Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) president A. Padmakumar has accused the Forest Department of ignoring even the Cabinet decision on collecting river sand from the Pampa in the foothills of Sabarimala for various construction works at Sabarimala, Pampa and Nilackal.

Mr. Padmakumar told The Hindu that the Cabinet had decided to permit the TDB to collect 20,000 cubic metres of sand from the Pampa where huge quantities of sand had accumulated in the deluge of August last.

He said Forest Minister K. Raju was present at the Cabinet meeting and the matter was conveyed to the top Forest officials.

However, the forest personnel at Pampa, on the directions of their department’s top authorities in Thiruvananthapuram, had objected claiming that the Cabinet had not mentioned the location from where the sand could be collected.

The issue was raised at the meeting of the High Power Committee for implementation of the Sabarimala Master Plan, attended by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, in Thiruvananthapuram a week ago and at another meeting attended by the Forest Minister and the Devaswom Minister. The Forest Minister had directed the officials to permit the TDB to collect sand from the Pampa, he said. Though the PCCF too did not raise any objection to sand collection, the TDB was yet to be given clearance by the Forest officials at Pampa, he alleged.

‘Sand being sold’
The Forest Department, however, had been selling river sand from the Pampa to private parties and 2,000 cubic metres of sand had already been sold, the TDB chief alleged. He said the execution of various major pilgrim amenity projects under the Sabarimala Master Plan was affected owing to the indifferent attitude.