

பார்லிமேன்තු ப்ரகாஸன லாஓா ஂ஑: 488

ஂாஸனனயே நல : ஡ஂ ஂார்கார ஡ேபார்ட்மென்துவ

பார்லிமேன்துவே ரப்யே ஂிஂு஡ி பிஂி஡ே ஑ார்க ஂஂாவ விஂின் ஂஂாஂஂ ஑ர்ன ஡ே வார்டா ஂ஡ி஡ன்஡ியென் ஂர்ாவர்
நியோ஡ ஂ஑ 119 (4) ஂ஡னே ஂர் ஂஂாஂாவர்யாவே நிரி஑்ஂஂ ஂா ஂஂு ஡ஂன பியவர் பார்லிமேன்துவ வேன
ஓ஡ிபன் ஑ிரி஡.

பாராஂ்ர஡ன்ற வெளியீ஡்஡ுத் ஡ொ஡ர் இல஑்஑஡: 488

நிறுவனத்தின் பெயர் : பொது ந஡்பி஑்஑ைப் பொறுப்பாளர் திணை஑்஑ள஡்

பாராஂ்ர஡ன்றத்தின் ஂரச ஑ண஑்஑ு஑் குழுவினால் முன்வை஑்஑ப்பட்ட ஂறி஑்஑ை ஡ொ஡ர்பாக நிலையியற்
஑஡்டளை இல஑்஑஡் 119(4) இன் ஑ீழ் ஑ௌரவ ஂமை஑்஑ரின் ஂவதாஂிப்பு஑்஑ள஡் ஡ற்ற஡் ஂது
஡ொ஡ர்பாக ஂ஡ு஑்஑ப்பட஡் நடவடி஑்஑ை஑ள஡் பாராஂ்ர஡ன்றத்திற்கு ஑஡ர்ப்பித்தல்.

Parliamentary Series No: 488

Name of the institution: Department Of Public Trustee

Submission of observations of Hon. Minister and steps taken with regard to the reports tabled by the
Committee on Public Accounts in terms of Standing Order No. 119(4)

	Shortcomings Identified by the Committee/ Directives issued by the Committee	Measures taken by the committee to rectify the shortcomings/ Implementation of recommendations/ Current status
01.	<u>An allocation of Rs. 35 million has been provided under the 2024 Budget for the development of a computerized data system; therefore, the current status of the project was inquired into.</u> The Committee pointed out that the absence of a computerized data system has created difficulties in obtaining information related to the assets owned by the Department of Public Trustee. The Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs stated that the relevant allocation had been provided for the development of data systems for five institutions under the Ministry. It was further stated that Technical Evaluation Committees have already been appointed for this purpose and that, after identifying the requirements of the relevant institutions, quotations would be called within the next few weeks. Furthermore, the CAO/Accounting Officer of the Ministry informed the Committee that a register containing the properties belonging to the Department has already been prepared, and that two officers have been assigned to computerize information relating to the Department's properties scattered across the island.	A total allocation of Rs. 35 million was made in 2024 by the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs for software development activities of the Department of Public Trustee and other institutions functioning under the Ministry. However, due to issues arising from the lack of technical expertise required for computer software development, the Ministry submitted a request then to the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA) seeking technical consultancy services and development support. Nevertheless, the agency informed that it was unable to provide the required assistance at that time due to its existing workload and the deployment of officers to already assigned duties at full capacity. Accordingly, difficulties encountered in technically identifying system requirements and carrying out development activities resulted in the failure to implement the project. The Department of Public Trustee is currently obtaining consultancy services from the Department of Information Technology of University of Moratuwa for enhancing the requirements of the existing SAP computer software currently being maintained by the Department. Necessary development

		activities are being carried out in accordance with the recommendations provided, and, at present, the system is considered adequate for the operational requirements of the Department. Further, the documentation of properties belonging to the Department is currently being carried out, and the computerization process is also being implemented simultaneously where appropriate.
02.	<u>Administration of properties owned by the department of public trustee scattered across the island</u> The Committee recommended to the Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) / Accounting Officer (AO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs that, as new recruitments would take considerable time, a suitable mechanism be expeditiously formulated in consultation with the Hon. Minister and after obtaining the advice of the Attorney General, either by amending the relevant Ordinance or by obtaining the necessary authorization from the District Courts, to facilitate the regional administration of estates/properties vested in the Department of Public Trustee through the involvement of District Secretaries and Divisional Secretaries in all 25 districts.	In accordance with the recommendations made by the Committee on Public Accounts at its meeting held on 08.05.2024, discussions were held with the hon. minister and the Secretary to the Ministry regarding this matter. During these discussions, it was observed that, since persons who vest properties in the Department of Public Trustee do so specifically in favour of the Public Trustee, and as actions relating thereto must be carried out in terms of the Public Trustee Ordinance and the Trust Ordinance, assigning such properties/estates to District Secretaries or Divisional Secretaries would not be legally permissible. Nevertheless, in the administration of estates/properties vested in the Public Trustee, assistance is obtained from District Secretaries, Divisional Secretaries, and Grama Niladharis, particularly in matters requiring verification of legal issues, ownership-related matters, or other special legal concerns.

03.	<u>Acquisition of Properties by the Department of Public Trustee</u> The Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) / Accounting Officer (AO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs stated that properties are received by the Department of Public Trustee through wills and court orders. It was further stated that the Department receives properties through the issuance of probate, letters of administration, and appointment by the court as a custodian trustee. He further informed the Committee that the Department takes steps to obtain the necessary information through coordination with parties such as Grama Niladharis and Divisional Secretaries.	In the administration of estates/properties vested in the Department of the Public Trustee, assistance is obtained from District Secretaries, Divisional Secretaries, and Grama Niladharis in matters relating to the verification of legal issues, ownership matters, or other instances requiring special legal attention.
04.	<u>Categories of properties/assets vested in the department of the public trustee and the exact extent of such properties located throughout Sri Lanka</u> The Committee recommended to the Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) / Accounting Officer (AO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs that a comprehensive register be prepared containing details of the various means through which assets are vested in the Department of Public Trustee, including the date on which each asset was received, the person by whom it was vested, and the conditions relating to such vesting. The Committee further recommended that, inclusive of the above information, a computer presentation be made at the next meeting of the Committee on Public Accounts scheduled to be held on 20 June 2024, outlining each service provided by the Department of Public Trustee and the activities carried out under those services during the past five years.	A report in this regard has been forwarded to you by Letter No. PT/02/CA/01/740 dated 27.03.2025
05	<u>Leasing of Lands/Properties vested in the Public Trustee</u> The Committee also pointed out alternative approaches, in addition to leasing, such as engaging in discussions with institutions, including the Sri Lanka Army, the Civil Security Department, and the Department of Prisons, to utilize soldiers and inmates	Lands and estates vested with the Public Trustee are managed by the Department of Public Trustee or leased out on a rental basis through the calling of quotations.

	for more productive cultivation activities and other related purposes on these lands.	As proposed, steps were taken to cultivate these lands and estates in collaboration with institutions such as the Sri Lanka Army, Civil Security Department, and the Department of Prisons. However, these efforts were not successful. Accordingly, actions are currently being taken to lease out such lands and estates on a rental basis.
06	<u>Trust Funds</u> The Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) / Accounting Officer (AO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs stated that the Department of Public Trustee maintains 1,130 trusts, of which 1,100 are in active status. It was further stated that the funds of these trusts have been deposited in 1,936 accounts maintained in three main banks, with a total balance amounting to Rs. 2,823 million. It was pointed out during the audit that these funds had been deposited under low interest rates. Subsequently, following discussions with state banks, the funds were invested under more favorable interest rates, thereby generating an income of Rs. 252 million for the year 2023. The CAO/AO further stated that such funds are utilized for fulfilling the objectives of the respective trusts. In addition, it was stated that the relevant funds have also been invested in fixed deposits, treasury bills, and treasury bonds.	When investing surplus funds of the trusts, competitive quotations are obtained from banks, and investments are made with the bank offering the highest interest rate.
07	<u>Vehicles received from trusts</u> The Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) / Accounting Officer (AO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs, stated that a vehicle received from a trust is currently in the possession of the Department of Public Trustee and is being utilized for the Department's official purposes in accordance with the intention of the relevant trust.	At present, this vehicle is not being used for day-to-day activities. Action will be taken to dispose of them in due course.

08	<u>Current Status of the Harry Hapugoda Estate Located at Suduwelipotha, Baddegama, Galle</u> The Committee instructed that fresh tenders be called for leasing purposes.	Out of the lands belonging to this trust, the 17-acre Mattakawatta estate has already been tendered and leased on the basis of the highest bid. Tenders have also been called for the leasing of eight land parcels, comprising 61 acres and 33 perches, on a rental basis. The remaining lands will be reviewed, and appropriate action will be taken in due course.
09	<u>Beneficiaries of the Trusts</u> The Committee was informed that, in accordance with the last wishes of the settlors of the trusts, where a surplus remains after fulfilling the intended purposes, approval has been granted, subject to the authorization of the Public Trustee, to utilize such funds for charitable activities. It was further stated that a large number of charitable institutions serve as continuing beneficiaries of many trusts. The Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) / Accounting Officer (AO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs stated that the relevant charitable institutions had been informed regarding the receipt of funds from such trusts, and that the Department also undertakes meritorious activities in remembrance of the settlors who vested these properties.	Charitable activities are carried out in accordance with the relevant religious rites and in the manner stipulated under the terms of each trust agreement.
10	<u>Disbursement of Foreign Compensation to Claimants</u> The Committee instructed that the Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs be informed in writing to submit, prior to 06 June 2024, a report to the Committee on the existing legal framework relating to the receipt of compensation on behalf of a Sri Lankan who had died overseas, the procedure currently followed in that process, the amounts of compensation received by the Department of the Public Trustee during the past five years, and the circulars relating to the payment of foreign compensation. The Chair of the Committee also instructed the Secretary to the Committee to make arrangements to	A report in this regard has been forwarded to you by Letter No. PT/02/CA/01/740 dated 27.03.2025 Further, discussions were held with the Consular Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 11.06.2025 and 19.02.2026 regarding the efficient administration of foreign compensation payments, and the necessary measures have been taken accordingly.

	summon the Consular Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the next Committee meeting scheduled to be held on 20 June 2024 in relation to the aforesaid matter. Further, the Committee recommended to the Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) / Accounting Officer (AO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs that a summary relating to the process of providing compensation payments and outstanding salaries to the heirs of Sri Lankan expatriates/workers who had died overseas be submitted to the Committee by 13.05.2024.	
11	<u>Payment of compensation to Temples</u> The Committee recommended to the Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) / Accounting Officer (AO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs that, since compensation amounting to Rs. 1,170 million remains payable to 417 temples located throughout the island, a suitable format/form be prepared and forwarded to the relevant temples in order to obtain the necessary information, and that steps be taken to release the relevant funds to temples where there are no pending legal proceedings or disputed matters. The Committee further recommended that the progress in this regard be reported before the Committee by 20 June 2024.	A report in this regard has been forwarded to you by Letter No. PT/02/CA/01/740 dated 27.03.2025 Compensation payments made under the Temple Compensation Ordinance are released for the specific development activities of the relevant temple. As such activities are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the respective temple, the responsibility of this Department is limited to notifying compensation entitlements and facilitating the release of such entitlements whenever necessary.
12	<u>Updating of the Website of the Department of Public Trustee</u> The Committee recommended to the Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) / Accounting Officer (AO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs that the website of the Department of Public Trustee be updated, before 01 June 2024, by including information relating to the services provided by the Department, the relevant application forms, and property-related information, together with the Tamil translations thereof.	Information relating to the services provided by the Department, together with the relevant application forms and details required for obtaining such services, had been uploaded to the Departmental website before 01 June 2024. Further, steps have been taken to update the Tamil translations in phases, and the Performance Report has now also been uploaded in all three languages.

13	<u>Payment of Compensation in Instances Where Properties Vested in the Public Trustee Have Been Acquired by the Government</u> The Chief Accounting Officer (CAO) / Accounting Officer (AO) of the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs stated that properties vested in the Public Trustee had been acquired for the Volkswagen factory project and for the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, and that compensation amounting to several million rupees received in this regard has not yet been released due to ongoing legal proceedings. It was further stated that, upon receipt of the relevant compensation funds, such monies would be utilized for fulfilling the intentions of the respective property settlers.	Case No. 9/LA pending before the Kuliyaipitiya District Court has not yet been concluded.
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