



Media Release

Overflowing reservoirs may endanger Poson pilgrims warns AIA



Colombo 27 May 2015: This year, continued inclement weather could pose a threat to Poson pilgrims who use the reservoirs in Anuradhapura. AIA Insurance conducts an extensive Poson safety programme in the district and is concerned about the increased danger faced by the visiting pilgrims who use the tanks and reservoirs.

During the month of May it was reported that all 6 spill gates at the Nachchaduwa Reservoirs in Anuradhapura were open as a result of the heavy rains. Water was being released to Malwathu Oya and as a result of the river breaking its banks several access roads to Anuradhapura were inundated. Two spill gates of the Mahakanadarawa reservoir in Mihintale were also opened. The Department of Irrigation stated that spill gates of 20 reservoirs falling under their purview had been opened and that most of these reservoirs are located in the Anuradhapura district.

It is in this backdrop that AIA Insurance prepares for its Poson Safety Programme in Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Dambulla. The Company has been conducting a comprehensive safety programme for the past 22 consecutive years for the million or more Poson pilgrims who gather in the sacred city to commemorate the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. They camp out on the banks of the many historical reservoirs and tanks in the district and need to be mindful of the danger of bathing in unfamiliar waters.

The number of drowning accidents during Poson was high before the Company extended a ready helping hand to keep the pilgrims safe. As an insurance company AIA understands and appreciates the value of human life and is deeply concerned about the safety of families. The drowning incidents have been reduced to near zero since the Company commenced the safety programme in 1993, saving at least 200 lives over the past two decades with the help of professional lifesavers.

This year, AIA has deployed 720 lifesavers working together with the Sri Lanka Police, Lifesaving Association of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Navy and Civil Security Department. Last year the lifesavers deployed by the Company saved 9 lives including a 6 year old from Kantale and a 14 year old from Moratuwa.

AIA's comprehensive safety campaign includes communications over TV, radio and newspapers, as well as the public address systems in the Sacred City. The extensive campaign includes, hoardings, banners and pennants to remind pilgrims to be cautious while bathing in reservoirs. Last year, AIA's Poson Safety TV Commercial was adjudged the Best TV Commercial of the Year at Sumathi Awards and the project itself was among the top 5 Best Sustainability Projects awarded by the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

Head of Marketing at AIA, Suren Perera said "We urge all Poson pilgrims to be more cautious and not take any unnecessary risks. They should also heed our warning boards at the reservoirs. We take great pride in protecting lives by this endeavour. This year we are deploying more lifesavers because of the bad weather conditions."