

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE A. BADHARUDEEN

FRIDAY, THE 19<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF DECEMBER 2025 / 28TH AGRAHAYANA, 1947

BAIL APPL. NO. 14361 OF 2025

CRIME NO.3701/CB/CU-IV/TVM/D/2025 OF CRIME BRANCH,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Thiruvananthapuram

PETITIONER/4TH ACCUSED:

K.S. BAIJU, AGED 62 YEARS,  
S/O. K.V. SREEDHARAN,  
T.V. SADANAM, MAILODE DESOM,  
POOYAPPALLY VILLAGE, KOTTARAKARA TALUK,  
KOLLAM, PIN - 691537.

BY ADVS.  
SRI.P.MOHANDAS (ERNAKULAM)  
SRI.SABU PULLAN  
SHRI.R.BHASKARA KRISHNAN  
SHRI.BHARATH MOHAN  
DR.K.P.SATHEESAN (SR.)  
SRI.K.SUDHINKUMAR

RESPONDENTS/STATE & COMPLAINANT:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA  
REPRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR, HIGH COURT OF  
KERALA, ERNAKULAM, PIN - 682031.
- 2 THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE,  
SIT CRIME BRANCH, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
PIN - 695001.

BY ADVS.  
SRI GRACIOUS KURIAKOSE, ADDL.DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PROSECUTION  
SENIOR PUBLIC PROSECUTOR SRI C.K SURESH

THIS BAIL APPLICATION HAVING BEEN FINALLY HEARD ON  
16.12.2025, ALONG WITH Bail Appl.NOs.14369/2025, 14394/2025 AND  
CONNECTED CASES, THE COURT ON 19.12.2025 DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING:



2025:KER:98196

B.A.No.14361/2025 & conn.cases

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE A. BADHARUDEEN

FRIDAY, THE 19<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF DECEMBER 2025 / 28TH AGRAHAYANA, 1947

BAIL APPL. NO. 14369 OF 2025

CRIME NO.3700/CB/CU-IV/TVM/D/2025 OF CRIME BRANCH,

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Thiruvananthapuram

PETITIONER/7TH ACCUSED, :

K.S. BAIJU, AGED 62 YEARS  
S/O. K.V. SREEDHARAN, T.V. SADANAM, MAILODE DESOM,  
POOYAPPALLY VILLAGE, KOTTARAKARA TALUK,  
KOLLAM, PIN - 691537.

BY ADVS.  
SRI.P.MOHANDAS (ERNAKULAM)  
SRI.K.SUDHINKUMAR  
SRI.SABU PULLAN  
SHRI.R.BHASKARA KRISHNAN  
SHRI.BHARATH MOHAN  
DR.K.P.SATHEESAN (SR.)

RESPONDENTS/STATE & COMPLAINANT:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA  
REPRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR, HIGH COURT OF  
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- 2 THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE  
SIT, CRIME BRANCH, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695001.  
BY ADVS.

SRI GRACIOUS KURIAKOSE, ADDL.DIRECTOR GENERAL OF  
PROSECUTION

THIS BAIL APPLICATION HAVING BEEN FINALLY HEARD ON  
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2025:KER:98196

B.A.No.14361/2025 & conn.cases

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE A. BADHARUDEEN

FRIDAY, THE 19<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF DECEMBER 2025 / 28TH AGRAHAYANA, 1947

BAIL APPL. NO. 14394 OF 2025

CRIME NO.3700/2025 OF CRIME BRANCH, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
Thiruvananthapuram

PETITIONER/2ND ACCUSED:

B. MURARI BABU, AGED 53 YEARS  
S/O BALAKRISHNA PILLAI, THEKKEDATH (H)  
PERUNNA WEST P O. CHANGANASSERY, PIN - 686102.

BY ADVS.  
SRI.S.RAJEEV  
SRI.V.VINAY  
SRI.M.S.ANEER  
SHRI.SARATH K.P.  
SHRI.ANILKUMAR C.R.  
SHRI.K.S.KIRAN KRISHNAN  
SMT.DIPA V.  
SHRI.AKASH CHERIAN THOMAS  
SHRI.AZAD SUNIL  
SHRI.T.P.ARAVIND  
SHRI.MAHESWAR PADICKAL  
SMT.AKSHARA S.

RESPONDENT/STATE:

STATE OF KERALA  
REPRESENTED BY PUBLIC PROSECUTOR,  
HIGH COURT OF KERALA, PIN - 682031.

SRI GRACIOUS KURIAKOSE, ADDL.DIRECTOR GENERAL OF  
PROSECUTION  
SENIOR PUBLIC PROSECUTOR SRI C.K.SURESH

THIS BAIL APPLICATION HAVING BEEN FINALLY HEARD ON  
16.12.2025, ALONG WITH Bail Appl.NOs.14361/2025, 14369/2025 AND  
CONNECTED CASES, THE COURT ON 19.12.2025 DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING:



2025:KER:98196

B.A.No.14361/2025 & conn.cases

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE A. BADHARUDEEN

FRIDAY, THE 19<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF DECEMBER 2025 / 28TH AGRAHAYANA, 1947

BAIL APPL. NO. 14395 OF 2025

CRIME NO.3701/2025 OF CRIME BRANCH, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
Thiruvananthapuram

PETITIONER/6TH ACCUSED:

B. MURARI BABU, AGED 53 YEARS,  
S/O BALAKRISHNA PILLAI, THEKKEDATH (H) PERUNNA WEST  
P.O., CHANGANASSERY, PIN - 686102.

BY ADVS.  
SRI.S.RAJEEV  
SRI.V.VINAY  
SRI.M.S.ANEER  
SHRI.SARATH K.P.  
SHRI.ANILKUMAR C.R.  
SHRI.K.S.KIRAN KRISHNAN  
SMT.DIPA V.  
SHRI.AKASH CHERIAN THOMAS  
SHRI.AZAD SUNIL  
SHRI.MAHESWAR PADICKAL  
SHRI.T.P.ARAVIND  
SMT.AKSHARA S.

RESPONDENT/STATE:

STATE OF KERALA  
REPRESENTED BY PUBLIC PROSECUTOR, HIGH COURT OF KERALA  
(CRIME NO 3701/CB/.CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025) SIT CRIME  
BRANCH), PIN - 682031.

BY ADVS.  
SRI GRACIOUS KURIAKOSE, ADDL.DIRECTOR GENERAL OF  
PROSECUTION  
SRI C.K.SURESH, SENIOR PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

THIS BAIL APPLICATION HAVING BEEN FINALLY HEARD ON  
16.12.2025, ALONG WITH Bail Appl..14361/2025 AND CONNECTED CASES,  
THE COURT ON 19.12.2025 DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING:



2025:KER:98196

B.A.No.14361/2025 & conn.cases

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE A. BADHARUDEEN

FRIDAY, THE 19<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF DECEMBER 2025 / 28TH AGRAHAYANA, 1947

BAIL APPL. NO. 14430 OF 2025

CRIME NO.3701/2025 OF CRIME BRANCH, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

PETITIONER/ACCUSED NO.3:

N VASU, AGED 75 YEARS,  
S/O OF K NANU, KALHARAM (A), CKRRA 127/1, TC  
93/2367(1), PALLI ROAD END, PETTAH P O, VANCHIYOOR  
VILLAGE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695024.

BY ADVS.  
SRI.S.RAJEEV  
SRI.V.VINAY  
SRI.M.S.ANEER  
SHRI.SARATH K.P.  
SHRI.ANILKUMAR C.R.  
SHRI.K.S.KIRAN KRISHNAN  
SMT.DIPA V.  
SHRI.AKASH CHERIAN THOMAS  
SHRI.AZAD SUNIL  
SHRI.T.P.ARAVIND  
SMT.AKSHARA S.  
SHRI.MAHESWAR PADICKAL

RESPONDENT/STATE:

STATE OF KERALA,  
REPRESENTED BY PUBLIC PROSECUTOR,  
HIGH COURT OF KERALA, ERNAKULAM, PIN - 682031.

BY ADVS.  
SRI GRACIOUS KURIAKOSE, ADDL.DIRECTOR GENERAL OF  
PROSECUTION  
SRI C.K.SURESH, SENIOR PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

THIS BAIL APPLICATION HAVING BEEN FINALLY HEARD ON  
16.12.2025, ALONG WITH Bail Appl..14361/2025 AND CONNECTED CASES,  
THE COURT ON 19.12.2025 DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING:

***A. BADHARUDEEN, J.***

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*Bail Application Nos.14394 of 2025  
14395 of 2025, 14361/2025, 14369/2025  
and*

*Bail Application No.14430 of 2025*

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*Dated this the 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2025*

**COMMON ORDER**

B.Murari Babu, who got arrayed as the 2<sup>nd</sup> accused in Crime No.3700/2025 of Crime Branch, Thiruvananthapuram, and 6<sup>th</sup> accused in Crime No.3701/2025 of Crime Branch, Thiruvananthapuram, has filed B.A.Nos.14394/2025 and 14395/2025 under Section 483 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 ('BNSS' for short), seeking regular bail.

2. B.A.Nos.14361/2025 and 14369/2025 are at the instance of Sri K.S.Baiju, who is arrayed as 4<sup>th</sup> accused in Crime No.3701/2025 and 7<sup>th</sup> accused in Crime No.3700/2025.

3. B.A.No.14430/2025 is an application filed by N.Vasu, the 3<sup>rd</sup> accused in Crime No.3701/2025 seeking regular bail.

4. Heard the learned counsel for Sri Murari Babu, Sri K.S.Baiju and Sri N.Vasu as well as the learned Additional Director



General of Prosecution ('ADGP' for short) appearing for the prosecution. Meticulously analysed the statements and records produced by the prosecution before this Court in Crime Nos.3700/2025 and 3701/2025 along with the documents produced by the respective counsel for the petitioners.

5. Coming to the prosecution case, Crime No.3700/2025 was initially registered alleging commission of offences punishable under Sections 120B, 403, 406, 409, 466, 467 r/w. Section 34 of the Indian Penal Code (hereinafter referred to as 'IPC'), by the accused.

6. Again Crime No.3701/2025 was registered alleging commission of offences punishable under Sections 120B, 403, 406, 409, 466, 467 r/w. 34 of the IPC, by the accused.

7. In both crimes, during investigation, on finding involvement of offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act as amended in 2018 (hereinafter referred to as 'PC (Amendment) Act, 2018'), offence under Section 13(1)(a) of the PC (Amendment) Act, 2018 was also added. The prosecution case in Crime No.3700/2025 is that, in furtherance of a common intention of all the accused to obtain wrongful gain and to



cause wrongful loss to the Travancore Devaswom Board, the 1<sup>st</sup> accused hatched conspiracy with accused Nos.2 to 10, who are bound to protect Devaswom properties, submitted an application before the Travancore Devaswom Board on 17.6.2019, in consequence of the conspiracy hatched between them for exacting that the Dwarapalaka sculptures made of copper plates in the Sabarimala Sannidhanam Shrine to be enshrouded with gold by process of cladding. The prosecution allegation further is that the 2<sup>nd</sup> accused, the then Administrative Officer, Sabarimala, and all other accused are fully aware that the Dwarapalaka sculptures were originally gold cladded in 1998, the 2<sup>nd</sup> accused wrote a letter in the year 2019 that they were just copper plates, which were intended to be plated with gold, and submitted a false report before the Travancore Devaswom Board in this regard. Then, in the year 2024, the 2<sup>nd</sup> accused again made an illegal recommendation to the Devaswom Board to allow 'Smart Creations', Chennai, for gold plating the Dwarapalaka sculptures. The 3<sup>rd</sup> accused, the then Executive Officer of Sabarimala Temple, who also knew that the plates of Dwarapalaka sculptures were enshrouded in gold, prepared a false recommendation letter stating that the golden plates are





just copper plates and submitted the said letter to the Travancore Devaswom Board, for the purpose of giving the same to the accused. Thereafter, at the time of handing over the plates to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused, the 3<sup>rd</sup> accused prepared mahazars stating that the gold plates are just copper plates and falsely included the names of persons, who were not present at the time of preparing the mahazars, and recorded in the mahazars that the plates were being given to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused, and the signatures of the friends of the 1<sup>st</sup> accused were obtained. Accordingly, the 4<sup>th</sup> accused, the then Secretary, Travancore Devaswom Board ordered to handover the plates on Dwarapalaka sculptures to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused, as against the Board Minutes. The 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> accused, although they knew that the Dwarapalaka sculptures were enshrouded with gold plates, put their signatures on the mahazars prepared on 19.07.2019 and 20.07.2019 as witnesses and caused the articles to be handed over to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused, and on 11.09.2019, when the Dwarapalaka sculptures were brought back to Sabarimala, prepared the second mahazar, without checking its actual weight. It is further alleged that, the 7<sup>th</sup> accused, the then Thiruvabharanam Commissioner of Sabarimala Devaswam, who was duty bound to look after all these



matters, did not depute a goldsmith at the time of removing the golden plates from the Dwarapalaka sculptures. Thereafter, on 29.08.2019, the 8<sup>th</sup> accused, the then Thiruvabharanam Commissioner of Sabarimala Devaswam, in the Smart Creation in Chennai, handed over the sculpture layers to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused, without comparing its weight in the mahazars, and thereby gave an opportunity to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused to perform pooja by illegally displaying the said Dwarapalaka sculptures in various places and houses. After that, on 11.09.2019, when the sculpture layers were restored in the shrine, the 8<sup>th</sup> accused was not present there and did not depute the Devaswom Smith, though his presence was mandatory at the time of handling the valuable items. On 11.09.2019, while installing the layers on the Dwarapalaka sculptures, accused Nos 9 and 10, the then Executive Officer and Administrative Officer of Sabarimala, prepared a namesake mahazar without correctly measuring its weight and recorded the same in the registers. Furthermore, accused No. 10 did not prepare mahazar while attempting to fix the Thangupeedham (താങ്ങുപീഠം) belonged to Sabarimala Devaswom on the Dwarapalaka sculptures. It is further alleged that, when accused Nos.2 and 3 sent a letter to the Travancore Devaswom



Board in 2019, recommending for gold plating the Dwarapalaka sculptures, the 10<sup>th</sup> accused, who was holding the charge of Devaswom Commissioner at the relevant time, did not inspect the Dwarapalaka sculptures. Thus, the very valuable and sacred Dwarapalaka sculptures of the Sabarimala shrine and the gold plates weighing 42800 grams attached to the northern and southern corners of the said sculptures were given in custody of the 1<sup>st</sup> accused on 19.07.2019 and 20.07.2019 under the pretext of repair and maintenance to Bangalore and Hyderabad, where they used the sculptures to remove the originally cladded gold therein fraudulently for obtaining undue pecuniary advantage thereof. Then the accused persons entrusted the sculptures to Smart Creation, Chennai on 29.08.2019, where, only 394.900 grams of gold was plated on the sculptures and misappropriated the remaining gold and thereby caused a huge loss to Travancore Devaswom Board and consequence to the holy deity Sabarimala.

8. In Crime No.3701/2025 the prosecution allegation as minusculed in the FIR in Crime No.3700/2025 is that the accused in this crime hatched conspiracy with a view to clad gold on the door frames in



front of the Sabarimala Sreekovil which were originally cladded with gold and thereafter they forged records to show that the door frames were originally made of copper and taken out the same through the 1<sup>st</sup> accused on the premise of cladding the same with gold and thereby the 1<sup>st</sup> accused, as part of the conspiracy hatched between the accused persons, produced the same before Smart Creations, Chennai, and during the investigation, 409 gram of gold, which had been misappropriated, was taken into custody by the Investigating Officer from Smart Creations, Chennai, and more gold is awaiting to be recovered. Even though in the FIR the allegation refers only to door frames, now the prosecution allegation is that apart from the door frames, the Shiva idol on its top, the arch including the Vyali roopam, raashi plates, Dasharadha plates and the upper side of the door frame also, originally cladded with gold, were entrusted to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused on the premise of gold cladding, describing the entire items as items made of copper.

9. While pressing for the grant of regular bail to B.Murari Babu in both crimes, the prime contention raised by the learned counsel for B.Murari Babu is that, regarding prosecution allegations and their



correctness Murari Babu has serious dispute, including his involvement in this crime, after hatching conspiracy as alleged by the prosecution. Now Murari Babu has been in custody from 22.10.2025 and his custody for the purpose of investigation is practically over. It is also pointed out that Murari Babu is now aged 75 years and has been suffering from diabetics, high blood pressure and associated ailments and in this regard medical records were also produced. Therefore, the learned counsel for Murari Babu submitted that on merits Murari Babu deserves bail, or else his medical condition may be considered for granting bail, since his further custody is not required for the purpose of investigation.

10. While canvassing bail to Sri N.Vasu in Crime No.3701/2025, the learned counsel for N.Vasu argued that, N.Vasu is involved only in this crime. According to the learned counsel for N.Vasu, N.Vasu worked as Commissioner, Travancore Devaswom Board from 10.11.2010 to 15.03.2013 and also from 01.02.2018 to 31.01.2019 and he continued upto 14.03.2019 as Devaswom Commissioner, as his tenure was extended by this Court upto 14.03.2019. It is also submitted that N.Vasu was appointed as the President of the Travancore Devaswom Board on



15.11.2019 and he continued as President till 14.11.2021. According to the learned counsel for N.Vasu, going by Annexure III letter dated 06.03.2019 issued by N.Vasu to the Secretary, Travancore Devaswom Board, he had recommended the Board to take a proper decision, when he received Annexure I letter dated 16.02.2019 from the Executive Officer and in Annexure III he had stated that the door frames of Sreekovil originally made of copper also to be cladded with gold. The prime contention of the learned counsel for N.Vasu is that in Annexure I letter, issued by Executive Officer, Sabarimala to the Devaswom Commissioner, Travancore Devaswom Board dated 16.02.2019, the door frames were described as one which were originally gold cladded. But, the prosecution has no case that the door frames were originally gold cladded and, in fact, the recommendation made by N.Vasu is only to clad gold on the door frames which were not either gold plated or cladded at any point of time. According to the learned counsel, though the allegation against N.Vasu is that he had recommended that the door frames, which were originally cladded with gold, to be again cladded with gold the door frames, which were not at all gold plated and the same were copper plated in their origin.



Apart from that the learned counsel for N.Vasu pointed out the custody of N.Vasu, who is aged 75 years, from 11.11.2025 and the progress of the investigation to grant bail to N.Vasu.

11. The learned Senior Counsel, who canvassed regular bail to K.S.Baiju, who is the 4<sup>th</sup> accused in Crime No.3701/2025 and 7<sup>th</sup> accused in Crime No.3700/2025, zealously pointed out that the only allegation raised in Crime No.3700/2025 against K.S.Baiju is that K.S.Baiju, being Thiruvabharana Commissioner and the custodian of Dwarapalaka idols and other items, failed to supervise or to appoint a goldsmith to ensure that the Dwarapalaka idols and other items were gold cladded at the time of entrustment of the same to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused. According to him, K.S.Baiju was asked by the President to go to Aranmula and oversee a contempt case against the President on the date of entrustment of the items in Crime No.3700/2025, and since he could not disobey the President, he was in Aranmula during the relevant time. According to the learned counsel for K.S.Baiju, in fact, K.S.Baiju has no involvement in the conspiracy or in the misappropriation in these crimes. Similar contentions are also raised in Crime No.3701/2025 while



canvassing bail to K.S.Baiju. In fact, the contention raised by the learned Senior Counsel is akin to a plea of alibi; which could not be considered at the stage of bail, particularly since no convincing material in this regard has been placed.

12. The learned ADGP vehemently opposed all the contentions raised by the learned counsel for the petitioners specifically by filing statements and additional statement on the submission that during investigation of Crime No.3700/2025, the mobile phone of Murari Babu was seized and forwarded to the State Forensic Science Laboratory ('SFSL' for short), Thiruvananthapuram through the J.E, Ranni for detailed forensic analysis. In response to the same, the Director of the SFSL, Thiruvananthapuram now forwarded letter dated 08.12.2025 reporting that the expert could not open the mobile phone as the same had been locked by using face ID (bio-metric authentication). According to the learned ADGP, the contents of the mobile phone have vital materials in connection with both these crimes. Therefore, opening the same with the assistance of Murari Babu in police custody and getting contents of the same are absolutely essential and in such a case, Murari Babu could not be





released on bail.

13. It is also submitted by the learned ADGP that insofar as the involvement of Murari Babu in Crime No.3700/2025 is concerned, the 1<sup>st</sup> accused Unnikrishnan Potti, sent a letter on 17.06.1991 to the Executive Officer, Sabarimala, with request to clad gold to the Dwarapalaka idols by wrongly describing the same as one made of copper ignoring the fact that the same were originally cladded with gold. Even though the Administrative Officer, Sabarimala (Murari Babu) is not the Executive Officer, he had issued a letter on 17.06.2019 itself to the Executive Officer along with the letter given by the 1<sup>st</sup> accused addressed to the Executive Officer with request to allow the application put up by the 1<sup>st</sup> accused describing the Dwarapalaka idols as one originally made of copper. The learned ADGP zealously pointed out that in the letter dated 17.06.2019 issued by Murari Babu, in the last portion he had stated that he had obtained permission to do the work from Sreekandararu Rajeev, the Thantri of the temple in writing. According to the learned ADGP, on perusing the letter given by Thantri, in fact, the same was dated 18.06.2019. Thus the contention raised by the learned ADGP is that in



Crime No.3700/2025 even before getting the letter to Thantri dated 18.06.2019, the Administrative Officer recommended to the Executive Officer stating that he had obtained permission to do the work and the same alone would show his *mala fide* intention of getting the Dwarapalaka idols originally cladded with gold to be sent out for the purpose of removing the gold cladded therein with intention to sell and misappropriate the funds thereof.

14. In addition to that, the learned ADGP filed separate statement in Crime No.3701/2025 while opposing the grant of bail to Murari Babu. According to the learned ADGP, these crimes are very serious, where the interest of the holy deity of Sabarimala and lakhs of devotees is involved and when gold cladded items were sent outside as against the Devaswom manual which prohibits sending of any item outside the Sannidhanam with intention to misappropriate the same, the accused doesn't deserve bail and his trial is to be completed keeping him in custody.

15. As regards to the plea raised by N.Vasu is concerned, the learned ADGP would submit that even though in the FIR in Crime



No.3701/2025 the door frames alone were stated, the investigation based on the available records and the statements of witnesses showed that apart from the door frames, the Shiva idol on its top, the arch including the Vyali roopam, Raashi plates, Dasharadha plates and the upper side of the door frame also were also decided to be cladded with gold describing the same as copper plated in its origin. According to the learned ADGP, in this regard, the statements of many persons including Annexure I letter issued by the Executive Officer to Devaswom Commissioner is available, wherein the door frames also were stated as items which were cladded with gold earlier. That apart, the statements of witnesses, viz., Balakrishnan, S/o.Chinnayya; Nagarajan, S/o.Sankaran; Maniyasan, S/o.Gopalakrishann; Ramanujan, S/o.Sivaraman; Premji M.J, S/o.Janardhanan Pilla; K.Kumaran Nair, S/o.Ravikumar; Bharagvan, S/o.V.Kesavadas; C.R.Rajasekharan, S/o.Chellappan Pilla, showing that the door frames were also originally cladded with gold, are given emphasis by the learned ADGP while strongly opposing bail to N.Vasu, who also worked as Commissioner, Travancore Devaswom Board during the relevant period, showing his involvement in this crime. According to the



learned ADGP, in fact, the recital in Annexure I, showing that the door frames were originally cladded with gold, was suppressed by N.Vasu while issuing Annexure III letter describing the door frames as made of copper without any gold cladding, would emphatically show his involvement in this crime. Therefore, the bail plea canvassed by learned counsel for N.Vasu could not be countenanced.

16. Regarding the bail plea at the instance of K.S.Baiju is concerned, the same also seriously opposed by the learned ADGP showing his involvement and according to the learned ADGP, K.S.Baiju, who was the Thiruvabharana Commissioner and his sole duty is to protect and safeguard Thiruvabharanam, sacred trust property of the deity, (ie. the items in both crimes are relating to Thiruvabharanam). Therefore, his contention that he had gone to Aranmula as directed by the President etc. are of no avail to him since he failed to see the actual nature of the items by appointing a Goldsmith at the time of entrustment of the same to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused.

17. Thus the learned ADGP strongly opposed grant of bail to the petitioners herein on the submission that the investigation is only at a



primitive stage and the investigation has to progress much. According to him, the release of the petitioners on bail in cases of serious nature like the present, where the petitioners are capable of influencing witnesses and destroying the relevant materials to be collected in continuation of the investigation, would impede the investigation. Separate statements in both the crimes also were filed by the Investigating Officer. In the report filed in B.A.No.14369/2025 in Crime No.3700/2025, it has been stated as under:

*“3. It is submitted that, as the custodial interrogation of the petitioner was highly essential, request along with affidavit had been submitted before the Hon'ble Enquiry Commissioner & Special Judge, Kollam and the Hon'ble Court had granted the custody application and as such, on 29.11.2025, Sri. S.S. Sureshababu, Dy. Superintendent of Police, Crime Branch received A7 into Police custody. After conducting investigation and questioning A7 thoroughly Sri. S.S. Sureshababu, Dy. Superintendent of Police, Crime Branch produced him before the Court and the Court remanded him in judicial custody.*

*4. Sri. K.S. Baijoo, the petitioner herein, was the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner of Travancore Devaswom Board from 19.07.18 to 31.07.2019. Even though, the office of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner is functioning at Aranmula, various temples including Sree Ayyappa Temple at Sabarimala is under the jurisdiction of A7. As per the Devaswom Manual Vol-1, Chapter-XV Page- 72 (Annexure - I) it is the duty of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner to make arrangements*



*for the proper preservation and custody of all Thiruvabharanam and all belongings of Devaswoms and as per Devaswom Manual Vol-I, Chapter-XV, Page-72 & 73 (Annexure - II) it is the duty of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner to maintain in his office the registers of Thiruvabharanam and to keep them up-to-date. But Sri. Baijoo, the petitioner herein, miserably failed in observing the directions as stated above.*

*5. As per the Devaswam Manual Vol-II Chapter-IX Page 116, (Annexure - III) all works involving the valuables of Devaswom should always be carried out within the Devaswom premises in the presence of a responsible officer authorized by the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner and in page 117 (Annexure - IV) it is specifically mentioned that detailed mahazer showing the weight, touch of the articles should be prepared when old articles are handed over to contractors and another mahazer should be prepared when newly made or prepared articles are accepted from the contractors. It is also mentioned that the value of the metals unaccounted for by the contractor should be recovered from him. But Mr. Baijoo, the petitioner herein, had clearly violated the mandatory provisions of the Manual by not supervising the removal of gold cladded plates and also by not deputing the Devaswom smith attached to his office, at the time of preparation of the mahazer.*

*6. A7, being the then Thiruvabharanam Commissioner, evaded from his duty by not complying the orders of the Board, not authorizing a responsible officer and also failed to direct the Devaswom Smith to take the estimate of the valuables and there by paving the way for the misappropriation of gold.*

*7. The fact that the petitioner had abstained himself from preparing a mahazer when stripping the dwarapalaka idol plates and corner pillar plates on 19.07.2019 and 20.07.2019 was done without procure any legal*



*order from the Devaswom Board. The depth of conspiracy hatched among the accused persons as well as the monitory benefit obtained are being probed.*

**PARA-WAR REMARKS ON THE STATEMENT OF FACTS**

*A. The petitioner is cited accused No. 7 in Crime No. as 3700/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025 of Crime Branch Police Station*

*B. XXX*

*C. XXX*

*D. XXX*

*E. During the period of the commission of the offence in this case, the petitioner was serving as the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner of Travancore Devaswom Board. As per the Devaswom Manual Vol-I, Chapter-XV clause 3(1) (Page- 72) it is the duty of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner to make arrangements for the proper preservation and custody of all Thiruvabharanams and all belongings of Devaswoms and as per Devaswom Manual Vol-I, Chapter-XV, clause-3(4) (Page- 72 & 73) it is the duty of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner to maintain in his office the registers of Thiruvabharanam and to keep them up-to-date. But Sri. Baijoo, the petitioner herein, miserably failed in observing the directions as stated above. Similarly as per the Devaswam Manual Vol-II Chapter-IX Page 116 all works involving the valuables of Devaswom should always be carried out within the Devaswom premises in the presence of a responsible officer authorized by the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner and in page 117 it is specifically mentioned that detailed mahazer showing the weight, touch of the articles should be prepared when old articles are handed over to contractors and another mahazer should be prepared when newly made or prepared articles are accepted from the*



*contractors. It is also mentioned that the value of the metals unaccounted for by the contractor should be recovered from him. But Mr. Baijoo, the petitioner herein, had clearly violated the mandatory provisions of the Manual by not supervising the removal of gold cladded plates and also not deputing the Devaswom smith attached to his office, at the time of preparation of the mahzer.*

*In this case, on 17.06.2019, the 1 accused, Sri. Unnikrishnan Potty addressed a letter to the 3rd accused, Sri. Sudheesh Kumar, (Executive Officer, Sabarimala) stating that he would repair and gold plate the Dwarapalaka idol plates and the side plates on sponsorship basis. The 2nd accused, Sri. Murari Babu, the then Administrative Officer of Sabarimala, took the letter from A1 and forwarded it to A3 along with his own letter wherein he purposefully and with ulterior motives misrepresented the Gold cladded plates as just "Chembu Palikal". The 3rd accused forwarded this letter to the Devaswom Commissioner on 18.06.2019, again falsely representing the plates as "Chembu Thakidukal". On 28.06.2019, the Deputy Devaswom Commissioner of the office of the Devaswom Commissioner sent a letter to the Secretary, A4, citing the letter of A3 seeking orders for permission to get the repair works and gold plating works of the "Chembu Thakidukal" of the Dwrapalaka plates done by Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty (A1). A4, who was the Secretary of the Board included this proposal in the agenda for the Board meeting that was to be held on 03.07.2019. The Board discussed the matter as item No. 77 and accorded permission.*

*The minutes was signed by the President, 2 members and A4 Jayasree. On 05.07.2019, the Board issued its proceedings on the above matter. The proceedings was signed by A4. The proceeding of*





*the Board is as follows:-*

തിരുവാഭരണം കമ്മീഷണർ, എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് ഓഫീസർ ശബരിമല, അഡ്മിനിസ്ട്രേറ്റീവ് ഓഫീസർ ശബരിമല, ശബരിമല തന്ത്രി, എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് എൻജിനീയർ, ശബരിമല, അസിസ്റ്റന്റ് എൻജിനീയർ ശബരിമല എന്നിവരുടെ സാന്നിധ്യത്തിൽ നിലവിൽ ശ്രീകോവിലിന്റെ കതകിന് ഇരുവശത്തും ഉള്ള ദ്വാരപാലകന്മാരെ പൊതിഞ്ഞിട്ടുള്ള ചെമ്പ് പാളികളും, കൂടാതെ തെക്ക് വടക്ക് മൂലകളിൽ പൊതിഞ്ഞിട്ടുള്ള ചെമ്പ് തകിടുകളും ഇളക്കി മറയ്ക്കുക പ്രകാരം തുടങ്ങി, അദ്ദേഹം എന്നിവ ബോധ്യപ്പെട്ട ശ്രീ ഉണ്ണികൃഷ്ണൻ പോറ്റിക്ക് സ്വർണ്ണം പൂശുന്നതിനായി കൈമാറുന്നതിനും, തിരുവാഭരണം കമ്മീഷണറുടെ മേൽനോട്ടത്തിൽ സ്വർണ്ണം പൂശുന്നതിനും അതിന് ശേഷം ശബരിമല എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് ഓഫീസർ, അഡ്മിനിസ്ട്രേറ്റീവ് ഓഫീസർ ശബരിമല, ശബരിമല തന്ത്രി, എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് എൻജിനീയർ, ശബരിമല, അസിസ്റ്റന്റ് എൻജിനീയർ ശബരിമല എന്നിവരുടെ സാന്നിധ്യത്തിൽ ശാസ്ത്രവിധി പ്രകാരം തിരികെ ഫിറ്റു ചെയ്യുന്നതിനും അനുവദിച്ചു ബോർഡുത്തരവാകുന്നു

*Following the circulation of the Board order to A2, A3, A7 and others, 2 separate mahazers were prepared on 19.07.2019 and 20.07.2019 to dismantle and hand over the 12 Dwarapalaka plates and 2 side plates respectively to A1 Unnikrishnan Potty for repair works and gold plating. But the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner, the petitioner herein, deliberately abstained himself from being present at the time of dismantling, as directed by the Devaswom Board and also failed to authorize the Devaswom Smith to take the estimate. Both the mahazers were signed by A2, A3 and others and on both the mahazers the Copper plates were deliberately misrepresented as Chembu Thakidukal" instead of Gold cladded Copper plates which indicates the devious designs of the accused to hand over the Gold cladded plates to A1 which later paved way for the misappropriation of the gold from these plates.*

*By abstaining from his official responsibilities, he committed grave misconduct and thereby he aided the handing over of the*



*Dwarapalaka idol plates and side plates to A1, which subsequently led to the misappropriation of Gold from these plates by A1 and other accused at Smart Creation Chennai. Hence the contention of the petitioner that he has not committed any act or omissions is devoid of any merit and thus is not maintainable.*

*F). Here, the A7, being the then Thiruvabharanam Commissioner, evaded from his duty by not complying the orders of the Board, did not authorize a responsible officer and also failed to direct the Devaswom Smith to take estimate of the valuables and there by paved the way for the misappropriation of gold. The depth of conspiracy hatched among the accused persons as well as the monitory benefit obtained are being probed.*

*G). The petitioner herein was the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner of the Travancore Devaswam Board having jurisdiction over the Sabarimala Sree Ayyappa Temple. The Commissioner of Thiruvabharanam is duty bound to preserve and protect all Thiruvabharanams under his Charge. The duties and responsibilities of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner are enumerated in Chapter XV of the Travancore Devaswom manual -I (2012). Also, under clause 23 of Chapter IX of the Travancore Devaswam Board Volume II (2011) works involving the use and handling of valuables belonging to the Devaswom should always be carried out at a place within the Devaswom premises and in the presence of a responsible officer authorized by the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner. During investigation it is revealed that the petitioner conspired with the remaining accused, intentionally violated all the mandatory provisions of Devaswom Manual in order to aid the accused persons in the misappropriation of gold from the Dwarapalaka plates and side plates.*



*H). Under clause 23 of Chapter IX of the Travancore Devaswam Board Volume II (2011) works involving the use and handling of valuables belonging to the Devaswom should always be carried out at a place within the Devaswom premises and in the presence of a responsible officer authorized by the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner. Here, the petitioner herein being the then Thiruvabharanam Commissioner, evaded from his duty by not complying the orders of the Board, by not authorizing a responsible officer and also failed to direct the Devaswom Smith to take estimate of the valuables and there by paving the way for the misappropriation of gold from the Dwarapalaka plates and side plates.*

*I). The investigation of the case is still in progress. The nature and involvement of more employees and officials of Travancore Devaswom Board are being probed, certain documents relating to the offence have not yet been made available by the Devaswom board despite issuing notices and even after conducting legal searches at some offices. Moreover detailed investigation is being done to fully recover the misappropriated gold."*

18. Similarly, in the report filed in B.A.No.14361/2025 in Crime No.3701/2025, in paragraphs 3 to last it has been stated as under:

*"3). Mr. K.S. Baijoo, the petitioner herein, was the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner of Travancore Devaswom Board from 19.07.2018 to 31.07.2019. Even though, the office of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner is functioning at Aranmula, various temples including Sree Ayyappa Temple at Sabarimala is under the jurisdiction of the petitioner (A4). As per the Devaswom Manual Vol-I,*



*Chapter-XV Page- 72 (Annexure - I) it is the duty of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner to make arrangements for the proper preservation and custody of all Thiruvabharanams and all belongings of Devaswoms and as per Devaswom Manual Vol-I, Chapter-XV, Page- 72 & 73 (Annexure – II) it is the duty of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner to maintain in his office the registers of Thiruvabharanam and to keep them up-to-date. But Mr. Baijoo, the petitioner herein, miserably failed in observing the directions as stated above and criminally conspired with other officials of the Board in order to hand over the artefacts to A1, a private individual, which paved way for the misappropriation of gold from the sacred plates.*

*4). The petitioner had worked as the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner of the Travancore Devaswom Board having jurisdiction over the Sree Ayyappa Temple at Sabarimala. Being a senior official of Travancore Devaswam Board and having clear knowledge that the door-frame plates and connected prabhavalayam plates were indeed gold plated, he prepared a mahazer on 18.05.2019, at the time of dismantling of gold cladded door frames of the Sreekovil, stating that those were mere copper plates based on the Board order, ROC 9097/18/M dated 20.03.2019. Even though he had the knowledge that the door frames and connected "prabhavalayam" plates were gold cladded and also the Devaswom smith was present during the preparation of the mahazer, the mahazer is silent about the presence of gold cladding. Moreover, the plates were misrepresented as mere copper plates on the mahazer which indicates that the contents of the mahazer were falsified willfully and with dishonest intention. After gold plating at Smart Creations Chennai, the 7 pieces were brought back to Sabarimala and reinstalled. But the weights of the plates were not recorded during the re-installation and no*



*mahazer was prepared. This is in gross violation of the provisions contained in Devaswom Board Manual Vol-II, Chapter IX, Page 117, (Annexure - III) wherein it is specifically mentioned that detailed mahazer showing the weight, touch, etc. of the articles as per accounts and as actually found at the time, should be prepared when gold articles are handed over to contractors and another mahazer showing the weight, touch etc of articles newly made or repaired should be prepared when the articles are accepted back from the contractors. By making false entries in the mahazer and by handing over the sacred door frame plates to AI without any escort and without executing any proper agreement and by not taking the weight of the door frame plates and also by not making relevant entries in the Devaswom registers, A4, K.S. Baijoo committed grave official misconduct and administrative malpractice which resulted in the misappropriation of gold by AI and others. For the purpose of cheating, the petitioner criminally conspired with the other accused, ignored the procedures as mandated by the Travancore Devaswam Board Manuals and aided the other accused to commit misappropriation of gold.*

*5). As per the Devaswam Manual Vol-II Chapter-IX Page 116, (Annexure - IV) all works involving the valuables of Devaswom should always be carried out within the Devaswom premises in the presence of a responsible officer authorized by the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner. But the petitioner violated the provision by allowing the sacred gold cladded door frame plates to be handed over to AI Unnikrishnan Potty which ultimately led to the misappropriation of gold by AI and others at Smart Creations, Chennai. As per Devaswom Board manual Vol-II, chapter IX page 117, it is specifically mentioned that detailed mahazer showing the weight, touch of the articles should be*



*prepared when old articles are handed over to contractors and another mahazer should be prepared when newly made or prepared articles are accepted from the contractors. It is also mentioned that the value of the metals unaccounted for by the contractor should be recovered from him. But Mr.Baijoo, the petitioner herein, did not prepare the mahazer and did not take the weight of the plates, when the gold plated door frame plates were re-installed at Sabarimala after gold plating at Smart Creations, Chennai. Had a proper mahazer describing the weight, touch, etc of the plates, being taken at the time of re-installation, any loss in weight/ misappropriation could have been detected then and there itself and appropriate remedial measures have been taken. Investigation conducted so far revealed that the petitioner had purposefully abstained from preparing a proper mahazer with the malicious intention of concealing the misappropriation of the gold at Chennai.*

*6). During the course of investigation it is revealed that the petitioner had committed grave offences by making false entries in the mahazer and by handing over the sacred door frame plates to A1, a private person, without any escort and without executing any proper agreement and by not taking the weight of the door frame plates and connected prabhavalayam plates and also by not making relevant entries in the Devaswom registers. These grave official misconduct and administrative malpractice were resulted in the misappropriation of gold by A1 and others.*

*7). The depth of conspiracy hatched among the accused persons as well as the monitory benefit obtained are being probed.*

**PARA-WAR REMARKS ON THE GROUNDS**

*F. The petitioner is cited as accused No. 4 in Crime No.*



*3701/CB/CU- IV/TVPM/D/2025 of Crime Branch Police Station*

*G. The contention of the petitioner is devoid of any merits.*

*H. XXX*

*I. XXX*

*J. During the period of the commission of the offence in this case, the petitioner had been serving as the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner of Travancore Devaswom Board. As per the Devaswom Manual Vol-I, Chapter-XV Para-3 (1) it is the duty of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner to make arrangements for the proper preservation and custody of all Thiruvabharanams and all belongings of Devaswoms and as per Devaswom Manual Vol-I, Chapter-XV, Para-3(4) it is the duty of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner to maintain in his office, the registers of Thiruvabharanam and to keep them up-to-date. But Mr.Baijoo, the petitioner herein, miserably failed in observing the directions as stated above. Similarly, as per the Devaswam Manual Vol-II Chapter-IX Page 116 all works involving the valuables of Devaswom should always be carried out within the Devaswom premises in the presence of a responsible officer authorized by the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner and in page 117 it is specifically mentioned that detailed mahazer showing the weight, touch of the articles should be prepared when old articles are handed over to contractors and another mahazer should be prepared when newly made or prepared articles are accepted from the contractors. It is also mentioned that the value of the metals unaccounted for by the contractor should be recovered from him. But Mr. Baijoo, the petitioner herein, had clearly violated the mandatory provisions of the Manual by not supervising the removal of gold cladded door frames and connected Prabhavalayam plates and did not use the service of Devaswom Smith.*



*The petitioner failed to supervise the gold re-plating works of the artefacts at Smart Creations, Chennai and also did not ascertain the weight of the door frames when brought back to Sabarimala after re-plating. The petitioner also did not prepare a mahazer at the time of re-installation.*

*K. Here, the petitioner, being the then Thiruvabharanam Commissioner, prepared a mahazer on 18.05.2019 at the time of dismantling process of the 7 pieces of gold clad door frames of the Sreekovil based on the Board order ROC 9097/18/M dated 20.03.2019. On a close scrutiny of the mahazer, when read in conjunction with the statement of witnesses, indicate that the mahazer was prepared inaccurately and in a highly irresponsible manner. The mahazer is silent about the presence of gold cladding even though the Devaswom Smith was present during the preparation of the mahazer. Moreover, the plates were misrepresented as mere copper plates on the mahazer which indicates that the contents of the mahazer were falsified willfully and with dishonest intention. The weights of the plates were not recorded during the re-installation and no mahazer was prepared. By making false entries in the mahazer and by not executing an agreement, he aided the handing over of the sacred door frame plates to A1, a private person, without any escort, in gross violation of the provisions of Devaswom Manual. By not taking the weight of the door frame plates and also by not making relevant entries in the Devaswom registers, the petitioner concealed the misappropriation of gold by A1 and others at Smart Creations, Chennai. From the above it is evident that the petitioner committed grave official misconduct and administrative malpractice which resulted in the misappropriation of gold by A1 and others by the mahazer prepared by the petitioner, other Devaswom*





*officials such as Mr. Sunil Kumar.K, Assistant Engineer, Sabarimala, Mr.B. Murari Babu, Administrative Officer, Sabarimala, and Mr. Sankaranarayanan, Head Accountant, Sabarimala, etc. had affixed their signature which clearly establishes the conspiracy in committing the offence. The depth of conspiracy hatched among the accused persons as well as the monitory benefit obtained are being further probed.*

*G & H) The investigation of the case is still in progress. The nature and involvement of more employees and officials of Travancore Devaswom Board are being probed, certain documents relating to the offence have not yet been made available from Devaswom board despite issuing notices and even after conducting legal searches at some offices. The Hon'ble High Court of Kerala while passing orders in WP (C) No. 40608 of 2025 dated 05.11.2025 had permitted the SIT to carry out scientific examination by taking samples from various sacred adornments at Sabarimala, following this the SIT had taken samples and had sent the samples for scientific examination through the Hon'ble Court. The scientific examination of these samples are still in progress and it is only after a proper analysis of the results of this examination, that a proper estimation of the total quantity of gold misappropriated can be arrived at. More investigation will have to be carried out based on the result of the scientific examination.*

*I to M). XXX*

*The investigation of the case is still in progress. The nature and involvement of more employees and officials of Travancore Devaswom Board are being probed. Certain documents relating to the offence have not yet been made available from Devaswom Board despite issuing notices and even after conducting legal searches at some offices.*



*Moreover, detailed investigation is being done to fully recover the misappropriated gold. Since the investigation is still progressing there is every possibility that if the petitioner is let on bail he, being the former Devaswom Commissioner of Travancore Devaswom Board will influence witnesses of this case and will cause destruction/disappearance of evidence and documents. Moreover this is a case which relates to the misappropriation of gold from the priceless and sacred door-frame plates and connected plates of the famous Sabarimala Temple. The incidents that led to the case has deeply hurt the religious sentiments of scores of Ayyappa devotees and pilgrims. Considering the gravity of the offences committed by the accused and others it is prayed that the bail application submitted by the petitioner be dismissed at the very outset itself."*

19. In Crime No.3700/2025, the prime allegation of the prosecution is that Dwarapalaka idols clad with gold in original having 42800 gram of weight were taken by the 1<sup>st</sup> accused as part of conspiracy hatched in between the accused persons and at the time of its return the weight was reduced to 3825.8100 and thus the prosecution allegation is that 4541.900 gram of gold originally form part of Dwarapalaka idols were misappropriated by the accused. While dismissing the anticipatory bail applications filed by the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> accused in Crime No.3700/2025, this Court observed in paragraphs 14, 15 and 16 as under:



“14. Coming to the decision taken by the Board, the same would show that, the Dwarapalaka plates, which according to the Board, were copper plated ones and not gold plated ones. In fact, Dwarapalaka plates are actually cladded with gold in its origin and therefore, there is no necessity for doing any other process of cladding or plating of gold over the same. The conspirators and the perpetrators of this crime who were well aware of the fact that by recording the Dwarapalaka plates as one made of copper and the same to be allowed to be subjected to gold cladding, on that premise, the gold originally therein could be misappropriated for getting illegal gratification for themselves and accordingly, they had recorded the Dwarapalaka plates as fully made of copper in the minutes of the Devaswam Board as well as in the mahazars one of which was signed by the 6<sup>th</sup> accused. Similarly, the 4<sup>th</sup> accused also issued order to handover the Dwarapalaka plates to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused shown the description of the Dwarapalaka plates as copper made, though she also is fully aware of the fact that those are originally gold cladded items. Thus, the accused persons with knowledge that once the Dwarapalaka plates to be recorded as copper plated items in the Board decision and the corresponding mahazars, it is easy for them to swindle away the gold cladded over the same to sell and make money out of the same. Thus, prima facie, the conspiracy, in the instant case, is in a widest magnitude, including some other higher officials other than the accused persons now arrayed and without the involvement of the higher officials, this kind of large scale looting of gold, that too, from a holy temple like Sabarimala, where lakhs of people



*bestowed themselves, should not have happened. Therefore, even though the investigation is on the right direction, the investigation should be widened to include those who have involvement in this scam, particularly tracing the higher ups who had control, connection and constant contact with Sri.Unnikrishnan Potty, since Sri.Unnikrishnan Potty, the 1<sup>st</sup> accused, continued in Sabarimala under the grace of some big guns. Therefore, the investigating officer shall have to consider the widest conspiracy and investigate on the involvement of the big guns in the scam without fail to ensure fair investigation.*

15. *Coming back, it could be noticed that, as on 03.07.2019, the Travancore Devaswom Board decided to do gold plating works to the Dwarapalaka plates and also the plates on the southern and northern corners of the Sreekovil, describing those items are fully made of copper, without any gold plating, and it was decided to do the work of gold plating on those items at the instance of Sri. Unnikrishnan Potty, the 1<sup>st</sup> accused, as per the decision of the Thanthri and under the supervision of the Devaswom Commissioner. In this context, it is relevant to refer that even though the Devaswom Board did not decide to send the Dwarapalaka plates outside for gold plating, the decision of the Board, describing those items originally cladded with gold as items fully made of copper, would show the deceitful intention and consequential misappropriation of the gold, actually plated therein, so as to make unlawful enrichment to the perpetrators of the crime and corresponding loss to the Devaswom Board, and in turn, the holy 'Sabarimala Ayyappan'. So, the decision itself would show the involvement of the Devaswom Board members in*



*describing the items as purely made of copper, though its original was gold cladded, and also would show the involvement of the decision makers who decided so as on 03.07.2019.*

16. *The prosecution records would reveal the role of the 4<sup>th</sup> accused. The 4<sup>th</sup> accused, having worked under the Devaswom Board as Secretary during the relevant time, issued an order dated 05.07.2019, which led to Sri.Unnikrishnan Potty to get custody of the items, that too against the Board decision. It is relevant to note that, after two days of the decision of the Board (decision of the Board was on 03.07.2017), the 4<sup>th</sup> accused passed an order on 05.07.2019, to handover the Dwarapalaka plates and items on the southern and northern corners of the Sreekovil to Sri.Unnikrishnan Potty, though actually there was no decision by the Board to do so. In this context, it is relevant to refer that, as argued, the 4<sup>th</sup> accused had joined in Travancore Devaswom Board as an L.D. Clerk on 24.12.1982 and by promotion, reached the post of Secretary of Travancore Devaswom Board, holding that position from 03.07.2017 to 06.12.2019 and also as Thiruvabharanam Commissioner upto 31.05.2020 till her retirement. Therefore, the knowledge of the 4<sup>th</sup> accused regarding this stature of the Dwarapalaka plates and the items on the southern and northern corners of the Sreekovil, as originally gold cladded items is damn sure and the 4<sup>th</sup> accused could not contend that she was not aware of the same. Thus, knowing fully well that what was stated in the Board decision on 03.07.2019, describing the Dwarapalaka plates and the other items on the southern and northern corners of the Sreekovil were described as mere copper plates, is an absolute falsehood. Therefore, if the 4<sup>th</sup> accused is*



*innocent and not involved in the conspiracy, the natural response from the 4<sup>th</sup> accused should be to write a letter to the Board stating that Dwarapalaka plates and other items decided to be gold plated, describing the same as copper made, was wrong and therefore, no order could be issued. Unfortunately, instead of doing the said exercise, as a bona fide employee of the Devaswom Board, who was bestowed with the duty of protecting the interest of the respectable deity of Sabarimala, she did not point out the same, instead she had issued an order within two days, that too, in deviation from the decision of the Board, to hand over the Dwarapalaka plates to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused to take them out for the purpose of gold plating, though, in fact, no such gold plating was required as far as the items are concerned, since its origin itself is gold plated. Thus, the role of the 4<sup>th</sup> accused is well made out prima facie, and on merits, the 4<sup>th</sup> accused could not wriggle out from the prosecution. Since the role of the 4<sup>th</sup> accused is well made out, prima facie, in a huge scam, she is not entitled to get anticipatory bail on merits, as her arrest, custodial interrogation and the modus operandi are to be ascertained.”*

20. In the report of the Devaswom Board dated 09.10.2025 filed before this Court in SSOR.No.23/2025 (where from these crimes were registered and investigations have been going on) the details of the originally gold clad item submitted by UB Group to Sannidhanam and it was reported therein that only 394.900 grams of gold were used to clad



the Dwarapalaka idols and the remaining gold were misappropriated by the accused, as part of the conspiracy hatched in between them. In the report in B.A.No.14361/2025 in Crime No.3700/2025, it is stated as under:

*“3. It is submitted that, despite the fact that the Thanthri, in his letter dated 18.06.2019 had clearly described the plates as “സ്വർണം കുറഞ്ഞു ചെമ്പു തെളിഞ്ഞിട്ടുള്ളത്”, the petitioner herein, purposefully and with ulterior motives omitted these words and merely represented the plates as “ചെമ്പ്”. This is the genesis of the sequence of correspondence and acts that ultimately led to the handing over of the sacred gold cladded Dwarapalaka plates to Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty (A1). The petitioner submitted the recommendation letter to the Executive Officer (A3), on 17.09.2019 along with the Thanthri's letter dated 18.06.2019. It is impossible to enclose Thanthri's letter dated 18.06.2019 along with his letter dated. 17.06.2019 which clearly establishes the conspiracy behind the crime and proves that it is a pre-planned action. As even before getting the report from Thanthri he had intentionally stated in the letter as 'Chembu Pali' even though he was well aware of the fact that these plates were cladded with gold in 1998.*

*4. The petitioner, after his first term as Administrative Officer during 2018- 2019, he was again posted at Sabarimala as Executive Officer on 12.07.2024. On 17.08.2024 not much later than his taking charge he sent a letter to the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner stating that several portions of the gold plated copper plates of the dwarapalakas were damaged and the President, Travancore Devaswom Board had instructed to get the repair works*



*done before the Sabarimala season. It is pertinent to note here that, Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty (A1) and the petitioner were instrumental in illegally taking the Dwarapalaka and other items to Chennai in 2019, for gold plating, which led to the misappropriation of gold from those articles by A1 and others. Since they have once again initiated this process, it can be assumed that they had designs to conceal the offences committed in 2019 and also to raise sponsorship in the name of gold plating probably with the intention of illegal financial gain. It is to be noted that in 2019 while he was Administrative Officer, Sabarimala he initiated the process of gold plating works and wrote a letter to the Executive Officer, recommending the gold plating. But in 2024 in this case there was no report of Administrative Officer as he had done in 2019. In both these incidents Mr. Murari Babu (A2) initiated this process irrespective of his official position which points towards his malicious design. 5. Pursuant to the orders of the Hon'ble High Court of Kerala and on the basis of the letters received from the Commissioner, Travancore, along with the reports of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer, Travancore Devaswom Board, the present Crime is registered at Crime Branch Police Station as Cr.3700/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025 U/S. 403, 406, 409, 466, 467, and 34 IPC.*

*6). xxxx xxxx xxxx*

*7). The 2nd accused was arrested on the basis of the findings of the investigation conducted by the SIT. As per the findings of the investigation it was revealed that though the letter of Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty was addressed to Mr. D. Sudheesh Kumar (A3), it was the petitioner, who played behind the curtain. made A1 sign on the letter, then obtained the letter from Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty (A1) and*





*forwarded it to D. Sudheesh Kumar (A3) along with his own letter wherein he purposefully and with ulterior motives misrepresented the gold cladded plates as mere "ചെമ്പു പാളികൾ". He had also enclosed a letter from the Tanthri dated 18.06.2019 addressed to the Executive officer, (A3) in which it was mentioned that permission could be given to gold plate the Dwarapalaka plates "since the gold on it had been faded". It is impossible to enclose Thanthri's letter dated 18.06.2019 along with his letter dated. 17.06.2019. This clearly indicates the level of conspiracy hatched amongst the accused persons. This dubious manner let to the issuance of the Board proceedings that ultimately led to the misappropriation of the cladded gold from the dwarapalaka plates as well as the pillar plates and is indicative of the clandestine designs of the petitioner herein.*

*8 (A). 1). The duties and responsibilities of Administrative Officer of Sabarimala as mentioned in Devaswom Manual Vol-I, Chapter -XV, 10 (b) are*

*2). They have to conduct daily, monthly and other ceremonies in Devaswom under their charge properly and in time as per the instructions received from the Executive Officer, Sabarimala*

*3). To keep correct accounts and maintain all registers and records up to date and carry out the orders of the superior officers from time to time.*

*4). To keep all the valuables of the Devaswoms entrusted to his care and maintain registers of valuables properly and up to date. This emphasizes the fact that the Administrative Officer of Sabarimala has to keep all the valuables of the Devaswom entrusted to his care and maintain registers of*



*valuables properly and up to date.*

*B. It is the duty of the Administrative Officer as per the Travancore Devaswom Manual Vol-1, Chapter XV- 14(e)*

*(9) To check all sorts of wastes, misappropriation and malpractices in the institution, (10) To see that no defilement of any kind is caused to the temples and to refrain from doing anything repugnant and contrary to custom and usages obtaining in the temples it is again reiterated that it shall be the duty of the Administrative Officer (17) To have the custody of the valuables of the Devaswoms. (20) To attend all other item of work connected with the Devaswom and to supervise the actual conduct of ceremonies. As envisaged above, being the custodian of the valuables of Sabarimala Devaswom, it is the bounden duty of the Administrative Officer of the Temple, to ensure the priceless gold cladded Dwarapalaka plates and side plates would not have been subjected to any misappropriation, malpractices and misuse. The petitioner herein, Mr. Murari Babu failed to observe his mandated duties as described above and purposefully neglected his bounden duties.*

*C. Mr. Murari Babu, (A2) the petitioner herein was inducted into the service of Travancore Devaswom Board in the year 1995. After having worked in various capacities with Travancore Devaswom Board, he took charge as Administrative Officer of Sabarimala Temple on 17.08.2018. Being a senior officer and having sufficient experience in Travancore Devaswom Board and at Sabarimala, he was well aware of the fact that the Dwarapalaka idol plates and the pillar plates were indeed gold cladded in 1998 by UB Group. In spite of this, he misrepresented the gold cladded Dwarapalaka idol plates and the side plates as mere "ചെമ്പു പാളികൾ" in his recommendation letter sent to Mr D.Sudheesh Kumar (A3), Executive*



*Officer on 17.06.2019 . Despite the fact that the Thanthri, in his letter had clearly described the plates as “സ്വർണം കുറഞ്ഞു ചെമ്പു തെളിഞ്ഞിട്ടുള്ളത്”, Mr Murari Babu (A2) the petitioner herein, purposefully and with ulterior motives omitted these words and merely represented the plates as “ചെമ്പ്”. This is the genesis of the sequence of correspondence and that act ultimately led to the handing over of the sacred gold cladded Dwarapalaka plates to Mr. A.K. Unnikrishnan Potty (A1), and resulted in the subsequent misappropriation of the gold from the plates by Mr. A1. Unnikrishnan Potty, A1 and others at Smart Creations, Chennai.*

*D. Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty, (A1) prepared a letter on 17.06.2019, as per the direction of Mr Murari Babu, (A2) by addressing the Executive Officer, Sabarimala Mr Sudheesh Kumar (A3) stating that he would repair and gold plate the Dwarapalaka idol plates and the side plates on sponsorship basis. Mr Murari Babu, (A2) the then Administrative Officer of Sabarimala forwarded the letter of A1 to A3 along with his own letter wherein he purposefully and with ulterior motives misrepresented the gold cladded plates as just "Chembu Palikal". He had also enclosed a letter dated 18.6.2019 from the Thanthri addressed to the Executive Officer in which it was mentioned that permission could be given to gold plate the Dwarapalaka plates "since the gold on it had been faded". It is impossible to enclose the Thanthri's letter dated 18.06.2019 along with his letter dated 17.06.2019. It is the bounden duty of the Officer to peruse the report of the Thanthri and mention in his report the presence of gold already cladded on the plates. It is nothing but an intentional act which ultimately lead to the handing over of these items to Mr Unnikrishnan potty (A1). Later the Board discussed the matter as item No. 77 in the minutes book and accorded permission vide Board order ROC 9097/18/M Dated 05.07.2019 to get the repair and gold plating works of the Dwarapalaka plates and side plates,*



*done by Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty (A1). Mr. Murari Babu, (A2) the petitioner herein is the 1st person to use the term "copper plates" rather than "gold cladded copper plates" with respect to the aforesaid valuables owned by the Travancore Devaswom Board and which ultimately resulted in the misappropriation of gold by Mr Unnikrishnan potty (A1) and others.*

*E). Mr Murari Babu (A2), the petitioner took charge as Administrative Officer of Sabarimala Temple on 17.08.2018 and continued upto 17.7.2019. The maintenance and repairs of the main door of Sreekovil, door frame and Dwarapalaka Structures and two pillars situated on the north and south corner of the Sreekovil were carried out during his tenure. The procedure for the door was started in 2018 and it was only for the fixing of the new gold plated door. The procedure for gold plating of Dwarapalaka idol plates with respect to this crime had been initiated and completed during his period as Administrative Officer in Sabarimala Devaswom itself.*

*F) Mr.Murari Babu (A2), the petitioner herein, misrepresented the gold cladded Dwarapalaka idol plates and the side pillar plates as mere "ചെമ്പു പാളികൾ", in his recommendation letter sent to the Executive Officer dated 17.06.2019. with the attachment of the letter of Thantri. Despite the fact that the Thanthri, in his letter dated 18.6.2019 had clearly described the plates as "സ്വർണം കുറഞ്ഞു ചെമ്പു തെളിഞ്ഞിട്ടുള്ളത്", the petitioner herein, purposefully and with ulterior motives concealed these words and merely represented the plates as "ചെമ്പ്". As per the Devaswam Board Manual Vol- I, Chapter XV, 14 (e) (9) and (e)(17) it shall be the duty of the Administrative Officer to check all sorts of wastes, misappropriation and malpractices in the institution and to have the custody of all the valuables of the Devaswoms. As a responsible and experienced officer knowing that these artefacts were gold cladded in*



1998 by UB Group. It was his duty to mention the contents of the Thanthri's letter in his recommendation letter also. Here Mr Murari Babu (A2), intentionally used the term "copper plates" rather than "gold cladded copper plates" with respect to the valuable artefacts owned by the Travancore Devaswom Board, neglecting the letter of Thanthri, and which ultimately resulted in the misappropriation of gold by the 1st accused and the others. As per Devaswom Mannuel Vol II Chapter IX SI.No. 23, Para 4 & Para 7 making or repairing of Thiruvabharanam should as far as possible be done under the immediate supervision of the Deputy Devaswam Commissioner, detailed mahazars showing the weight and touch etc of articles, as per accounts and as actually found at the time, should be prepared etc.

G). Mr Murari Babu (A2), the petitioner joined in the service of Travancore Devaswom board in 1995. As per Sec.2(c) of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1998, Mr Murari Babu (A2) comes under the purview of Public Servant. The duties and powers of Administrative Officers of the Travancore Devaswom are well explained in Travancore Devaswom Manual Vol-I, Chapter -XV,14, (2) (e) and Vol-I, Chapter -XV (3) (10) (b). As per Devaswom Manual Vol-I, Chapter -XV (3) (10) (b) (4) The Administrative Officer of Sabarimala has to keep all the valuables of the Devaswoms entrusted to his care and maintain registers of valuables properly and up to date and as per Devaswom Manual Vol-I, Chapter -XV,14, (2) (e) (17) the petitioner(A2) as the Administrative officer as to have custody of the valuables of the Devaswoams. And is responsible for protecting and safeguarding all the valuables of the Devaswoms. So he has the entrustment of the property as per the above provisions. He had also committed the above offences with the connivance of the other accused.

Mr Murari Babu (A2), the petitioner had the knowledge that the



*Dwarapalaka idols and pillar plates were gold cladded by UB Group in 1998. Suppressing this fact, even if it is mentioned in Thantri's letter he purposefully prepared falsified record of his letter dated 17.6.2019 related to Dwarapalaka idol gold plating with the connivance of the other accused, which ultimately resulted in the handing over of these artefacts to Mr Unnikrishnan potty, (A1) and thereby led to the misappropriation of the gold cladded on it and there by caused illegal pecuniary loss to the Devaswom Board and illegal pecuniary gain to the accused. The investigation is going on in depth to gather more evidences. Mr. Murari Babu (A2), the petitioner was also liable under section 467 of Indian Penal Code. In order to transfer the valuable artefacts to A1, the petitioner made A1 signing on the letter dated 17.06.12019 and forwarded it to A3 on the same day along with the letter dated 18.06.2019 from the Tanthri addressed to the Executive officer in which it was mentioned that permission could be given to gold plate the dwarapalaka plates "since the gold on it had been faded". But, in his own recommendation letter wherein he purposefully and with ulterior motives misrepresented the gold cladded plates as mere "ചെമ്പു പാളികൾ". It's impossible to enclose Thanthri's letter dated 18/06/2019 along with his letter dated. 17.06.2019. This dubious manner in which the proceedings that ultimately led to the misappropriation of the cladded gold from the dwarapalaka plate was initiated is indicative of the clandestine designs of the petitioner.*

9). *Though, Mr Murari Babu (A2), the petitioner was transferred just before the preparation of Mahazar on 19.7.2019. and 20.7.2019 all the procedures for handing over the Dwarapalaka idol plates to Mr Unnikrishnan Potty( A1) were completed before his relieving. The documents seized during the searches conducted at the house of A2 are being verified. The Bank Account details and the details of movable and*



*immovable properties of the petitioner have been collected and investigation is going on in that aspect. The process is not at all completed. This effort is being continued. The result of the mobile phone analysis is yet to be received and investigation in to that effect is to be done in-depth.*

*10) Mr Murari Babu (A2), the petitioner had forwarded his letter to Mr Sudheesh Kumar. D (A3), Executive Officer, in spite of the fact that the Thanthri, in his letter had clearly described the plates as “സപ്തരശ്മി കുറഞ്ഞു ചെമ്പു തെളിഞ്ഞിട്ടുള്ളത്”, the petitioner herein, purposely and with ulterior motives omitted these words and merely represented the plates as “ചെമ്പ്”. This is the genesis of the sequence of correspondence and acts that ultimately led to the handing over of the sacred gold cladded Dwarapalaka plates to Mr Unnikrishnan Potty (A1), and the subsequent misappropriation of the gold from the plates by A1 and others at Smart Creations, Chennai. He was the Administartive Officer at the time of fixing of new gold plated door, detaching and handing over of door frames to A1 and at the time of refixing and during the various stages of handing over of Dwarapalaka idols to Mr Unnikrishnan potty (A1) in 2019 in the capacity of Administrative Officer and also initiated the documentation works of gold plating Dwarapalaka idol plates again in 2024 with the intention of concealing the previous misappropriation of gold from the Dwarapalaka idol plates.*

*11) xxxx xxxx xxxx*

*12) Suspected financial transactions in respect of the petitioner, his associates, relatives are being verified by collecting the Bank transactions, landed property details, CDRs, phone details etc. Other mode of communications and transactions resorted by the accused need to be probed thoroughly.*

*13 to 16) The investigation of the case is still in progress. The*



*possibility of the involvement of other officials of Travancore Devaswom Board is being investigated. Some documents relating to the offence have not yet been made available by the Devaswom Board despite issuing repeated notices and even after conducting legal searches at the respective offices. Moreover, detailed investigation is being done to fully recover the misappropriated gold. Since the investigation is at the nascent stage and is still progressing, there is every possibility that if the petitioner is let on bail he, being the former Administrative Officer of Travancore Devaswom Board and presently being a Senior Officer in the hierarchy, he will influence the witnesses of this case and will cause destruction/disappearance of evidence and documents. Moreover, this is a case which relates to the misappropriation of gold from the priceless and sacred Dwarapalaka idol plates and side plates of the famous Sabarimala Temple. The incidents that led to the case has deeply hurt the religious sentiments of scores of Ayyappa devotees and pilgrims. If bail is granted to the accused he may abscond and do not cooperate with the trial of the case. Considering the gravity of the offences committed by the accused and others, it is prayed that the bail application submitted by the petitioner may kindly be dismissed."*

21. In the report in B.A.No.14369/2025 in Crime No.3701/2025, the Investigating Officer in his report stated as under:

*"3)The brief of the case as per the FIR is that in furtherance of the common intention of the accused to obtain wrongful gain and to cause wrongful loss to the Travancore Devaswom Board, the 1st accused, with the connivance of accused Nos. 2 to 10, who are bound to protect Devaswom properties, entered into criminal conspiracy to misappropriate the gold that was used for cladding on the door frames*





*of the Sreekovil of the Sabarimala Temple, on 16.02.2019 a recommendation was made by the 5th accused to the 3rd accused and A3 in his letter ROC.6068/18/SAB dated 06.03.2019 addressed to the Travancore Devaswom Secretary purposely omitted the words and instead mentioned "കട്ടികളിൽ പൊതിഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്ന ചെമ്പു തകിടുകൾ ഇളക്കി ഉണ്ണികൃഷ്ണൻ പോറ്റിക്കു കൈമാറുന്നതിനും ആയവയിൽ സ്വർണം പൂശി ലഭിക്കുന്ന മുറക്ക് കട്ടികളയിൽ സ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നതിന്" following which the Board issued orders and subsequently taken out the gold cladded copper door frames, having the total weight of 42.100 KGs, were handed over to Unnikrishnan Potty, flouting all norms, which ultimately led to the misappropriation of gold from the sacred plates by A1 and others etc.*

*4). Mr. Murari Babu, the petitioner herein was inducted into the service of Travancore Devaswom Board in the year 1995. After having worked in various capacities with Travancore Devaswom Board, he took charge as Administrative Officer of Sabarimala Temple on 17.08.2018. Being a senior officer and having sufficient experience in Travancore Devaswom Board and at Sabarimala, he was well aware of the fact that the door-frames were indeed gold cladded. As per the Devaswom Board Manual Vol-I, Chapter -XV, 10 (b) (4) the Administrative Officer of Sabarimala has to keep all the valuables of the Devaswom entrusted to his care and maintain registers of valuables properly and up to date. Based on the Board proceedings vide. ROC 9097/18/M dated: 20.03.2019, the 7 pieces of gold cladded door frames were dismantled on 18.05.2019 by preparing a mahazar by Mr. K.S. Baijoo (A4), the then Thiruvabharanam Commissioner. As an Administrative Officer, who is an experienced officer of T D B and having sufficient work experience at Sabarimala A6 had clear knowledge that the door frames were originally gold cladded and hence he committed grave official misconduct by signing on the mahazer in which the gold cladded door frames were wrongfully referred*



*to as copper plates, willfully and with dishonest intention. Moreover, a close scrutiny of the mahazer, when read in conjunction in the statements of the witnesses indicates that the mahazer was prepared inaccurately and in a highly irresponsible manner. Some of the witnesses present at the time of preparing the mahazer, had indicated the presence of gold in the plates. But this fact was deliberately avoided and the sacred plates were misrepresented as mere copper plates on the mahazer. The fact that Mr. Marari Babu, (A6) had signed on the falsified mahazer is a clear indication of his malafide intention to hand over the sacred gold cladded door frames to A1 which ultimately led to the misrepresentation of the gold from the plates at the Smart creations, Chennai. The claim of the petitioner that he had sent a letter dated 19.03.2019 to the Travancore Devaswom Board is utterly false.*

*5). Pursuant to the orders of the Hon'ble High Court of Kerala and on the basis of the letters received from the Commissioner, Travancore, along with the reports of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer, Travancore Devaswom Board, two crime cases were registered at Crime Branch Police Station on 11.10.2025 as*

*1. Cr. 3700/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025 U/S. 403, 406, 409, 466, 467, and 34 IPC*

*2. Cr. 3701/CB/CU-IV/TVPM/D/2025 U/S. 403, 406, 409, 466, 467 and 34 IPC.*

*Cr. 3701/2025 relates to the offences committed with respect to the removal of the cladded gold from the door frames and connected plates of the Sreekovil.*

*Pursuant to the registration of the case, I, Sasidharan. S, IPS, Assistant Director KEPA took over the investigation of the case on 12.10.2025. As part of the investigation, the scene mahazar was prepared, several*



*records were seized from various Devaswom offices, Smart Creations Chennai and also during the searches conducted at the houses of the arrested accused persons. The documents seized were perused and closely examined and investigated into in conjunction with the statements of witnesses recorded. Several Devaswom officials and other people acquainted with the facts and circumstances of the cases were questioned thoroughly and their versions are being cross checked and subjected to scrutiny. During the course of investigation, A1, A3, A4, A5, A6 and A8 were arrested and the investigation is progressing. Sec. 120.B IPC and Sec.13(1)(a) r/w 13(2) of Prevention of Corruption Act 1988 (Amendment Act 2018) were added, subsequent to the revelation of these offences during the investigation.*

*6). During the course of investigation, it has come to notice that the Vigilance wing of Travancore Devaswom Board had submitted a report to the President, Travancore Devaswom Board, against the petitioner for official misconduct while he had been working as Administrative Officer at Ettumanoor Devaswom in 2021.*

*7). As per the Devaswom Board Manual Vol-I, Chapter -XV, 10 (b) (Annexure-) the Administrative Officer of Sabarimala has to keep all the valuables of the Devaswom entrusted to his care and maintain registers of valuables properly and up to date. The petitioner, who was the then Administrative officer of Sabarimala, having the knowledge that the copper plates of the door-frames were cladded with gold, did not take any steps to correct the description 'copper plates' in the mahazer dated 18.05.2019, which ultimately led to the misappropriation of gold from the sacred plates by Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty (A1) and others.*

*8.A). As per the Devaswom Board Manual Vol-I, Chapter -XV, 10 (b) (4) (Annexure-) the Administrative Officer of Sabarimala has to keep all the*



*valuables of the Devaswom entrusted to his care and maintain registers of valuables properly and up to date. Moreover, in Devaswom Board Manual Vol- I, Chapter 15, Section 14 (e) (9) (Annexure-) it shall be the duty of the Administrative Officer to check all sorts of wastes, misappropriation and malpractices in the institution and in Chapter 15 Sec 14 (e) (17) (Annexure- ) it is again reiterated that it shall be the duty of the Administrative Officer to have the custody of the valuables of the Devaswom. Being the custodian of the valuables of Sabarimala Devaswom, as the Administrative Officer of the Temple, it was the bounden duty of the petitioner to ensure the priceless gold cladded door frames which would not have been subjected to any misappropriation and misuse.*

*B). As per the Devaswom Board Manual Vol-1, Chapter -XV, 10 (b) (4) the Administrative Officer of Sabarimala has to keep all the valuables of the Devaswom entrusted to his care and maintain registers of valuables properly and up to date. Moreover in Devaswom Board Manual Vol- I, Chapter 15, Section 14 (e) (9) it shall be the duty of the Administrative Officer to check all sorts of wastes, misappropriation and malpractices in the institution and in Chapter 15 Sec 14 (e)(17) it is again reiterated that it shall be the duty of the Administrative Officer to have the custody of the valuables of the Devaswom. Being the custodian of the valuables of Sabarimala Devaswom, as the Administrative Officer of the Temple, it was the bounden duty of the petitioner to ensure the priceless gold cladded door frames of the Sreekovil which would not have been subjected to any misappropriation and misuse. On noticing the fact that the gold cladded plates were misrepresented and falsely described as mere "copper plates", on the mahazer prepared on 18.05.2019, the petitioner being the custodian of the properties, should have corrected the*



*mistake then and there itself. Instead of doing that, he colluded and connived with A1, A4, A5 and others with ulterior motives to hand over the gold cladded door frames to A1, which paved the way to the misappropriation of gold from these plates by A1 and others. Moreover, by handing over the sacred gold cladded door frames to Unnikrishnan Potty and by allowing him to take the frames to Smart creations Chennai, the accused had blatantly violated the provisions of the Devaswom Manual which mandates that all temple related works are to be carried out within the premises of the temple itself. (Devaswom Manual, Vol-II, Chapter IX, Page 116) (Annexure). The petitioner also failed to prepare the mahazer and take the weights of the door frames when the door frames were brought back from Chennai and reinstalled at Sabarimala. Had the weight of the door frames being taken on re-installation, any loss of gold would have been detected then and there itself and remedial actions could have been taken. Investigation also revealed that the petitioner had not made any entry in the registers of valuables regarding the gold plating works of the door frames which is a clear violation of the provisions of the Devaswom Manual. Hence, the contention of the petitioner that the petitioner did not have any dominion or entrustment over the property involved in the crime is contrary to the facts, false and hence not maintainable.*

*C to E). On 16.02.2019, Mr. D. Sudheesh Kumar, the then Executive Officer, Sabarimala vide EOP No. 223/19/SAB sent a letter to the Devaswom Commissioner seeking orders for permission to dismantle the door-frame copper plates (മുൻപ് സ്വർണം പുശിയിട്ടുള്ളത്) and hand over the plates to Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty (A1), Bangalore for gold plating and to reinstall the plates on the door frames after gold plating. But the Devaswom Commissioner, Mr. N. Vasu (A3) in his letter ROC*



6068/18/SAB dated: 06.03.2019 addressed to the Secretary, Travancore Devaswom Board, committed a grave mistake by inaccurately referring the gold cladded copper plates as mere "copper plates", omitting reference to the existing gold cladding, subsequent to which the Board in its meeting held on 19.03.2019 also referred to it as "copper plates" and gave permission to hand over the "Copper Plates" (ചെമ്പു പാളികൾ) to Mr. Unnikrishnan (A1) for gold plating after duly preparing the mahazar and thereafter to reinstall the plates after gold plating done. Based on this, the Devaswom Secretary issued the Board proceedings as ROC 9097/18/M dated: 20.03.2019. The 7 pieces of gold cladded door frames were dismantled on 18.05.2019, on the basis of the Board order, by preparing a mahazar. The mahazar was prepared by Mr. K. S. Baijoo, (A4) the then Thiruvabharam Commissioner. As per the mahazar, the total weight of the 7 pieces together, while weighing at Sabarimala (before cleaning) was 42.100 Kg and the 7 pieces were handed over to A1. The mahazar was attested by Mr. K.S. Baijoo, Thiruvabharanam Commissioner, Sabarimala, Mr.. D. Sudheesh Kumar, Executive Officer, Sabarimala, Mr. Murari Babu, Administrative Officer, Sabarimala, Mr. V.M Kumar, Smith. and Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty. A close scrutiny of the mahazar, when read in conjunction with the statement of witnesses indicates that the mahazar was prepared inaccurately and in a highly irresponsible manner. The mahazar is silent about the presence of gold cladding even though the Smith was present during the preparation of the mahazar. Moreover the petitioner, Mr. Murari Babu and Mr. Sudheesh Kumar and others, who are experienced officers of Travancore Devaswom Board and having sufficient experience of having worked at Sabarimala had clear knowledge and understanding that the door frames were originally gold cladded, committed grave official misconduct by



*willfully and with dishonest intention, wrongfully referred to as copper plates even on the mahazar. Further investigation revealed that, some of the witnesses presented at the time of preparing the mahazar, had indicated the presence of gold on the plates to the others present there, which reiterates the fact that the accused present there were having clear knowledge that the door frame plates of Sreekovil were in fact gold cladded.*

*Having taken possession of the door frames, Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty (A1) took the plates to SMART Creations, Chennai. No officer of Travancore Devaswom Board accompanied A1 to SMART Creations and the gold plating process was not supervised by the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner as ordered by the Travancore Devaswom Board. There, the cladded gold was stripped from the copper plates and 184 gms of gold supplied by the sponsor Govardhan Roddam, Bellari was plated on the 7 door frame plates as sponsorship, as told by Govardhan Roddam. The gold stripped from the door frame plates was left unaccounted in stripping solution at the SMART Creations.*

*After gold plating, the 7 pieces were returned to Sabarimala on 15.06.2019 by Unnikrishnan Potty and that too without the escort of Travancore Devaswom Board officials and no mahazar was prepared regarding this either at Smart Creations or at Sabarimala and the weight of the plates also was not recorded during re-installation. All these acts clearly depict the connivance, conspiracy, involvement of the accused persons in the commission of the offences.*

*Investigation revealed a series of serious official misconduct and administrative lapses on the part of Devaswom officials right from the initial correspondence till the handing over of the door frame plates to Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty without proper authorization. No estimate was taken*



*by the Devaswom Smith and no agreement was executed between the Board and the Sponsor. By handing over the sacred door frame plates to Unnikrishnan Potty and by allowing him to take the frames to Smart Creations Chennai, Devaswom officials had blatantly violated the provisions of the Devaswom Manual which mandates that all temple related works are to be carried out within the Temple premises itself (Devaswom Manual, Vol-II, Chapter-IX-23, Para-4, Page 116, and in Thiruvithamcore Devaswom Sub Group Manual Chapter X. Para-26, Page 150). Despite having clear knowledge that the plates were gold cladded in 1998, none of the Devaswom officials enquired about the gold that was stripped from these plates at Smart Creations. By not effectively supervising the works at SMART Creations and by not taking the weights of the gold plated door frame plates on re-installation and by not making prompt entries in the relevant registers, the Devaswom officials had committed grave official malpractice which led to the commission of misappropriation. All these acts and omissions from the part of Devaswom officials tantamounts to official misconduct, thereby abetting and aiding Unnikrishnan Potty and others to misappropriate the gold at SMART Creations, causing unlawful pecuniary loss to Travancore Devaswom Board and corresponding unlawful gain to Unnikrishnan Potty and others. Being a public servant and the custodian of the valuables of Sabarimala Devaswom, the petitioner committed grave official misconduct by miserably failing in his bounden duty to prevent the misappropriation and misuse of Devaswom valuables.*

*F). (i). As per the Devaswom manual as mentioned above, the petitioner, as the Administrative Officer of Sabarimala Devaswom, was duty bound to keep all the valuables of the Devaswom entrusted to his care and maintain registers of valuables properly and up to date. It is also*





*enumerated in the manual, that it shall be the duty of the Administrative Officer to check all sorts of wastes, misappropriation and malpractices in the institution. By signing on the falsified mahazer as detailed above, by not taking the weight of the door frames during its re-installation, by not making prompt entries in the relevant registers, the petitioner committed grave official misconduct and aided Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty (AI) and others to misappropriate gold from the sacred door frames at Smart Creations, Chennai thereby causing unlawful pecuniary loss to Travancore Devaswom Board and corresponding pecuniary gain to AI and others. Hence the contention of the petitioner that he never dishonestly misappropriated any movable property is contrary to the facts and hence not maintainable*

*(ii). As detailed in the foregoing paragraphs, it is evident that the Administrative Officer of Sabarimala is the custodian of the valuables of Devaswom and it was his duty to ensure that the valuables are not subjected to any waste, misappropriation and misuse. Hence the contentions of the petitioner that he is not in any way entrusted with the door frames of Sabarimala Sreekovil is baseless. The fraudulent intention of the petitioner is evident from the fact that he had intentionally signed on the falsified mahazer, thereby permitting the priceless gold cladded door frames to be handed over to Mr. Unnikrishnan potty (AI). Moreover, by not weighing the door frames on its re-installation at Sabarimala and by not making prompt entries in the relevant registers, the petitioner intentionally concealed the misappropriation of the gold from the door frames.*

*(iii). As stated above, the petitioner signed as an attester on the mahazer prepared on 18.05.2019 in which the gold cladded door frames were deliberately misrepresented as mere copper plates. Moreover, some of the*



*persons who are cited as witnesses of the mahazer have not signed on it and some were not made aware of the contents of the mahazer, which clearly shows that the mahazer was indeed falsified.*

*iv). As above*

*v). In this case, the process of gold plating of the door frames was initiated by Mr. D. Sudheesh Kumar (A5), the then Executive Officer of Sabarimala. The petitioner had not submitted any letter from the Thanthri as claimed. Moreover, the contention of the petitioner that he had signed on the mahazer as per the direction of his Superior officers and also from the direction of the Travancore Devaswom Board is baseless.*

*vi). From the explanations given above it is evident that as the Administrative Officer of Sabarimala the petitioner is entrusted with the custody of the valuables of the Devaswom and it was his duty as a public servant to ensure the priceless gold cladded door frames would not have been subjected to any misappropriation and misuse. It is crystal clear that the petitioner's claim that he hadn't any control or entrustment over the property is baseless and devoid of merits.*

*9 to 18). The investigation of the case is still in progress. The items seized from the house of the petitioner after preparing seizure mahazer are being thoroughly probed. The nature and involvement of more employees and officials of Travancore Devaswom Board are being probed. Certain documents relating to the offence have not yet been made available from Devaswom Board despite issuing notices and even after conducting legal searches at some offices. Moreover, detailed investigation is being done to fully recover the misappropriated gold. Since the investigation is still progressing there is every possibility that if the petitioner is let on bail he, being the former Administrative Officer of Travancore Devaswom Board will influence probable witnesses of this case and will cause*



*destruction/disappearance of evidence and documents. Moreover this is a case which relates to the misappropriation of gold from the priceless and sacred dwarapalaka idol plates and side plates of the famous Sabarimala Temple. The incidents that led to the case has deeply hurt the religious sentiments of scores of Ayyappa devotees and pilgrims. Considering the gravity of the offences committed by the accused and others it is prayed that the bail application submitted by the petitioner be dismissed at the very outset itself."*

22. When considering the role of Murari Babu alone in both these cases, it is well evident that at the time of taking decision to clad gold on Dwarapalaka idols, north and south of the Sreekovil involved in Crime No.3700/2025; and the door and other items also as alleged in Crime No.3701/2025, Murari Babu held the post of Administrative Officer till the 4<sup>th</sup> accused Sri S.Sreekumar had taken charge as the Administrative Officer on 17.07.2019 and he, in fact, is responsible for the custody of all the valuables of Sabarimala temple in general in terms of the Travancore Devaswom Manual, as already extracted in the report of the Investigating Officer. It is relevant to note that the Devaswom Board decision placed before this Court would show that the Devaswom Board had not decided to authorise the 1<sup>st</sup> accused Unnikrishnan Potti to take out the Dwarapalaka idols and by a letter issued by the 4<sup>th</sup> accused Jayasree, the 1<sup>st</sup> accused was authorised to



take those items outside the Sannidhanam. Thus Jayasree is a prime accused in this case. However, in Crime No.3701/2025 it could be seen that there was decision by the Board members to remove old door and to replace new door, though according to the prosecution, the same includes the door frames, the Shiva idol on its top, the arch including Vyaali Roopam, Raashi plates and Dasharadha plates. Any how, pursuant to the Board decision, orders were issued to entrust the above items to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused for getting the same cladded with gold by describing that the same were originally made of copper by falsifying the records. It is pertinent to note that as argued by the learned ADGP, as per letter dated 17.06.2019 on getting a letter from the 1<sup>st</sup> accused dated 17.06.2019 addressed to the Executive Officer, he immediately recommended the removal of the items describing the same as copper ignoring the description of the items as gold cladded in the letter dated 16.02.2019. In addition to that, in the letter dated 17.06.2019, issued by Murari Babu, he had stated that he had obtained permission from the 'Thantri' in this regard in writing. But as on 17.06.2019, Thantri had not given any letter to Murari Babu, though a letter in writing issued by the Thantri was obtained on the next day on



18.06.2019. As rightly pointed out by the learned ADGP this aspect alone would shw the mense rea of Murari Babu in the matter of misappropriation and therefore the contention in contra raised by the learned counsel for Murari Babu is found unacceptable. Thus the role of Murari Babu in both the crimes is well established, *prima facie*.

23. The next aspect is the role of Sri N.Vasu, who is the 3<sup>rd</sup> accused in Crime No.3701/2025. It is true that N.Vasu worked as Commissioner, Travancore Devaswom Board from 10.11.2010 to 15.03.2013 and also from 01.02.2018 to 14.03.2019. That apart, he worked as the President of the Travancore Devaswom Board in between 15.11.2019 and 14.11.2021. Even though it is argued by the learned counsel for N.Vasu that the prosecution has no records to show that the door frames were originally gold cladded, the learned ADGP placed the statements of many witnesses, who dealt with the door frames, door and other items of the Sreekovil. In this regard, the statements of witnesses Balakrishnan, S/o.Chinnayya; Nagarajan, S/o.Sankaran; Maniyasan, S/o.Gopalakrishann; Ramanujan, S/o.Sivaraman; Premji M.J, S/o.Janardhanan Pilla; K.Kumaran Nair, S/o.Ravikumar; Bharagvan,



S/o.V.Kesavadas; C.R.Rajasekharan, S/o.Chellappan Pilla, showing that the door frames were originally cladded with gold are available. Apart from that, as pointed out by the learned ADGP in Annexure I letter in the bail application of N.Vasu, it has been specifically stated that the door frames were originally cladded with gold and the prosecution allegation is that the above fact was suppressed by N.Vasu while issuing Annexure III letter in his bail application. Here as regards to the Dwarapalaka idols and other items involved in Crime No.3700/2025, there was decision by the Devaswom Board describing the items therein as copper instead of gold and thus all the Devaswom Board members involved in this decision, viz., Padmakumar, K.P.Sankardas and N.Vijayakumar are criminally liable for describing the original gold cladded items as copper plated, since the same is the starting point of misappropriation. Although the Investigating Officer arrested Padmakumar, others remain not arrested and no effective investigation against them to be noticed from the records available. This shows serious laxity in the investigation of this crime and casts shadow of doubt in the investigation. The Investigating Officer shall address the same. When looking into the decision taken by the Devaswom Board, as seen from the minutes of the meeting, which relates to Crime No.3701/2025 and the



decision was to change the old door of Sreekovil and substitute new door after cladding gold therein in Chennai on 01.03.2019 and 02.03.2019 and it was also decided to entrust the said work to be undertaken by Thiruvabharana commissioner. It was thereafter as alleged by the prosecution the door frames, the Shiva idol on its top, the arch including Vyaali roopam, Raashi plates and Dasharadha plates were taken by the 1<sup>st</sup> accused to Chennai and alleged to have misappropriated the original gold cladded therein by substituting lesser quantity of gold.

24. Thus it appears that the contention raised by the learned counsel for N.Vasu that, N.Vasu is absolutely innocent and there are no materials to show that the door frames were originally cladded with gold, cannot be found in favour of N.Vasu at this stage, where the available materials would suggest that the door frames, the Shiva idol on its top, the arch including Vyaali roopam, Raashi plates and Dasharadha plates originally cladded with gold were alleged to be taken away to misappropriate the gold plates. Therefore, the innocence canvassed by the learned counsel for N.Vasu could not be found, at this stage.

25. Coming to the role of Sri K.S.Baiju, who is the Thiruvabharana Commissioner also, the decision of the Board discussed



herein above is relevant. The decision was to carry out the work of gold cladding on 01.03.2019 and 02.03.2019 to the door and other items under the leadership of the Thiruvabharana Commissioner and admittedly during the relevant time K.S.Baiju was the Thiruvabharana Commissioner. Therefore, the attempt made by the learned counsel for K.S.Baiju that K.S.Baiju is innocent, cannot be countenanced. That is to say, the Devaswom Manual would clearly show that the post of Thiruvabharana Commissioner is created and meant for the proper preservation, maintenance and custody of all Thiruvabharanam and all belongings of the deity and, in fact, no other duty is assigned to the Thiruvabharana Commissioner. In such a case, the plea of Thiruvabharana Commissioner, that he is innocent and he had no role in the misappropriation of gold cladded in the Thiruvabharanam, cannot be accepted with a grain of salt. Even though it is argued by the learned Senior Counsel appearing for K.S.Baiju relying on a decision of the Apex Court reported in [2011 KHC 5051 : 2012 (1) KLT SN 40 : AIR 2012 SC 830], ***Sanjay Chandra v. CBI***, that the right to bail is not to be denied merely because of the sentiments of the community against the accused, this contention would





not yield as sentiments of the community alone is not the matter involving in these cses, but the allegations are misappropriation of gold belonged to a holy deity by its custodians, which is usually unheard of and having unique stature embedded with.

26. Thus the role of Sri Murari Babu and K.S.Baiju in both the crimes as well as the role of N.Vasu in Crime No.3701/2025 are made out, *prima facie*.

27. When the facts in all these cases are evaluated, it could be seen that the allegations in these crimes are unheard of. The Travancore Devaswom Board and its officials are duty bound to protect the interest of the temple and also the interest of lakhs of devotees. Although the accused persons are given assignment to do the said job, instead of protecting the interest of the holy Deity, temple and lakh of devotees, they involved in misappropriating gold, cladded in the 'Thiruvabharanam' and this is nothing but a typical example; where 'protectors' become the 'destroyers' or a 'guardian' turned 'executioner' or the 'hand that heals', now 'harms'. No doubt, the seriousness of a case is one of the key factors that the courts should consider while deciding



whether to grant bail to an accused involved in serious crimes, apart from the purpose of their custody and the progress of the investigation. When cases are of serious nature, namely, large scale manipulation and misappropriation of the Thiruvabharanam of a holy Deity by falsifying records, such cases are unprecedented and are to be encapsulated in a totally different species of which no genus. In such cases, grant of bail should be dealt in segregation from the general postulate. Therefore, in such cases, the progress of the investigation and the necessity of further custodial interrogation by themselves would not be decisive factors when a court considers regular bail plea of the accused persons involved in the crime. Although bail is the rule and jail is an exception; serious cases of this nature would fall under the category of exception and in such cases, the rule may vanish to replace exception.

28. Before adieu, it is worthwhile to mention that, some stagnation in the investigation, after dismissal of the anticipatory bail applications filed by the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> accused in Crime No.3700/2025, to be noted, though the anticipatory bail applications dismissed on 04.12.2025 moved by the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> accused have been zealously opposed by the



prosecution. Anyhow the 6<sup>th</sup> accused was not arrested till 16.12.2025 though it is learnt that he was arrested on 17.12.2025, twelve days after dismissal of his bail application, even though his role has been dealt in detail in the order dismissing pre arrest bail plea. It is true that the 4<sup>th</sup> accused was not arrested and her bail application moved on 18.12.2025 is under the consideration of the Hon'ble Apex Court. It is relevant to note that ROC 9097/18/M Board notice dated 05.07.2019 signed on 03.07.2019 as per the decision of the Devaswom Board stating that the Dwarapalaka idols and the north and south corner of Sreekovil cladded with copper were to be entrusted to the 1<sup>st</sup> accused to take the same outside for the purpose of gold cladding was signed by the Devaswom Board members, who participated in the meeting and S.Jayasree. But whether all the Devaswom Board members arrayed as accused in this case is in serious doubt. That apart, whether K.Sunil Kumar, R.G Radhakrishnan, V.S.Rajendra Prasad and K.Raghavan Nair named in the FIR in Crime No.3700/2025 were arrested also could not be gathered from the prosecution materials. The order permitting the 1<sup>st</sup> accused to take the door frames, door and other items for gold cladding, describing the same as copper plated in its origin



was signed by A.Padmakumar, the President, Travancore Devaswom Board, Advocate Vijayakumar, Member, Travancore Devaswom Board and K.P.Sankardas, Member, Travancore Devaswom Board, apart from S.Jayasree. It is surprising to note that, when asked as to whether Vijayakumar and K.P. Sankardas, who were either arrayed as accused in Crime No.3701/2025 and were arrested for the purpose of effective investigation, the learned ADGP on instructions from the Investigating Officer, who was also present in open Court, submitted that it was not done so far. This would show serious stagnation in the investigation after 05.12.2025 and the Investigating Officer shall address the same and to effectuate investigation against all erring officers without any discrimination and without segregating the culprit for any reasons. Similarly, while dismissing the anticipatory bail plea of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> accused in Crime No.3700/2025, this Court observed in paragraph No.13 that, *“A perusal of prosecution records, with a view to find out the complicity of accused Nos.4 and 6, it could be seen that there has been deliberate intention and largely moulded conspiracy hatched by the accused persons and certain other persons holding higher positions having connection with the administration of Sabarimala, prima facie. Otherwise, it is not at all possible to take the items outside*



*the Sannidhanam, a holy place, as against the Devaswom Board Manual and also for gold cladding of the Dwarapalaka plates which would not require any gold cladding as its origin itself is gold. That is to say, as submitted by the learned ADGP, the 1<sup>st</sup> accused, Sri.Unnikrishnan Potty, is neither 'the poojari' nor 'the assistant poojari' of the Sabarimala temple. But he continued in the Sabarimala without any official designation under the grace of some high profile officials and as part of conspiracy hatched between the accused persons, he was authorised to take out the Dwarapalaka plates, originally cladded with gold, on the premise of describing the same as one made of 'copper plates', as against the mandate of Devaswom Board Manual. On perusal of the prosecution records, the allegations are very serious and mind blowing since such a misappropriation happened in a sacred place, viz., Sabarimala Sannidhanam and this Court is shocked of the events. It appears from the prosecution records prima facie that Sri.Unnikrishnan Potty has not assigned with any duty in particular and if so, why he continued and dealt with the affairs of the Sabarimala Sannidhanam is a serious matter. It could be gathered further that Sri.Unnikrishnan Potty created an aura and enjoyed an unbridled freedom to devour the valuable gold of the holy deity, with connivance of the accused persons and this would not be possible without the involvement of some big guns who had role in the administration of Sabarimala temple of the Devaswam Board. Therefore, the investigation must go on further to elicit and bring all the culprits involved in this crime without leaving any room for escape as the allegations are very serious as*



*already observed.* Despite the same, no investigation in that direction to be discernible from the records available, in fact, this is a matter of anxiety and displeasure. I hope that the Investigating Officer shall give his attention in this regard hereafter, without fail.

29. In this connection, it is relevant to refer paragraph 49 of the judgment of the Apex Court reported in [2023 KHC 6191 : 2023 KHC OnLine 6191 : AIR 2023 SC 1441 : 2023 (6) SCC 559] ***State of Chattisgarh v. Aman Kumar Singh***, wherein the Apex Court dealt with the menace of corruption as under:

*“49. We preface our discussion, leading to the answers to the above two questions, taking note of a dangerous and disquieting trend that obviously disturbs us without end. Though it is the preambular promise of the Constitution to secure social justice to the people of Indian by striving to achieve equal distribution of wealth, it is yet a distant dream. If not the main, one of the more prominent hurdles for achieving progress in this field is undoubtedly ‘corruption’. Corruption is a malaise, the presence of which is all pervading in every walk of life. It is not now limited to the spheres of activities of governance; regrettably, responsible citizens say it has become a way of one's life. Indeed, it is a matter of disgrace for the entire community that not only on the one hand is there a steady decline in steadfastly pursuing the lofty ideals which the founding fathers of our Constitution had in mind, degradation of moral values in society is*



*rapidly on the rise on the other. Not much debate is required to trace the root of corruption. 'Greed', regarded in Hinduism as one of the seven sins, has been overpowering in its impact. In fact, unsatiated greed for wealth has facilitated corruption to develop like cancer. If the corrupt succeed in duping the law enforcers, their success erodes even the fear of getting caught. They tend to bask under a hubris that rules and regulations are for humbler mortals and not them. To get caught, for them, is a sin. Little wonder, outbreak of scams is commonly noticed. What is more distressing is the investigations/inquiries that follow. More often than not, these are botched and assume the proportion of bigger scams than the scams themselves. However, should this stage of affairs be allowed to continue? Tracking down corrupt public servants and punishing them appropriately is the mandate of the P.C. Act. "We the people", with the adoption of our Constitution, had expected very high standards from people occupying positions of trust and responsibility in line with the Constitutional ethos and values.*

*Regrettably, that has not been possible because, inter alia, a small section of individuals inducted in public service for 'serving the public' appear to have kept private interest above anything else and, in the process, amassed wealth not proportionate to their known sources of income at the cost of the nation. Although an appropriate legislation is in place to prevent the cancer of corruption from growing and developing, wherefor maximum punishment by way of imprisonment for ten years is stipulated, curbing it in adequate measure, much less eradicating it, is not only elusive but unthinkable in present times. Since there exists no magic wand as in fairy tales, a swish of which could wipe out greed, the Constitutional Courts owe a*



*duty to the people of the nation to show zero tolerance to corruption and come down heavily against the perpetrators of the crime while at the same time saving those innocent public servants, who unfortunately get entangled by men of dubious conduct acting from behind the screen with ulterior motives and/or to achieve vested interests. The task, no doubt, is onerous but every effort ought to be made to achieve it by sifting the grain from the chaff. We leave the discussion here with the fervent hope of better times in future.”*

30. In this context, it is relevant to refer Section 187(1) & (2) of BNSS, which reads as under:

*“187. Procedure when investigation cannot be completed in twenty-four hours.*

*(1) Whenever any person is arrested and detained in custody, and it appears that the investigation cannot be completed within the period of twenty-four hours fixed by section 58, and there are grounds for believing that the accusation or information is well-founded, the officer in charge of the police station or the police officer making the investigation, if he is not below the rank of sub-inspector, shall forthwith transmit to the nearest Magistrate a copy of the entries in the diary hereinafter specified relating to the case, and shall at the same time forward the accused to such Magistrate.*

*(2) The Magistrate to whom an accused person is forwarded under this section may, irrespective of whether he has or has no jurisdiction to try the case, after taking into consideration whether such person has not been released on bail or his bail has been cancelled, authorise, from time to time, the detention of the accused in*





*such custody as such Magistrate thinks fit, for a term not exceeding fifteen days in the whole, or in parts, at any time during the initial forty days or sixty days out of detention period of sixty days or ninety days, as the case may be, as provided in sub-section (3), and if he has no jurisdiction to try the case or commit it for trial, and considers further detention unnecessary, he may order the accused to be forwarded to a Magistrate having such jurisdiction.*

31. Here the learned counsel for Murari Babu as well as the learned ADGP would agree that only 'eight days' custody has been obtained insofar as Murari Babu is concerned and that the prosecution could obtain his further custody for a period of 7 days within the statutory period of 60 days. That apart, K.S.Baiju and N.Vasu completed only 35 and 33 days' custody and their custody can be sought for by the prosecution limiting the same to a total of 15 days, within sixty days' of their custody. However, apart from all, the seriousness of the case is aggravating further which disentitles bail to the accused. Most importantly as held by the Apex Court in ***State of Chattisgarh v. Aman Kumar Singh***'s case (*supra*) that, *unsatiated greed for wealth has facilitated corruption to develop like cancer. If the corrupt succeed in duping the law enforcers, their success erodes even the fear of getting caught. What is more distressing is the*



*investigations/inquiries that follow. More often than not, these are botched and assume the proportion of bigger scams than the scams themselves. Tracking down corrupt public servants and punishing them appropriately is the mandate of the P.C. Act. “We the people”, with the adoption of our Constitution, had expected very high standards from people occupying positions of trust and responsibility in line with the Constitutional ethos and values. Further, there exists no magic wand as in fairy tales, a swish of which could wipe out greed, the Constitutional Courts owe a duty to the people of the nation to show zero tolerance to corruption and come down heavily against the perpetrators of the crime while at the same time saving those innocent public servants, who unfortunately get entangled by men of dubious conduct acting from behind the screen with ulterior motives and/or to achieve vested interests. The task, no doubt, is onerous but every effort ought to be made to achieve it by sifting the grain from the chaff.*

32. In equal moiety, flaws, laziness and willful lapses in the investigation of serious cases including corruption should be avoided to secure defect free investigation and eventful prosecution. Indubitably, when the investigation in serious cases including corruption is not fully defect free, without any loop hole the corrupt persons, including the big guns involved therein, would escape from



the process of law and prosecution and the same would affect the development of the country, the social equilibrium and the economic fabric. Therefore, while dealing with serious case including corruption, the investigation as well as the prosecution should be so vigilant to avoid escape of the culprits, including the big guns involved therein to protect the wish of the framers of the Constitution and to safeguard the Society as a whole.

33. In such cases, age old ailments such as diabetes, hypertension, etc. and medication thereof are also not grounds for granting bail, since such infirmities can be adequately addressed by the jail authorities or the Investigating Agency by giving proper medical care to the accused persons.

34. Having said so, at this stage, the release of the petitioners on regular bail would definitely impede the investigation, as already discussed in detail hereinabove and also the same would be detrimental to the interest of the holy Deity as well as the lakhs of devotees. Hence these petitions are liable to be dismissed.



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Accordingly these petitions stand dismissed.

*Sd/-*

***A.BADHARUDEEN, JUDGE***

*rtr/*



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APPENDIX OF BAIL APPL. NO. 14361 OF 2025

**PETITIONER' s ANNEXURES**

- Annexure -1**                      TRUE COPY OF THE FIR IN CRIME NO. 3701/2025  
DATED 11-10-2025 FILED BY THE 2ND RESPONDENT  
BEFORE THE JUDICIAL FIRST CLASS MAGISTRATE' S  
COURT, RANNI.
- Annexure -2**                      CERTIFIED COPY OF THE ORDER DATED 29-11-2025  
IN CRL.M.P.NO. 246/2025 OF THE COURT OF THE  
ENQUIRY COMMISSIONER AND SPECIAL JUDGE,  
KOLLAM.



2025:KER:98196

B.A.No.14361/2025 & conn.cases

APPENDIX OF BAIL APPL. NO. 14369 OF 2025

**PETITIONER' s ANNEXURES**

**Annexure -1**                      TRUE COPY OF THE FIR IN CRIME NO. 3700/2025  
DATED 11-10-2025 FILED BY THE 2ND RESPONDENT  
BEFORE THE JUDICIAL FIRST CLASS MAGISTRATE' S  
COURT, RANNI.

**Annexure -2**                      TRUE COPY OF THE APPLICATION FILED BY THE  
INVESTIGATING OFFICER BEFORE THE COURT OF THE  
ENQUIRY COMMISSIONER AND SPECIAL JUDGE  
(VIGILANCE) , KOLLAM DATED 29-11-2025.



2025:KER:98196

B.A.No.14361/2025 & conn.cases

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**APPENDIX OF BAIL APPL. NO. 14394 OF 2025**

**PETITIONER' s ANNEXURES**

**Annexure-I**

A CERTIFIED COPY OF THE ORDER DATED  
26.11.2025 IN CRL MP NO 238/2025 BEFORE COURT  
OF ENQUIRY COMMISSIONER AND SPECIAL JUDGE,  
KOLLAM.



2025:KER:98196

B.A.No.14361/2025 & conn.cases

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**APPENDIX OF BAIL APPL. NO. 14395 OF 2025**

**PETITIONER' s ANNEXURES**

**Annexure I**

**A COPY OF THE ORDER DATED 26.11.2025 IN CRL  
MP NO 240/2025 OF THE HON'BLE ENQUIRY  
COMMISSIONER AND SPECIAL JUDGE, VIGILANCE,  
KOLLAM.**



APPENDIX OF BAIL APPL. NO. 14430 OF 2025**PETITIONER' s ANNEXURES**

<b>Annexure I</b>	<b>A COPY OF THE LETTER DATED 16.02.2019 FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER.</b>
<b>Annexure II</b>	<b>A COPY OF THE PROCEEDINGS DATED 26.02.2019.</b>
<b>Annexure III</b>	<b>THE LETTER TO THE BOARD DATED 06-03-2019.</b>
<b>Annexure IV</b>	<b>THE ORDER DATED 20.03.2019, SIGNED BY THE SECRETARY ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD.</b>
<b>Annexure V</b>	<b>MAHAZAR DATED 18.05.2019.</b>
<b>Annexure VI</b>	<b>THE COMMUNICATION DATED 09.12.2019.</b>
<b>Annexure VII</b>	<b>A COPY OF THE COMMUNICATION SENT TO THE THIRUVABHARAM COMMISSIONER FROM THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD DATED 17.12.2019.</b>
<b>Annexure VIII</b>	<b>A COPY OF THE BOARD NOTE.</b>
<b>Annexure-VIII(a)</b>	<b>A COPY OF THE BOARD NOTE AND THE COMMENT ON THE NOTE DATED 24.12.2019.</b>
<b>Annexure IX</b>	<b>MEDICAL RECORDS OF THE PETITIONER.</b>
<b>Annexure X</b>	<b>CERTIFIED COPY OF THE BAIL ORDER DATED 03.12.2025 IN CRL.MP NO 248/2025 IN THE COURT OF THE ENQUIRY COMMISSIONER AND SPECIAL JUDGE KOLLAM.</b>