permit mosques to hold prayers on Eid-ul-Fitr day<sup>1</sup>. In order to facilitate an alternative solution, the Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs (DMRCA), with approval from the Wakf Board and permission from the Ministry of Buddha Sasana Religious and Cultural Affairs, and Ministry of Health, organized a live telecast of Eid services on 14 - May - 2021.

The programme was broadcast live on Shakthi TV from Nimal Road Mosque - Colombo 04. It was conducted in the Tamil language and included many notable Sri Lankan scholars. It was repeat broadcast on SLBC Muslim Radio Service at 8.45am.

**The itinerary of programme as follows:**

7.35 am : Thakbeer

7.40 am : Eid prayers

7.50 am : Khuthba (sermon)

8.05 am : Dua and Salawaath

8.15 am : Programme End

*(Scheduled to start at 7.30pm. The broadcast was delayed due to screening of advertisements)*

**Participants**

**Thakbeer:** Sheikh Shiyam, Sheikh Al Qari Iffath, Sheikh Al Qari Yusuf, and Sheikh Al Qari Abdullah Ibrahim.

**Explanation of Eid Salah :** Sheikh Ilham

**Imam of Eid Salah :** Sheikh Alhafiz Al Qari Muhammed Fahmi Harris

**Khuthba :** Sheikh Arkam Nooramith

**Dua and Salawath :** Sheikh Hasan Maulana

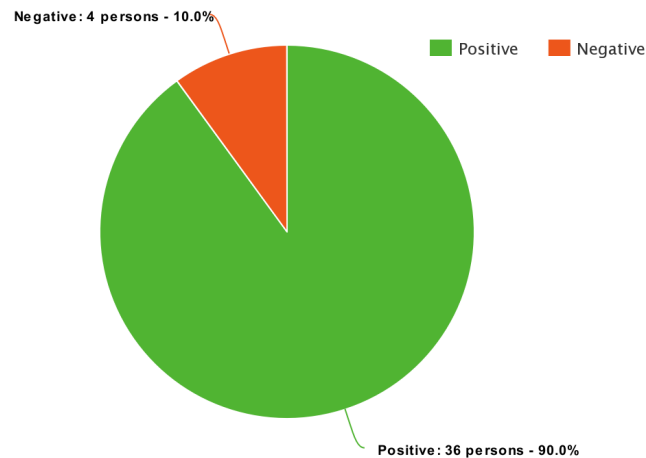
*(Profiles of those who participated in the programme in ANNEXTURE I)*

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<sup>1</sup> MRCA/A/1/62 Statement issued by DMRCA on 10-05-2021

## Feedback and Suggestions

In order to develop an extended programme for the upcoming Eid-ul-Adha festival in August, feedback from 40 Muslim Key Opinion Leaders was received. The overall response was positive (90%) that the live broadcast helped Muslims in Sri Lanka experience a sense of celebration and community.



There was also appreciation that participating *ulema* (scholars) were from various ideological groups and organizations. However, certain areas were highlighted for improvement even among those who viewed it positively.

A significant suggestion was to conduct the sermon in Tamil, Sinhala and English, thereby acknowledging the diverse linguistic background of the Muslim community. This would have the additional benefit of helping members from other communities viewing the programme understand Islamic tenets and practices.

Many of the constructive responses felt the upcoming programme should be used as an opportunity to reach out to other communities to create awareness about Islamic customs and rituals. As ignorance of Islamic practices has contributed to misconceptions about the Muslim community leading to hostility against its members and the religion.

Only one respondent felt less attention should be drawn to the activities of Muslims. While another felt focusing on a Muslim's everyday conduct is what will go a long way in establishing peaceful relations.

## DRAFT

Contentions or negativity was raised by three respondents about conducting *Jamaat Salah* (congregational prayer) virtually. It was suggested that if a religious ruling supporting virtual salats could be made public, it would make people more comfortable about it. Those who were positive about it felt virtual programming should continue beyond the pandemic for those who are old, ill or unable to leave their homes.

It was suggested to invite a panel of experts in media, Islam and Islamic culture to curate the Eid-ul-Adha programme. The programme should highlight the pluralism of Sri Lankan Muslims, and their cultural contributions to Sri Lanka while being shot from different locations. Special emphasis should also be made on the universal message of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), as well as rituals of the Hajj pilgrimage.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

- Khuthba should be in all three languages (Tamil, Sinhala and English).
- A message from the DMRCA to the community should be in the itinerary.
- The following themes should be included in the speeches/sermon of the programme.
  1. Message to develop a responsible Muslim Society.
  2. Develop Coexistence with other communities/promote nation building.
  3. Clarify common misconceptions about Islam.
- Highlight pluralism of Muslims in Sri Lanka.
- Show contribution of Muslims to the culture and heritage of Sri Lanka.
- Keep in mind youth and include fresh voices and faces.
- Make public *fatwah* (religious opinion) on permissibility of virtual congregational prayer.
- Highlight universal message of Prophet Ibrahim (alai) and rituals of Hajj.
- Avoid politicization of the programme.
- Use the programme as an opportunity to reach out to other communities in a positive and constructive way.

DRAFT

**ANNEXTURE I**

*Profile of Scholars*

1. Sheikh Mohamed Arkam Nooramith: General secretary of All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama /Member of Wakfs Board of Sri Lanka
2. Sheikh Hasan Moulana: Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs Coordinator to Prime Minister
3. Sheikh Al Hafil Moulavi Ilham (Rashadi): Chief Imam Majmaul Khairath ( Nimal Road ) Masjid
4. Sheikh Mohamed Sameen Mohamed Shiyam: Imam of Wellawatte Masjid
5. Sheikh Muhammad Fahmy Haris: Colombo Grand Masjid
6. Ustaz Muhammadh Yoosuf: Visiting lecturer at Mawahibul Uloom Arabic College, Imam Shafiee Arabic college
7. Al Hafiz al Alim Abdullah Ibrahim: Assistant Imam of Jamiyathul Fakhir Jummah Masjid, Wattarapala Road, Mount Lavinia
8. Sheikh Al Qari Iffath: Usthad Mawahibul Uloom, Rajagiriya