

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM**  
**PRESENT**  
**THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V**  
**&**  
**THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR**  
**Friday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of August 2025 / 31st Sravana, 1947**

**SSCR NO. 13 OF 2025**

**IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER  
REPORT - SM.NO.13/2025 - REPORT REGARDING THE DEATH OF A PILGRIM BY  
ELECTROCUTION THROUGH DRINKING WATER AT PAMBA DURING EDAVAMASA POOJA - 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. **CHIEF POLICE COORDINATOR**  
**(ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE), (POLICE HEADQUARTERS),**  
**SABARIMALA, PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN-689713**
3. **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**
5. **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
**SABARIMALA, SABARIMALA P.O , PATHANAMTHITTA-689662**

6. CHIEF VIGILANCE & SECURITY OFFICER (SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE)  
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695003
7. ASSISTANT ENGINEER (ELECTRICAL)  
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, SABARIMALA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT,  
PAMBA & NILAKKAL, PAMBA TRIVENI P.O.-689662
- 8 EXECUTIVE ENGINEER  
KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD, PATHANAMTHITTA DIVISION,  
PATHANAMTHITTA, KERALA-689645  
\*ADDL.R9 TO R11 IMPEADED
9. THE KERALA WATER AUTHORITY,  
REPRESENTED BY ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR, JALABHAVAN,  
VELLAYAMBALAM, PIN-695033
10. THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,  
KERALA WATER AUTHORITY, PATHANAMTHITTA
11. THE DISTRICT ELECTRICAL INSPECTOR,  
ELECTRICAL INSPECTORATE, PATHANAMTHITTA  
**\*ARE SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL RESPONDENTS 9 TO 11 AS  
PER ORDER DATED 20/05/2025 IN SSCR.NO.13/2025**  
\*ADDL.R12 IMPEADED
12. THE UNITED INDIA INSURANCE COMPANY LTD.,  
REPRESENTED BY ITS BRANCH MANAGER, CWC BUILDING, PALAYAM,  
LMS COMPOUND, PMG, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM – 695033  
**\*IS SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL 12TH RESPONDENT VIDE ORDER  
DATED 02/06/2025 IN SSCR.NO.13/2025**  
\*ADDL.R13 IMPEADED
13. THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,  
ELECTRICAL DIVISION, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, SABARIMALA  
**\*IS SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL 13TH RESPONDENT VIDE ORDER  
DATED 14/07/2025 IN SSCR.NO.13/2025**

**BY SRI.S.RAJMOHAN, SENIOR GOVERNMENT PLEADER**

**BY SRI.G.BIJU, STANDING COUNSEL FOR TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD**

**BY M/S.P.M.JOHNY and GEORGIE JOHNY, SC, KERALA WATER AUTHORITY**

**BY SRI.B.PREMOD, SC, KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD**

**BY SMT.SAYUJYA RADHAKRISHNAN, AMICUS CURIAE FOR**

**SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER**

**BY SRI.P.K.MANOJ KUMAR, STANDING COUNSEL FOR R12**

**THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING COME UP FOR  
ORDERS AGAIN ON 22/08/2025, UPON PERUSING THE REPORT AND THIS COURT'S  
ORDER DATED 13/08/2025, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY PASSED THE FOLLOWING:**



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

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**SSCR No. 13 of 2025**  
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**Dated this the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of August, 2025**

**ORDER**

**Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.**

This special report concerns the electrocution of a pilgrim, which incident took place on 19.05.2025. By order dated 01.08.2025, this Court directed the Kerala State Electricity Board as well as the Kerala Water Authority to conduct inspections at all locations and to take all necessary precautions to ensure that no untoward incidents occur in the future.

2. By order dated 13.08.2025, this Court directed the Water Authority, KSEB, as well as the Devaswom Board to state before us the steps taken by them to prevent such incidents in future.

3. The Travancore Devaswom Board had filed an affidavit dated 14.08.2025, wherein the steps proposed to be taken, as per instructions of the Electrical Inspectorate, to avoid similar incidents in the future have been narrated in detail. We shall extract the same for the purpose of clarity:

**"1. Marakkootam Sannidhanam:**

1 & 2. The recommendation for the provision of an open channel/utility duct as a long term solution. A letter in this regard has already been submitted to the High Power Committee for Implementation of Sabarimala Master Plan.

3. Currently all electrical works are executed only by licensed electrical contractors and the same will be continued in the future as well.

4. Tree touching for LT/HT lines are under the possession of KSEBL and will be communicated to the KSEB authorities for necessary action.

5. Water kiosks placed by Kerala Water Authority are seen tied to the TDB electric posts for support, which raise safety concerns. The Assistant Engineer (Electrical), Pampa has already sent a letter to the Assistant Engineer KWA Vadasserikkara requesting to relocate the water kiosks keeping sufficient distance from the electric poles, as per law.

6. The unused cables for street lighting will be dismantled immediately and a communication in this regard will also be given to KSEBL and BSNL authorities.

7. The dismantling of rusted HT conductors near Shed 13 (Neelimala) is to be taken up with the KSEBL, and the same will be informed immediately.

8. Regarding the use of OFC cable instead of coaxial cable, necessary communications in this regard will be forwarded to the concerned departments.

9. All connectors and other materials used for works done by TDB are of approved make and quality. The same shall be informed to KSEB also.

## 2. Nadapanthal - Sannidhanam.

Estimates have already been taken for carrying out necessary rectification. Immediate action will be taken to rectify the shortfalls pointed out and daily monitoring is underway.

## 3. Pamba - Marakkootam - Sannidhanam Nadapanthal.

1. Earth Leakage Protection for street lights placed outside the sheds - Estimate is already prepared and the work will be immediately executed.

2. Earthing of all 'A' Poles under TDB and KSEB: Included in new estimate and will be executed immediately and necessary communications will also be made to KSEB for earthing their poles.

3. Danger warning boards will be provided on all DBs as per safety norms.

4. Broken CCTV cable supports (maintained by Police): Necessary communication will be sent to the Police Department for rectification.

5. Temporary wiring and light holders at Chelikkuzhy Police Security Scan: Necessary action will be taken to do permanent wiring.

## 4. Ganapathy Ambalam Bhandaram Building

1 & 2. Earth Leakage Protection (ELCBS) will be installed on all DBs at all points mentioned.

3. Old and rusted panels in the Bhandaram building will be replaced as soon as possible. Estimates will be prepared to standardize the circuits and DB's around the Temple premises and will be executed immediately.

4. Electrical insulation mats will be provided in front of all panels.

5. Non-conductive DB covers will be installed in the SSS building. Estimate will be prepared to standardize the circuits and DB's and will be executed immediately.

6. The exposed earthing conductor crossings Ayyappa Seva Sangham- Ganapathy Ambalam steps will be routed through PVC conduit.

#### 5. DG Room Pamba

1. Proper name board for panel identification will be provided.

2. Temporary wiring has already been dismantled and permanent wiring installed.

#### 6. Pamba Manappuram Nadapanthal Ganapathy Ambalam

1. Exposed live terminals in street light connectors have been properly covered/enclosed.

2. Display board electrification at Govt. Ayurvedic Dispensary, Pranaplus, and Karunya Pharmacy - The matter will be communicated to the hospital authorities for appropriate action.

3. Earth leakage protection for TDB VDB's (street lights) at Pamba Manalpuram, Ganapathy Ambalam, and Nadapanthal will be undertaken as part of ongoing works in Anjaneya Auditorium.

4. Temporary extension from Dhanalakshmi Bank DB to Ganapathy Ambalam Nadapanthal display board - Direction will be given to the Bank authorities for urgent action.

#### 7. Pamba Government Hospital

As the following items fall under the purview of the Public Works Department (PWD), the same will be communicated to the respective authority for appropriate action.

1. Removal of unwanted items from Electrical Substation and DG Room.

2. Replacement of defective transformer temperature indicators.

3. Maintenance of APC Panel.
4. Ensuring minimum 1-meter clearance in front of all DB's
5. Avoidance of beds/obstructions in front of electrical room doors.
6. Provision of DB covers.
7. Provision of overcurrent and earth leakage protection for lift LDB.
8. Maintenance of DG and GCP.
9. Provision of electrical-grade insulation mats in front of GCP and DB's.

#### 8. Pamba

1. Hotel Sastha Building Viri (KSEB Consumer No. 7009298): The kuthaka right is given to the contractor. Necessary communication will be sent to the kuthaka holder for compliance with IS 732:2019.
2. Display board electrification at Annadhana Mandapam - Already included in the repair/replacement estimate at Annadhanamandapam.
3. Temporary extension wiring from Pamba TDB Toilet Building - already removed.
4. Electrification to Sheds 1, 2, and 3 at Manalpuram Nadapanthal - Work completed.
5. Temporary wiring from Shed No. 4 - Will be removed.
6. Display boards in Anjaneya Auditorium - Necessary instruction will be given to Dhanalakshmi Bank to standardise the connection to their display boards.

#### 9. Nilackal

1. Earthing of street light poles (TDB and KSEB): will be undertaken at the earliest.
2. Proper guarding and clearance for HT/LT lines in the new parking area - Necessary instructions will be issued to KSEB.
3. Earth Leakage Protection for all sub-circuits in the Primary Health Centre at Nilackal will be provided immediately."

4. The Devaswom Board shall take all steps and measures at their command to ensure compliance with the above on or before 15th of November.

5. The learned Standing Counsel appearing for the KSEB Ltd. submitted that the KSEB Ltd. had conducted a joint inspection with the Forest Department and the Devaswom Board. The observations and findings have been narrated, and the same are

as under:

"1. Laying UG cables from Pamba to Sannidhanam requires construction of cable trench along traditional trekking path covering Neelimala and Appachimedu. The traditional trekking path is part of the Periyar Tiger Reserve (National Tiger Reserve). The Forest department has raised objection as obtaining permission to construct cable trench in the ecologically fragile Periyar Tiger Reserve would be a herculean task.

2. Hence the possibility of constructing cable trench along the existing traditional trekking path was considered. The traditional path being very narrow, construction of cable trench would require prying up the granite slabs paved on the path. The Travancore Devaswom Board therefore dissuades prying up the granite slabs that are paved in order to anchor the soil to prevent erosion on hillside slopes. Also another hurdle in constructing cable trench along the existing traditional trekking path is that if any fault/failure occurs along the cable, it would require opening of the trench resulting in prying up the granite pavement whenever that occurs.

3. The third alternative is to construct cable trench by Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) along the existing traditional trekking path. On inspection it was observed and concluded that transporting the heavy machinery required for HDD to the work site would hardly be possible owing to the steep ascends and descends on the hilly terrain. Also rocks and boulders on the rough terrain pose hurdle to horizontal drilling. Moreover drilling and construction in an ecologically fragile area would result in significant environmental damage which if augmented by torrential rains could trigger landslides causing massive destruction and loss of valuable life both human and animal."

6. In the report, it is further stated that it is imperative that a technical committee be formed, including various officials of the Forest Department, Travancore Devaswom Board, Electrical Inspectorate, etc., to evolve an amicable solution involving all stakeholders to ensure the safety of pilgrims.

7. At this stage, the learned Senior Government Pleader, as well as the learned Standing Counsel for the Travancore Devaswom Board, submitted that a joint



inspection can be conducted at the earliest by KSEB Ltd., the Travancore Devaswom Board, the Electrical Inspectorate, and the Kerala Water Authority. It was further submitted that all measures necessary to ensure seamless coordination between KSEB Ltd. and the Kerala Water Authority, and to guarantee an incident-free season, shall be identified and placed before this Court without delay. It was assured that while preparing the report, all possible suggestions and preventive measures to avoid recurrence of such incidents in the future would be examined and explored in detail.

8. We have considered the submissions advanced.

9. Insofar as the measures that are to be taken by the Travancore Devaswom Board, as suggested by the Electrical Inspectorate, are concerned, all works shall be completed without delay, and the said fact shall be reported to this Court. The proposed joint inspection by all stakeholders shall also be carried out and a report shall be placed before this Court. Insofar as the Kerala Water Authority is concerned, they have sought a week's time to place on record their views and suggestions.

Post on 27.08.2025.

Sd/-  
**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,**  
**JUDGE**

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

msh