

**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 27th day of November 2025 / 6th Agrahayana, 1947

SSCR NO. 37 OF 2025

**IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER
REPORT - SM.NO.37/2025 - REGARDING THE CROWD MANAGEMENT DURING MANDALA-
MAKARAVILAKKU SEASON 2025-2026 - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED - REG:**

PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENTS:

1. STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695001
2. STATE POLICE CHIEF
POLICE HEAD QUARTERS, VAZHUTHACAUD, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM -695 010
3. THE DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF, PATHANAMTHITTA - 689 645
4. THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR
COLLECTORATE, PATHANAMTHITTA, KERALA - 689645
5. THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 003
6. DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003
7. THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SABARIMALA, PAMPA TRIVENI P.O., PATHANAMTHITTA - 689670
8. THE CHIEF POLICE COORDINATOR
(ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE, (POLICE HEADQUARTERS)
SANNIDHANAM, SABARIMALA, PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN - 689 713

9. EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE
SANNIDHANAM, SABARIMALA, PATHANAMTHITTA - 689 713
10. CHIEF VIGILANCE AND SECURITY OFFICER
(SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE), TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD,
NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 003
11. PRINCIPAL CHIEF CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS
FOREST HEADQUARTERS, VAZHUTHACAUD, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695014
12. FOREST RANGE OFFICER
PAMBA RANGE, VALLAKKADAVU P.O., VANDIPERIYAR (VIA),
IDUKKI - 685553
13. KERALA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION
REPRESENTED BY ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR, TRANSPORT BHAVAN,
FORT P.O., THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 035
14. THE TRANSPORT COMMISSIONER, KERALA
TRANSPORT COMMISSIONERATE, VAZHUTHACAUD,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 014
15. THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER (ENFORCEMENT)
STADIUM JUNCTION, KAIPATTOOR ROAD, NH 183A,
PATHANAMTHITTA - 689 645
16. THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES
DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES, GENERAL HOSPITAL JUNCTION,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 035
17. KERALA WATER AUTHORITY
REPRESENTED BY ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR, JALABHAVAN,
VELLAYAMBALAM - 695033
18. EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD, TRANSMISSION DIVISION,
AZHOOR ROAD, PATHANAMTHITTA - 689645
19. DIRECTOR GENERAL
KERALA FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES HEADQUARTERS, FIRE FORCE JUNCTION,
PULIMOODU P.O., THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695001
20. DEPUTY EXCISE COMMISSIONER
EXCISE DIVISION OFFICE, 1ST FLOOR, DEVASWOM BOARD BUILDING,
PATHANAMTHITTA - 689645

21. THE DIG OF POLICE

GROUP CENTRE, CRPF, PALLIPURAM, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 316

***ADDL.R22 IMPEADED**

22. DEPUTY DIRECTOR,

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR, (PERIYAR WEST DIVISION),

PERIYAR TIGER RESERVE, PEERUMEDU P.O., IDUKKI - 685531

***IS SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL 22ND RESPONDENT VIDE
ORDER DATED 19/11/2025 IN SSCR.NO.37/2025**

BY DEPUTY SOLICITOR GENERAL OF INDIA

BY SRI.S.RAJMOHAN, SENIOR GOVERNMENT PLEADER

BY SRI.NAGARAJ NARAYANAN, SPECIAL GOVERNMENT PLEADER (FOREST)

BY STANDING COUNSEL FOR TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD

BY STANDING COUNSEL FOR KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD

BY STANDING COUNSEL FOR KERALA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION

BY STANDING COUNSEL FOR KERALA WATER AUTHORITY

BY SMT.SAYUJYA RADHAKRISHNAN, AMICUS CURIAE FOR SABARIMALA

SPECIAL COMMISSIONER

**THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING COME UP FOR
ORDERS AGAIN ON 27/11/2025, UPON PERUSING THE REPORT AND THIS COURT'S
ORDERS DATED 19/11/2025 AND 21/11/2025, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY
PASSED THE FOLLOWING:**

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

SSCR No. 37 of 2025

Dated this the 27th day of November, 2025

ORDER

Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.

This Order shall be read in continuation of the Orders dated 19.11.2025 and 21.11.2025.

2. In the Order dated 19.11.2025, we had taken note of the enormous inflow of pilgrims and directed that, for effective and safe crowd management, the Virtual-Q booking shall be capped at 70,000 per day, and that, with effect from 20.11.2025, spot booking shall be limited to 5,000 per day. We had further directed that the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) shall ensure that the aggregate number of spot bookings issued across all counters does not exceed 5,000 per day.

3. Subsequently, in the Order dated 21.11.2025, the above directions were modified, and we permitted the Executive Officer, in coordination with the Chief Coordinator and the Special Commissioner, to make minor modifications to the cap imposed by this Court, provided that the inflow of pilgrims remained on the lower side. We had also made it abundantly clear that the concentration of pilgrims shall at all times remain strictly within the green-zone limits.

4. Today, when the matter is taken up, it is submitted by the learned Standing Counsel appearing for the TDB that on 24.11.2025, a total of

1,18,866 devotees arrived at Sannidhanam, much beyond its carrying capacity. On 25.11.2025, 95,121 pilgrims visited the Sannidhanam, out of which, only 45,170 could be verified. Whereas, on 26.11.2025, despite the Virtual-Q cap of 70,000 and the spot-booking limit of 5,000, 41,646 booking passes were verified, while 7,877 passes had unreadable barcodes and therefore could not be verified.

5. It is pointed out that information has been received that certain devotees arrived at Sannidhanam using fake booking passes to gain unauthorised entry.

6. The learned Amicus Curiae appearing for the Special Commissioner submits that it has come to notice that when groups of pilgrims arrive at Sannidhanam, some members may possess verified booking passes while others may not be carrying any passes at all. However, as they arrive in groups, they are collectively permitted to proceed to Sannidhanam. This practice is causing considerable hardship to other pilgrims and is placing an undue strain on the overall carrying capacity.

7. We have considered the submissions advanced and have carefully perused the data with regard to the pilgrims who throng Sannidhanam. We note that the Virtual-Q booking pass contains the photograph, gender, date of booking, date of visit, selected slot, reporting time, and selected route. It also clearly states that manipulation of the Virtual-Q booking pass is a punishable offence. Pilgrims are required to bring the original photo ID used at the time of booking for verification. Each booking pass also contains a bar code, which is to be scanned with a machine to verify the genuineness of the booking. Even if a pilgrim arrives at Sannidhanam possessing a damaged Virtual-Q booking pass, verification will still be possible if the individual

carries the ID card used during booking, thereby enabling confirmation of the date, slot, and time of the booking. There is, therefore, no justification for permitting entry to any person who is unable to produce either a verifiable booking pass or the corresponding identification.

8. We find considerable merit in the submissions advanced that, unless the influx of pilgrims is strictly regulated and controlled, there will be an inevitable and dangerous build-up of devotees at Nilakkal and Pampa, anxiously awaiting clearance to proceed further. Such an uncontrolled congregation will severely overburden and overwhelm the infrastructure available at those transit points. This will result in the vehicle movement becoming paralysed, parking capacity getting exhausted, sanitation facilities stretched beyond its limits, food and water supply disrupted, and medical resources compromised. In such circumstances, the Police and the authorities will be confronted with a law-and-order situation. The spiritual experience of the devotees will also be considerably dampened if such a contingency occurs. From previous experience, we find that the Police and the authorities, out of sheer compulsion, are forced to allow such crowds to proceed further to Sannidhanam, even without a booking pass, thereby transferring the congestion uphill, where the carrying capacity is even more limited and fragile. The resultant bottlenecks will destroy the regulated queue movement system, undermine emergency response capabilities, trap pilgrims in narrow corridors, and significantly heighten the risk of stampede-like situations, with catastrophic consequences. We deem it necessary to reiterate that crowd behaviour becomes unpredictable and unmanageable once saturation levels are breached.

9. We would like to emphasise that such insistence as to the maximum cap of pilgrims is not a mere procedural formality, but a crowd control measure required for effective pilgrim management and for preventing any untoward incident. The facilities at Sannidhanam, which include the water supply, sanitation, resting spaces, queue complexes, medical aid posts, and emergency-evacuation channels, are designed to cater to the permitted cap only. Even a marginal excess places extraordinary strain on these systems.

10. We would like to remind the Police and the TDB that any incident caused due to overcrowding would be irreversible and unforgivable. This Court cannot, and will not, permit a situation where lakhs of innocent devotees are exposed to foreseeable, preventable, and potentially fatal hazards, merely due to lax enforcement or administrative complacency.

11. In order to ensure that the pilgrim influx at Sannidhanam remains within the limits prescribed in our earlier orders, and bearing in mind that the carrying capacity of Sannidhanam is significantly lower than the present influx, the following directions are issued:

- a) The Chief Coordinator heading the police team and the Travancore Devaswom Board shall ensure that only persons with genuine Virtual-Q or spot-booking pass corresponding to the specified date and time slot are permitted entry to Sannidhanam.
- b) Under no circumstances shall the Police permit any person carrying a fake booking pass to trek from Pamba to Sannidhanam. Likewise, pilgrims who have obtained slots for a

different date or different time shall not, under any circumstances, be permitted entry. Absolute and uncompromising adherence to the booking-slot system and the production of a booking pass or a spot entry pass is mandatory and non-negotiable.

12. The respondents shall ensure scrupulous compliance with these directions in letter, spirit, and execution, as they are indispensable to regulating the inbound flow of pilgrims and paramount for safeguarding the life, health and safety of every devotee visiting Sannidhanam and the Sanctity of the Holy Temple.

13. We also direct the TDB to give wide and continuous publicity to these directions through the Virtual-Q platform, as well as through print, electronic, and digital media, and shall also issue Short Messaging Service (SMS) alerts to all pilgrims holding Virtual-Q bookings, well in advance of their scheduled date and time of visit.

Post on 03.12.2025.

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,
JUDGE**

Sd/-

**K.V. JAYAKUMAR,
JUDGE**

APM