

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 24th day of September 2025 / 2nd Aswina, 1947****SSCR NO. 25 OF 2025**

**(IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER
REPORT - SM.NO.25/2025 - MONTHLY REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER,
SABARIMALA REGARDING THE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING ONAM DAYS AND
KANNI MASA POOJA ON 03.09.2025 TO 07.09.2025 AND FROM 16.09.2025 TO 21.09.2025
(1201ME KANNI MASAM) AT SABARIMALA SREE DHARMA SASTHA TEMPLE. - SUO MOTU
PROCEEDINGS INITIATED - REG:)**

PETITIONER:**SUO MOTU****RESPONDENTS:****1. STATE OF KERALA**

**REPRESENTED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT,
GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 696001**

2. STATE POLICE CHIEF

**POLICE HEAD QUARTERS, VAZHUTHACAUD,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695010**

3. TRANSPORT COMMISSIONER,

**(MOTOR VEHICLE DEPARTMENT) TRANSPORT COMMISSIONERATE,
IIND FLOOR, TRANS TOWER, THYCAUD P.O., VAZHUTHACADU,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695014**

4. THE DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF, PATHANAMTHITTA - 689645

5. **PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT**
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695001
6. **PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT**
LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695001
7. **CHIEF ENGINEER, PROJECTS,**
KERALA STATE TRANSPORT PROJECT (KSTP), PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM,
TC 11/339, SREEBALA BUILDING, KESTON ROAD, NANTHANCODE,
KOWDIAR P.O., TRIVANDRUM - 695003
8. **THE UNION OF INDIA**
REPRESENTED BY SECRETARY (RT & H),
MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS, PARIVARAN BHAVAN,
PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI - 110 001
9. **PROJECT DIRECTOR**
NATIONAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY OF INDIA (NHAI), TC 36/574-1,
KRISHNA KRIPA, PALKULANGARA JUNCTION, PALKULANGARA,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695024.
10. **THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD**
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003
11. **THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER**
SABARIMALA, PAMPA TRIVENI P.O., PATHANAMTHITTA - 689670

12. DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER

**TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003**

BY SRI.S.RAJMOHAN, SENIOR GOVERNMENT PLEADER

BY SPECIAL GOVERNMENT PLEADER (TRANSPORT)

BY STANDING COUNSEL FOR NATIONAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY OF INDIA (NHAI)

BY SMT.O.M.SHALINA, DEPUTY SOLICITOR GENERAL OF INDIA

BY SMT.SAYUJYA RADHAKRISHNAN, AMICUS CURIAE FOR SABARIMALA

SPECIAL COMMISSIONER

**THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING COME UP FOR
ADMISSION ON 24/09/2025, UPON PERUSING THE REPORT, THE COURT ON THE SAME
DAY PASSED THE FOLLOWING:**



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

SSCR No. 25 of 2025

Dated this the 24th day of September, 2025

ORDER

Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.

This Court, by order dated 18.11.2022 in SSCR No. 19 of 2022, directed the Special Commissioner to file a report seeking appropriate directions to the concerned authorities to (i) complete the maintenance and repair works of the road network leading to Sabarimala, (ii) maintain those roads and pedestrian facilities strictly in conformity with the relevant standards and guidelines, and (iii) ensure rigorous enforcement of the Road Safety Policy and the provisions of the Motor Vehicles (Driving) Regulations, 2017.

2. The learned Special Commissioner now points out that the Mandala–Makaravilakku Festival 2025–2026 is scheduled to commence on 16.11.2025, during which lakhs of pilgrims are expected to undertake the pilgrimage. It is submitted that unless the maintenance of the entire road network used by the pilgrims en route to Sabarimala is completed within a fixed time frame, the safety and security of the devotees cannot be guaranteed.

3. It further appears that several meetings have been convened

with the officials of the PWD Road Wing, the Kerala State Transport Project (KSTP), Thiruvananthapuram, the Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department (National Highway), Thiruvananthapuram, and the Motor Vehicles Department, to address these concerns.

4. After conducting an inspection, the Special Commissioner has enumerated in detail the works that require immediate execution to ensure a safe and secure pilgrimage during the Mandala–Makaravilakku season 2025–2026.

5. After a careful review of the statement, the following issues have been identified under each head, all of which require immediate redressal:

A. Achankovil–Konni Road

- 1.1 The road is presently in a dilapidated condition.
- 1.2 Responsibility for its maintenance does not clearly vest with either the Kerala Road Fund Board (KRFB) or the Public Works Department (PWD) Road Wing.
- 1.3 An immediate, coordinated effort is therefore required to complete essential clearing and repairs before the onset of the pilgrimage season in mid-November 2025.

B. Muvattupuzha–Punalur State Highway

- 2.1 The only unfinished segment is the sharp curve near Mylapra.
- 2.2 Work has been stalled due to litigation pending before this Court in W.P.(C) No. 27964 of 2023.
- 2.3 Urgent steps must be taken to secure necessary permissions or interim orders to complete this critical stretch.

C. Funding and Coordination

- 3.1 Road Safety Authority funds should be drawn upon immediately to meet urgent expenses for maintenance and safety drives in each district.
- 3.2 The Kerala Water Authority has proposed road cutting on the MC Road at Pandalam and along the Aranmula–Seerhathodu route despite having sanction for this work several months earlier. If commenced now, these works may not conclude before mid-November 2025.
- 3.3 The Authority must therefore be directed to defer such works until after the festival season.

D. Obstruction Removal

- 4.1 Long logs from felled trees must not be left along the roadside so as to avoid obstruction of pilgrim movement during the festival.

E. Lighting and Visibility

- 5.1 Street lighting is absent along the Erumeli–Plappally road, seriously impairing night-time visibility. Immediate installation of adequate lighting is essential.

F. Emergency Preparedness

- 6.1 Officials of the PWD Road Subdivision at Ranni (Pathanamthitta District) and the National Highway Subdivision at Punalur currently lack adequate emergency vehicles.
- 6.2 Arrangements must be made to deploy sufficient emergency and rescue vehicles throughout the Mandala–Makaravilakku season.

G. Parking and Access Roads

- 7.1 The parking ground at Nilakkal and the road from Chakkupalam to Pamba (under the Devaswom Board) require urgent repair and resurfacing.

H. Crash Barriers and Road Safety Infrastructure

- 8.1 PWD must immediately install crash barriers wherever absent on NH-183A from Mannarkulanji to Elavumkal and from Elavumkal to Pamba, and repair all damaged barriers.
- 8.2 A road-safety audit should be conducted jointly by PWD, the Forest Department, and the Local Self-Government Department.

I. Facilities for Officials

- 9.1 Accommodation equipped with furniture and electricity must be provided at Nilakkal for officials coordinating the “safe-zone” activities.

J. Communication Systems

- 10.1 Mobile connectivity is poor and landmarks are lacking from Naranamthodu to Elavumkal and from Laha to Pamba.
- 10.2 A communication system based on an SOS-switch model should be urgently installed to assist pilgrims in distress.

K. Rapid Repair Mechanism

- 11.1 A single-window coordination scheme must be established to repair any crash barriers or signboards damaged in accidents within 48 hours.

L. Directional and Safety Signage

- 12.1 An arch-type directional board bearing the word “Sabarimala” in multiple languages must be erected at Mannarkulanji, where NH-183A begins.
- 12.2 All cautionary and mandatory signboards, including Chevron markings on NH-183A and PWD roads, must be cleaned and repaired.

M. Specific Crash Barrier Installations (NH-183A Mannarkulanji–Elavumkal)

- 13.1 Barriers must be installed or reinstated in chainages - 44/300, 44/400 to 44/500, 44/700, 46/300, 46/600, 48/500, 49/600 to

50/200, 50/800 to 51/800, 70/500 to 71/700, 76/400.

N. Replacement of Damaged Lighting and Signage

14.1 The damaged blinking LED light post at chainage 47/400 must be replaced.

14.2 Outdated signboards must be replaced at chainages 47/400, 55/000, 73/900, 74/200, 74/500, and 74/700.

O. Other Safety Devices

15.1 The flexible delineator post at chainage 59/400 (Vilakkuvanchi bend) must be repaired and reinstated.

15.2 The defective convex mirror at chainage 62/400 kms must be repaired and restored.

P. Forest-Area Landmark Boards

16.1 Along the forest stretches from Laha to Elavumkal and Elavumkal to Naranamthodu, landmark boards with serial numbers must be installed to enable precise identification of accident or breakdown sites.

Q. Solar Road Studs

17.1 Solar road studs must be installed at Laha Valiavalavu and Vilakkuvanchi areas to improve night-time visibility.

R. High-Wind Precautions

18.1 As Laha is at a high altitude and prone to strong winds, large hoarding structures pose a serious risk of collapse.

18.2 Local self-government bodies must be directed to restrict or deny permits for the installation of such structures during the festival period.

6. As regards the above aspects, as an interim measure, we direct the respondents, namely, the Director General of Police, the Transport Commissioner, the Motor Vehicles Department, the Road Safety

Commissioner, the Public Works Department (Roads Division), the Kerala State Transport Project (KSTP), and the National Highways Authority of India, to coordinate effectively and take earnest, immediate action, on a war footing, to ensure that the entire road network used by Sabarimala pilgrims within the State of Kerala is properly maintained so as to guarantee safe and secure vehicular movement during the pilgrimage season.

Such compliance shall specifically include:

- (a) Maintaining all roads and pedestrian facilities strictly in conformity with the relevant standards and guidelines;
- (b) Preventing and removing any encroachments upon the right of way or pedestrian facilities; and
- (c) Ensuring the highest level of safety for vulnerable road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.
- (d) Removal of all hoardings, advertisements, and other unauthorized installations that cause distraction or constitute encroachment on road pavements shall be removed forthwith.
- (e) The Road Safety Commissioner, or an officer subordinate to him, shall conduct a comprehensive security audit of the entire road network used by Sabarimala pilgrims and report on the measures taken.
- (f) The respondents shall further ensure the strict enforcement of the State Road Safety Policy and the provisions of the Motor Vehicles

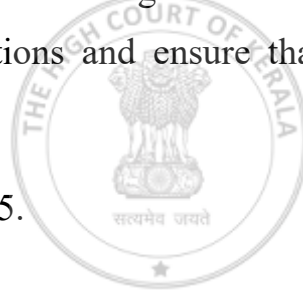
(Driving) Regulations, 2017, in full adherence to the directions issued by this Court in order dated 10.11.2022 in SSCR No. 19 of 2022.

7. An action taken report shall be placed before this Court within a period of ten days.

8. Another issue brought to our notice by the special commissioner is with regard to the maintenance of the Food Testing Laboratory, Pamba. Certain issues with regard to electrical fluctuations and short-circuiting have been highlighted.

9. The learned Standing Counsel for the Travancore Devaswom Board shall get instructions and ensure that those repairs are carried out without delay.

Post on 10.10.2025.



Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,
JUDGE**

Sd/-

**K.V. JAYAKUMAR,
JUDGE**

APM