



IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM
PRESENT
THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V
&
THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR
TUESDAY, THE 7TH DAY OF APRIL 2026 / 17TH CHAITHRA, 1948

HPCR(S) NO. 1 OF 2026

(IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SREE
DHARMASASTHA TEMPLE - IN THE MATTER OF APPOINTING CHAIRMAN FOR
THE HIGH POWER COMMITTEE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SABARIMALA MASTER
PLAN - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED - REG:)

PETITIONER:

THE HIGH POWER COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
SABARIMALA MASTER PLAN
REPRESENTED BY ITS CHAIRMAN, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD,
NANTHANCODE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, KERALA- 695003

BY ADV SMT.SAYUJYA RADHAKRISHNAN, SC, HIGH POWER
COMMITTEE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SABARIMALA MASTER PLAN

RESPONDENTS:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695001

- 2 THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE,
KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003

SMT. RASHMI K.M., SR.GP
SRI. G. BIJU, SC, TDB

THIS HIGH POWER COMMITTEE REPORT (SABARIMALA) HAVING COME UP
FOR FINAL HEARING ON 07.04.2026, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY
DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING:



ORDER

Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.

This report is filed in the matter concerning the appointment of a new Chairman to the High Power Committee entrusted with the implementation of the Sabarimala Master Plan.

2. At the outset, it is apposite to note that the need for a comprehensive Master Plan was initially articulated by stakeholders as well as the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament. Pursuant to directions issued by the Hon'ble Apex Court, the Government of Kerala entrusted M/s. IL&FS Eco Smart Limited, New Delhi, with the task of preparing the Master Plan, after undertaking a detailed study of the implications of the pilgrimage, particularly in relation to pilgrim safety, infrastructure, and environmental impact. It appears that an extensive and detailed plan was accordingly prepared and was approved for implementation by the Government of Kerala through an order dated 03.05.2007.

3. The primary objective of the Master Plan was to cater to the essential needs of Sabarimala pilgrims while ensuring the protection of the region's fragile ecological balance. The plan comprehensively addressed multiple facets of the pilgrimage, including traffic and transport management, solid waste management, water supply and sanitation, development of base camps, pilgrimage logistics, healthcare infrastructure, communication systems, and disaster management. It further envisaged a phased implementation—an immediate phase to be completed before



November 2007, a short-term phase to be completed prior to 2015, and a long-term phase extending up to the year 2050.

4. It is also evident that the Government of Kerala had constituted two committees – the Apex Level Committee and the Working Level Committee – in the year 2005 for the purpose of implementing the Master Plan. Subsequently, by order dated 02.04.2009 in DBP No. 3 of 2009, this Court constituted a High Power Committee for overseeing the implementation of the Master Plan, with Sri K. Jayakumar, IAS, then Additional Chief Secretary, as Chairman. The Committee comprised approximately eight members, including the Special Commissioner appointed by this Court. The High Power Committee was vested with the powers of both the Apex Level Committee and the Working Level Committee constituted by the State Government, in addition to such powers as may be conferred by this Court from time to time.

5. Later, by order dated 30.08.2017 in DBP No. 136 of 2012 and SSCR No. 9 of 2017, this Court reconstituted the High Power Committee, appointing Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Siri Jagan, a former Judge of this Court, as its Chairman. The Committee presently comprises around 21 members, along with a Technical Committee constituted to assist and guide it on technical and environmental aspects. This Technical Committee includes approximately ten members and two special invitees. In addition, a Special Technical Committee consisting of environmental experts functions under the aegis of the High Power Committee.

6. It is further understood that a Sabarimala Master Plan Infrastructure Fund



Trust Board has been constituted and registered for mobilizing financial resources for the project. The Trust Board includes patrons and trustees, and staff have been engaged on a contractual basis to support its functioning.

7. Following the constitution of the High Power Committee in 2009 and the Infrastructure Fund in 2010, initial project execution was undertaken using a corpus fund of ₹1 Crore provided by the Travancore Devaswom Board, along with approximately ₹2 Crores mobilized through donations. Thereafter, from the financial year 2011–12 onwards, the Government of Kerala has consistently allocated funds through annual budgetary provisions for developmental activities at Sabarimala, amounting in total to ₹390.2 Crores up to the financial year 2025–26.

8. From the materials placed before us, it emerges that several measures have been undertaken by the High Power Committee. These include the preparation of a detailed layout plan for Sannidhanam, the trek route, and Nilakkal, as well as substantial infrastructure development such as a 5 MLD Sewage Treatment Plant, an Annadanamandapam capable of serving 5,000 pilgrims at a time, a Darsanam Complex, RCC ground-level water storage tanks, restaurant facilities, parking areas, resting halls, integrated toilet complexes, and water tanks at Nilakkal. However, certain components of the pilgrim management plan and queue complexes along the trek route remain only partially completed and require further development. A proposal for formulating a comprehensive Pilgrim Management Plan, aimed at regulating the movement of pilgrims, is currently under active consideration, and Terms of Reference have been



prepared for inviting Expressions of Interest. Once implemented, this plan is expected to streamline pilgrim flow, reduce congestion at Pampa and along the trek routes, and facilitate the development of queue complexes and related infrastructure as envisaged under the Master Plan.

9. It is also noted that one of the key recommendations of the Master Plan involves the removal of certain structures located at higher levels near the temple, including areas around the Thazikakkudam and the upper Thirumuttom, to ensure better pilgrim circulation and adherence to temple traditions. Proposals for constructing alternative facilities, including Thanthrimadom and relocation of offices, are under preparation. Steps are also being taken to free the lower Thirumuttom for improved pilgrim movement. In addition to the ongoing works, several major projects have been identified for prioritised implementation, including a Pilgrim Amenity Centre, Prasadam Complex, firefighting systems, a rescue bridge at Sannidhanam, a ropeway system from Pampa to Sannidhanam, and development of the Nilakkal core area with pedestrian pathways, administrative blocks, and resting facilities.

10. It is also relevant to note that this Court initiated suo motu proceedings as W.P. (C) 8529 of 2026 pursuant to its order dated 06.02.2026 in SSCR No. 37 of 2025, taking into account the challenges faced in crowd management during the Mandala–Makaravilakku Season 2025–26. Based on these experiences, directions were issued to establish an institutional framework ensuring coordinated and advance planning among all stakeholders. During the proceedings, the Court recorded the



submission of the Travancore Devaswom Board that a Vision Document had been prepared to improve the overall conduct and management of the pilgrimage, with emphasis on safety, sanitation, service delivery, and administrative efficiency. The Court considered the following aspects for detailed examination:

- I. Institutional Framework and Governance
- II. Crowd Management and Virtual Queue Systems
- III. Technology and Integrated Command Systems
- IV. Traffic Management and Road Infrastructure
- V. Infrastructure at Nilakkal (Base Camp), Pamba, and Sannidhanam
- VI. Safety, Fire, and Electrical Systems
- VII. Sanitation and Waste Management
- VIII. Medical and Health Services
- IX. Pilgrim Amenities and Welfare
- X. Environmental Compliance
- XI. Appearance, Ambience, and Communication
- XII. Personnel Training and Staffing
- XIII. Timelines for Completion

11. These suggestions were made after obtaining inputs from the Travancore Devaswom Board and the Chief Police Coordinator. It is clarified that the intention was not to encroach upon the functions of the High Power Committee but to supplement efforts towards improving pilgrim facilities.

12. From the statement filed by the Audit Department, it is evident that the



Master Plan prepared by M/s. IL&FS Eco Smart Limited is a comprehensive and detailed document addressing all aspects of the Sabarimala pilgrimage. However, for effective implementation, it is imperative that a time-bound action plan based on prioritisation is formulated. This necessarily requires the preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) as part of the planning and design phase. We concur with the audit findings that, in the absence of such structured action plans and DPRs, developmental activities may deviate from the projects originally envisaged under the Master Plan, including those scheduled under immediate, short-term, and long-term phases. It also appears that certain ongoing projects are not aligned with the original framework of the Master Plan. For instance, the disaster management component envisaged under the Master Plan has not yet been implemented.

13. The report indicates that Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Siri Jagan passed away on 24.01.2026. In view of the demise, the High Power Committee is presently unable to effectively carry out its functions. For ensuring the continued and uninterrupted functioning of the Committee, the appointment of a new Chairman is urgently required. Having considered the entire facts and circumstances, we appoint Hon'ble Mr. Justice Arun V.G., learned Former Judge of this Court, as Chairman of the High Power Committee for implementation of the Sabarimala Master Plan.

14. We would like to reiterate that in the order dated 02.04.2009 in DBP 3 & 15 of 2009 and SSCR No. 1 of 2009 and order dated 30.8.2017 in DBP 136 of 2012 and SSCR No. 9 of 2017, this Court had emphasized and laid down the role that has to be



played by the Chairman for the High Power Committee for the implementation of the Sabarimala Master Plan. The role of the Chairman of the High Power Committee, as envisaged in the orders of this Court dated 02.04.2009 and 30.08.2017, is central to and determinative of the entire implementation process of the Sabarimala Master Plan. The Chairman presides over all meetings of the Committee and exercises overall supervision and control over its functioning and the implementation of the Master Plan. This Court had recorded that the Chairman is vested with the powers earlier exercised by the Apex Level Steering Committee and the Working Level Committee and is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the time-bound implementation of the Master Plan in accordance with the directions issued by this Court. The Chairman is also empowered to co-opt representatives from the Pollution Control Board, the Public Works Department, and such other departments as may be required from time to time. The Chairman bears the responsibility of submitting periodical status reports to this Hon'ble Court, once every two months, through the learned Advocate General. In addition, the Chairman is required to closely monitor the day-to-day progress of works, conduct site inspections, review the functioning of the Technical Committee, and prioritise projects based on the availability of funds. The Chairman is further tasked with resolving inter-departmental issues and ensuring strict financial discipline and transparency in the utilisation of public funds. Importantly, the Chairman acts as the vital link between this Court, the State Government, and the Travancore Devaswom Board. As the driving force behind the Committee, the Chairman is responsible for ensuring that the Master Plan is implemented in a time-bound and result-oriented manner. The Chairman is also



entrusted with identifying priority works, ensuring phased execution in accordance with available resources, and maintaining continuous oversight over all developmental activities. Equally significant is the Chairman's obligation to safeguard the flora and fauna of the region and to ensure that no project undertaken compromises the ecological balance of the Periyar Tiger Reserve and the Western Ghats.

15. We request the High Power Committee to duly consider the aspects highlighted by this Court in Suo Motu Writ Petition No. 8529 of 2026, along with the suggestions set out herein. Appropriate decisions shall be taken to ensure that there is no duplication or overlap of functions, and that the implementation remains aligned with the objectives and structural framework of the Master Plan. It is further clarified that it shall be open to the High Power Committee to move this Court by way of an appropriate application or report, at any stage and not merely as part of the periodic reporting, if such intervention is considered necessary for the effective discharge of the functions of the High Power Committee.

Accordingly, this HPCR(S) is closed.

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,
JUDGE**

Sd/-

**K.V. JAYAKUMAR,
JUDGE**