

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM  
PRESENT  
THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V  
&  
THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR  
Monday, the 18<sup>th</sup> day of May 2026 / 28th Vaisakha, 1948  
SSCR NO. 14 OF 2026**

**IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER  
REPORT SM.NO.14/2026 - REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER, SABARIMALA  
REGARDING UNAUTHORIZED SUPPLY OF POOJA MATERIALS BY SUNIL KUMAR @ SUNIL SWAMY  
AND MISAPPROPRIATION IN PURCHASING THE POOJA MATERIALS - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS  
INITIATED - REG.**

**PETITIONER:**

**SUO MOTU**

**RESPONDENTS:**

- 1. STATE OF KERALA  
REPRESENTED BY THE SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,  
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695001.**
- 2. CHIEF POLICE CO-ORDINATOR  
(ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE) (POLICE HEADQUARTERS)  
SABARIMALA, PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN-689713.**
- 3. DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
LOCAL FUND AUDIT, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003.**
- 4. TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD  
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURM - 695003.**



5. **DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER**  
**TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS ,NANTHANCODE,**  
**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN-695003.**
6. **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
**SABARIMALA, SABARIMALA P.O., PATHANAMTHITTA-689662.**
7. **CHIEF VIGILANCE & SECURITY OFFICER( SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE)**  
**TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST,**  
**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695003.**

**BY SRI.S.RAJMOHAN, SENIOR GOVERNMENT PLEADER**  
**BY STANDING COUNSEL FOR TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD**  
**BY SMT.SAYUJYA RADHAKRISHNAN, AMICUS CURIAE FOR SABARIMALA SPECIAL**  
**COMMISSIONER**

**THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING COME UP FOR**  
**ADMISSION ON 18/05/2026, UPON PERUSING THE REPORT, THE COURT ON THE SAME**  
**DAY PASSED THE FOLLOWING:**



**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V.,  
&  
K.V. JAYAKUMAR, JJ.**

-----  
**SSCR No. 14 of 2026**  
-----

**Dated this the 18th day of May, 2026**

**ORDER**

**Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.**

The above Sabarimala Special Commissioner Report raises matters of serious concern relating to the administration of the Sabarimala Temple, financial propriety in the conduct of poojas, accountability of temple officials, and the overall transparency of the functioning of the Travancore Devaswom Board. The allegations reflected in the report, if ultimately found to be true, disclose long-standing irregular practices involving public funds and temple administration, warranting immediate examination and corrective measures at the highest level.

2. It appears that a complaint was submitted by a devotee before the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer of the Travancore Devaswom Board seeking investigation into certain objectionable and irregular practices allegedly prevailing at Sabarimala. Pursuant thereto, a preliminary vigilance enquiry was conducted by the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer, and a detailed report was submitted before this Court.

3. One of the principal issues highlighted in the report relates to the conduct of "Ashtabhishekam" poojas and the manner in which supplier costs are

allegedly being claimed and appropriated. From the report, it is seen that devotees are charged an amount of ₹6,000/- for conducting one Ashtabhishekam, out of which a sum of ₹300/- is earmarked towards procurement of pooja materials. The materials required for the pooja include Panchamritham, Ghee, Honey, Bhasmam, Kalabham, Milk, Tender Coconut and Panineer. According to the report, the first five items are already being issued through the Devaswom Store itself, whereas only Milk, Tender Coconut and Panineer are allegedly procured independently by the Administrative Officer concerned. The serious allegation raised is that, despite this arrangement, the Administrative Officer has been claiming the entire amount of ₹300/- towards supplier costs for every Ashtabhishekam without producing any valid bills, vouchers or supporting purchase records to substantiate the expenditure incurred.

4. The Vigilance Report further reveals that the aforesaid practice has allegedly continued unabated for several years and that substantial amounts have been appropriated by successive Administrative Officers under the guise of supplier costs. The Vigilance Officer has specifically observed that, when eight items are required for conducting the pooja, and five of them are already supplied through the Devaswom Store, there appears to be absolutely no justification for procuring only three items externally while appropriating the entire supplier cost amount. Prima facie, the arrangement itself appears to lack transparency and financial accountability.

5. The Vigilance Officer has also scrutinised various accounts and bills relating to different pooja seasons commencing from August 2024 onwards. It is

reported that, on 12.08.2024 and during the period from 17.08.2024 to 21.08.2024, a total of 218 Ashtabhishekams were conducted and an amount of ₹65,400/- at the rate of ₹300/- per pooja was appropriated towards supplier costs. Likewise, for the poojas conducted on 21.09.2024 and during the period from 17.10.2024 to 20.10.2024, 287 Ashtabhishekams were conducted and an amount of ₹86,100/- was appropriated. The report further reveals that, during the Onam Pooja season of September 2025, 271 Ashtabhishekams were conducted resulting in appropriation of ₹81,300/-. During the Kanni Masa Pooja period commencing from September 2025, 340 Ashtabhishekams were conducted and an amount of ₹1,02,000/- was appropriated. Similarly, during the Thulam Masa Pooja period commencing from October 2025, 264 Ashtabhishekams were conducted and a sum of ₹79,200/- was appropriated. It is also reported that, during the Meenam Masa Pooja conducted from 15.03.2026 to 19.03.2026, 337 Ashtabhishekams were conducted and an amount of ₹1,01,100/- was appropriated under the same head.

6. The Vigilance Officer has specifically reported that, merely by examining the accounts relating to six Masa Poojas, the amount involved itself comes to ₹5,15,100/-. The report further states that the accounts relating to the Mandala Makaravilakku season and several other pooja periods have not yet been examined. It is also reported that some of the accused involved in Crime Nos. 3700 of 2025 and 3701 of 2025 had occupied posts such as Administrative Officer and Executive Officer at Sabarimala, and that the same practice has allegedly continued for nearly a decade. The Vigilance Officer has further observed that, had a proper audit been conducted by the State Audit Department with respect to the conduct of

Ashtabhishekams during the previous ten years, these irregularities would have surfaced much earlier.

7. The learned Standing Counsel appearing for the Travancore Devaswom Board has raised serious objections regarding the findings in the Vigilance Report and submits that a detailed statement would be filed controverting the allegations and conclusions recorded therein. It is submitted that the present arrangement was introduced pursuant to the order dated 05.11.2021 in DBA No. 12 of 2021 and that the amount of ₹300/- is being appropriated towards supplier costs pursuant to the said arrangement. However, the fact that the amount is being appropriated under the said head is admitted.

8. Prima facie, we fail to understand why, when all the materials required for conducting Ashtabhishekam could conveniently be supplied through the Devaswom Store itself, the Board permitted procurement of only three items through the Administrative Officer by separately claiming supplier costs. In our considered view, items such as Milk, Tender Coconut and Panineer could very well have been issued directly through the store counter itself, thereby ensuring proper accounting, transparency and financial discipline. Furthermore, for the conduct of the Ashtabhishekam, a full bottle of Milk and Panineer is not required.

9. Another serious issue highlighted in the report pertains to the supply of pooja materials by one Sri. Sunil Kumar @ Sunil Swamy. It is reported that materials such as rice, malar, jaggery, pazham, kottathenga, coconut, dry ginger, cumin seeds, cardamom, turmeric and pepper for use in "Nithya Nidhana Pooja", along with Pattu,

Thorthu and Vellamundu for use at Ganapathy Prathishta and Malikappuram, are allegedly being supplied by the aforesaid individual. It is further reported that all these materials are being stored in a room under the custody and control of the Administrative Officer.

10. The enquiry conducted by the Vigilance Officer allegedly revealed that none of the aforesaid materials was properly accounted for in the Devaswom accounts and that, till date, no receipts had been issued to the said Sunil Kumar in respect of the supplies allegedly made by him nor any account is being made by the officers concerned with the Board. The report further states that the quality, purity and quantity of the materials supplied by him were never verified or certified by any competent authority. This assumes significance because materials procured through the Devaswom Store pursuant to competitive tenders are ordinarily subjected to testing and approval by the Food Safety Laboratory before acceptance into the store. Another extremely serious allegation raised in the report is that, despite the pooja materials allegedly being supplied by the aforesaid Sunil Kumar, reimbursement claims were simultaneously being made by the Administrative Officer for the procurement of the very same materials.

11. The Vigilance Officer has further reported that the said Sunil Kumar allegedly incurred expenses of approximately ₹3,00,000/- during Masa Poojas and nearly ₹18,00,000/- during the Mandala Makaravilakku season towards supply of pooja materials. According to the report, the continuous acceptance of pooja materials from a single individual, without any transparent procedure, proper

authority or financial accountability, in a temple of the stature and importance of Sabarimala, would inevitably create room for corruption and administrative misuse at various levels.

12. It is further reported that, during Masa Poojas, the said Sunil Kumar supplies nearly 20 sacks of jaggery and that, during the pilgrimage season, about 210 sacks of jaggery are supplied by him. These materials are allegedly stored in a room adjacent to that of the Administrative Officer. As per the applicable Board Orders, whenever devotees or individuals supply items to the temple, the Administrative Officer is duty-bound to issue receipts in Form No. 3 and make corresponding entries in the relevant registers. A Special Nivedhya Register is also required to be maintained for proper accounting and disbursement of such materials. We find it highly objectionable that a particular individual has allegedly been permitted to continue supplying pooja materials in this manner for several years, especially when serious allegations have already been raised against him in the complaint under consideration. Prima facie, the said practice also appears to be contrary to ROC No. 4750/2025/SAB dated 11.06.2025.

13. The Vigilance Officer has also examined certain procurement bills submitted by the Administrative Officers and noted that original purchase bills from shops were not produced and that only quantity details were furnished. When reimbursement of amounts is claimed from temple funds, proper supporting bills and valid vouchers are necessarily required to be produced. Failure to do so is prima facie violative of the fundamental principles of financial propriety contained in the Kerala

Financial Code, Volume I, Article 7, which mandates that every payment must be supported by proper, original and verifiable vouchers.

14. The learned Standing Counsel shall therefore obtain specific instructions regarding the acts and conduct of the aforesaid Sunil Kumar and explain under what authority and circumstances the Devaswom Board permitted the said individual to continue supplying materials to the temple administration.

15. We also find that there is absolutely no justification for maintaining a separate room adjacent to the room of the Administrative Officer for storing materials allegedly supplied by Sri. Sunil Kumar. Equally, there appears to be no justification whatsoever for failing to enter the same in the Nadavaravu Register and other prescribed records maintained by the temple administration.

16. There shall therefore be a direction to the respondents to place before this Court a comprehensive report regarding the procedure presently followed for procurement of pooja materials under the Stores Purchase Rules, along with the relevant rules, circulars and guidelines governing such procurement, so as to ensure transparency, accountability and financial discipline in temple administration.

17. The Board shall also file a detailed statement furnishing the tenure particulars of officers such as the Executive Officer, Assistant Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Temple Special Officers and other senior officials now serving at Sabarimala. This direction is being issued because it has come to our notice that certain officers have continued to occupy one post or another at Sannidhanam for

prolonged periods. Such concentration of administrative control in sensitive posts may not augur well for the efficient, transparent and impartial functioning of the temple administration. The Board shall therefore place before this Court the complete tenure details of each such officer and the duration for which they have been stationed exclusively at Sannidhanam in various capacities. The Board shall also produce the accounts, vouchers and records relating to the amounts disbursed towards supplier costs for Ashtabhishekams for our perusal. In the said statement, the Board shall further disclose whether any of the senior officers concerned had faced disciplinary proceedings during service or whether any adverse remarks had been recorded against them either by this Court or by the Board at any point of time.

18. We further direct the Director, Kerala State Audit Department, to conduct a detailed examination of the accounts relating to the conduct of Ashtabhishekams during the past ten years and to submit a report before this Court indicating whether the Travancore Devaswom Board has suffered any financial loss on account of the practices referred to above and identifying the officers responsible for the same.

Post on 28.05.2026.

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,  
JUDGE**

Sd/-

**K.V. JAYAKUMAR,  
JUDGE**

APM