

PRESS RELEASE – UPDATE ON CHEMMANI MASS GRAVE CASE

BR/433/PC/25

Dated: July 21 2025

The second session of phase two of the excavation process of the Chemmani Mass Grave Case BR/433/PC/25, Jaffna commenced on July 21 2025, and expected to continue for 15 days. This session is expected to last 15 days subject to changes, including weather conditions. Phase two was divided into separate sessions in order to provide a break for the team who had been working 15 days at a stretch. The entire fund allocation required for phase two covering a total 45 days has been approved and released by the Ministry of Justice.

The Honourable Jaffna Magistrate, A.A. Anandarajah is overseeing the investigations being undertaken by the Consultant JMO, Dr Selliah Pranavan and archaeologist, Professor Raj Somadeva and his team, assisted by consultant JMOs, members of SOCO, students from Jaffna University and labourers from the Nallur Pradeshiya Saba. Two progress reports have been submitted by the JMO and the archaeologist to Court.

The first session of phase two concluded on 10th of July 2025. A minimum number of 65 human remains belongs to certain individuals have been unearthed and exhumed from the site in the “Sithupaththy Hindu Cemetery” in Chemmani, Jaffna. While some of the exhumed remains were near-complete skeletons, some others were co-mingled. In addition, some artefacts such as clothing was also uncovered.

The site continues to have protection from the Police on a 24-hour basis, with the active support of the local community members associated with the “Sithupaththy Hindu Cemetery Board.” The Board has set up CCTV cameras in order to ensure that they can better monitor the site. The OMP was granted the right to act as an observer by the Honorable Jaffna Magistrate on April 29th 2025, and since then it has been observing the process of excavation. The OMP works towards ensuring a multidisciplinary approach to mass grave investigations in order to ensure identification of victims, and the protection of the rights of affected families.

The OMP was established under the Office on Missing Persons (Establishment, Administration and Discharge of Functions) Act No. 14 of 2016 and has a primary mandate to search for and trace missing persons. Under its investigative powers, the OMP has the authority to apply to a Magistrate’s Court to act as an observer at excavations and exhumations of suspected grave sites [Section 12(d)].