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### 3,200 Amala Bharatham volunteers in Sabarimala cleaning drive

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A view of the littered bathing ghats in river Pampa at Pampa in the foothills of Sabarimala on Wednesday. Photo: Leju Kamal

*The Hindu*

The Mata Amritanandamayi Math (MAM) will be deploying 3,200 Amala Bharatham volunteers for the intensive cleaning drive planned at Sabarimala on March 16 and 17.

Talking to *The Hindu*, V.N.Jithendran, District Collector, has said that the cleaning drive was aimed at systematic clearing of the waste accumulated at Sabarimala, Pampa and along the trekking path in view of the 10-day annual festival at the Lord Ayyappa Temple that begins on March 18.

#### **MAM role**

According to Brahmachari Sudeep, Amrita Viswa Vidyapeedhom director and co-ordinator of the cleaning programme, the Math has been an active participant in the cleaning drive at Sabarimala since the past two years.

He said the Ashram head, Mata Amritanandamayi, has taken it a duty of every devotee to keep South India's largest pilgrim centre clean and it was her decision to extend a helping hand to the temple authorities as well as the Government in maintaining the serenity and pristine glory of the sacred grove of Lord Ayyappa.

Gurudas Chaitanya, Thapasyamrita Chaitanya and Brahmachari Raju would be co-ordinating the cleaning drive at Sabarimala, Pampa and along the trekking path on the two days, he said.

Revenue Minister, Adoor Prakash, will formally inaugurate the cleaning programme at a function to be held at Pampa at 5 pm on March 15 and the work will begin the next day morning.

#### **Conveyance**

Though the Devaswom Minsiter, V.S. Sivakumar, had promised to arrange Kerala State Road Transport Corporation buses for conveyance of the MAM volunteers coming from different parts of the State, earlier, the corporation is not willing to provide the same owing to the prevailing financial crisis in the organisation.

The Government stand had left the MAM authorities in a fix as they are unable to make use of the service of a good number of its school-college buses for transporting the volunteers to Sabarimala owing to the annual examinations under way in March.

#### **51 buses needed**

Mr Sudeep said the Math required a total of 51 buses for transportation of volunteers from different parts of the State to Pampa and for their return journey from March 15 to 17.

Brahmachari Sreevalsan, programme manager, said the Math was planning to transport the volunteers in 21 buses each from Amritapuri and Kochi. He said Amala Bharatham volunteers of the Math from across the State, except from Thrissur and Palakkad, will be participating in the proposed cleaning drive at Sabarimala.

The Special Commissioner appointed by the Kerala High Court, K. Babu, said it was he who had approached MAM

seeking help for carrying out the pre-festival cleaning operation at Sabarimala on the directions of the Kerala High Court in the backdrop of the excellent service rendered by the Amala Bharathom volunteers at the pilgrim centre during the past two years.

### **TDB promises full support**

When pointed out the alleged indifferent attitude of the Travancore Devaswom Board authorities towards the MAM volunteers, denying them even proper food and accommodation, during the pre-pilgrim season cleaning drive in November last, the board member, Subhash Vasu, said, this time, the board would take extra care in providing the best available basic facility to them at Sabarimala.

Regarding the conveyance of the volunteers, Mr Vasu said the TDB president would consult the Devaswom Minister and do everything possible to sort out the problem.

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