

**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 12th day of November 2025 / 21st Karthika, 1947**

DBAR NO. 1 OF 2025

**IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SPECIAL REPORT ON WATER
DISTRIBUTION AT SABARIMALA BY KERALA WATER AUTHORITY - REG:**

PETITIONER:

**JOINT DIRECTOR
KERALA STATE AUDIT DEPARTMENT, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD AUDIT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN-695003**

BY GOVERNMENT PLEADER for the petitioner

RESPONDENTS:

- 1. THE SECRETARY,
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003
*ADDL.R2 & R3 IMPEADED**
- 2. KERALA WATER AUTHORITY,
JALABHAVAN, VELLAYAMBALAM, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695033,
REPRESENTED BY ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR**
- 3. EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
KERALA WATER AUTHORITY, CHUTTIPARA,
VALANCHUZZHI, PATHANAMTHITTA - 689645

*ARE IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL RESPONDENTS 2 & 3 VIDE ORDER DATED
03/03/2025 IN IA.NO.1/2025 IN DBAR NO.1/2025**

***ADDL.R4 & R5 IMPEADED**

4. THE CHIEF ENGINEER,
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM HEADQUARTERS, NANTHANCODE,
KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM – 695003
5. THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, SABARIMALA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT,
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD BUILDING, KUMBAZHA ROAD,
PATHANAMTHITTA – 689645

***ARE SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL RESPONDENTS 4 & 5 AS PER
ORDER DATED 07/11/2025 IN DBAR.NO.1/2025**

BY STANDING COUNSEL, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD FOR R1

BY SRI.V.V.JOSHI, SC, WATER AUTHORITY FOR R2 & R3

(BY ORDER DATED 03/03/2025)

BY SRI.GEORGIE JOHNY, SC, KERALA WATER AUTHORITY

(BY ORDER DATED 03/06/2025)

BY SRI.P.M.JOHNY, SC, KERALA WATER AUTHORITY

**THIS DEVASWOM BOARD AUDIT REPORT HAVING COME UP FOR ORDERS AGAIN
ON 12/11/2025, UPON PERUSING THE REPORT AND THIS COURT'S ORDER DATED
07/11/2025, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY PASSED THE FOLLOWING:**

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

DBAR No.1 OF 2025

Dated this the 12th day of November, 2025

ORDER

Raja Vijayaraghavan V., J.

This Order shall be read in continuation of the Order dated 07.11.2025.

2. In compliance with the directions issued by this Court, the Chief Engineer of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), the Executive Engineer, TDB, the Superintending Engineer of the Kerala Water Authority (KWA), Executive Engineer, KWA have appeared before us in person.

3. We have interacted with the concerned officers in detail with regard to the matters referred to in the Audit report.

4. From the submissions made by the Superintending Engineer of the Kerala Water Authority, we find that during the Mandalam–Makaravilakku season, water is transported from Pamba to Nilakkal in tanker lorries and that the average expenditure incurred during each of the last five seasons has been approximately Rs.5 Crores.

5. It is further submitted that, as of date, the total outstanding amount due to the Water Authority from the TDB for the water supplied stands at ₹13 Crores. The learned counsel appearing for the TDB has disputed the aforesaid figures.

6. It is brought to our notice that the Nilakkal Water Supply Scheme became operational on 27.10.2025, and that the Water Authority is now in a position to supply water directly to Nilakkal and to provide non-domestic connections upon formal request from the TDB. It is further submitted that, subsequent to the filing of the affidavit dated 26.08.2025, applications for two non-domestic connections were submitted by the TDB and that both have been sanctioned. The Superintending Engineer submitted that, in view of the above developments, the expenditure of about ₹5 Crores incurred during the previous year can now be substantially reduced to approximately Rs.60 Lakhs.

7. With regard to the transportation of water using tanker lorries, the Executive Engineer of the Travancore Devaswom Board submitted that the charges levied by the Kerala Water Authority appear to be on the higher side. In response, the Kerala Water Authority submitted that all maintenance and repair works at Nilakkal and Pamba are being carried out by the Water Authority itself. The Superintending Engineer further submitted that certain restrictions exist in classifying the Travancore Devaswom Board as a bulk consumer, as such

classification is generally reserved for local self-government institutions. However, if appropriate orders are issued by the Government, the request for categorising the TDB as a bulk consumer can be considered. Though charges will substantially be lower, in the case of bulk consumers, the responsibility for maintenance and operational activities ordinarily lies with the consumer. In the case of TDB, however, all such works are currently being carried out by the Kerala Water Authority.

8. With respect to the billing dispute, it has been brought to our notice that a Committee has been constituted comprising the Assistant Engineer of Pamba, the Executive Engineers, and the Administrative Officers of both the TDB and the Kerala Water Authority. Both sides have jointly suggested that the Chief Engineer, Superintending Engineer, and Executive Engineer of both institutions be included in the Committee to facilitate effective discussions and resolution of outstanding issues. We direct the reconstitution of the Committee forthwith. In order to sort out the billing issues and streamline the water supply, we direct the TDB to convene a meeting of the Committee within ten days from today and to make earnest efforts to resolve the monetary disputes between the Kerala Water Authority and the Travancore Devaswom Board. As it has been submitted that the amounts due to the Water Authority from previous years remain unpaid, the TDB shall, in the first meeting itself, take a decision to

transfer at least 1/3rd of the admitted dues to the Kerala Water Authority to enable it to continue its essential operations. The Committee shall also stipulate a time frame, within which the outstanding amounts can be cleared.

9. From the Audit Report, it is noted that if TDB were to utilize its water resources more effectively, it could reduce the huge water bill payable to the KWA. We find that there are four water sources at Nilakkal, namely, Pallikkulam, Ambalakkulam, Valayittakulam, and a Check Dam with an adjoining well. Water is being pumped to two ground water tanks from these sources. The recommendation is that if the depth and width of these ponds are increased, the TDB can decrease its burden and lower its expenses. The report further reveals that the Check Dam is in a dilapidated condition. An inspection conducted pursuant to the orders of this Court dated 05.06.2015 found that a faulty design had caused leakage. The Check Dam, constructed at a cost of ₹61,14,026/-, has now become unsafe due to such leakage. Random rubble masonry was used to regulate the flow of water, however, seepage occurs through gaps between the rocks. It is further reported that if the accumulated silt is removed and a concrete bund is constructed across the water channel, a considerable volume of water could be effectively stored in the Check Dam. We are given to understand that the services of a Consultant has been obtained to iron out the issues.

10. In that view of the matter, we direct the Chief Engineer, TDB, to place before us a comprehensive report before this Court, detailing the measures required to rectify the leakage, improve the capacity of the water sources and to ensure efficient water storage and utilisation at Nilakkal.

Post on 26.11.2025.

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,
JUDGE**



Sd/-

**K.V. JAYAKUMAR,
JUDGE**

PS/12/11/25