

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM
PRESENT
THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE DEVAN RAMACHANDRAN
&
THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE SYAM KUMAR V.M.

Wednesday, the 3rd day of September 2025 / 12th Bhadra, 1947
WP(PIL) NO. 109 OF 2025(S)

PETITIONER:

AJEESH KALATHIL GOPI, AGED 44 YEARS, S/O GOPI KALATHIL KUNJACHAN
LEX REDEMPTION PVT LTD, 8/51, F/F, JANGPURA- EXTESION, NEW DELHI,
PIN - 110014

RESPONDENTS:

1. STATE OF KERALA, THROUGH CHIEF SECRETARY SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695 001
2. THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, THROUGH ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695 003
3. THE MINISTRY OF CO-OPERATION, PORTS, AND DEVASWOMS, GOVERNMENT OF KERALA, THROUGH SECRETARY, ROOM NO. 397, 1ST FLOOR, MAIN BLOCK, SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, KERALA, PIN - 695 001
4. DISTRICT COLLECTOR, PATHANAMTHITTA, 2ND FLOOR, DISTRICT COLLECTORATE, PATHANAMTHITTA, KERALA, PIN - 689 645

Writ petition (public interest litigation) praying inter alia that in the circumstances stated in the affidavit filed along with the WP(PIL) the High Court be pleased to

A. Direct Respondent No.4 (District Collector, Pathanamthitta) to remove all temporary constructions, structures or arrangements made or being made at or near the Sabarimala Temple and the adjoining Pampa River bank including the customary areas utilized for temple-related activities, in connection with the proposed 'Global Ayyappa Sangamam,' pending the final disposal of this petition, to prevent irreparable harm to the sanctity of the temple and the rights of devotees.

B. Issue interim directions, as may be necessary, to safeguard the sanctity, spiritual purity and traditional ethos of the Sabarimala Temple and its premises and to protect the trust reposed by devotees, until the final disposal of this petition. In accordance with law after affording an opportunity of being heard, in the interest of justice, equity and good conscience.

This petition coming on for admission upon perusing the petition and the affidavit filed in support of WP(PIL) and upon hearing the arguments of AJEESH KALATHIL GOPI(Party-In-Person),SRI. S.KANNAN, SENIOR GOVERNMENT PLEADER for R1, R3 & R4 and of SRI. G.BIJU,STATDING COUNSEL for R2, the court passed the following:

DEVAN RAMACHANDRAN & SYAM KUMAR V.M.

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Dated this the 3rd day of September, 2025

ORDER

Devan Ramachandran, J.

The petitioner appearing in person – Sri.Ajeesh Kalathil Gopi, asserts that the event in question in this writ petition — called the “Global Ayyappa Sangamam” — is a “political one”, and hence can never be allowed in the name of Lord Ayyappa. He also impelled certain other objections, which of course, we cannot now deal with, since this is the stage of admission.

2. Sri.G.Biju – learned standing counsel for the TDB, in response, submitted that the proposed event is being conducted by the TDB to “showcase Sabarimala as a Global Pilgrimage Centre and to propagate the universal message of Thathwamasi promoting religious harmony and global unity” (sic). He added that the event also coincides with the Platinum Jubilee of the establishment of the TDB.

3. Sri.G.Biju, thereafter, explained that no amount or money will be used for the event from either the Public Exchequer, or from the resources of the TDB; and that it is proposed to be funded entirely through “sponsorships”. However, he was unable to inform us the nature and manner of

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sponsorship, but we do not blame him because, as we have said above, we are considering this matter for the first time today.

4. Sri.S.Kannan – learned Senior Government Pleader, conceded that the event is being organised exclusively by the TDB; and that the only role of the Government is to offer support for crowd management. He suggested that the crowd expected for the event would be large and that it will be the responsibility of the Police and other law enforcement agencies, to manage it effectively without incident.

5. Interestingly, neither of the sides have been able to tell us with precision what the nature of the proposed event is. What we have been told are peripheral things, which does not really explain the event fully.

6. When the TDB says that they are attempting to showcase “Sabarimala” as a Global Pilgrimage Centre, it can only be construed that they are promoting pilgrimage as a part of their obligations and duties under the Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950 (“Act”).

7. The contra-argument of the petitioner, of course, is that this is not so and that what is being attempted is a congregation, which is “political” in nature.

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8. *Prima facie*, at this stage, we cannot wholly understand what is the meaning ascribed to the word “political” by the petitioner; but are certain that, when this Court exercises jurisdiction under the “Act”, the TDB must be ordered to make sure that all their actions fall within the strict ambit of the same and their obligations, as are statutorily prescribed. It is so directed. They must bear it in mind that their duties and responsibilities are only to the Religious Institutions under the “Act”; bound in full by the trust, beliefs and conscience of the multitude of devotees on the deity.

9. To reiterate, anything that the TDB endeavors, must fall within the conspectus of this and not otherwise or beyond.

10. Since the Government states unequivocally that the event is being organised solely by the TDB, with them only providing security/crowd management services, the entire responsibility for it ineluctably rests on the latter.

11. Further, the proposed event – stated by the TDB to be conducted on the bank of River Pamba – can be allowed only with the highest sanctity, since it is held in acme reverence by the devotees. Pamba is often referred to as the “Dakshina Ganga”, exemplifying its piety to the worshipers who throng to the Sabarimala for darsan.

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12. The TDB must obviously explain and answer all above, placing on record every germane information regarding the event and its schedule.

13. Sri.G.Biju – learned standing counsel for the TDB, fully affirmed all the afore; and said that he will be able to get better instructions and file necessary pleadings on how the event is planned, and scheduled to be taken forward, particularly its financing, on the next posting date. This issue is crucially important because “sponsorships”, as the TDB now says, ought to be from verifiable and credible sources alone.

11. We, therefore, admit this matter and record that Sri.S.Kannan – learned Senior Government Pleader, has taken notice on behalf of respondents 1, 3 and 4; while, Sri.G.Biju has taken notice for the second respondent.

List for further consideration on 09.09.2025.

Sd/- DEVANRAMACHANDRAN,
JUDGE

Sd/- SYAM KUMAR V.M.
JUDGE

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