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SSCR No. 20/2025

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V

&

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR

THURSDAY, THE 29TH DAY OF JANUARY 2026 / 9TH MAGHA, 1947

SSCR NO. 20 OF 2025

(IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT - SM. NO. 20/2025 - REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER, SABARIMALA REGARDING THE PERIODICAL STATUS REPORT OF THE CHIEF VIGILANCE OFFICE - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED - REG:.)
PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENTS:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA, REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT, REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695001
- 2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR, LOCAL FUND AUDIT, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003
- 3 THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003
- 4 THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS, NANTHANCODE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695005



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5 **EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SABARIMALA, SABARIMALA P.O.,
PATHANAMTHITTA - 689662**

6 **CHIEF VIGILANCE SECURITY OFFICER (SUPERINTENDENT
OF POLICE - VIGILANCE)
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NANTHANCODE,
KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003**

**BY SRI.G.BIJU, SC, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
SRI.S. RAJMOHAN, SR GP
SMT. SAYUJYA RADHAKRISHNAN (SC)**

**THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING BEEN
FINALLY HEARD ON 17.12.2025, THE COURT ON 29.01.2026
DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING:**



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ORDER

K. V. Jayakumar, J.

This report pertains to the submission of the periodical status report of the Chief Vigilance Officer. In this report, the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala has cited the order in DBP 2/2022 dated 14.02.2022. Clause (v) of the order reads as follows:

“(v) The Chief Vigilance Officer in the Vigilance Wing of the Travancore Devaswom Board shall submit the periodical status reports of the cases, once in six months, to the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala. Such status reports of the Chief Vigilance Officer shall be placed before the Devaswom Bench, along with the report of the Special Commissioner.”

2. In this report, the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala has pointed out various instances of vigilance inspections conducted as reported by the Chief Vigilance Officer of Sabarimala with regard to the malpractices, misconduct, unauthorized absence of the temple staff and the misconduct of the employees of other temples coming under the Travancore Devaswom Board.

3. During the final hearing of this matter, the learned Standing Counsel for the TDB, Sri.G.Biju, submitted that the order referred to by the Special Commissioner, i.e., DBP 2/2022 was later modified by this Court in SSCR No.28/2023 and SSCR No.3/2025.



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4. While disposing of SSCR No.28/2023, this Court issued the following directions:

“(i) The reports of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer, which are addressed to the President of the Board, shall be placed before the Board, at the earliest, at any rate, within a period of one month from the date of that report, for taking necessary action.

(ii) The reports of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer, which requires immediate Interference, shall be placed before the Board immediately on receipt of the same, at any rate, in the next meeting of the Board.

(iii) The action taken report prepared by the Secretary of the Board, along with the reports of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer (Superintendent of Police), shall be filed before this Court in 1 week of January and 1 week of June, which shall be numbered as DBA and listed before the Devaswom Bench, immediately on receipt of such reports, for appropriate orders.

(iv) The State of Kerala, represented by the Principal Secretary to Government, Revenue (Devaswom) Department and the Deputy Director, Kerala State Audit Department, Travancore Devaswom Board Audit shall be arrayed as respondents in such DBAS.

(v) If found necessary, the Devaswom Bench may refer the matter to the learned Ombudsman for enquiry and report, and the report of the learned Ombudsman shall be placed before the Devaswom Bench for appropriate orders.”

5. The learned Standing Counsel would then point out that, as per the order in SSCR No.3/2025 dated 18.03.2025, this Court has issued further



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direction to the Board. Paragraph 20 of the order in SSCR is extracted hereunder.

“20. The learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board would submit that the action taken report prepared by the Secretary of the Board, along with the reports of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer (Superintendent of Police), shall be placed on record within a period of 10 days, in which the status of the pending reports shall be mentioned. The learned Standing Counsel would submit that taking note of the volume of work undertaken by the Board and its officials during Mandala-Makaravilakku festival seasons at Sabarimala, the time limit stipulated in paragraph 23(iii) of the order dated 09.07.2024 in SSCR Nos.28 of 2023 and 10 of 2024 may be modified as first week of March and first week of August respectively, instead of first week of January and first week of June.

In such circumstances, this SSCR is disposed of by directing the Board and its officials to ensure strict compliance of the directions contained in paragraph 23 of the order of this Court dated 09.07.2024 in SSCR Nos.28 of 2023 and 10 of 2024, in letter and spirit, subject to the modification as above. The action taken reports in terms of the aforesaid order shall be filed in the first week of March and the first week of August, respectively, which shall be numbered as DBA and listed before the Division Bench dealing with Devaswom matters.”

6. On going through the order in SSCR 3/2025, we find that the order passed in SSCR 28/2023 dated 09.07.2024 was partially modified by the subsequent order in SSCR 3/2025. It is stated that the action taken on the basis



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of the status report of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer be placed before this Court in the 1st week of March and 1st week of August, respectively.

7. The learned Amicus Curiae Smt. Sayujya Radhakrishnan submitted that if the report of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer is submitted to the President, Travancore Devaswom Board as per the directions issued by this Court in SSCR 28/2023 and modified by the order in SSCR 3/2025, the Special Commissioner may not get an opportunity to go through the periodical status report submitted by the Vigilance Wing of TDB and thereby, the very purpose would be defeated.

8. On the other hand, the learned Standing Counsel for TDB would submit that it is the prerogative of the Board to call for periodical status reports with regard to the misconduct, lapses, etc. of the employees, kuthaka holders, etc. of the Sabarimala Sree Dharmasastha Temple and other temples under its control.

9. On receipt of such a periodical status report, the Board will discuss and deliberate upon the various aspects of the report and will initiate necessary disciplinary actions. The learned Standing Counsel would submit that appropriate directions will be issued in this regard, with respect to the submission of periodical status reports and the action taken reports in pursuance thereof.

10. The anxiety expressed by the Amicus Curiae to the Special Commissioner is that if the periodical status reports are submitted directly to the Board, the Special Commissioner would not get real time information as to the discrepancies, lapses and misconducts of the kuthaka holders, staff and



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officers of the Sabarimala Sree Dharamasastha Temple and other temples under the control of the TDB.

11. We have carefully considered the submissions advanced and gone through the various orders passed by this Court in DBP No.2/2022 dated 14.02.2022, SSCR No.28/2023 dated 09.07.2024 and SSCR No.3/2025 dated 18.03.2025.

12. The present practice followed by the TDB is that as per the directions issued by this Court, a comprehensive periodical status report by the vigilance wing detailing all the lapses, misconducts and discrepancies for the period of six months will be submitted directly to the Board.

13. The Mandala Makaravilakku season in Sabarimala Sree Dharamasastha Temple begins by the middle of November and ends on 15th January every year. If the status report is submitted by the vigilance wing of all temples under the control of TDB including Sabarimala Sree Dharamasastha Temple as single report it would cause much hardships and inconveniences not only to the Board, but also to the Special Commissioner and the Devaswom Bench of this Court. The learned Standing Counsel pointed out that the Special Commissioner is vested with the powers only to deal with matters related to Sabarimala Sree Dharamasastha Temple and therefore, the Special Commissioner is not expected to look into and report the malpractices and misconducts in relation to the other temples under the control of the TDB.

14. Whenever misconduct or malpractice comes to the notice of the vigilance wing of the TDB, there should be a mechanism to promptly report the matter to the Board. In the absence of such prompt reporting, the Board



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may not be able to take effective measures to rectify the lapses by initiating proper remedial measures in accordance with law so as to ensure transparency and to avoid corruption and mismanagement in the temples.

In that view of the matter, we deem it appropriate to issue comprehensive guidelines for the effective and prompt reporting of the lapses, misconduct and malpractices, if any, in the religious institutions and to nip it in the bud.

- a. The lapses, malpractices, and misconduct, if any, brought to the notice of the Vigilance Wing of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) which pertains exclusively to the Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple, and those relating to other temples under the control of the TDB shall be addressed separately henceforth.
- b. The periodic status reports shall be submitted to the TDB on a quarterly basis hereafter, thereby ensuring a continuous and diligent commitment to transparency, accountability, and operational efficacy.
- c. For the purposes of this directive, each quarter shall be fixed as follows:
Ist quarter: January 1 to March 31;
IInd quarter: April 1 to June 30;



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IIIrd quarter: July 1 to September 30; and

IVth quarter: October 1 to December 31.

- d. The Vigilance Wing of the TDB shall focus their surveillance and oversight activities at the Sabarimala Temple during the Mandalam-Makaravilakku season (November 15 to January 15) and during the first five days of the Malayalam month in which the temple is open.
- e. During periods when the Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple is closed, the Vigilance Wing shall direct their attention towards the major temples under the control of the TDB.
- f. Within seven days of the conclusion of each quarter, the Chief Vigilance Security Officer shall submit a comprehensive periodical status report to the President of the TDB, detailing all relevant observations and findings for that quarter. A copy of each such report shall concurrently be furnished to the Special Commissioner of Sabarimala.
- g. It is clarified that the Vigilance Wing's status reports shall be submitted immediately after each quarter to the President of the TDB, and the Special Commissioner, specifically on the



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following dates: 7th April, 7th July, 7th October, and 7th January of each year.

- h. The Travancore Devaswom Board shall consider the Vigilance Wing's report within one (1) month from the date of its receipt and, if necessary, initiate corrective or disciplinary action in accordance with the applicable laws, rules, and regulations. An action-taken report on the Vigilance report shall be submitted to the Special Commissioner, without undue delay.
- i. The Special Commissioner shall, in turn, forward the action taken report, along with his own report, to the Devaswom Bench of this Court in an expeditious manner.
- j. Furthermore, the quarterly action taken reports shall be duly submitted to the Devaswom Bench of this Court no later than the mid-May, mid-August, mid-November, and mid-February deadlines, respectively.
- k. The procedures outlined herein for the submission and review of quarterly reports shall also apply mutatis mutandis to the temples other than Sabarimala.



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- l. The action reports submitted by the Special Commissioner, along with his report pertaining to each quarter, shall be numbered and placed before the Devaswom Bench as SSCR (ATR) within seven days of its filing by the Registry.
- m. It is hereby expressly clarified that these directives shall not be construed to restrict or limit the jurisdiction and authority of the Special Commissioner to report any matter which comes to his knowledge, at any time, outside the periodic reporting schedule.
- n. The Chief Vigilance and Security Officer shall promptly inform the Special Commissioner of any significant matter involving vigilance concerns related to the Sabarimala Temple as soon as such information comes to his notice.

SSCR is disposed of accordingly.

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,
JUDGE**

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



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APPENDIX OF SSCR NO. 20 OF 2025

RESPONDENT ANNEXURES

Annexure R3(a) **True copy of the Action Taken Report in respect of the vigilance reports referred to in SSCR No.20/2025 dated Nil**