

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM
PRESENT
THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE ANIL K.NARENDRAN
&
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE P.G. AJITHKUMAR

Monday, the 12th day of December 2022 / 21st Agrahayana, 1944
DBP NO. 70 OF 2022

IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SREE DHARMA SASTHA TEMPLE- MATTER PERTAINING TO THE RESTRICTION IMPOSED ON THE ENTRY OF VEHICLES INCLUDING MOTOR CARS FROM NILAKKAL TO PAMPA - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED BASED ON A COMPLAINT DATED NIL MADE BY SANDHYA R., THRIPIUNITHURA - REG:

PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU

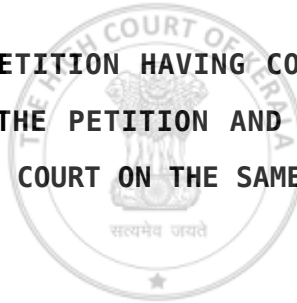
RESPONDENTS:

1. STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695001
2. THE SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT
TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695001
3. THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695003
4. THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS, NANTHANCOD,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695003
5. THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SABARIMALA DEVASWOM, DEVASWOM BOARD BUILDINGS, NANTHANCOD,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695003
6. THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR
COLLECTORATE, PATHANAMTHITTA, KERALA-689645

7. THE DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF,
PATHANAMTHITTA-689645
8. THE CIRCLE INSPECTOR OF POLICE
PAMBA POLICE STATION, SABARIMALA, PIN-689662
9. THE STATION HOUSE OFFICER
SANNIDHANAM POLICE STATION, SABARIMALA SANNIDHANAM,
PATHANAMTHITTA-689713

BY STANDING COUNSEL FOR TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
BY SRI.S.RAJMOHAN, SR.GOVERNMENT PLEADER
BY SRI.P.SANTHOSHKUMAR, SPL.GOVERNMENT PLEADER
BY SRI.N.RAGHURAJ, AMICUS CURIAE FOR SABARIMALA SPECIAL
COMMISSIONER

THE DEVASWOM BOARD PETITION HAVING COME UP FOR ORDERS AGAIN ON
12/12/2022, UPON PERUSING THE PETITION AND THIS COURT'S ORDERS DATED
12/12/2022 (ORDER NO.1), THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY PASSED THE FOLLOWING.



ANIL K. NARENDRAN & P.G. AJITHKUMAR, JJ.

**SSCR No.23 of 2022, DBP No.70 of 2022 and
DBP No.85 of 2022**

Dated this the 12th day of December, 2022

ORDER

Anil K. Narendran, J.

When these matters were taken up for consideration on 11.12.2022 in a special online sitting, we have issued various directions on crowd management at Nilakkal, Pamba and Sannidhanam and also regulation of traffic from Laha to Nilakkal and Kanamala to Elavunkal.

2. Today, when these matters were taken up for consideration at 10.15 am, in terms of the directions contained in the order dated 11.12.2022, the Special Commissioner, Sabarimla has filed a report on crowd management at Sabarimala Sannidhanam, with specific reference to the incident that occurred at Marakkoottam on 10.12.2022 due to heavy rush of pilgrims. The Special Commissioner, Sabarimala has also filed another report regarding the conduct of 'Ashtabhishekham' Vazhipadu on 10.12.2022. After taking note of the submissions made by the learned Senior Government

Pleader and also the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board, regarding the steps already taken, in terms of the directions contained in the order of this Court dated 11.12.2022, we have listed this matter for further consideration at 4.00 p.m, to enable the learned Senior Government Pleader and also the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board to get instructions on the report filed by the Special Commissioner. It was also pointed out that a joint meeting at Government level has been convened today (12.12.2022) at 12.00 p.m to discuss various issues in crowd management, movement of traffic, etc., at Sabarimala.

3. When these matters are taken up for consideration at 4.00 p.m, the learned Senior Government Pleader, has made available for the perusal of this Court written instructions from the 3rd respondent District Police Chief that the incident that occurred on 10.12.2022 at Marakkoottam was due to heavy inflow of devotees. By around 7.15. p.m, an emergency ambulance with patients from Sannidhanam reached the spot on its way to Appachimedu Emergency Medical Centre. In order to arrange the smooth passage of the Ambulance, the temporary blockade used for segmenting and restricting

pilgrims to Chandranandhan Road was shifted. Even with the police deployment, the pilgrims who were in queue inside the segment entered Chandranandhan Road in large numbers and rushed towards Sannidhanam. In anticipation of heavy footfall in Sabarimala, for the upcoming days, following measures will be taken to avoid any such untoward incident.

- The present pace at which the pilgrims ascent the holy steps per minute is 65-70. This will to be increased to 75-80. Special instructions have been given in this regard to personnel on duty at holy steps. The 100 Indian Reserve Battalion personnel have been exclusively deputed for duty at holy steps.
- The existing to and fro movement to Sannidhanam should be strictly followed. Infiltration to Chandranandan road must be strictly avoided by foot patrol teams.
- Additionally 422 policemen are deployed at Sannidhanam in this phase.
- If the flow to Sabarimala is beyond expectation, efforts will be taken to slow down traffic/block at places like Erumely, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam etc. and nearby places with prior information to District Collector and Special Commissioner.
- Announcement has to be done at Sannidhanam and Pamba requesting devotees who had darshan should return to Pamba at the earliest, so that heavy crowd in temple premises can be avoided.

4. The reports filed by the Special Commissioner would also show that though the Travancore Devaswom Board has

made arrangements for supply of 'chukkuvellam' and biscuits for stranded pilgrims, due to shortage of staff/volunteers, the arrangements made by the Board could not cater the need of large number of pilgrims. At Nadappanthal, the supply of water and biscuits to pilgrims were adequate.

5. The learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board would submit that the Board shall consider the question of increasing the number of volunteers for supplying chukkuvellam and biscuits for stranded pilgrims upto Marakkoottam.

6. In the order passed at 10.15 a.m, we noticed the submission made by the learned Senior Government Pleader and also the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board that the parking of vehicles at Nilakkal Parking ground is regulated appropriately to ensure that maximum number of vehicles are parked in all 16 parking grounds at Nilakkal.

7. The learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board would submit that after the order of this Court dated 11.12.2022, the Board has issued a show cause notice to the parking contractor to engage sufficient number of

employees to ensure proper parking of vehicles, failing which his contract will be terminated. On receipt of the show cause notice, the parking contractor has already engaged sufficient number of employees in each parking areas. Necessary details in this regard shall be furnished by tomorrow (13.12.2022.).

8. Regarding the conduct of Ashtabhishekam Vazhipadu in Sabarimala Sannidhanam, the learned Standing Counsel would submit that a decision has already been to limit the number of Ashtabhishekam to 15 per day. The devotees who offer Ashtabhishekam are permitted to stand in the 1st row, in single line, and the remaining area will be utilised for free movement of pilgrims in front of Sopanam, so that in addition to the existing three rows, one additional row will be available for movement of pilgrims in front of Sopanam.

9. The learned Senior Government Pleader would submit that in the joint meeting convened in the Government level, it has been decided to limit the number of online virtual queue bookings to 90,000 per day, however, spot booking will be permitted, without any restrictions.

10. We notice from the written instructions of the 3rd respondent District Police Chief that the average footfall from

16th November 2022 to 10th December 2022 shows that 85% to 95% of pilgrims who booked online had darshan at Sannidhanam. Around 5% to 8% of the additional footfall comes thorough spot booking, resulting almost 95 to 100% of the total spot booking daily.

11. The learned Senior Government Pleader would submit that a statement on behalf of the District Collector, Pathanamthitta based on the decisions already taken in the joint meeting convened at 12.00 p.m. today, shall be filed before this Court tomorrow.

List tomorrow (13.12.2022) for further consideration.

Sd/-

The seal of the High Court of Kerala is circular, featuring the state emblem of India in the center, surrounded by the text 'THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA' and the motto 'सत्यमेव जयते' at the bottom.
ANIL K. NARENDRAN, JUDGE

Sd/-

P.G. AJITHKUMAR, JUDGE

PV