



2025:KER:42081

SSCR No.2 of 2025

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE ANIL K. NARENDRAN

&

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE MURALEE KRISHNA S.

FRIDAY, THE 13TH DAY OF JUNE 2025 / 23RD JYAISHTA, 1947SSCR NO. 2 OF 2025

(IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT - SM.NO. 2/2025 - REPORT REGARDING VIDEOGRAPHY USING MOBILE PHONE AT SOPANAM ON 02.01.2025 DURING 'HARIVARAASANAM AT SANNIDHANAM DURING MANDALAMAKARAVILAKKU FESTIVAL 1200 M.E.' - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED - REG.)

PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENTS:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO
GOVERNMENT, REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT,
GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM 695 001
- 2 TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR
POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM 695003
- 3 THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS,
NANTHANCODE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN 695 005



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- 4 EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SABARIMALA, SABARIMALA P.O.,
PATHANAMTHITTA 689 662
- 5 THE DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF,
PATHANAMTHITTA 689 662
- 6 THE STATION HOUSE OFFICER
PAMBA POLICE STATION, PATHANAMTHITTA 689 662
- 7 THE STATION HOUSE OFFICER
SANNIDHANAM POLICE STATION, PATHANAMTHITTA 689662
- 8 ADDL R8- POLICE SPECIAL OFFICER (SUPERINTENDENT OF
POLICE) SANNIDHANAM POLICE STATION, SABARIMALA
SANNIDHANAM - 689 713
- 9 ADDL R9- SOPANAM SPECIAL OFFICER
SABARIMALA SANNIDHANAM - 689 713

ADDITIONAL RESPONDENTS 8 AND 9 ARE IMPEADED VIDE
ORDER DATED 10/01/2025 IN SSCR.NO.2/2025

BY ADV SHRI.G.BIJU, SC, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD

OTHER PRESENT:

SRI. S. RAJMOHAN, SR. GP;

SRI. G. BIJU, SC, TDB;

SMT. SAYUJYA RADHAKRISHNAN, AMICUS CURIAE

THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING BEEN FINALLY
HEARD ON 03.03.2025, THE COURT ON 13.06.2025 DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING:

**"CR"****ORDER**Anil K. Narendran, J.

This report filed by the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala is regarding videography by a temporary employee using mobile phone at Sopanam of Sabarimala Sannidhanam on 02.01.2025, during Harivaraasanam. In the said report, it is also stated that, on 25.12.2024, when the procession of Thanka Anki reached the Sanctum Sanctorum, cameramen of the press standing on the northern side of Sopanam climbed on the rail at the Sopanam and recorded video and took photos. The report of the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala reads thus;

"The Station House officer Sannidanam reported that he got an information that somebody is recording the videography using his mobile phone at Sopanam on 02.01.25 at 22:45 hrs during Harivarasanam before closing the temple. The SHO enquired about the same and identified that the person is one Akshay, who is a temporary employee of Emergency Operating Centre at Sannidhanam. The SHO examined his mobile phone and found from the gallery of the mobile phone that he recorded the video of Sanctum sanctorum and Harivarasanam on 02.01.2025 at 22:45 hrs. Since no order is passed by the Devaswom Board



prohibiting recording of videography and photography police is not in a position to register a case or to seize the phone or camera in such a situation.

On 25.12.2024 evening when the procession of Thanka Anki came to the Sanctum Sanctorum, cameramen of press standing on the northern side of the Sopanam climbed on the rail at Sopanam and recorded video and took photos.”

2. In the report, the Special Commissioner has pointed out the directions issued by this Court in O.P.No.1290 of 2000, which was registered suo motu, in which there is a prohibition regarding photography and videography above 'Pathinettampadi'.

3. By the order dated 06.01.2025, the learned Senior Government Pleader was directed to get a report from the Special Officer, Sannidhanam, and the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board was directed to get a report from the Sopanam Special Officer, regarding the incident that happened on 25.12.2024 and 02.01.2025.

4. Along with a memo dated 09.01.2025, the learned Senior Government Pleader has placed on record the report dated 07.01.2025 of the Police Special Officer, Sannidhanam.

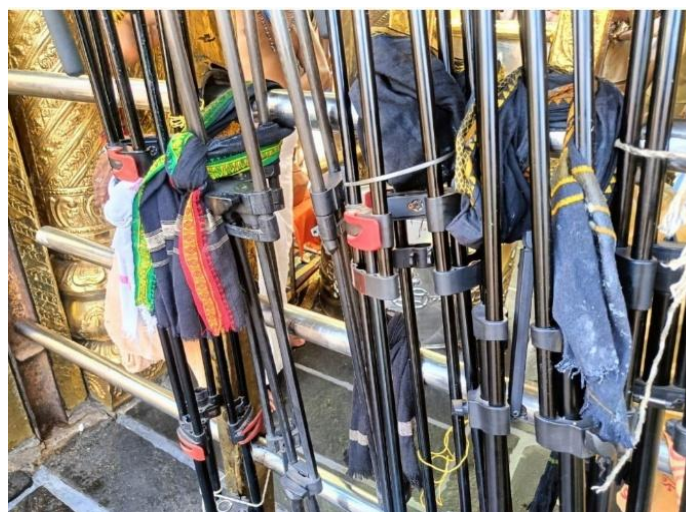
5. On 15.01.2025, when this SSCR came up for consideration,



this Court noticed the order dated 14.01.2025 in SSCR No.79 of 2024 filed by the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala, regarding crowd management and other aspects during Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season of 1200ME (2024-25). By the order passed at 10.15 a.m., this Court directed the Travancore Devaswom Board through the Executive Officer, Sabarimala and the Chief Police Co-ordinator, Sabarimala, through the Special Police Officer, Sannidhanam, to take immediate steps to remove the tripods tied on the pillars and railings of the Sopanam enclosure of Sabarimala Sannidhanam.

6. The photographs enclosed along with the additional report dated 13.01.2025 of the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala, regarding the installation of tripods by various media persons on the railings on the northern side of the Sopanam enclosure of Sabarimala Sannidhanam, which were extracted in paragraph 7 of the order of this Court dated 14.01.2025, are extracted hereunder;





7. In paragraph 11 of the order passed on 14.01.2025 at 10.15 a.m., in SSCR No.79 of 2024, this Court reproduced the photographs enclosed along with the additional report dated 13.01.2025 of the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala regarding installation of equipment by media persons in and around the Sopanam, Thirumuttam and even above the Devaswom Office



building near Melethirumuttam for live telecast of Makaravilaku festival. The said photographs are extracted hereunder;





8. In SSCR No.79 of 2024, this Court passed a detailed order on 14.01.2025 at 12.30 p.m. Paragraphs 2 to 7 of the order read thus;

"2. When this SSCR is taken up for further consideration at 12.30 p.m., the learned Senior Government Pleader and also the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board would submit that the tripods tied on the pillars and railings of Sopanam enclosure of Sabarimala Sannidhanam have already been removed.

3. By the order passed in this SSCR today at 10.15 a.m., considering the fact Sabarimala and its vicinity are Special Security Zone under Section 83(1) of the Kerala Police Act, 2011, vide G.O.(Ms.)No.74/2024/Home dated 14.10.2024 issued by the State Government, in order to exercise the powers under Section 83(2) of the said Act, to ensure a safe secure and hassle-free pilgrimage, it was ordered that the use of hele cam at Sabarimala by media persons shall not be permitted.

4. The learned Senior Government Pleader, on instructions from the 14th respondent Chief Police Co-ordinator, Sabarimala, would submit that the aforesaid direction contained in paragraph 10 of the order passed today at 10.15 a.m. shall be complied with, in letter and spirit, by the police.

5. It is made clear that the restriction contained in the aforesaid order shall not be applicable to surveillance by the police, with the help of hele cam, as part of crowd management at Sabarimala.

6. In the order at 10.15 a.m., this Court referred to another



additional report dated 13.01.2025 filed by the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala wherein it is stated that the media persons have installed their equipment for the live-telecast of Makaravilakku festival in and around the Sopanam, Thirumuttam and even above the Devaswom office building near Melethirumuttam. The photographs enclosed along with the said report were extracted in paragraph 11 of the said order.

7. The learned Senior Government Pleader, on instructions from the 14th respondent Chief Police Co-ordinator, Sabarimala, would submit that the police shall regulate such activities in an appropriate manner, in order to ensure the safety of all concerned."

9. Along with a memo dated 09.01.2025 filed by the learned Senior Government Pleader, a report dated 07.01.2025 of the Police Controller, Sannidhanam, is placed on record. The said report reads thus;

'On 2nd January 2025, at approximately 10:55 PM, during the Harivarasanam prayer at Sabarimala Sannidhanam, it was observed that an individual was recording a video on his mobile phone within the temple's Thirumuttam area. At this moment, the phone was seized for examination. Upon inspection, it was discovered that the phone contained video recordings of scenes taken from the Sanctum Sanctorium. Consequently, the phone was confiscated and handed over to the Sannidhanam Police Station for further action.



Subsequent investigations identified the individual as a temporary employee of the Emergency Operating Centre, Sri. Akshay, aged 20, son of Sri. Pradeep .T.K, residing at "Maniyil Thazhum Veettil," Konttody Village, Puthukaud P.O, Malappuram District. On 3rd January 2025, the Sannidhanam Police unlocked the mobile phone, which revealed that it contained videos of portions of the Sanctum Sanctorum, as well as scenes showing the closing of the temple. It was confirmed that the individual had violated the court's directions regarding restrictions on photography and videography within the Thirumuttam.

In accordance with the law, the mobile phone, identified by IMEI numbers 1- xxx and 2 - xxx, along with the report, was submitted to the Special Commissioner of Sabarimala by the Sannidhanam Police Station (Station House Officer), under report No.36/DES/SNDNMPS/2024-2025, dated 3rd January 2025. As per the directions of the Special Commissioner of Sabarimala, the recorded videos of the Sanctum Sanctorum were permanently deleted, and the phone was returned to the owner with instructions to refrain from repeating such actions in the future.

After this incident, instructions has been given the police personnel on duty at Mele thirumuttam to discourage the public from taking photography in and around temple premises. Media persons those who have proper accreditation were permitted to take photos/visuals from Temple premises for official purpose."

10. Along with a memo dated 15.01.2025 filed by the learned



Standing Counsel for the Travancore Devaswom Board, a report dated 07.01.2025 of the Sopanam Special Officer is placed on record. The said report reads thus;

“ശബരിമല 1200 എം.ഇ. മണ്ഡലം - മകരവിളക്ക് മഹോത്സവത്തോടനുബന്ധിച്ച് ഉള്ളൂർ (ഗ്രൂപ്പ് അസിസ്റ്റന്റ് ദേവസ്വം കമ്മീഷണറായി ജോലി നോക്കിവരുന്ന ഞാൻ 14.11.2024 ൽ ഡ്യൂട്ടിക്ക് ഹാജരായിട്ടുള്ളതും 15.11.2024 വൈകുന്നേരം ശബരിമല ശ്രീകോവിൽ തുറന്നതുമുതൽ സോപാനം സ്പെഷ്യൽ ഓഫീസറായി ജോലിനോക്കിവരുന്നതുമാണ്. ബഹുമാനപ്പെട്ട സ്പെഷ്യൽ കമ്മീഷണറുടെ റിപ്പോർട്ടിൽ പരാമർശിക്കുന്ന തക്കതരം ഘോഷയാത്ര സ്വീകരിച്ച് സോപാനത്ത് കൊണ്ടുവരുന്ന വേളയിൽ സോപാനത്തിന് വടക്കുവശത്ത് സോപാനത്തിന് പുറത്തായി പത്രമാധ്യമങ്ങൾക്കായി നിശ്ചയിച്ച് നൽകിയിട്ടുള്ള സ്ഥലത്ത് വൈകുന്നേരം 5.00 പി.എം. മുതൽ വിവിധ മാധ്യമ പ്രവർത്തകർ ചിത്രീകരണത്തിനായി നിലയുറപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. തക്ക തരം അങ്കി സോപനത്തേക്ക് കയറ്റുന്നതിനായി ടി സമയം രണ്ട് ദേവസ്വം വാച്ചർമാരെ മാത്രം സോപാനത്തിനുള്ളിൽ നിർത്തിയിട്ടുള്ളൂ. അങ്കി എത്തിയതിനൊപ്പം ബഹു. ദേവസ്വം മന്ത്രി, ദേവസ്വം ബോർഡ് പ്രസിഡന്റ്, മെമ്പർമാർ, എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് ഓഫീസർ, അഡ്മിനിസ്ട്രേറ്റീവ് ഓഫീസർ, അസിസ്റ്റന്റ് എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് ഓഫീസർ സോപാനം ഡ്യൂട്ടിയിലുള്ള ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരും ജീവനക്കാരും ഉള്ളിലേക്ക് അങ്കിവാഹകരായി എത്തുന്ന സ്വാമിമാരും സ്പെഷ്യൽ ഓഫീസർമാരും പ്രവേശിക്കുകയും ദീപാരാധനയ്ക്കായി ശ്രീകോവിൽ നട അടയ്ച്ചിട്ടുള്ളതുകൊണ്ടുമാകുന്നു. ടി അങ്കിപ്രവേശിക്കുന്ന വേളയിൽ അങ്കി അടങ്ങിയ പേടകം സോപാനത്തിനുള്ളിലേക്ക് നൽകിയശേഷം സോപാനത്തിനുള്ളിലെയും ഒന്നാം നിരയിലെ തിരക്ക് നിയന്ത്രിക്കുന്നതിന്റെ തിരക്കിൽ എനിക്ക് ബഹുമാനപ്പെട്ട സ്പെഷ്യൽ



കമ്മീഷണറുടെ റിപ്പോർട്ടിൽ പരാമർശിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള മാധ്യമ പ്രവർത്തകരുടെ ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള പ്രവൃത്തി എൻറെ ശ്രദ്ധയിൽപ്പെട്ടിട്ടില്ലാത്തതും നിലവിൽ വീഡിയോ ദൃശ്യങ്ങളുടെ ഫൂട്ടേജിൽനിന്നും മാത്രമാണ് ടി വിവരം ശ്രദ്ധയിൽപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുള്ളതും എന്നും മറ്റ് ദിവസങ്ങളിൽ ഒന്നുതന്നെ ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ എൻറെ ശ്രദ്ധയിൽപ്പെട്ടിട്ടില്ലാത്തതും അത്തരത്തിലുള്ള സംഭവങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടില്ലാത്തതുകൊണ്ടും സോപാനത്തിനുള്ളിലെ ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരുടെയും അങ്കി വാഹകരുടെയും മറ്റും തിരക്ക് നിയന്ത്രിക്കാനുള്ള അതീവ ശ്രദ്ധവേണ്ടിവന്നതിനാൽ ഇത്തരത്തിൽ ബാരിക്കേഡിന് മുകളിലേക്ക് കയറുന്നത് ശ്രദ്ധയിൽപ്പെടാതിരുന്നത് എന്നും ആയത് മേലിൽ ഉണ്ടാകാതിരിക്കുന്നതിന് ആവശ്യമായ നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ നൽകിയിട്ടുള്ളതാണ് എന്നും അറിയിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു.

കൂടാതെ ബഹുമാനപ്പെട്ട സ്പെഷ്യൽ കമ്മീഷണറുടെ റിപ്പോർട്ടിൽ പരാമർശിക്കുന്ന 02.01.2025 10.45 പി.എം. ന് ഹരിവരാസന സമയത്ത് ശ്രീ. അക്ഷയ് എന്ന ആൾ മൊബൈൽ വീഡിയോചിത്രീകരണം നടത്തിയതായി കാണുന്നു. ഇക്കാര്യത്തിൽ സന്നിധാനം പോലീസ് സ്റ്റേഷനിൽ സബ് ഇൻസ്പെക്ടർ കേസ് രജിസ്റ്റർ ചെയ്ത് ഫോൺ പിടിച്ചെടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളതായും പരാമർശിച്ച് കാണുന്നു. സോപാനത്ത് മൊബൈൽ ഫോൺ ഉപയോഗിക്കരുതെന്ന് സംബന്ധിച്ച് പബ്ലിസിറ്റി വഴി മൈക്കിലൂടെ വിവിധ ഭാഷകളിൽ അറിയിപ്പ് നൽകുന്നതും ബോർഡുകളിലൂടെ പ്രദർശിപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളതുമാണ്. എന്നിരുന്നാലും ഏതെങ്കിലും ഭക്തർ മൊബൈൽഫോണുകൾ ഉപയോഗിച്ചു വരുന്നതും ശ്രദ്ധയിൽവരുന്ന എല്ലാചിത്രീകരണങ്ങളും ഡ്യൂട്ടി യിലുള്ള എല്ലാ ഡിപ്പാർട്ട്മെന്റ് ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർ തടഞ്ഞ് അയ്യപ്പഭക്തർക്ക് കർശന നിർദ്ദേശം നൽകിവരുന്നതുമാണ്. എന്നാൽ ടിയാൻറെ മൊബൈൽ ചിത്രീകരണം മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ ശ്രദ്ധയിൽപ്പെടാത്തവിധം മറച്ച് ഡ്യൂട്ടിയിലുള്ള ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥരുടെയും ജീവനക്കാരുടെയോ



ശ്രദ്ധയിൽപ്പെടാത്ത രീതിയിൽ ചെയ്തതാണെന്നും കരുതുന്നു. ടി. വീഡിയോ ചിത്രീകരണം സംബന്ധിച്ച് വിവരം ബഹുമാനപ്പെട്ട സ്പെഷ്യൽ കമ്മീഷണറുടെ റിപ്പോർട്ടിൽ നിന്നുമാണ് അറിയാൻ സാധിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത് എന്നും മേലിൽ ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള സംഭവങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകാതിരിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ആവശ്യമായ നിർദ്ദേശം സോപാനം ഡ്യൂട്ടിയിലുള്ള എല്ലാ ജീവനക്കാർക്കും നൽകിയിട്ടുള്ളതുമാണ്. സോപാനത്ത് ദർശനം സംബന്ധമായ എല്ലാ കാര്യങ്ങളും എന്റെ കർത്തവ്യത്തിൽ വരുന്നതാണെന്നും, ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള നടപടികളും അനിഷ്ടതകളും ഉണ്ടാകാതിരിക്കുന്നതിലേക്കായി ഞാൻ പൂർണ്ണമായും ശ്രദ്ധചെലുത്തിവരുന്നതുമാണ്. എന്നാൽ ഇത്തരത്തിൽ മറച്ചുവെച്ചും വ്യാജ ഭക്തിയുടെ പേരിൽ എത്തുന്നതുമായി വ്യക്തികളുടെ ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള സമീപനം ഉണ്ടാകുമ്പോൾ മാത്രമാണ് ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള വിഷയങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകാൻ കാരണമാകുന്നത്. ടി വിഷയങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകുന്ന അവസരങ്ങളിൽ എല്ലാം എന്റെ ഭാഗത്തുനിന്നും അടിയന്തിരമായ ഇടപെടൽ ഉണ്ടാകാറുണ്ട് എന്നും ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടവർക്ക് കർശന നിർദ്ദേശം നൽകാറുള്ളതുമാണ്. മേലിൽ ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള അനിഷ്ട സംഭവങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകാതിരിക്കുന്നതിനായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട എല്ലാ ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥർക്കും ജീവനക്കാർക്കും കർശന നിർദ്ദേശം നൽകിയിട്ടുള്ളതാണ് എന്നുള്ള വിവരം വിനയപുരസരം ബഹുമാനപ്പെട്ട കോടതി മുൻപാകെ സമർപ്പിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു.”

11. Heard the learned Senior Government Pleader for respondents 1 and 5 to 8, the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board for respondents 2 to 4 and 9 and also the learned Amicus Curiae for the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala.

12. By the order dated 14.01.2025 in this SSCR, considering



the fact Sabarimala and its vicinity are Special Security Zone under Section 83(1) of the Kerala Police Act, 2011, vide G.O.(Ms.)No.74/2024/Home dated 14.10.2024 issued by the State Government, in order to exercise the powers under Section 83(2) of the said Act, to ensure a safe, secure and hassle-free pilgrimage, it was ordered that the use of helicam at Sabarimala by media persons shall not be permitted.

13. The Special Commissioner, Sabarimala has filed SSCR No.80 of 2024 regarding stay of media persons at Sabarimala, in connection with Maasapoojas and Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season of 1200ME (2024-25). That SSCR was disposed of by the order dated 14.11.2024, accepting the suggestion made by the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala, based on the report dated 13.11.2024 of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer (Superintendent of Police). By the order dated 14.11.2024, the Travancore Devaswom Board was directed to issue identity cards for media persons on a written recommendation by the Head of a print media having registration with Registrar of Newspapers of India or Visual Media having licence with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, based on the



recommendation of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer (Superintendent of Police). It was ordered that subject to the availability of accommodation facilities at Pranavam Guest House and Darshan Complex, persons holding the identity card issued by the Board alone shall be accommodated in the allotted room, who has to act as the reporter of that print media or visual media. No other person shall be permitted to occupy the allotted room. Persons holding identity cards alone shall be permitted to remain at Sannidhanam, since the entry of pilgrims to Sabarimala is regulated by Virtual-Q booking and spot booking, against available slots.

14. The Special Commissioner, Sabarimala, filed SSCR No.19 of 2024, pursuant to the directions contained in paragraph 19 of the order of this Court dated 17.01.2024 in DBP No.126 of 2023 and SSCR No.39 of 2023, regarding the stay of media persons without any accreditation at Sabarimala Sannidhanam. The said SSCR was disposed of by the order dated 22.10.2024. In paragraph 21 of the said order, this Court has referred to an order dated 11.09.2024 of the Travancore Devaswom Board, which was marked as Annexure R3(a) in SSCR No.19 of 2024. Paragraph 21 of the order dated



22.10.2024 in SSCR No.19 of 2024 reads thus;

'21. In the affidavit dated 09.10.2024 filed on behalf of the 3rd respondent Travancore Devaswom Board it is stated that the Board has considered the report of the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala and the report of the 6th respondent Chief Vigilance and Security Officer in respect of framing of guidelines for accreditation and stay of media persons deputed by the media houses for reporting at Sabarimala. The 5th respondent Executive Officer, Sabarimala, was directed to report the details of the rooms occupied by media persons at Sabarimala Sannidhanam and the rent due from them, etc. The Chief Vigilance and Security Officer was asked to submit a report in respect of the guidelines to be framed for stay and accreditation of media persons. After considering an exhaustive report submitted by the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer and after due deliberation, the Board has issued the guidelines, as stated in paragraph 4 of the affidavit. Paragraph 4 of the affidavit dated 09.10.2024 filed on behalf of the 3rd respondent Board, which is one sworn to by its Secretary, reads thus;

"4. It is submitted that the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer, Travancore Devaswom Board has submitted an exhaustive report regarding guidelines to be adopted for the stay and accreditation of media persons at Sannidhanam. The Board considered the report of Chief Vigilance and Security Officer and after due deliberations issued the following guidelines;

(a) The persons deputed by the media for reporting at



Sabarimala should be accredited media persons and they should carry their original accreditation document/certificate/card with them.

(b) The respective medias sending their reporters to Sabarimala should submit a declaration form in the prescribed format to the Public Relations Officer, Travancore Devaswom Board 15 days prior to the opening of the temple along with a copy of the accreditation card of the person.

(The P.R.O. of Travancore Devaswom Board will communicate the above requirement to all media's.)

(c) The P.R.O will transmit the declaration form and documents received from the representatives of media to the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer, Travancore Devaswom Board, one week prior to the opening of the temple.

(d) The Chief Vigilance and Security Officer, Travancore Devaswom Board will cross check the credentials of the media persons with the records submitted vide clause (b) above.

(e) An officer in the cadre of Sub Group Officer will be engaged as caretaker in the building, where rooms are allotted to media persons, on the opening day of temple, to see that no persons other than the persons deputed by the respective media are staying in the rooms allotted.

(f) The Executive Officer, Sabarimala is directed to instruct the Special Officer, Accommodation to keep a register containing the details of the rooms allotted to each media and the persons occupying the respective



rooms.

True copy of the proceedings of the Travancore Devaswom Board, ROC.118/2020/Sab dated 11.09.2024 is produced herewith and marked as Annexure-R3(a)."

15. By the order dated 22.10.2024 SSCR No.19 of 2024 was disposed of by directing the Travancore Devaswom Board to follow the guidelines contained in Annexure R3(a) Board order dated 11.09.2024, which was extracted in paragraph 4 of the affidavit dated 09.10.2024 sworn to by the Secretary of the Board, in letter and spirit, during Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season of 1200ME (2024-25) onwards and also during Maasapoojas. Paragraphs 22, 23 and also the last paragraph of the order in SSCR No.19 of 2024 read thus;

"22. As already noticed hereinbefore, Sabarimala and its vicinity are declared as Special Security Zone under Section 83(1) of the Kerala Police Act, 2011, in order to exercise the powers under Section 83(2) of the said Act, to ensure a safe, secure and hassle-free pilgrimage, in terms of the notification issued by the State Government. As stated in the report dated 29.08.2024 of the Chief Police Coordinator, Sabarimala, the practice of holding the rooms/keys in Darshan Complex and Pranavam Complex at Sannidhanam when the temple remains closed is improper, which may cause security threats, as the details of the occupants are not recorded. In addition to that, accredited media



houses/reporters are facing difficulties from unaccredited media persons, vloggers and bloggers.

23. As already noticed hereinbefore, the number of footfall at Sabarimala Sannidhanam during Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season of 1199 ME (2023-24) was more than 1,00,000 per day, which had gone up to 1,15,000 per day, as per the records. There is acute shortage of accommodation for pilgrims at Sabarimala Sannidhanam. Therefore, the available accommodation at Sabarimala has to be utilised to the maximum extent, during Maasapoojas and Manadala-Makaravilakku festival seasons. Due to acute shortage of accommodation facilities at Sabarimala Sannidhanam, a large number of pilgrims, including children of tender age and senior citizens, are getting only the toilet facilities provided at Sannidhanam.

In such circumstances, this SSCR is disposed of by directing the 3rd respondent Travancore Devaswom Board to follow the guidelines contained in Annexure R3(a) Board order dated 11.09.2024, which is extracted in paragraph 4 of the affidavit dated 09.10.2024 sworn to by the Secretary of the Board, in letter and spirit, during Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season of 1200ME (2024-25) onwards and during Maasapoojas."

16. In the order dated 05.06.2025 in this SSCR this Court noticed the submission made by the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board regarding the prohibition of photography or videography above 'Pathinettampadi', referred to in the order dated



18.07.2000 of a Division Bench of this Court in O.P.No.1290 of 2000. In paragraph 2 of the said order, the Division Bench noticed the stand taken by the Board in the second paragraph of the counter affidavit filed by the Board in that original petition, which refers to O.P.No.15667 of 1992, wherein an order was passed that there shall not be any photography or videography above 'Pathinettampadi'. A copy of the order dated 14.11.1997 in O.P.No.15667 of 1992 is marked as Annexure A to the counter affidavit filed by the Board in O.P.No.1290 of 2000.

17. We have perused the Judges' papers of O.P.No.15667 of 1992, which was registered suo motu as a public interest litigation, to deal with the hardship, plight and inconvenience caused to Sabarimala pilgrims during Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season and Maasapoojas. When the Division Bench was informed that Travancore Devaswom Board is permitting photography and videography below 'Pathinettampadi', the Division Bench ordered that photography and videography shall not be allowed above 'Pathinettampadi', by any agency, private or public (para 17 of the order dated 14.11.1997).

18. The submission of the learned Standing Counsel for the



Travancore Devaswom Board and also the learned Senior Government Pleader is that videography by media persons takes place for the last several years, in Melethirumuttam of Sabarimala Sannidhanam and also near the Sanctum Sanctorum.

19. Having considered the pleadings and materials on record and also the state of affairs as seen from the photographs extracted hereinbefore at paragraph 6 showing installation of tripods by various media persons on the railings on the northern side of the Sopanam enclosure of Sabarimala Sannidhanam and also the photographs extracted hereinbefore at paragraph 7 regarding installation of equipment by media persons in and around Sopanam, Thirumuttam and Devaswom office building near Melethirumuttam for live telecast of Makaravilakku festival, we deem it appropriate to dispose of this SSCR with the following directions;

- (i) The 2nd respondent Travancore Devaswom Board is directed to take an appropriate decision on videography in Melethirumuttam and also near the Sanctum Sanctorum of Sabarimala Sannidhanam, after considering the opinion of the Tantri of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple. After obtaining the opinion of the Tantri, the Board shall convene a joint meeting of the 3rd respondent Devaswom Commissioner



and also the Chief Police Coordinator [Additional Director General of Police (Police Headquarters)], Sabarimala. The decision taken by the Board shall be placed before the Division Bench dealing with Devaswom matters, along with a report of the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala.

(ii) Since Sabarimala and its vicinity being Special Security Zone under Section 83(1) of the Kerala Police Act, 2011, vide notification issued by the State Government, in order to exercise the powers under Section 83(2) of the said Act, the use of helicam at Sabarimala by media persons shall not be permitted. This restriction shall not be applicable to surveillance by the Police, with the help of helicam, as part of crowd management at Sabarimala.

(iii) The installation of tripods on the railings on the Sopanam enclosure of Sabarimala Sannidhanam shall not be permitted. The installation of equipment by the media persons for 'live telecast' of Makarajyothi darshan shall be only at identified locations, with the prior permission of the Travancore Devaswom Board, with the approval of the Chief Police Coordinator [Additional Director General of Police (Police Headquarters)], Sabarimala.

(iv) The officials of the Travancore Devaswom Board and also the police shall take necessary steps to ensure that videography in the permitted areas at Sabarimala is not causing any inconvenience whatsoever to the pilgrims.

(v) The issuance of identity cards to media persons shall be strictly in accordance with the directions contained in the order



of this Court dated 14.11.2024 in SSCR No.80 of 2024, referred to hereinbefore at para 13.

(vi) The stay of media persons at Sabarimala shall be strictly in accordance with the directions contained in the order of this Court dated 22.10.2024 in SSCR No.19 of 2024, referred to hereinbefore at para 15.

Sd/-

ANIL K. NARENDRA, JUDGE

Sd/-

MURALEE KRISHNA S., JUDGE

bkn/-