

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V

&

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR

Monday, the 8th day of June 2026 / 18th Jyaishta, 1948

WP(C) NO. 40608 OF 2025(A)

PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU AS PER THE ORDER DATED 21.10.2025 IN SSCR 23/2025 REGARDING THE HEIST AND PLUNDERING OF GOLD FROM THE GOLD-CLADDED DWARAPALAKAS PLACED ON EITHER SIDE OF THE SREEKOVIL, SABARIMALA., PIN - 682031

RESPONDENTS:

1. THE STATE OF KERALA REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT, REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM , PIN - 695001
2. THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003
3. THE CHIEF VIGILANCE AND SECURITY OFFICER (SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE) TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003
4. THE STATE POLICE CHIEF POLICE HEAD QUARTERS, VAZHUTHACAUD, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695010
5. THE SENIOR DEPUTY DIRECTOR KERALA STATE AUDIT DEPARTMENT, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003

BY Advs.

S. RAJMOHAN, SR.GOVERNMENT PLEADER FOR R1 & R4

S.SREEKUMAR (SR.) along with

SHRI.G.BIJU,STANDING COUNSEL FOR R2, R3 & R5

This petition again coming on for orders upon perusing the petition and the affidavit filed in support of WP(C) and this court's order dated 18/05/2026, the court passed the following:

VERDICTUM.IN

MONDAY, THE 8TH DAY OF JUNE 2026

WP(C) No. 40608 of 2025

SUO MOTU

VS

THE STATE OF KERALA & OTHERS

ADVS FOR PETITIONER/S:

SUO MOTU (IN PERSON)

ADVS FOR RESPONDENT/S:

SRI.S.SREEKUMAR (SR.), SHRI.G.BIJU, SC, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM
BOARD



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

WP(C) No. 40608 of 2025

Dated this the 8th day of June, 2026

ORDER

Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.

This order shall be read in continuation of our previous orders.

2. In our order dated 18.05.2026, we noted that it was only upon receipt of the analysis report from the National Metallurgical Laboratory(NML), Jamshedpur, that the complicity and involvement of the various persons connected with the removal of the gold-clad copper plates of the Dwarapalakas during September 2025 could be properly determined and the culpability of the persons concerned fixed. After perusing the report of the Special Investigation Team, we granted a further period of two weeks, by order dated 18.05.2026, to complete the entire exercise.

3. Today, when the matter was taken up, Sri. S. Sasidharan, IPS, Investigating Officer of the Special Investigation Team (SIT), appeared in person and submitted a progress report regarding the investigation in CB PS Crime Nos.

3700/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025 and 3701/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025. He submitted that the reports relating to the investigation concerning the gold-plated/gold-clad copper plates of the Sabarimala Temple, forwarded to the National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur, on 03.03.2026 in connection with the aforesaid crimes, were received on 29.05.2026. It is submitted that the report is highly comprehensive and, when read together with the report submitted by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), provides a clear picture of the methodology adopted and sheds light on the manner in which the offence was perpetrated. A copy of the report submitted by the Director, National Metallurgical Laboratory (NML), Jamshedpur, has also been placed before us.

4. We have carefully gone through the comprehensive report submitted by the NML and find that it would go a long way in identifying the manner in which the pilferage of gold was carried out at Sannidhanam. The progress report contains a detailed narration of the events commencing from 12.07.2024 and culminating in the transportation of the Dwarapalaka idol plates, together with the specific manner in which the investigation has been conducted. It is stated that, as of date, as many as 408 witnesses have been examined and their statements recorded. Two 1 TB hard disks used in the computer systems of the office of the Executive Officer, Sabarimala, for maintaining records relating to the Sabarimala Temple Devaswom, and one 2 TB hard disk containing various data pertaining to the period 2018–19, have been seized and forwarded to the Kerala State Forensic Science Laboratory. It is stated that the examination of the aforesaid digital

records is in progress and that the reports have not yet been received.

5. It is stated that, in 2019, Smart Creations, Chennai, had stripped the cladded gold from the artefacts using a special salt known as "stripping salt", procured from Mumbai. In the course of the investigation, a sample of the stripping salt was collected and forwarded to the NML, Jamshedpur, for scientific analysis, the results of which are awaited. The analysis of the special salt is crucial to establishing the method adopted by Smart Creations for stripping gold from the artefacts. It is further stated that the SIT has been able to collect details relating to the copper plates purchased in 1998 and that certain further investigations are required to be conducted in Chennai for verification of these aspects. It is also stated that, pursuant to the orders of this Court, samples of certain artefacts were taken from the Sabarimala Sreekovil. However, the Prabhamandalam plates and the upper-side door frame plate could not be dismantled and examined owing to difficulties raised by the skilled labourers engaged for the dismantling work. It is stated that objections were also raised from various quarters. It is further submitted that, in order to ascertain the actual weight of the artefacts, dismantling with the assistance of experts and the collection of samples are indispensable. Only thereafter can the actual quantity of gold cladding on the aforesaid artefacts be accurately assessed. A request is therefore made to permit the SIT to dismantle the Prabhamandalam plates and the upper-side door frame plate and to collect samples therefrom with the assistance of experts.

6. Having considered the report and the present stage of the investigation, we are satisfied that the request is justified. Accordingly, we grant permission to the Special Investigation Team to dismantle the Prabhamandalam plates and the upper-side door frame plate, collect samples therefrom with the assistance of experts, and forward the same to the laboratory for analysis, so that the truth of the matter may be fully and conclusively ascertained.

7. Sri. S. Sasidharan, IPS, also submitted before us that the investigation has reached its final stages insofar as the incidents leading to the removal and disposal of the Dwarapalakas in the year 2025 are concerned, and requested that the matter be posted on 18.06.2026 to enable the SIT to apprise this Court of the further developments and the culpability and role of the persons involved. It is submitted that the investigation is more or less completed and the final report can be laid without any further delay. The said submission is recorded.

8. It was pointed out that Sri. Anish P.B., Inspector of Police, had applied for deputation to the Cabinet Secretariat as Field Officer (GD) in the year 2024 and has now been selected for the said post. The State Police Chief and Director General of Police, Kerala, has agreed to relieve Sri. Anish P.B. to enable him to join as Field Officer in the Cabinet Secretariat. A request is therefore made to permit Sri. Anish P.B., Inspector of Police, to be relieved from the Special Investigation Team.

9. In view of the Special Report and the circumstances brought to our

notice, we grant permission to relieve Sri. Anish P.B. from the Special Investigation Team, so as to enable him to assume the post of Field Officer in the Cabinet Secretariat.

Post on 18.06.2026.

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

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

APM

