

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE ANIL K.NARENDRAN

&

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE P.G. AJITHKUMAR

Tuesday, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of February 2022 / 12th Magha, 1943

DBP NO. 2 OF 2022

IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - MATTER PERTAINING TO SABARIMALA TEMPLE - HUGE CORRUPTION BEHIND FAKE BILLS SUBMITTED BY DEVASWOM - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED - REG:

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PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENTS:

1. STATE OF KERALA  
REPRESENTED BY CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,  
GOVERNMENT SECRETARIATE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695001.
2. PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT  
REVENUE (DEVASWOM DEPARTMENT), GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695001.
3. TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD  
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KOWDIAR POST,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003.
4. DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER,  
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, NANTHANCODE, KOWDIAR POST,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003.



5. THE CHIEF VIGILANCE SECURITY OFFICER  
(SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE - VIGILANCE),  
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NANTHANCODE, KOWDIAR POST,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003.

BY STANDING COUNSEL FOR TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD FOR R3 & R4  
BY GOVERNMENT PLEADER FOR R1, R2 & R5  
BY SRI.N.RAGHURAJ, AMICUS CURIAE FOR SPECIAL COMMISSIONER  
SABARIMLA

THE DEVASWOM BOARD PETITION HAVING COME UP FOR ADMISSION ON  
01/02/2022, UPON PERUSING THE PETITION, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY PASSED  
THE FOLLOWING.



**ANIL K. NARENDRAN & P.G. AJITHKUMAR, JJ.**

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**Dated this the 1<sup>st</sup> day of February, 2022**

**ORDER**

**Anil K. Narendran, J.**

A news report appeared in Mathrubhumi online edition on 30.01.2022 alleging huge corruption behind fake food bills submitted by Devaswom. As per that news report, there is involvement of top officials behind disbanding the Vigilance team of the Travancore Deavswom Board. The move was spearheaded by those fearing arrest if the fake bills at the Sabarimala Guest House and the irregularities in the toilet construction comes out. Four officers, including two Sub Inspectors, were removed from the Vigilance Wing of the Tranancore Devaswom Board. Only the Superintendent of Police, who is soon to retire, is retained and the rest of the officers were returned to the Police department. As per the news report, Vigilance found inflated bills for food that was provided to the dignitaries and higher officials staying in the Guest House. Dignitaries who visited Sabarimala must bear the cost of food by themselves. For years, the expenses of the Guest House have not been audited. Even when the Special Commissioner was not at Sabarimala, his food expenses are recorded. Senior

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Devaswom officials are likely to be held responsible, if the case is taken up by the Vigilance. The officials were alarmed when the Devaswom Vigilance identified a few cases and handed over those cases to the State Vigilance.

2. By proceedings dated 31.01.2022, Registry was directed to initiate *suo motu* proceedings and list the matter before the Bench today. Accordingly, this D.B.P is listed before us.

3. On 20.01.2022, we have passed an order in S.S.C.R.No.8 of 2021 granting permission to extend the period of deputation of the Chief Vigilance Officer in the Vigilance Wing of the Travancore Devaswom Board, till 31.03.2022. In the said order, we have noticed that the Chief Vigilance Officer has to effectively monitor and control all the officers of the Vigilance Wing of the Travancore Devaswom Board, who are posted at Sabarimala and to guide them by giving effective directions to prevent pilferage from Appam and Aravana making and its sale, Bhandaram, Annadanam, etc. The Vigilance Wing, headed by the Chief Vigilance Officer

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has unearthed forgery of documents and misappropriation of huge amounts allegedly committed by the Administrative Officer, Nilakkal, during the period 2018-19, in the matter relating to purchase of materials for Devaswom mess at Nilakkal. Pursuant to the report of the Vigilance wing, the Travancore Devaswom Board forwarded the matter to State Vigilance, which has resulted in registration of a Crime as FIR No.EC02/2021, PTA by the Vigilance and Anti Corruption Bureau, under Sections 420, 468 and 471 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 13(2) read with Section 13(1) (a) of the Prevention of Corruption Act. The investigation of the said case is in progress. Several other instances of malpractices were also detected by the Vigilance Wing headed by the Chief Vigilance Officer.

4. The learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board would point out that, at present, the Vigilance Wing of the Board consists of the Chief Vigilance Officer and one officer in the cadre of Sub Inspector of police.

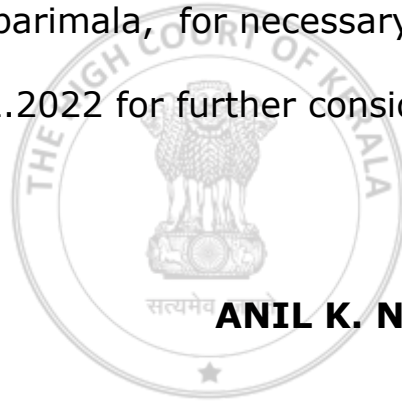
5. The learned Senior Government Pleader would

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submit that the other officers were returned to the Police department, since their period of deputation is over, and there was no request by the Travancore Devaswom Board for extension of their period of deputation.

6. The learned Amicus Curiae would submit that a copy of this D.B.P has already been mailed to the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala, for necessary instructions.

List on 03.02.2022 for further consideration.



**Sd/-**

**ANIL K. NARENDRAN, JUDGE**

**Sd/-**

**P.G. AJITHKUMAR, JUDGE**

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