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 17th day of November 2026 / 26th Karthika, 1948

SSCR NO. 22 OF 2026

IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT - SM.NO.22/2026 - MONTHLY REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER, SABARIMALA REGARDING THE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING AND KARKIDAKAM MASA POOJA FROM 16.07.2026 TO 21.07.2026 (1201 ME KARKIDAKAM MASAM) AT SABARIMALA SREE DHARMA SASTHA TEMPLE - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED - REG:

PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENTS:

1. **STATE OF KERALA REPRESENTED BY THE SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT, REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURM - 695001**
2. **CHIEF POLICE COORDINATOR (ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE) (POLICE HEADQUARTERS), SABARIMALA, PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN-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 - 695003**
5. **DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS, NANTHANCODE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN-695003**
6. **EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SABARIMALA, SABARIMALA P.O., PATHANAMTHITTA - 689 662**
7. **CHIEF VIGILANCE & SECURITY OFFICER (SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE) TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003**

***ADDL.R8 IMPLEADED**

8. ERUMELI GRAMA PANCHAYATH,REPRESENTED BY THE SECRETARY, ERUMELI, KOTTAYAM- 686509.

***IS SUO MOTU IMPLEADED AS ADDITIONAL R8 AS PER ORDER DATED 29-07-2026 IN SSCR 22/2026**

***ADDL.R9 IMPLEADED**

9. THE ASSISTANT ENGINEER, MINOR IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT, OFFICE OF THE MINOR IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT, KANJIRAPPALLY, KOTTAYAM.

*** IS SUO MOTU IMPLEADED AS ADDITIONAL R9 AS PER ORDER DATED 5-8-2026 IN SSCR 22/2026.**

***ADDL.R10 & R11 IMPLEADED**

10. THE CHIEF ENGINEER, IRRIGATION & ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

11. THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR, SUCHITWA MISSION, HOUSING BOARD BUILDING, MUTTAMBALAM P.O., KANJIKUZHI, KOTTAYAM - 686004

***ARE SUO MOTU IMPLEADED AS ADDITIONAL R10 & R11 AS PER ORDER DATED 18-08-2026 IN SSCR 22/2026.**

BY SRI.K.R.SUNIL,SPECIAL GOVERNMENT PLEADER(DEVASWOM)

BY STANDING COUNSEL FOR TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD

BY SMT. SAYUJYA RADHAKRISHNAN, AMICUS CURIAE FOR SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMISSIONER

BY SMT.CHITHRA CHANDRASEKHARAN,STANDING COUNSEL FOR R8

BY SPECIAL GOVERNMENT PLEADER FOR IRRIGATION

THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING COME UP FOR ORDERS AGAIN ON 17.11.2026, UPON PERUSING THE REPORT AND THIS COURT'S ORDER DATED 13.11.2026, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY PASSED THE FOLLOWING:

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

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SSCR Nos. 45 of 2026 & 22 of 2026

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Dated this the 17th day of November, 2026

O R D E R

Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.

Today, when these matters were taken up for consideration, the learned Standing Counsel appearing for the Travancore Devaswom Board placed before us a detailed chart setting out the particulars of the various works undertaken. The chart contains details of the administrative sanctions accorded, the amounts sanctioned, the dates of execution of agreements, the expected dates of completion and the remarks relating to the respective works.

2. The Special Commissioner shall examine the chart and submit a report before this Court regarding the progress of the works, including their present stage of completion and any delay in their execution.

3. The learned Standing Counsel appearing for the Erumeli Grama Panchayat brought to our notice that garbage had been dumped in the Erumeli Devaswom Board parking ground, in front of the latrine and bathroom facilities.

On perusal of the photograph placed before us, we find that a considerable quantity of waste has accumulated in the said area. It is further submitted that the Erumeli Grama Panchayat has already issued a notice to the Travancore Devaswom Board, requiring it to remove the garbage and clear the area. We direct the Travancore Devaswom Board to take immediate steps to remove the garbage dumped in the parking area in front of the latrine and bathroom facilities in the Erumeli parking ground. The area shall thereafter be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition and kept free from waste, so that it remains fit for use as a parking facility.

4. The learned Standing Counsel appearing for the Erumeli Grama Panchayat would further submit that a sufficient number of boards have been installed, requesting pilgrims not to pollute the holy abode of Lord Ayyappa by throwing clothes and other waste into the holy Erumeli Valiyathodu.

5. We have perused the photographs of the boards installed by the Erumeli Grama Panchayat and find that the steps taken by the Panchayat in this regard are appropriate and in order.

6. The next contention advanced by the learned Standing Counsel appearing for the Erumeli Grama Panchayat is that, although the Travancore Devaswom Board has installed boards displaying the parking charges applicable to various categories of vehicles, the permitted duration of parking has not been specified. We find that the omission to indicate the period for which a vehicle

may remain parked is likely to cause confusion among pilgrims and other users of the parking facility. It may also lead to avoidable disputes regarding the parking charges payable. We therefore direct the Travancore Devaswom Board to ensure that the permitted duration of parking is clearly specified in all the boards installed at various locations in the Erumeli parking grounds. The information shall be displayed in a clear and prominent manner so as to avoid any ambiguity and enable vehicle owners to ascertain the applicable parking conditions.

7. The next issue is with regard to dumping of clothes by pilgrims. In our order dated 28.11.2025 in SSCR 43 of 2025, the following directives were issued:

Directives:

a) A significant part of the solution lies in influencing the behaviour of pilgrims even before they reach the riverbank. Pilgrims tend to follow what they perceive others doing; therefore, clear and consistent instructions must be communicated well in advance of their arrival at Pampa. Steps shall be taken to ensure that announcements are made from buses, KSRTC stands, and queue complexes, informing pilgrims that dumping clothes into the Pampa is environmentally harmful and expressly prohibited. Visual boards displaying simple messages such as "Dumping cloth pollutes the Pampa — Prohibited under law" in all vernacular languages shall be placed at every entry point, if not already installed. These measures are essential to create early awareness and behavioural conditioning.

b) For effective waste disposal, heavy-duty, waterproof garment-disposal bins shall be placed at intervals of every 50 metres, with clear colour-coded signage indicating that the bins are meant exclusively for cloth disposal. Supervisors shall ensure that no dumping occurs on the steps leading to the river or in the surrounding areas.

c) The 30 employees engaged under the kuthaka arrangement, along with as many additional employees as the Devaswom Board can reasonably spare, and volunteers concerned with environmental protection, shall be deployed in three continuous shifts to ensure uninterrupted presence on the ground. The Chief Police Coordinator shall also provide the services of a sufficient number of police personnel for guidance, positive nudging, and direct interdiction whenever necessary. Their presence is crucial to maintain discipline and prevent violations.

d) Ten mobile hand-held speakers shall be placed across the entire stretch, continuously broadcasting messages every one to two minutes, including "Dumping dhoti in Pampa harms the holy river" in all vernacular languages. Speakers and mics can also be handed over to volunteers who can scout the area and deter the pilgrims from dumping clothes. These periodic public announcements will reinforce the behavioural directives issued to the pilgrims.

e) CCTV cameras shall be installed every 50 metres to vigilantly monitor attempts to dump clothes into the river. The presence of such surveillance will have a strong deterrent effect and will also facilitate effective monitoring of the staff deployed in the area.

f) When a pilgrim is seen carrying a cloth towards the water, volunteers shall intervene politely and guide the devotee to the designated disposal facility, offering a bin or collection bag. This substitution method is proven to be effective in large crowds,

reduces confrontation, and ensures compliance with environmental norms.

g) The control and monitoring system shall operate in three shifts—4:00 AM to 12:00 PM, 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM, and 8:00 PM to 4:00 AM—ensuring round-the-clock vigilance.

h) A rapid-response team consisting of ten members shall patrol the entire stretch, promptly removing any clothes that may be dumped inadvertently and preventing the formation of large accumulations.

8. We direct the TDB to implement all the directions in its letter and spirit during this season as well.

9. The learned Standing Counsel appearing for the KSRTC is also present. We are of the view that it would be beneficial to play recorded audio messages in the KSRTC buses transporting pilgrims and also in the bus stations wherein pilgrims board buses to reach Sannidhanam. Such messages would create awareness among pilgrims about the need to preserve the cleanliness and sanctity of the holy river and to refrain from dumping clothes and other waste into it, as well as from using plastic articles during the pilgrimage.

10. The Travancore Devaswom Board shall hand over the recorded audio messages in different languages to the KSRTC. The messages shall specifically highlight the importance of maintaining the cleanliness and sanctity of the holy river and its surrounding areas. Pilgrims shall be cautioned against

throwing clothes and other waste into the river, using plastic articles, including plastic sachets containing shampoo and other toiletries, and discarding such materials in or around the river. The messages shall also advise pilgrims to refrain from using synthetic kumkum and other non-biodegradable articles during the pilgrimage. They shall be reminded of their responsibility to ensure that no waste is left behind and that the natural environment and sanctity of the pilgrimage centre are preserved.

11. The KSRTC shall make necessary arrangements for the installation of speakers in all buses transporting pilgrims and ensure that the recorded messages are played at appropriate intervals during the journey.

Post on 30.11.2026.

Sd/-
RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,
JUDGE

Sd/-
K.V. JAYAKUMAR,
JUDGE

APM