

**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 29<sup>th</sup> day of June 2026 / 8th Ashadha, 1948**

**WP(C) NO. 40608 OF 2025(A)**

**PETITIONER:**

1. SUO MOTU AS PER THE ORDER DATED 21.10.2025 IN SSCR 23/2025 REGARDING THE HEIST AND PLUNDERING OF GOLD FROM THE GOLD-CLADDED DWARAPALAKAS PLACED ON EITHER SIDE OF THE SREEKOVIL, SABARIMALA., PIN - 682031

**RESPONDENTS:**

1. THE STATE OF KERALA REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT, REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM , PIN - 695001
2. THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003
3. THE CHIEF VIGILANCE AND SECURITY OFFICER (SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE) TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003
4. THE STATE POLICE CHIEF POLICE HEAD QUARTERS, VAZHUTHACAUD, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695010
5. THE SENIOR DEPUTY DIRECTOR KERALA STATE AUDIT DEPARTMENT, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003

**BY Advs.**

**SPECIAL GOVERNMENT PLEADER FOR R1 & R4**

**S.SREEKUMAR (SR.) along with SHRI.G.BIJU,STANDING COUNSEL FOR R2, R3 & R5**

This petition again coming on for orders upon perusing the petition and the affidavit filed in support of WP(C) and this court's order dated 18/06/2026, the court passed the following:

MONDAY, THE 29TH DAY OF JUNE 2026

WP(C) No. 40608 of 2025

SUO MOTU

VS

THE STATE OF KERALA & OTHERS

**ADVS FOR PETITIONER/S:**

SUO MOTU (IN PERSON)

**ADVS FOR RESPONDENT/S:**

SRI.S.SREEKUMAR (SR.),

SHRI.G.BIJU, SC, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD



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

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**WP(C) No. 40608 of 2025**  
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**Dated this the 29th day of June, 2026**

**ORDER**

**Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.**

In terms of the directions issued by this Court in the order dated 18.06.2026, a detailed report has been placed before us by Sri. S. Sasidharan, IPS, Investigating Officer of the Special Investigation Team (SIT).

2. We have carefully gone through the report. The investigation conducted thus far reveals that the Dwarapalakas, which were originally clad with gold in the year 1998, were transported to Chennai in the year 2019 at the request of Sri. Unnikrishnan Potty. In the process of granting permission for the transportation of Gold from Sannidhanam, the officers of the Board, with malicious motive, deliberately described the gold-clad Dwarapalakas as copper plates and concealed its true nature. This was obviously to remove the gold from the Dwarapalakas and to plate a thin film of gold on the same. During the process undertaken at Chennai, the original gold cladding was removed, and as only a minimal quantity was required for gold plating, the balance extracted was misappropriated by the accused. Notwithstanding the inferior quality of the work carried out, a certificate was issued falsely certifying that the gold plating carried a

warranty of forty years to ensure that no doubt is raised. Within a few months, however, the gold plating deteriorated, exposing the underlying copper surface. The accused was alerted that if a fresh plating of gold is not made, the dubious acts committed in 2019 would be revealed. The investigation further reveals that, in order to conceal the pilferage and misappropriation of the gold committed during the year 2019, the sponsor and the officers involved entered into a criminal conspiracy to once again transport the Dwarapalakas to Chennai under the guise of carrying out fresh gold plating. In furtherance of this design, the sponsor, together with the proprietor of the concern which undertook the gold plating work, entered into a criminal conspiracy with officers and employees of the Travancore Devaswom Board and succeeded in influencing the decision-making process of the Board. On 13.11.2023, immediately after the newly appointed President of the Travancore Devaswom Board assumed office, Sri. Unnikrishnan Potty managed to gain his confidence and induced him to exercise his authority in furtherance of the above conspiracy. The materials collected during the investigation further disclose that the members of the Board, who were entrusted with the solemn responsibility of protecting and preserving the assets and valuables belonging to the Devaswom, and who were expected to discharge their fiduciary duties with utmost diligence, facilitated the decision to once again transport the Dwarapalakas to Chennai. This was done despite being fully aware that such action was contrary to the provisions of the Devaswom Manual as well as the specific directions issued by this Court in SSCR No. 13 of 2023, and despite knowing that the same was intended to conceal the earlier acts of misappropriation and would result in further loss to the Devaswom.

3. The materials collected during the investigation further disclose that the officers and members of the Board were fully aware, from the communications exchanged with Sri. Unnikrishnan Potty, that he continued to remain in possession of the balance quantity of gold retained after removing the original gold cladding in the year 2019 and carrying out the subsequent replating. The communications exchanged, the Board Orders issued, and the decisions taken collectively reveal that named officers of the Board and some of the Board Members had knowledge of the misappropriation of the gold and, instead of taking corrective action, actively colluded with Sri. Unnikrishnan Potty and the other accused in facilitating the removal of the Dwarapalakas and concealing the theft and misappropriation of the gold.

4. The report further states that overwhelming materials have been collected, clearly establishing the role of (1) Sri. Murari Babu, Executive Officer, Sabarimala; (2) Sri. Unnikrishnan Potty, the sponsor; (3) Sri. Pankaj Bhandari, proprietor of Smart Creations, Chennai; (4) P.S. Prashanth, President of the Travancore Devaswom Board; (5) Adv. A. Ajikumar, Member, Travancore Devaswom Board; (6) Sri. Kandararu Rajeevaru, Chief Priest (Thantri), Sabarimala; and (7) Sri. Rejilal, Thiruvabharanam Commissioner of the Travancore Devaswom Board. The Special Investigation Team has concluded that the acts committed by the accused, acting in concert and pursuant to a premeditated criminal conspiracy, disclose the commission of offences including criminal breach of trust, forgery and criminal conspiracy, punishable under Sections 316(2), 316(5), 336(2) and 61(2) read with Section 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. They shall, in view of the above,

initiate stringent action in terms of the provisions of the BNSS and ensure that the final report is laid as expeditiously as possible.

5. We also find from the report that the role of Sri. Sundareshan, who was then a Member of the Board, Smt. Bindhu, Secretary of the Travancore Devaswom Board, Sri. Mahesh Mohanararu, Thantri, Smt. Sunila, Thiruvabharanam Commissioner, Sri. O.G. Biju, Executive Officer, Sri. Sreenivas, Administrative Officer, Sri. Hemanth, Assistant Executive Officer, Sri. Pandurangaiah Naga Govardhan, a jeweller based in Ballari, and Sri. V.S. Rajendra Prasad, who served as Executive Officer during the year 2020, is presently being probed in detail. If, during investigation, sufficient materials are gathered disclosing their involvement in the commission of the offences, the Special Investigation Team shall take appropriate action in accordance with law, including the filing of additional reports, if so warranted.

6. It is also stated that the analysis report in respect of one of the samples forwarded to the National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur, and another sample sent to the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, is yet to be received. Additional time has therefore been sought for completing the investigation after receipt of the said expert reports.

7. It is for the Special Investigation Team to carry the investigation forward with all diligence and vigour and, if the materials so warrant, either register a fresh crime in respect of the transaction relating to the year 2025 or file a further report in Crime No. 3700/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025.

8. We are also informed that the investigation in Crime No. 3701/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025 has been completed, and all that remains is the filing of the final report.

9. Having regard to the nature and gravity of the allegations, the magnitude of the suspected misappropriation, and the involvement of several persons occupying positions of trust and responsibility, we direct the Special Investigation Team to proceed with utmost expedition and diligence at their command. The investigation shall be carried to its logical conclusion by ensuring that no aspect of the matter remains unexplored. Every endeavour shall be made to ensure that no stone is left unturned in unearthing the truth and bringing all those found responsible to justice, in accordance with law.

Post this matter on 20.07.2026.



Sd/-  
**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,  
JUDGE**

Sd/-  
**K.V. JAYAKUMAR,  
JUDGE**

APM