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Sabarimala: Don't levy parking fee at toll booths, says HC

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KOCHI: Collection of parking fee at toll collection booths should be discontinued at Sabarimala, the Kerala High Court ruled on Monday.

Declining Travancore Devaswom Board's (TDB) contention that the earlier high court order banning toll collection was coming in the way of collection of parking fee, a division bench of Justice Thottathil B Radhakrishnan and Justice C T Ravikumar ruled that parking fee should be collected only at places specifically earmarked for parking, and not at toll booths.

Further, the court held that only TDB or approved contractors should be allowed to collect parking fee. The court directed the police to ensure that parking fee was collected by approved contractors. The court also asked TDB to limit parking fee collection to five places, viz hill top, Chakkupalam 1 and 2, Nilakkal, and Triveni, and to collect parking fee after vehicles enter the allotted areas.

On November 25, the court had banned toll collection on the routes to the hill top shrine within Pathanamthitta district. Imposing the ban on toll collection, the court had held that the toll was being collected by contractors assigned by Travancore Devaswom Board, a body constituted through a state legislation, without the government issuing any legally-valid permission.

The court had also observed that the roads where tolls were collected were situated in the land belonging to the department of forests. Therefore, the devaswom board was not entitled to collect toll fee in the name of maintaining the roads leading to Sabarimala.

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