

Respected Kallingal Siddique Baba  
Chairman, Yahum Thangal Maqam  
BP Angadi PO, Tirur  
Malappuram, Kerala - 676102

9<sup>th</sup> January 2025

**Re: Request to use lifelike mechanical elephants for the historical Yahum Thangal Valiya Nercha (Puthiyangadi Nercha) at BP Angadi, Tirur**

Assalamu Alaikum! I hope this message finds you in the best of health and iman.

I am writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India, a charity dedicated to animal protection with over 2 million members and supporters. I take this opportunity to acknowledge your esteemed mosque for exemplifying the noble principles of Islam, which emphasizes compassion, the safeguarding of others, and the sanctity of life for all of Allah's creations.

We understand that elephants are hired as part of the annual Yahum Thangal Valiya Nercha procession festivities. However, we are deeply saddened by the disturbing incident during the procession on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025, where an upset and frustrated elephant named Paakkath Sreekuttan became violent and attacked devotees, causing severe panic and injuries to at least 24 individuals.

In light of this, we humbly request that you consider using lifelike mechanical elephants in future processions. I deeply respect the profound cultural and religious significance of Yahum Thangal Valiya Nercha. This is precisely why I appeal to you to reflect on the risks and suffering involved in using live elephants for such events.

Despite their majestic presence, elephants are wild animals and inherently unpredictable, especially in large, noisy crowds. In fact, anything can trigger an elephant, which can make them attack. This tragic incident underscores the potential dangers. Such incidents are not isolated; captive elephants have caused more than 500 fatalities in Kerala alone over 15 years. I am sure you agree that the safety of the devotees, organisers and participants is paramount and must not be compromised. Anything in the environment can trigger an elephant which can make them attack. Elephant Paakkath Sreekuttan, in fact, has a history of attacking, as it happened at the Arattu festival at Viyyur Vishnu temple in Kozhikode in January 2024.

To avoid such dangerous situations in the future, we propose to donate a lifelike mechanical elephant, which can fulfill the ceremonial role without risking human safety or animal welfare. These mechanical alternatives are gaining popularity and are increasingly adopted in various temples for religious events and other celebrations such as weddings, social gatherings, etc., providing attendees with a safe and awe-inspiring experience. PETA India is ready to facilitate this transition at no cost to Yahum Thangal Makham.

A mechanical elephant looks, feels, and functions just like a real elephant. It can shake its head, move its ears and eyes, swish its tail, lift its trunk, and even spray water with it. Unlike live elephants, mechanical elephants do not experience pain, frustration, or loneliness. They can be climbed upon, fitted with a ceremonial seat,

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and maintained at a nominal cost during events. Pictures of a mechanical elephant are enclosed as **Annexure 1**.

PETA India has already donated seven such life-size mechanical elephants to temples in Kerala and Karnataka in recognition of their decision to never to own or hire live elephants (**Annexure 2**). These seven mechanical elephants are now used to conduct ceremonies at their temples in a safe and cruelty-free manner, helping real elephants stay with their families in the wild. These temples also rent mechanical elephants to others for rituals, wedding processions, and other occasions.

Islam teaches mercy and kindness towards all living beings. Our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever is kind to the creatures of God is kind to himself." Using elephants in festivals and processions causes these animals severe physical and psychological stress. They are distressed by loudspeakers, traffic, and other commotion and are controlled through painful methods, such as chains and beatings. These practices contradict the principles of compassion and mercy that our faith advocates.

In the spirit of Islamic teachings and for the safety of all devotees, we earnestly request that you make this compassionate and forward-thinking change. Adopting a mechanical elephant will not only honour the legacy of Yahum Thangal but also set a tremendous precedent of mercy and safety, reflecting the true essence of our faith. I hope you will consider this plea with the gravity and urgency it warrants. Your decision could prevent harm and demonstrate a profound commitment to the values of Islam.

I look forward to hearing from you. I can be contacted at **8527506382** and [FarhatU@petaindia.org](mailto:FarhatU@petaindia.org).

May Allah guide us all to make choices that reflect His mercy and wisdom.

Kind regards,

*Farhat*

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