



2026:KER:8134

SSCR No.31/2025

1

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V

&

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR

TUESDAY, THE 3RD DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026 / 14TH MAGHA, 1947

SSCR NO. 31 OF 2025

(IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD-SABARIMALA
SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT-S.M.NO.31/2025-REPORT AS DIRECTED
IN THE ORDER DATED 10-10-2025 IN SSCR NO.28/2025 BY THE
HONOURABLE HIGH COURT OF KERALA REGARDING THE SELECTION OF
MELSHANTHIES TO THE SABARIMALA SREE DHARMA SASTHA TEMPLE AND
MALIKAPPURAM TEMPLE FOR THE YEAR 1201 M.E BY DRAW OF LOTS
HELD AT SABARIMALA ON 18.10.2025- SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS
INITIATED-REG:-)

PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENTS:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY SECRETARY, REVENUE (DEVASWOM)
DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695001
- 2 THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY,
NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695003



2026:KER:8134

SSCR No.31/2025

2

3 DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER
 TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, NANTHANCOD, ,
 KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695003

4 EXECUTIVE OFFICER
 SABARIMALA, SABARIMALA P.O. ,
 PATHANAMTHITTA - 689662

BY ADV SHRI.G.BIJU, SC, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
SRI. S. RAJMOHAN, SR.GP.
SMT. SAYUJYA RADHAKRISHNAN (AMICUS CURIAE)

THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING BEEN
FINALLY HEARD ON 14.01.2026, THE COURT ON 03.02.2026
DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING:



2026:KER:8134

SSCR No.31/2025

3

ORDER

K. V. Jayakumar, J.

This report of the Sabarimala Special Commissioner is with respect to the selection of Melshanthis to the Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple and Malikappuram Temple for the year 1201 M.E (2025- 26) by draw of lots. The Special Commissioner reported that in compliance with the order of this Court in SSCR No. 28/2025, the selection process of the Melshanthis to the Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple and Malikapuram Temple was conducted and the entire selection process was completed in the presence of the Observer as per the directives issued by this Court.

2. When the matter was taken up on 23.10.2025, the learned Standing Counsel for the Travancore Devaswom Board, in response to the query posed by this Court, submitted that, to assist the Melshanthi in performing his duties and rituals at the Sannidhanam, 20 assistants are engaged by the Melshanthi himself. These assistants would support Melshanthi throughout his entire tenure. The learned Standing Counsel would further submit that the Melshanthis are paid honorarium by the Board.

3. On 23.10.2025, this Court directed the Devaswom Board to file an affidavit detailing the particulars of the Assistants who accompanied the Melshanthis. Paragraph No. 5 of the said order is extracted hereunder:



“5. Having regard to the above submissions and the significance of ensuring transparency, accountability, and sanctity of service at the Sabarimala and Malikapuram Temples, this Court deems it appropriate to call for a detailed affidavit from the Travancore Devaswom Board. Accordingly, the learned Standing Counsel appearing for the Travancore Devaswom Board is directed to file an affidavit narrating all relevant aspects, including but not limited to the following:

1. The names and full identities of the persons who will be assisting the Melshanthis during the current year, i.e., for the year 1201 M.E. (2025–26);
2. Whether any verification or inquiry has been carried out with regard to their antecedents, background, or character;
3. Whether identity proofs or credentials of the persons assisting the Melshanthis are obtained and verified prior to their being permitted to serve at the Sannidhanam;
4. Whether any of these individuals have served in the same capacity during previous years under different Melshanthis; and
5. The manner in which responsibility or accountability is fixed in the event that any such individual is found to be involved in objectionable, unlawful, or reprehensible acts within the temple premises.”

4. In compliance with the said interim order, the Travancore Devaswom Board has filed a memo with regard to the credentials of the persons engaged as Assistants to the Melshanthis. Along with the memo, the proceedings of the Board dated 19.12.2025 in R.O.C. No. 16/25/S and



2026:KER:8134

SSCR No.31/2025

5

proceedings dated 29.12.2025 in R.O.C. No.10/25/Saba were produced. As per proceedings dated 19.12.2025, the Board has permitted 35 Assistants for Melshanthi of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple, 10 Assistants for the Malikappuram Melshanthi, 10 persons as Sabarimala Ulkzhakam and 6 persons as Sabarimala Kazhakam. The remuneration for those Assistants was fixed in the following manner:

Assistants to Sabarimla Melshanthi	₹450 per day for 24 Assistants.
Assistants to Malikappuram Melshanthi	₹450 per day for 10 Assistants
Assistants to Sabarimala Ulkzhakam	₹250 per day for 10 persons

5. The said proceedings further state that, for the purpose of performing the rites and rituals of the Sabarimala Temple, the team of Assistants shall consist of a minimum of four experienced persons for the Melshanthis and two for the Keezhshanthis. No remuneration shall be paid by the Board for any Assistants engaged in excess of the aforesaid limit.

6. It is further stated in the said proceedings that, if the Melshanthis and the Kazhakam require additional persons to assist them in the discharge of their duties, they may appoint such persons at their own expense, risk, and cost. Clause (5) of the proceedings dated 19.12.2025 stipulates that the Assistants so appointed shall possess a valid Police Clearance Certificate



(P.C.C) and identity cards issued by the Devaswom Vigilance. The Assistants of the Melshanthi and Keezhshanthi who enter the Sreekovil shall, every day, make an entry in the register kept before the Administrative Officer. The complete details relating to the Assistants shall be recorded and attested, and an undertaking shall be obtained from the concerned Melshanthi, Ulkazhakam, and Kazhakam to the effect that full responsibility in respect of such Assistants shall rest with them. Clause (7) further stipulates that the Thantri may appoint the required number of Assistants only after verifying the identity card and the Police Clearance Certificate.

7. ROC 10/25/Saba dated 29.12.2025 is another proceeding issued by the Board with respect to the number and details of the Assistants to be employed by Melshantis, Malikapuram, Ulkazhakam and Kazhakam of Sabarimala. In the said proceedings, it is stated that out of the total 48 persons who applied for identity cards as the Assistants of Melshanti, only 18 persons were issued identity cards. Out of the 23 persons who applied for identity cards to be employed as the Assistants of Malikapuram Melshanti, only 7 persons were issued with identity cards.

8. Heard the submissions advanced by Sri.S.Rajmohan, learned Senior Government Pleader, Sri.G.Biju, learned Standing Counsel for the Travancore Devaswom Board and Smt. Sayujya Radhakrishnan, Amicus Curiae for Sabarimala Special Commissioner.

9. On a perusal of the proceedings dated 29.12.2025, it is discernible that some of the persons suggested by the Sabarimala



2026:KER:8134

SSCR No.31/2025

7

Melshanthis, Ulkzhakam, and Kazhakam have criminal antecedents.

10. From the proceedings, we find that the Board has appointed 18 Assistants to the Melshanthi of Sabarimala temple, 9 persons to assist Malikapuram Melshanthi as per the order dated 04.11.2016. The aforementioned proceedings will provide details of the assistants that can be appointed by the Melsanthis, Ulkzhakam, and Kazhakam, along with their remuneration. The following chart shows the details of the proceedings:

Nature of the work	No. of Assistants permitted	No. of Assistants to whom remuneration will be paid through Devaswom Dept.	Remuneration (Rs.)
Sabarimala Melshanthi	35	24	450
Malikappuram Melshanthi	10	10	450
Ulkzhakam	10	10	250
Kazhakam	6	-	-

11. From the records, we find that the Assistants for the Melshanties of Sabarimala and Malikapuram, as well as for Kazhakam and Ulkzhakam,



are selected by the respective employees themselves. In other words, the Board has no control in the process of selection. These Assistants are paid a meager amount as daily wages. If the number of Assistants exceeds the limit fixed by the Board, they will not get any remuneration at all. The records further indicate that many of the persons suggested or recommended by the aforementioned employees have criminal backgrounds and antecedents. Currently, the Board insists on the submission of Police Clearance Certificates and vigilance clearances for Assistants appointed at the behest of the Melshantis and Kazhakam. The present practice of selection of assistants by the Melshantis, Kazhakam and Ulkzhakam without verifying their credentials, background and antecedents to serve in important temples like Sabarimala—especially without adequate remuneration—poses significant risks. Such a course may lead to misappropriation of funds, valuables, and other forms of corruption.

12. Therefore, we deem it appropriate to issue directions to the Travancore Devaswom Board to prepare a panel of qualified employees to be engaged as Assistants to Melshantis, Kazhakam and Ulkzhakam at Sabarimala. The Board shall verify the credentials of those candidates through their vigilance wing and also through the Special Branch. The Board shall ensure that the employees included in the panel are of impeccable integrity. Furthermore, the Board shall cease the practice of engaging Assistants at the sole discretion of the Melshantis, Kazhakam, and Ulkzhakam, thereby



2026:KER:8134

SSCR No.31/2025

9

eliminating arbitrary or capricious appointments. Alternatively, the Board may explore the possibility of appointing persons by way of deputation from other temples.

SSCR is disposed of as above.

Sd/-

RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V
JUDGE

Sd/-

K. V. JAYAKUMAR
JUDGE

BR/Sbna



2026:KER:8134

SSCR No.31/2025

10

APPENDIX OF SSCR NO. 31 OF 2025

RESPONDENT ANNEXURES

- Annexure R2 (a)** True copy of the letter vide R.O.C. No.16/25/S dated 04.11.2025 sent to the Secretary, Travancore Devaswom Board by the Devaswom Commissioner forwarding the list of helpers provided by the Melsanthies
- Annexure R2 (b)** True copy of the report, bearing No.CT.22/25/TDB/VIG/SB dated 21.11.2025 submitted by the Superintendent of Police (Vigilance and Security), Travancore Devaswom Board before the President of the Board
- Annexure R2 (c)** True copy of the additional report bearing No.CT.24/25/TDB/VIG/SB dated 21/11/2025 submitted by the Superintendent of Police (Vigilance and Security), Travancore Devaswom Board before the President, Travancore Devaswom Board
- Annexure R2 (d)** True copy of the report bearing E.O.P No. 920/25/Sab dated 3.12.2025, submitted by the Executive Officer before the Secretary, Travancore Devaswom Board