



2026:KER:19305

SSCR NO. 8 OF 2026

1

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V

&

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR

WEDNESDAY, THE 4TH DAY OF MARCH 2026 / 13TH PHALGUNA, 1947

SSCR NO. 8 OF 2026

(IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA
SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT - SM.NO.08/2026 - MONTHLY REPORT
SUBMITTED BY THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER, SABARIMALA REGARDING
THE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING, KUMBHAM MASA POOJA
FROM FEBRUARY 12, 2026 TO FEBRUARY 17, 2026 (1201 ME KUMABHAM
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,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 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,



2026:KER:19305

SSCR NO. 8 OF 2026

2

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

ADV SAYUJA RADHAKRISHNAN(SC HIGH POWER COMMITTEE FOR
IMPLEMENTATION OF SABRIMALA MASTER PLAN),
ADV S RAJMOHAN(SR GP),
ADV G BIJU(SC TDB)

THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING COME
UP FOR ADMISSION ON 04.03.2026, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY
DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING:

**ORDER****Raja Vijayaraghavan V., J.**

In the earlier order dated 25.02.2026, the attention of this Court was drawn to certain lapses and irregularities in the conduct and booking of Padi Pooja at the Sabarimala Sree Ayyappa Temple. Padi Pooja refers to the sacred ritual performed at the eighteen holy steps (Pathinettambadi) and is conducted on select days following the "Pushpabhishekam" of the idol. The ritual is ordinarily held in the evening and is performed by the Thantri, in the presence of the Melsanthi, and forms an important and deeply revered offering in the temple's ritual schedule.

2. It was further brought to the notice of this Court that a discreet vigilance enquiry had unearthed disturbing instances in which certain individuals had secured bookings for Padi Pooja by furnishing false or fictitious addresses. It was also alleged that such bookings were subsequently transferred or sold to third parties for higher consideration.

3. Taking serious note of these allegations and the potential misuse of a sacred temple offering for monetary gain, this Court had directed the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer (Superintendent of Police) to forthwith take possession of, and secure custody over, all registers and connected records relating to Padi Pooja bookings, including records reflecting how bookings had been effected up to the year 2040.



4. Pursuant to the said directions, the relevant registers and records have now been produced before this Court in a sealed cover. A detailed report dated 02.03.2026 has also been placed before this Court by the Vigilance Officer.

5. From the report placed before us, it is seen that, pursuant to Board Order dated 17.03.2022, the rate for conducting Padi Pooja was revised and fixed at ₹1,37,900/-. A devotee desirous of performing the Padi Pooja is required to appear in person and remit the entire amount at the time of booking. Reference is made to Annexure-1, which indicates that a devotee who remitted a sum of ₹1,37,900/- on 03.01.2026 was issued a receipt showing that the Padi Pooja booked by him is scheduled to be conducted only in May 2040. This illustrates the long waiting period presently associated with the booking of this offering. The report further indicates that Padi Pooja is not conducted during the Mandala-Makaravilakku season. Ordinarily, the temple opens for five days during each Maasa Pooja, and it is during these five days that Padi Pooja is typically conducted. In addition, when the temple opens for a nine-day festival, Padi Pooja can also be performed during those days. On certain occasions—such as Prathishta Dhinam, Chithira Atta Thirunal, and Niraputhari—when the temple remains open for a single day, Padi Pooja can be conducted. Further, during the month of Chingam, Padi Pooja can be performed on the days of Uthradam, Thiruvonam, Avittam, and Chathayam, as well as during the Onam festival and for eight days in connection with Vishu.



6. The registers produced before this Court reveal that bookings for Padi Pooja have already been completed for the period from 2026 March up to September 2040, with approximately 705 persons having secured bookings. The report also reveals that there are several instances where devotees who had booked Padi Pooja during the COVID-19 period or during the floods were unable to conduct the pooja as scheduled. In certain other cases, the devotees who had made the bookings have since expired. The number of such instances is stated to be approximately 71. A further aspect discernible from the registers is that, during the period between 26 March 2026 and September 2040, there are about 207 days on which no Padi Pooja has been booked, even though the temple remains open on those days and the ritual could, in fact, be conducted. We also note that the Vigilance Wing presently conducts proper verification of all devotees who appear for Padi Pooja, and as a result, no similar irregularities have recently been reported. The Chief Vigilance Officer has, however, made certain recommendations to streamline the process further. It is suggested that if Padi Pooja is scheduled on the available valid days for devotees who have already booked the offering up to September 2040, the overall waiting period could be substantially reduced, thereby enabling more devotees to perform the pooja within a reasonable timeframe. It has also been recommended that the vacant days be published on the temple's official website so that devotees who have already secured bookings may opt to conduct the pooja on those available dates. If such an option is provided, it is likely that the



pending bookings up to September 2040 can be cleared in a phased and transparent manner. The report further notes that several other temple offerings—such as Udayasthamaya Pooja (₹61,800), Ulsava Bali (₹37,500), Kalababishekam (₹38,400), and Sahasra Kalasam (₹91,250)—are already published on the official website www.sabarimala.online.org. Making information regarding vacant Padi Pooja dates available on the website would enhance transparency and may encourage devotees to come forward and utilize those slots. It is also pointed out that, in certain instances, bookings have been accepted without payment of the prescribed amount. If the required payment is not made even after the lapse of several months, such bookings may be cancelled and the slot allotted to another devotee.

7. In order to ensure that the sanctity of the offering is preserved and to prevent any commercial exploitation of the same, we direct the Vigilance Authorities to continue conducting discreet verification of devotees who have secured bookings for Padi Pooja, so as to ensure that such bookings are not transferred or sold to third parties for monetary consideration.

8. Insofar as the deployment and reputation of police personnel is concerned, the Chief Police Co-ordinator, Sabarimala, has reported that 648 police personnel have been deployed for the Kumbhamaasa Pooja, inclusive of the additional force requisitioned and deployed to regulate and manage the unexpected



surge in pilgrimage flow.

9. The learned Standing Counsel also submits that the number of personnel engaged in the Bhandaram has been increased to ensure better management of temple activities and pilgrim services.

10. Taking note of the recommendations contained in the report and in order to ensure transparency and better utilisation of the available days for conducting Padi Pooja, we issue the following directions:

- a) The Travancore Devaswom Board shall identify all available and valid days on which Padi Pooja can be conducted and shall explore the possibility of scheduling the pooja on such days for devotees who have already secured bookings up to September 2040, so as to reduce the existing waiting period and facilitate the performance of the pooja within a reasonable timeframe. For this purpose, intimations shall be issued to the devotees in accordance with their seniority in booking, so as to ascertain their willingness to conduct the pooja on the available dates.
- b) The Board shall publish the details of all vacant days available for conducting Padi Pooja on the official website (www.sabarimala.online.org) within a reasonable period. Devotees who have already made bookings shall be given an opportunity to



opt for such available dates, if they so desire.

- c) The Board shall frame and implement an appropriate mechanism for reallocating the vacant slots in a phased and transparent manner so that the pending bookings up to September 2040 may be cleared, as far as practicable.
- d) With the concurrence of the Temple Tantri, the Board shall also examine the feasibility of conducting more than one Padi Pooja on eligible days, if ritualistically permissible, in order to accommodate more devotees and reduce the waiting period.
- e) The Board shall ensure that, at the time of booking, valid identity documents and complete contact details of the devotee are obtained so as to clearly identify the individual who has booked the Padi Pooja. The pilgrim shall also be required to nominate a person who may be permitted to conduct the pooja in the event of any unforeseen circumstances. Further, no booking for Padi Pooja shall be confirmed without payment of the prescribed amount. In cases where bookings have been made without payment of the requisite amount, and such payment is not made within the period to be specified by the Board, the concerned bookings shall stand cancelled, and the corresponding slots shall be reallocated to other



2026:KER:19305

SSCR NO. 8 OF 2026

9

devotees in accordance with the procedure to be prescribed.

- f) The Board shall publish information relating to vacant Padi Pooja dates, Udayasthamaya Pooja, Ulsava Bali, Kalababishekam, and Sahasra Kalasam in the official website to enhance transparency and enable devotees to avail themselves of the available opportunities.

11. The above directions shall be implemented by the Travancore Devaswom Board and a compliance report shall be placed before the Special Commissioner within a period of two months from today. The Special Commissioner shall file a report before this Court within two weeks from the date of submission of the compliance report.

With the above directions and observations, this SSCR stands closed.

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V.,
JUDGE**

Sd/-

**K. V. JAYAKUMAR
JUDGE**

msp