

**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 3rd day of August 2026 / 12th Sravana, 1948**

SSCR NO. 24 OF 2026

**IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER
REPORT - SM.NO.24/2026 - REPORT REGARDING MISAPPROPRIATION OF GHEE SUPPLIED BY
MILMA TO SABARIMALA DURING THE SEASON 2025-2026 - 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 - 695 001**

2. THE CHIEF POLICE CO-ORDINATOR

**(ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE) (POLICE HEAD QUARTERS),
SABARIMALA, PATHANAMTHITTA - 689713**

3. DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**LOCAL FUND AUDIT, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 003**

4. TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD

**REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 003**

5. DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER

**TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS, NANTHANCODE,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN-695 003**

6. EXECUTIVE OFFICER

SABARIMALA, SABARIMALA P.O., PATHANAMTHITTA-689 662

7. THE CHIEF VIGILANCE AND SECURITY OFFICER

**(SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE), TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS,
NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695 003**

***ADDITIONAL R8 IMPEADED-**

8. THE DIRECTOR,

DIRECTORATE OF VIGILANCE AND ANTI-CORRUPTION BUREAU

(VIGILANCE DIRECTORATE), VIKAS BHAVAN, LAW COLLEGE ROAD,

OPPOSITE KSRTC DEPOT, P.O. PALAYAM, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM – 695033

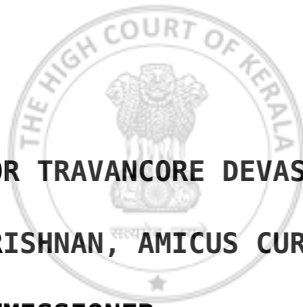
***IS SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL 8TH RESPONDENT AS PER ORDER
DATED 03.08.2026 IN SSCR NO.24/2026**

BY 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 03.08.2026, UPON PERUSING THE REPORT, THE COURT ON THE SAME
DAY PASSED THE FOLLOWING:**

MONDAY, THE 3RD DAY OF AUGUST 2026

SSCR No. 24 of 2026

SUO MOTU

VS

STATE OF KERALA & OTHERS

ADVS FOR PETITIONER/S:

NIL

ADVS FOR RESPONDENT/S:



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

SSCR No. 24 of 2026

Dated this the 03rd day of August, 2026

ORDER

Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.

This report has been submitted by the learned Special Commissioner regarding the alleged misappropriation and irregularities in the procurement and supply of ghee by Milma to Sabarimala Sannidhanam during the 1201 M.E. Mandala Makaravilakku Festival season (2025–2026).

2. It appears that, based on reports published in various television channels and newspapers alleging that adulterated ghee had been transported to Sabarimala during the 1201 M.E. Mandala Makaravilakku Festival season, the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer was directed to conduct a detailed enquiry and submit a report.

3. The preliminary enquiry report dated 02.08.2026 submitted by the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer has been placed before us for consideration.

4. A perusal of the report reveals that, for the 1201 M.E. Mandala Makaravilakku Festival season, the Travancore Devaswom Board had invited e-tenders for the supply of ghee to Sabarimala. Six bidders participated in the tender process.

Kumkumaraj Dairy, Tamil Nadu, emerged as the L1 bidder by quoting ₹369 per litre. Swami Ayyappa Enterprises, Kochi, was the L2 bidder with a quoted rate of ₹375 per litre, while Sri Venkiteshwara Traders, Tamil Nadu, was the L3 bidder quoting ₹376 per litre. The samples furnished by the L1, L2 and L3 bidders were subjected to analysis by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, and the samples submitted by L1 and L2 were found to have satisfied the prescribed quality standards.

5. The report further reveals that, notwithstanding the above tender process, the Executive Officer, Sri. Murari Babu, addressed a communication dated 30.12.2024 stating that, for the preparation of one lot of Aravana, approximately 10 litres of ordinary ghee were ordinarily required. According to him, if Milma ghee were used, the same quantity of Aravana could be prepared by using only 7 litres of ghee, thereby resulting in better quality and better smell. He also stated that, since Milma is a Government of Kerala undertaking, preference ought to be given to Milma by purchasing ghee from it. This was notwithstanding the substantially higher rate of ₹510 per litre quoted by Milma. The assumed superior quality of the product was projected as the principal justification for such purchase.

6. Subsequently, by another communication dated 21.07.2025, the Executive Officer reiterated the very same reasons. He further stated that, during the previous festival season (1200 M.E.), nearly 20 lakh tins of Aravana had been prepared using approximately 1,50,000 litres of ghee and asserted that, by using better quality Milma ghee, the same quantity of Aravana could be prepared by consuming only 7.5 litres of ghee instead of the usual 10 litres.

7. On the basis of these communications, the Board, by order dated 06.08.2025, approved the purchase of 1,65,000 litres of ghee from Milma at the rate of ₹510 per litre, thereby abandoning the e-tender process already initiated.

8. The preliminary enquiry report further discloses that the Commissioner had, by communication dated 03.04.2025, strongly objected to the proposal made by the Executive Officer and opposed the purchase of ghee from Milma. The Commissioner observed that the assumption regarding the superior quality of Milma ghee was unsupported by study or evaluation. He further opined that the assertion that the quantity of ghee required for preparing Aravana could be reduced from 10 litres to 7 litres was founded solely upon the assumptions made by the Executive Officer and was unsupported by any empirical material. The Commissioner also raised serious objections regarding the unusually high purchase price of ₹510 per litre. Despite these objections, the President of the Board, Sri. P.S. Prasanth, together with the other members, including Sri. Aji Kumar, approved the proposal to purchase ghee from Milma and consequently cancelled the procurement process initiated through the e-tender.

9. Having examined the preliminary report, we find that the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer has expressed a serious apprehension as to whether the entire quantity of 1,61,535 litres of ghee allegedly supplied by Milma had, in fact, reached Sannidhanam. This apprehension is founded on circumstances which, according to us, merit serious consideration.

10. By order dated 28.11.2025 in SSCR No.42 of 2025, this Court had

directed the Melsanthis of Sannidhanam and Malikappuram and the Santhis of Ulkzhakam not to collect the ghee remaining after Neyyabhishekam from devotees. They were further directed to immediately hand over all ghee stored in vessels, jars and other containers in their respective rooms to the competent authority of the Travancore Devaswom Board. This Court had also directed that Ghee Abhishekams should thereafter be performed only against valid Neyyabhishekam tickets issued by the Board. According to the preliminary enquiry, pursuant to the aforesaid directions of this Court, substantial quantities of ghee had accumulated at Sannidhanam, to such an extent that all storage tanks meant for storing ghee had become completely full. If that be so, the necessity for purchasing an additional quantity of ghee from Milma at an extraordinarily high price was unwarranted.

11. The report further records that, according to Milma's own records, only 1,61,535 litres of ghee had been shown as supplied. It has also been calculated that, had the Board proceeded with the purchase from the successful L1 bidder, it could have saved an amount of ₹2,27,76,435. The report also points out several discrepancies relating to the transportation, receipt and accounting of the ghee allegedly supplied.

12. One of the most disturbing findings recorded by the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer relates to the procurement of ghee by Milma itself. During the enquiry, it was revealed that Milma had purchased 24,970 kilograms of ghee from Sonai Co-operative Dairy, Pune, on 17.08.2025 at the rate of ₹497 per litre. Milma attempted to explain this purchase by stating that the procurement was intended to meet the increased demand during the Onam season. The Vigilance has found this explanation

wholly unconvincing. The report notes that the supply order issued by the Travancore Devaswom Board had already reached the Pathanamthitta Depot of Milma on 26.07.2025, and it was only thereafter that Milma proceeded to procure the above quantity of ghee from Sonai Co-operative Dairy. The enquiry has also revealed that the Pathanamthitta Dairy had not purchased ghee from outside sources during the years 2023 and 2024. These circumstances have raised serious doubts regarding the true purpose behind the purchase made from Sonai Co-operative Dairy.

13. The report also discloses another serious irregularity. The only quality certificate relied upon by the Travancore Devaswom Board was the quality analysis report issued by Sonai Co-operative Dairy. The ghee actually transported and supplied by Milma was never independently tested or analysed by the Food Safety and Standards Authority. During the enquiry, the Food Safety Officers informed the Vigilance Officer that samples had been collected only from five cans on 10.10.2025, one can on 07.11.2025, and one can on 15.12.2025. Thereafter, no samples whatsoever were collected by the Food Safety Authorities. On the basis of these facts, the Vigilance Officer has expressed a serious doubt as to whether any ghee was actually received at Sannidhanam after 15.12.2025. The report also points out that, ordinarily, one batch number is assigned to every 5,000-litre tank of processed ghee, which would approximately comprise 333 cans. However, in the present case, a single batch number has been assigned to nearly 1,000 cans, which is wholly inconsistent with the established manufacturing practice and raises further suspicion regarding the genuineness of the records.

14. The Vigilance Officer has further reported that the records maintained

by the Travancore Devaswom Board do not disclose that any quality inspection or verification was conducted at the time of receipt of the ghee at Sannidhanam, despite the claim that a total quantity of 1,61,535 litres of ghee had been supplied to Sannidhanam, Nilakkal, Pandalam and Erumeli.

15. Having carefully gone through the preliminary enquiry report dated 02.08.2026 submitted by the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer, we are of the prima facie view that the allegations disclosed therein are extremely grave and disclose serious irregularities in the procurement and supply of ghee. The report indicates that the decision to abandon the e-tender process and procure ghee from Milma at a substantially higher price was taken despite specific objections raised by the Commissioner. The report also discloses several discrepancies relating to the procurement, transportation, quality verification and actual receipt of the ghee. Prima facie, the materials collected during the preliminary enquiry indicate the possibility of a coordinated course of action involving certain members of the Board and officials, resulting in substantial financial loss to the Travancore Devaswom Board and the possible supply of substandard ghee for the preparation of Aravana. The report further raises a serious apprehension that payments may have been released even in respect of quantities of ghee that may not have actually been supplied. These allegations strike at the very integrity of the procurement process and involve the misutilisation of public funds entrusted to a statutory body administering one of the most revered temples in the Country. The matter, therefore, warrants a thorough, independent and comprehensive investigation.

16. The learned Standing Counsel appearing for the Board submitted that

the Board has, by order dated 01.08.2026, already directed the Superintendent of Police to conduct an enquiry into whether there has been any breach of the contractual obligations between the Travancore Devaswom Board and Milma, whether the contractual conditions have been complied with, whether the requisite food safety standards and tests were adhered to, and whether the Board has suffered any financial loss in connection with the transaction.

17. Having regard to the serious nature of the allegations and the prima facie findings recorded in the preliminary enquiry report, we are of the view that the matter is to be investigated by the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau. Accordingly, we suo motu implead the Director, Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (Vigilance Directorate), Vikas Bhavan, Law College Road, opposite KSRTC Depot, P.O. Palayam, Thiruvananthapuram – 695033, as additional 8th respondent.

18. The learned Special Government Pleader shall take notice for the additional respondent.

19. The following directions are accordingly issued:

- a) The Chief Vigilance and Security Officer shall forthwith forward the report dated 02.08.2026 to the Director, Vigilance & Anti-Corruption Bureau.
- b) The Additional 8th respondent shall constitute a team of upright and competent officers and shall initiate steps to register a crime on the strength of the report dated 02.08.2026 submitted by the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer. The team so constituted shall conduct a meticulous, coordinated, and effective investigation

into the matters referred to above and those disclosed in the said report. It is made clear that the team shall not disclose any details of the investigation to the public or the media.

- c) The investigating team shall file a report before this Court within a period of one month from today, indicating the progress of the investigation.
- d) In view of the law laid down by this Court in **Jayaprakash v. State of Kerala¹, Venugopal V. and Others v. State of Kerala², Yakoob Purayil v. State of Kerala³** and in view of the nature of allegations, prior approval under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 shall not be required in the present case.
- e) The team so constituted shall be answerable only to this Court, and before filing the final report, prior permission of this Court shall be obtained.

Post on 17.08.2026.

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,
JUDGE**

Sd/-

**K.V. JAYAKUMAR,
JUDGE**

APM

¹ 2022 (1) KHC 206
² [2021 KHC 565]
³ [2024 KHC 1199]