

**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 26th day of March 2026 / 5th Chaithra, 1948

WP(C) NO. 40608 OF 2025(A)

PETITIONER:

1. SUO MOTU AS PER THE ORDER DATED 21.10.2025 IN SSCR 23/2025 REGARDING THE HEIST AND PLUNDERING OF GOLD FROM THE GOLD-CLADDED DWARAPALAKAS PLACED ON EITHER SIDE OF THE SREEKOVIL, SABARIMALA, PIN - 682031

RESPONDENTS:

1. THE STATE OF KERALA, REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT, REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM , PIN - 695001
2. THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003
3. THE CHIEF VIGILANCE AND SECURITY OFFICER (SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE), TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003
4. THE STATE POLICE CHIEF, POLICE HEAD QUARTERS, VAZHUTHACAUD, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695010
5. THE SENIOR DEPUTY DIRECTOR, KERALA STATE AUDIT DEPARTMENT, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003.

BY S. RAJMOHAN, SR.GOVERNMENT PLEADER FOR R1 & R4

S.SREEKUMAR (SR.) along with SHRI.G.BIJU,STANDING COUNSEL FOR R2, R3 & R5

This petition again coming on for orders upon perusing the petition and the affidavit filed in support of WP(C) and this court's order dated 19/02/2026, the court passed the following:

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

WP(C) No. 40608 of 2025

Dated this the 26th day of March, 2026

ORDER

Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.

In terms of the directions issued by this Court on 19.02.2026, Sri. S. Sasidharan, IPS, Investigating Officer of the Special Investigation Team (SIT), appeared in person and placed before us a progress report in connection with Crime Nos. 3700/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025 and 3701/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025.

2. From the submissions, we find that, in terms of the directions issued by this Court in the order dated 09.02.2026, a Special Investigation Team consisting of officers of the Forensic Science Laboratory, Legal Metrology Gold Assaying and Testing Laboratory, the Department of Photography, and members of "Is Going Online Systems Technologies" collected samples from the untouched corner pillar plate, gold-plated side pillar plates, and Dwarapalaka idol plates, with the assistance of experts, on 12.02.2026 and 13.02.2026. We find that the collected samples have been forwarded for scientific analysis to the National Metallurgical Laboratory (CSIR-NML), Jamshedpur, Jharkhand.

3. It is submitted that the SIT has been informed by the National

Metallurgical Laboratory that, as intricate and specialised procedures are involved, the results can be furnished only by the last week of April, 2026.

4. We find that, in earlier orders, this Court had directed the Special Investigation Team to conclude the investigation on or before 31.03.2026. However, in the peculiar facts and circumstances of the case, unless the laboratory report from the National Metallurgical Laboratory (CSIR-NML), Jamshedpur, Jharkhand is received, it would not be possible for the SIT to submit a final and conclusive report. In that view of the matter, we are inclined to grant further time to the Special Investigation Team to conclude the investigation. As it is submitted that the laboratory report would be received by the end of April 2026, let the case be posted on 18.05.2026.

5. We also find that, as of date, 358 witnesses have been examined. The investigation has been conducted at Mahalakshmi Layout Temple, Mundotti Palayam Temple, Sreeramapuram Temple, Gauribidanur, Bellari, Hongasandra, Vyalikaval and other places in the State of Karnataka, and at Madanapally and Ananthapur in the State of Andhra Pradesh. Witnesses connected with Sreeramapuram Temple, Mahalakshmi Layout Temple, Ananthapur Temple and other related institutions have been questioned and their statements recorded.

6. We further find from the report that the investigation in respect of the gold plating of the Dwarapalaka idols in the year 2025 is in progress. It is also reported that as many as 20 witnesses have been examined in detail in this regard.

The Officer informed us that the investigation is proceeding in an expeditious and meticulous manner and that only upon receipt of the chemical analysis report from the National Metallurgical Laboratory can the investigation proceed with greater certainty and precision.

7. Having gone through the report, we are satisfied that the investigation is proceeding in a proper and systematic manner.

8. In the course of investigation in Crime No. 3700/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025 and Crime No. 3701/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025 relating to the Dwarapalakas, the attention of this Court was drawn to the preliminary enquiry conducted by the Devaswom Vigilance in connection with the renovation or installation of a new temple flag mast in the year 2017. By order dated 19.02.2026, this Court directed an independent vigilance enquiry, and the Director, Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau, Vikas Bhavan, Thiruvananthapuram, was directed to conduct a preliminary enquiry to ascertain whether the acts disclosed the commission of cognisable offences.

9. In terms of the said directions, an enquiry was carried out by the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau, Special Investigation Unit-I, Poojappura, Thiruvananthapuram, and a report has been filed before this Court by the Deputy Superintendent of Police in charge of the enquiry.

10. Having gone through the report, we find that a detailed and meticulous enquiry has been carried out by the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau. The report

reveals that, as per the Devaswom mahazars and records, a total of 412.010 grams of gold was shown as having been received from devotees for the construction of the flag mast at Sabarimala. However, upon verification, the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau contacted each of the individuals named therein and found that the cumulative quantity of gold actually donated by them was 300 grams. On the basis of the preliminary enquiry and the documentary as well as oral evidence collected, it has been concluded that there is no material to suggest any criminal misappropriation or criminal breach of trust in respect of the gold donated by devotees for the flag mast installation process at Sabarimala during the year 2017.

11. We have carefully considered the report and the conclusions arrived at by the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau.

12. Having regard to the above, and being satisfied with the manner in which the enquiry has been conducted, we are inclined to accept the preliminary enquiry report submitted by the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau. The VACB may close the proceedings.

Let the matter be posted on 18.05.2026.

Sd/-
RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,
JUDGE

Sd/-
K.V. JAYAKUMAR,
JUDGE

APM