

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE ANIL K. NARENDRAN

&

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE G. GIRISH

MONDAY, THE 25TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2023 / 4TH POU SHA, 1945

SSCR NO. 29 OF 2023

(SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT-SM NO.29/2023-
PREPARATIONS AND ACTION PLANS TO BE MADE BY THE TRAVANCORE
DEVASWOM BOARD - THE STATE OF KERALA AND THE KERALA POLICE
FOR PROVIDING AMENITIES AND FACILITIES TO THE SABARIMALA
PILGRIMS AND FOR EFFECTIVE CROWD MANAGEMENT)

PETITIONER/S :

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENT/S :

- 1 STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 695 001.
- 2 STATE POLICE CHIEF
POLICE HEAD QUARTERS, VAZHUTHACAUD,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695010
- 3 THE DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF,
PATHANAMTHITTA-689645.
- 4 THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR,
COLLECTORATE, PATHANMATHITTA, KERALA-689645
- 5 THE PRINCIPAL CHIEF CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS (WILDLIFE) AND
CHIEF WILDLIFE WARDEN,
FOREST HEADQUARTERS, VAZHUTHACAUD,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM 695001
- 6 DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
PERIYAR WEST DIVISION, PEERUMEDU, IDUKKI-685531.
- 7 THE FOREST RANGE OFFICER ,
PAMBA RANGE, VALLAKKADAVU P.O.,
VANDIPERIYAR (VIA), IDUKKI-685553
- 8 KERALA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION,
REPRESENTED BY ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR,

VERDICTUM.IN

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- TRANSPORT BHAVAN,
FORT P.O., THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695035
- 9 THE SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695001
- 10 THE TRANSPORT COMMISSIONER KERALA
TRANSPORT COMMISSIONERATE, VAZHAUTHACAUD,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 014
- 11 THE SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT
HEALTH DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695001
- 12 THE DISTRICT MEDICAL OFFICER (HEALTH),
CIVIL STATION, PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN-689645
- 13 THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE,
KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695 003
- 14 THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER,
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS,
NANTHANCODE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN-695 005.
- 15 THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
SABARIMALA, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, NANTHANCODE,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695 003
- 16 KERALA WATER AUTHORITY,
REPRESENTED BY ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR, JALA BHAVAN,
VELLAYAMBALAM, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695 033
- 17 THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
KERALA WATER AUTHORITY, PUBLIC HEALTH CIRCLE,
PATHANAMTHITTA, THIRUVALLA-689 101
- 18 ADDL R18 - THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
TRANSMISSION DIVISION, AZHOOR ROAD,
PATHANAMTHITTA-689 645
*IS SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL 18TH RESPONDENT
VIDE ORDER DATED 10.10.2023 IN SSCR 29/2023
*CORRECTED AS EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD,
TRANSMISSION DIVISION, AZHOOR ROAD,
PATHANAMTHITTA-689 645.
*THE DESCRIPTION OF THE ADDITIONAL 18TH RESPONDENT
IS SUO MOTU CORRECTED AS PER ORDER DATED 13/10/2023 IN
SSCR.NO.29/2023
- 19 THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES
THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES,
DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES,
GENERAL HOSPITAL JUNCTION,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM- 695 035.
*IS SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS THE ADDITIONAL 19TH RESPONDENT
AS PER ORDER DATED 13/10/2023 IN SSCR.NO.29/2023

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- 20 THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR
LOCAL FUND AUDIT, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD,
DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NATHANCODE, KOWDIAR P.O,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN-695 003
*IS SUO MOTU IMPLEADED AS ADDITIONAL 20TH RESPONDENT VIDE
ORDER DATED 15/11/2023 IN SSCR 29/2023 *
- 21 ADDL R21 - EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE
SANNIDHANAM, SABARIMALA, PATHANAMTHITTA - 689 713
- 22 ADDL R22 - CHIEF VIGILANCE AND SECURITY OFFICER
(SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE), TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695 003
*ARE SUO MOTU IMPLEADED AS ADDITIONAL
RESPONDENTS 21 AND 22 VIDE ORDER DATED 22/11/2023 IN
SSCR.NO.29/2023
- 23 ADDL R23- THE CHIEF POLICE COORDINATOR
(ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE, LAW AND ORDER)
SANNIDHANAM, SABARIMALA, PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN - 689 713
*ARE SUO MOTU IMPLEADED AS ADDITIONAL RESPONDENT 23 VIDE
ORDER DATED 04/12/2023 IN SSCR.NO.29/2023
- 24 ADDL R24- THE DIG OF POLICE
GROUP CENTRE, CRPF, PALLIPURAM,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 316
*IS IMPLEADED AS ADDITIONAL 24TH RESPONDENT
VIDE ORDER DATED 09.12.2023 IN SSCR 29/2023
- 25 ADDL R25- THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER (ENFORCEMENT)
STADIUM JUNCTION, KAIPATTOOR ROAD, NH 183A,
PATHANAMTHITTA-689 645 *IS SUO MOTU IMPLEADED AS THE
ADDITIONAL 25TH RESPONDENT VIDE ORDER
DATED 11/12/2023 IN SSCR 29/23
- 26 ADDL R26- RANNI PERUNAD GRAMA PANCHAYAT
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, RANNY PERUNAD,
PERUNAD, PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN - 689711
*IS SUO MOTU IMPLEADED AS ADDITIONAL
26TH RESPONDENT VIDE ORDER DATED 18/12/2023 IN
SSCR.NO.29/2023
- 27 ADDL R27- THE CONTROLLER
DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL METROLOGY, LEGAL METROLOGY BHAVAN,
VRINDAVAN GARDEN, PATTOM, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695 004
- 28 ADDL R28- DEPUTY CONTROLLER (FLYING SQUAD)
LEGAL METROLOGY DEPARTMENT, MURINGAMANGALAM, KONNI,
PATHANAMTHITTA-689 692
- 29 ADDL R29- DEPUTY CONTROLLER (FLYING SQUAD)
LEGAL METROLOGY DEPARTMENT,
MINI CIVIL STATION, KOTTAYAM-686 001
*ARE SUO MOTU IMPLEADED AS ADDITIONAL
RESPONDENTS 27 TO 29 VIDE ORDER DATED 19/12/2023 IN
SSCR.NO.29/2023
BY ADVS.

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Deepu Thankan
JOSHY VV
KISHORE D
UMMUL FIDA (K/954/2013)
LAKSHMI SREEDHAR (K/946/2016)
LEKSHMI P. NAIR (K/001011/2017)
NAMITHA K.M. (K/001556/2021)
MEERA GOPINATH (K/001803/1999.)
R.MURALEEKRISHNAN (MALAKKARA) (K/000583/2008)

This SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT having come up for orders on 25.12.2023, ALONG WITH SSCR.36/2023, 41/2023 AND CONNECTED CASES, the court on the same day passed the following:

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE ANIL K. NARENDRAN

&

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE G. GIRISH

MONDAY, THE 25TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2023 / 4TH POUSHA, 1945

SSCR NO.36 OF 2023

PETITIONER/S:

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENT/S:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM 695001
- 2 TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE,
KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM 695 003
- 3 THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS,
NANTHANCODE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN 695 005
- 4 THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SABARIMALA, PAMPA TRIVENI P.O., PATHANAMTHITTA- 689670
- 5 THE SECRETARY
DISTRICT TOURISM PROMOTION COUNCIL (DTPC), KODIMATHA,
KOTTAYAM 686013
- 6 UNION GOVERNMENT
MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, REPRESENTED BY THE DIVISIONAL RAILWAY
MANAGER, (THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DIVISION),
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM 695001
- 7 COCHIN DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY , ROUND NORTH, THRISSUR 680001
- 8 MALABAR DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, HOUSEFED COMPLEX,
ERANHIPALAM, KOZHIKODE 673006
- 9 GURUVAYUR DEVASWOM MANAGING COMMITTEE,
GURUVAYUR DEVASWOM BOARD, GURUVAYUR, PIN 680 101,
REPRESENTED BY ITS ADMINISTRATOR
- 10 EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE

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11 PORUMKAL KADAVU ROAD ERUMELI, PATHANAMTHITTA, 686509
ERUMELI GRAMA PANCHAYATH
REPRESENTED BY SECRETARY SH 44, ERUMELI,
PATHANAMTHITTA 686509
BY ADVS.
MANU S. DSG OF INDIA
JIBU P THOMAS

This SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT having come up for orders on 25.12.2023, ALONG WITH SSCR.29/2023 AND CONNECTED CASES, the court on the same day passed the following:

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE ANIL K. NARENDRAN

&

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE G. GIRISH

MONDAY, THE 25TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2023 / 4TH POUSHA, 1945

SSCR NO. 41 OF 2023

PETITIONER/S:

SUOMOTU

RESPONDENT/S:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695001
- 2 THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
RPERESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695003
- 3 THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS,
NANTHANCODE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,, PIN - 695002
- 4 THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SABARIMALA, PAMPA TRIVENI P.O.,
PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN - 689669
- 5 THE ADDL.R5*DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF, PATHANAMTHITTA
THE DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF, PATHANAMTHITTA;
- 6 *THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR
THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR, PATHANAMTHITTA
- 7 *THE ICICI BANK, T.K ROAD, ABAN ARCADE,
PATHANAMTHITTA, KERALA-689645, REPRESENTED BY
ITS AUTHORIZED OFFICER *ARE SUO MOTU IMPLEADED AS
ADDITIONAL RESPONDENTS 5 TO 7 VIDE ORDER
DATED 04/12/2023 IN SSCR 41/2023
BY ADV

This SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT having come up
for orders on 25.12.2023, ALONG WITH SSCR.29/2023 AND

SSCR Nos.29, 36, 41 and 42 of 2023

CONNECTED CASES, the court on the same day passed the following:

VERDICTUM.IN

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE ANIL K.NARENDRAN

&

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE G.GIRISH

MONDAY, THE 25TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2023 / 4TH POU SHA, 1945

SSCR NO. 42 OF 2023

PETITIONER/S:

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENT/S:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 695001
- 2 THE CHIEF POLICE CO-ORDINATOR (ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL
OF POLICE, LAW AND ORDER)
SANNIDHANAM, SABARIMALA, PATHANAMTHITTA ,PIN -689 713
- 3 THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR
COLLECTORATE, PATHANAMTHITTA, KERALA-689 645
- 4 THE DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF,
PATHANAMTHITTA-689 645
- 5 THE STATION HOUSE OFFICER
PAMBA POLICE STATION, THRIVENI-PAMBA,
PATHANAMTHITTA,PIN 689662
- 6 THE STATION HOUSE OFFICER
SANNIDHANAM POLICE STATION, SABARIMALA SANNIDHANAM,
PATHANAMTHITTA,PIN-689 713
- 7 THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE,
KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM- 695 003
- 8 THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS,
NANTHANCODE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN-695 005
- 9 THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SABARIMALA, PAMBA TRIVENI P.O, PATHANAMTHITTA-689670
- 10 ADDL R10- THE DIG OF POLICE
GROUP CENTRE, CRPF, PALLIPURAM, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 31
*IS IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL 10TH RESPONDENT VIDE ORDER DATE

VERDICTUM.IN

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09.12.2023 IN SSCR 42/2023
BY ADV MANU S. DSG OF INDIA

This SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT having come up for orders on 25.12.2023, ALONG WITH SSCR.29/2023 AND CONNECTED CASES, the court on the same day passed the following:

ANIL K. NARENDRAN & G. GIRISH, JJ.

.....
SSCR Nos.29, 36, 41 and 42 of 2023
.....

Dated this the 25th day of December, 2023

ORDER

Anil K. Narendran, J.

SSCR No.29 of 2023:- The Special Commissioner, Sabarimala has filed this SSCR pursuant to the directions contained in the order of this Court dated 21.01.2023 in SSCR No.23 of 2022 and DBP No.70 of 2022, regarding crowd management and other matters at Sabarimala, in connection with the Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season of 1199 ME (2023-24).

2. SSCR No.36 of 2023:- The Special Commissioner, Sabarimala, has filed this report, pursuant to the directions contained in the order of this Court dated 10.01.2023 in SSCR No.20 of 2022, regarding the steps to be taken to provide adequate facilities to pilgrims at Sabarimala Edathavalams, during Mandala-Makaravilakku Festival Season of 1199 ME (2023-24).

3. In the orders passed on 22.12.2023 at 10.15 a.m. and 4.15 p.m., this Court issued various directions on crowd management during the Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season

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of 1199 ME (2023-24) and Registry was directed to list the matters on 03.01.2024. Today, these matters are listed before the Bench, after obtaining the orders of the Honorable the Chief Justice, on account of certain issues in crowd management at Sabarimala, which has affected the movement of pilgrims from various Edathavalams to Nilakkal and then to Sannidhanam.

4. In terms of the orders of this Court in SSCR No.29 of 2023, when the movement of vehicles to Nilakkal is restricted through 'hold and release' mechanism, vehicles carrying pilgrims will have to be parked at the identified Edathavalams or at the places identified in the order of this Court dated 14.12.2023 (passed at 3.00 p.m.).

5. By the order dated 12.12.2023 in SSCR No.29 of 2023, this Court directed the Chief Police Co-ordinator at Sannidhanam to regulate the movement of pilgrims through 'Pathinettampadi' in appropriate manner, without compromising the safety of the pilgrims, especially women, children of tender age and senior citizens, to ensure darshan to the maximum number of pilgrims through 'Pathinettampadi'. Further, when the movement of vehicles to Nilakkal is controlled by 'hold and release' mechanism, the Police shall take necessary steps to ensure that, to the extent possible, such vehicles are parked in

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the parking grounds of Sabarimala Edathavalams and the pilgrims in those vehicles are provided with Annadhanam and other facilities available at those temples. In case such vehicles are parked for a considerably long period between Laha and Nilakkal, the Police and the enforcement officers in the Motor Vehicles Department shall conduct sector patrolling and such pilgrims shall be provided with drinking water and biscuits, with the assistance of the Executive Officer, Sabarimala or the Administrative Officer, Nilakkal.

6. On 22.10.2023, the District Police Chief, Pathanamthitta filed a detailed report, which contains the list of Edathavalams in Pathanamthitta district, including the places identified in the order of this Court dated 14.12.2023, where vehicle parking with basic amenities to pilgrims are available. The said list is extracted hereunder;

EDATHAVALAMS IN PATHANAMTHITTA DISTRICT							
Sl. No	Name and Address of Edathavalam	Police station jurisdiction	LSGD Limt	Vehicle parking capacity		Basic facilities available or not	Remarks
				HMV/ MMV	LMV		
1	Valiyakoickal Sreedharma Sastha Temple, Pandalam.	Pandalam	Pandalam	10	30	Basic facilities available	
2	Muringamangalam Temple, Konny.	Konny	Konny	10	25	Basic facilities available	
3	Edathavalam near DPO, PTA.	Pathanamthitta	Pathanamthitta	50	300	Basic facilities available	
4	Sree Rekthakanda Swami Temple,	Pathanamthitta	Omalluur	5	40	Basic facilities available	

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	Omallur.						
5	Uzhavath temple	Pathanamthitta	Omallur	0	5	Basic facilities available	
6	Malayalappuzha Devi Temple.	Malayalappuzha	Malayalappuzha	10	25	Basic facilities available	
7	Sree Parthasarathy Temple Aranmula.	Aranmula	Aranmula	8	20	Basic facilities available	
8	Puthiyakavu Devi Temple, Ayroor.	Koipuram	Ayroor	5	15	Basic facilities available	
9	Municipal Stadium, Thiruvalla.	Thiruvalla	Thiruvalla	50	150	Basic facilities available	
10	Sastha Temple Meenthalakkara-Thiruvalla.	Thiruvalla	Thiruvalla	0	5	Basic facilities available	
11	Edathavalam-Pazhavangadi, Ranni.	Ranni	Pazhavangadi	5	12	Lack of basic facility	Lack of light and bathroom
12	Ramapuram Temple, Ranny.	Ranny	Ranny	10	15	Basic facilities available	
13	Sabaree Saranasramam, Koonamkara.	Perunad	Perunad	0	25	Basic facilities available	
14	Perunad Edathavalam, Madathumoozhy	Perunad	Perunad	0	4	Basic facilities available	
15	Yogamayanda Ashramam, Perunad	Perunad	Perunad	15	20	Basic facilities available	
16	Cheriyakavu Devi Temple, Vadasserikkara.	Vadasserikkara	Vadasserikkara	0	30	Basic facilities available	
17	Prayar Maha Vishnu Temple, Vadasserikkara.	Vadasserikkara	Vadasserikkara	0	25	Basic facilities available	
18	Perunad Kakkadukoyikkal Dharmasastha Temple, Perunad.	Perunad	Perunad	0	10	Basic facilities available	
19	School ground, Vadasserikkara	Vadasserikkara	Vadasserikkara	0	75	Lack of basic facility	Lack of light
20	H.S Ground Perunadu	Perunad	Perunad	0	75	Lack of basic facility	Lack of light
21	Madamon Rishiksha Temple	Perunad	Perunad	0	5	Lack of basic facility	
22	Laha Estate Bungalow road	Perunad	Perunad	0	50	Lack of basic facility	Lack of hotels for food
Total				178	961		

PLACES BETWEEN VADASSERIKKARA AND LAHA IN PATHANAMTHITTA DISTRICT

SI. No	FROM	TO	LENGTH OF STRETCH	LSGD Limit	Police station jurisdiction	Vehicle parking capacity		Basic facilities available or not
						HMV/MMV	LMV	
1	BSNL LAHA	LAHA FOREST STATION	1.3 KMS	Perunadu	Perunadu	10	15	Basic facilities available
2	MANUJALA HOTEL	AMMAN KOVIL/HARRISON	0.8KMS	Perunadu	Perunadu	10	15	Basic facilities available
3	PUTHUKKADA	VARAYANMARUTHY JN.	2KMS	Perunadu	Perunadu	16	20	Basic facilities available
4	POOVATHUM-ODDU BRIDGE	VADASSERIKKARA	5.2KMS	Perunadu	Perunadu	8	5	Basic facilities available
TOTAL						44	55	

PLACES FROM KANAMALA IN ERUMELI IN KOTTAYAM DISTRICT

SI.No	FROM	TO	LENGTH OF STRETCH	LSGD Limit	Police station jurisdiction	Vehicle parking capacity		Basic facilities available or not
						HMV/MMV	LMV	
1	MES	THIRUVAMPADI TEMPLE	2KMS	Erumeli	Erumeli	15	250	Basic facilities available
2	35th MILE	MUTTAPPALY	1.5KMS	Erumeli	Erumeli	0	50	Basic facilities available
TOTAL						15	300	

7. In the report of the District Police Chief, Pathanamthitta, it is stated that the pilgrims are not aware of the 'live status' of queue and rush and weather conditions at Pamba and Sannidhanam. Some of the pilgrims regularly make heated arguments with the Police when the vehicles are blocked, which can be avoided if the Travancore Devaswom Board updates the 'live status' of the queue and rush at Sannidhanam and Pamba on their website, which will help the Police to regulate the flow of pilgrims in a systematic manner.

8. In the order dated 22.12.2023 (passed at 04.15 p.m.) this Court directed the Travancore Devaswom Board to make necessary arrangements, if not already made, to announce the 'live status' of the queue, rush and weather conditions at Pamba and Sannidhanam to the pilgrims through public announcement system at Edathavalams when the movement of pilgrims to Nilakkal is regulated by 'hold and release' mechanism. Similar announcements shall also be made from the Police patrol vehicles deployed for sectoral patrolling at the places identified in the order dated 14.12.2023 (passed at 03:00 p.m.), where vehicles carrying pilgrims have been parked, when the movement of pilgrims at Nilakkal is regulated by 'hold and release' mechanism. The Chief Police Co-ordinator at Sannidhanam was directed to give necessary information about the 'live status' of the queue, rush and weather conditions at Pamba and Sannidhanam to the Executive Officer, Sabarimala or the Special Officer, Sabarimala, who shall pass on that information to the respective Sub-Group Officer/Administrative Officer of the respective Edathavalam for making such announcements to the pilgrims.

9. In the order dated 14.11.2023 in SSCR No.36 of 2023, this Court reiterated that in view of the provisions

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contained in Sections 15A and 31A of the Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act, the Travancore Devaswom Board has a statutory duty to ensure that proper facilities are provided to Sabarimala pilgrims in Sabarimala Edathavalams/temples under its management. The Temple Advisory Committees of the temples, which are identified by the Travancore Devaswom Board to provide facilities to Sabarimala Pilgrims during the Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season, have a statutory duty to render necessary assistance to the concerned Sub Group Officer in providing such facilities to Sabarimala pilgrims.

10. By the order dated 14.11.2023 in SSCR No.36 of 2023, this Court directed the Travancore Devaswom Board to ensure that proper facilities are provided to Sabarimala pilgrims in the Edathavalams/temples under its management, during the Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season of 1199 ME. The Temple Advisory Committees of those temples are directed to provide necessary assistance to the concerned Sub-Group Officer in providing proper facilities to the pilgrims. The concerned Assistant Devaswom Commissioners are directed to conduct periodical inspections in those temples, to ensure that proper facilities are provided to Sabarimala pilgrims.

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11. By the order dated 13.12.2023 (passed at 12.00 p.m.) in SSCR No.29 of 2023, taking note of the issues on crowd management at Pamba and Sannidhanam on the previous days, this Court directed the Travancore Devaswom Board to limit spot booking facility to 10,000 on days when the Virtual-Q booking has reached 80,000. The Chief Police Co-ordinator, Sannidhanam and also the Special Police Officer at Pamba were directed to ensure that entry from Pamba is regulated through Virtual-Q booking and spot booking. The entry of pilgrims from Pamba without Virtual-Q booking or spot booking shall be restricted to the maximum extent possible. In that order, it was made clear that the above restriction shall be brought to the notice of the pilgrims through print and visual media. Thereafter, by the order dated 19.12.2023, taking note of the total footfall at Sannidhanam on the previous days, this Court permitted the Chief Police Co-ordinator, Sannidhanam, in consultation with the Devaswom Commissioner and also the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala to increase the limit for spot booking from 10,000 to 15,000, on days when the Virtual-Q booking has reached 80,000, when the footfall at Sannidhanam and Pamba are far below the holding capacity of the respective locations and the tail end of the queue at Sannidhanam is at a safer zone.

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12. Today, during the course of arguments, the learned Senior Government Pleader would submit that yesterday (24.12.2023) 1,00,969 pilgrims had darshan at Sannidhanam through 'Pathinettampadi'. In addition to this, around 25,000 pilgrims had 'civil darshan'. Therefore, on 24.12.2023, the total footfall at Sannidhanam was more than 1,25,000.

13. From the submissions made by the learned Senior Government Pleader, we notice that, despite the directions issued by this Court to ensure that entry from Pamba is regulated through Virtual-Q booking and spot booking a large number of pilgrims, a majority of whom are pilgrims within the State, reach Pamba without Virtual-Q booking or spot booking. Since the Virtual-Q booking on most of the days has reached 80,000 and the number of spot bookings is limited, the Chief Police Co-ordinator at Sannidhanam has to restrict or even prohibit the entry of pilgrims without Virtual-Q booking or spot booking, when the footfall at Sannidhanam and Pamba has touched the holding capacity of those locations, in order to ensure safe and comfortable darshan to pilgrims having Virtual-Q booking or spot booking.

14. As already noticed, the total footfall at Sannidhanam was more than 1,25,000 on 24.12.2023. The learned Senior

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Government Pleader and the learned Amicus Curiae for Special Commissioner, Sabarimala, would submit that a large number of pilgrims who had darshan in the afternoon of 24.12.2023, are still at Sannidhanam. Some of those pilgrims are remaining at Sannidhanam for Mandala Pooja. When the footfall at Pamba and Sannidhanam reached the maximum holding capacity, the movement of pilgrims to Nilakkal is being regulated by 'hold and release' mechanism, as a result of which, vehicles carrying pilgrims were blocked at Ponkunnam, Mundakayam, Pala, Kanjirappalli, Thirunakkara, Ettumanoor and Vaikom. Depending upon the outflow of pilgrims from Sannidhanam and Pamba and the outflow of vehicles from Nilakkal, the vehicles blocked at Ponkunnam, Mundakayam, Pala, Kanjirappalli, Thirunakkara, Ettumanoor and Vaikom are being permitted to move towards Nilakkal. The learned Senior Government Pleader would submit that the Police and the District Administration are providing drinking water and biscuits to the pilgrims stranded at those locations, in terms of the directions contained in the orders of this Court in SSCR No.29 of 2023.

15. When the footfall at Pamba and Sannidhanam reached the maximum holding capacity, the movement of pilgrims to Nilakkal has to be regulated by 'hold and release' mechanism.

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Similarly, when the number of vehicles parked at the parking grounds of the Travancore Devaswom Board at Nilakkal has reached the maximum limit, the movement of vehicles carrying pilgrims to Nilakkal has to be regulated by 'hold and release' mechanism. At present, vehicles carrying pilgrims are not being blocked from 'Elavunkal to Laha' and 'Elavunkal to Kanamala' forest areas, as far as possible, since those areas have no street lights or shops.

16. When the footfall at Pamba and Sannidhanam reached the maximum holding capacity on 24.12.2023, the movement of pilgrims to Nilakkal was regulated by 'hold and release' mechanism, as a result of which, vehicles carrying pilgrims were blocked at Ponkunnam, Mundakayam, Pala, Kanjirappalli, Thirunakkara, Ettumanoor and Vaikom.

17. As held by this Court in **Ram Mohan Das v. Travancore Devaswom Board [1975 KLT 55]** the Travancore Devaswom Board shall manage the properties and affairs of the Devaswoms, both incorporated and unincorporated, and arrange for the conduct of the daily worship and ceremonies and of the festivals in every temple according to its usage. The position of the Board in regard to the Devaswoms, both

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incorporated and unincorporated, is analogous to that of trustees.

18. When the vehicles carrying pilgrims are blocked at Edathavalams/temples, the Travancore Devaswom Board, in discharge of its statutory duty under Sections 15A and 31 of the Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act has to provide proper facilities to the pilgrims, by providing them Annadhanam, drinking water, toilet facilities, etc. The Temple Advisory Committees of those Edathavalams/temples have a statutory duty under Section 31A of the Act, read with the provisions under the Rules (Bye-laws) framed under sub-section (3) of Section 31A of the Act, to render necessary assistance to the concerned Sub Group Officer in providing such facilities to Sabarimala pilgrims. By the order dated 14.11.2023 in SSCR No.36 of 2023 in SSCR No.36 of 2023, this Court directed the concerned Assistant Devaswom Commissioners to conduct periodical inspections in the Edathavalams/temples, to ensure that proper facilities are provided to Sabarimala pilgrims during Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season of 1199 ME.

19. Having considered the submissions made at the Bar and taking note of the issues at Ponkunnam, Mundakayam, Pala, Kanjirappalli, Thirunakkara, Ettumanoor and Vaikom, when the

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movement of pilgrims to Nilakkal was regulated by 'hold and release' mechanism, when the footfall at Pamba and Sannidhanam reached the maximum holding capacity, we deem it appropriate to direct the State Police Chief to have a constant vigil on the crowd management at such locations, during Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season of 1199 ME, by deploying additional police force, if found necessary. The Devaswom Commissioner is directed to ensure, through the concerned Assistant Commissioners and the Sub Group Officers, that when the vehicles carrying pilgrims are blocked at Edathavalams/ temples, the pilgrims are provided with Annadhanam, drinking water, toilet facilities, etc. We make it clear that any failure on the part of the Travancore Devaswom Board in providing Annadhanam, drinking water, toilet facilities, etc. to such pilgrims will be viewed seriously, especially when the position of the Board in managing the affairs of the Devaswoms is analogous to that of trustees. The concerned Assistant Commissioners in charge of the Edathavalams/temples at the aforesaid places shall conduct an inspection, forthwith, and submit reports before the Devaswom Commissioner, with specific reference to the issues faced by the pilgrims on 24.12.2023 and today (25.12.2023). Those reports shall be placed before this

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Court in SSCR No.36 of 2023, along with an affidavit of the Devaswom Commissioner, explaining the facts and circumstances. The Devaswom Commissioner shall ensure strict compliance of the direction contained in the order of this Court dated 14.11.2023 in SSCR No.36 of 2023, to provide proper facilities to Sabarimala pilgrims in Edathavalams/temples under its management during the Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season of 1199 ME. When the pilgrims are stranded at the places identified in the order of this Court dated 14.12.2023, they shall be provided with drinking water and light refreshments, with the support of the Police, District Administration or the Local Self Government Institution. Since the Virtual-Q booking on most of the days has reached 80,000 and the number of spot bookings is limited, the Chief Police Co-ordinator at Sannidhanam has to restrict or even prohibit the entry of pilgrims without Virtual-Q booking or spot booking, when the footfall at Sannidhanam and Pamba has touched the holding capacity of those locations, in order to ensure safe and comfortable darshan to pilgrims having Virtual-Q booking or spot booking.

20. Since a large number of pilgrims are stranded at various locations when the movement of vehicles to Nilakkal is

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regulated through 'hold and release' mechanism, the Travancore Devaswom Board shall request the pilgrims at Sannidhanam, through the public address systems, to leave Sannidhanam after darshan, as early as possible, so that the number of footfall at Sannidhanam and Pamba, which is at the maximum holding capacity, can be reduced and maximum number of pilgrims stranded at various places can move towards Nilakkal and Pamba for darshan, today itself. The pilgrims shall also be informed through the public address systems at the Edathavalams/ temples and also through Police patrolling vehicles deployed for sectoral patrolling, to cooperate with the restrictions imposed, since the number of footfall at Sannidhanam and Pamba has reached the maximum holding capacity, and that steps are being taken to ensure that all the pilgrims have darshan, at the earliest.

In case any urgent orders are necessary on crowd management in connection with Mandala-Makaravilakku festival season, it would be open to the learned Senior Government Pleader, learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board or the learned Amicus Curiae for Special Commissioner, Sabarimala, to request Registry to list these matters before the

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Bench. On such request being made, the Registry shall list these matters before the Bench forthwith.

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List on 03.01.2024.

Sd/-

ANIL K. NARENDRAN, JUDGE

Sd/-

G. GIRISH, JUDGE

bkn/-