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ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ತುಣುಕುಗಳು
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SC gives ex-royals right to manage deity's property

But a panel will administer Padmanabhaswamy temple

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday held that the erstwhile Travancore royal family is the "human ministrant" or the *shebait* (manager) of the properties belonging to Sree Padmanabha, chief deity of the famed and fabulously rich Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple in Kerala.

A Bench of Justices U.U. Lalit and Indu Malhotra, in a 218-page judgment, brought quietus to a dispute of over a decade on whether the temple and its considerable assets should devolve to the Kerala government following the death of Travancore ruler Sree Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma in July 1991.

Arguments were raised both to and fro – senior advocate Krishnan Venugopal for the royals and some devotees represented by a team of advocates of P.B. Suresh, Vipin Nair and Karthik Jayashankar – on whether the 26th Constitutional Amendment, which put an end to privy purses enjoyed by erstwhile rulers, would nudge the temple and properties into the hands of the State. In fact, the Kerala High Court, in 2011, directed the State to take over the temple and exhibit its treasures for public viewing in a museum.



Tears of Joy: Avittom Thirunal Adithya Varma of Travancore royal family hugs his mother Aswathi Thirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bayi in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Justice Lalit, who wrote the judgment, categorically held that the death of a ruler does not affect the royal family's shebaitship of the temple. "Shebaitship was always in the royal family and the Ruler represented the unbroken line of shebait," the judgment said. Shebaitship does not lapse in favour of the State by principle of escheat (reversion of property to the State).

Accepting the royals' submission that the temple is a "public temple", the court issued a slew of directions

for its transparent administration in the future.

It directed the setting up of an administrative committee, with the Thiruvananthapuram district judge as its chairperson. The other members would be a nominee of the trustee (royal family), the chief thanthri of the temple, a nominee of the State and a member nominated by the Union Ministry of Culture. The panel would take care of the daily administration of the temple.

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D. S. M.

T. H.

Kerala temple case: government to abide by SC ruling

T.H. 14/7/20

Royal family to manage and administer the centuries-old Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government will abide by the Supreme Court ruling that upheld the right of the royal family of erstwhile Travancore in management of assets of principal deity of the centuries-old Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple here.

Responding to the SC ruling on Monday that put an end to a nine-year-old dispute, Devaswom Minister Kadakampally Surendrian said the government was duty-bound to implement the verdict, and it would not go in appeal against it.

Asked to comment on the Supreme Court reversing the Kerala High Court's, 2011 order that the rights of the erstwhile royal family ceased to exist after the death of the last ruler of erstwhile Travancore in 1991, the Minister said the State government had made its stand clear ear-

Temple Case Chronology

5-2-2010	31-1-2011	2-5-2011	8-7-2011
22-9-2011	23-8-2012	6-12-2013	15-4-2014
24-4-2014	27-11-2014	13-7-2020	
Jan-April 2019	10-1-2019		

SC upholds the right of the royal family of erstwhile Travancore to manage deity's property

lier. "The ruling needs to be examined in detail. We welcome the Supreme Court ruling," he added.

Aswathy Tirunal Gouri

Lakshmi Bayi, Popyam Tirunal Gouri Parvathy Bayi and Adithya Varma of the royal family of erstwhile Travancore expressed happiness

over the much-awaited ruling. "No one can claim credit for this. It is a victory of the Lord and a blessing from him to his devotees. The temple

wealth belongs to the Lord and not the royal family. We are thankful to all those who stood by us," said Popyam Tirunal Gouri Parvathy Bayi.