

# News

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**The Kerala High Court requests that the media not make the Sabarimala gold loss issue too dramatic.**



The Court noted that speculative, hasty, and careless reporting would impact both the investigation and the rights of the people involved.

On Friday, the Kerala High Court requested that the media not make a big deal out of the purported loss of gold from the copper plates that were plated in gold and covered the "Dwarapalaka idols" (door guardians) at the Sabarimala temple. [**Suo Motu v. Kerala State & ors**].

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) that it established has only recently started looking into the case, according to a Division Bench made up of Justices Raja Vijayaraghavan V and KV

Jayakumar.

The Bench clarified that although the public has a right to be informed about current events by a free press, speculative and premature reporting would impact both the investigation and the rights of those involved in the case. Additionally, it pointed out that the media appeared to be utilizing soundbites from those who knew very little about the subject.

"The public has a right to up-to-date information, which is provided by print and electronic media. It is also acknowledged that everyone facing trial has the right to a fair, prompt, and open trial. It is also undeniable that the public is very interested in trials and that investigation is a component of trials. What we have noticed, though, is that the media is interviewing people who are just somewhat familiar with the issues. Newspapers, print media, and electronic media all provide contradicting reports," the Court noted.

Those with a cell phone and a video camera but little knowledge appear to be covering the issue as well, the Court added.

**"Those with access to a cell phone or video camera are also broadcasting events, which could violate the accused's rights and prevent a proper investigation into the situation. The Court stated, "We urge the media to abstain from sensationalizing the matter."**

In a ruling issued today regarding suo motu proceedings that were started in response to a report from the Sabarimala Special Commissioner, the Court made these observations. The gold-plated copper coverings were shipped to Smart Creations, a Chennai-based company, for repair work without prior notice to the commissioner or court, which sparked concerns in the report.

The coverings were taken off by the TDB and given to 'Smart Creations', a Chennai-based company, for restoration with the help of a devotee named Unnikrishnan Potti.

Reports indicating that 42.8 kg of things were given to Potti to deliver to the firm, but that the firm only registered roughly 38 kg of items as received prior to performing the repairs, greatly disturbed the Court.

Gold-plated pedhams were found in Potti's sister's home, according to later vigilance reports. They also discovered inconsistencies in the documentation of the TDB's record books and missing entries in the Thiruvabharanam journal, which records the gold jewels presented by the devotees.

Serious disparities in TDB registers were also brought to light in the report. The Court ultimately designated retired judge Justice KT Sankaran to supervise the completion of an exhaustive inventory of all valuables at the Sabarimala temple after observing that the TDB registers were inaccurate.

A SIT investigation into the matter was also ordered by the court.

Today, the Court was notified that Justice Sankaran will spend the weekend at the shrine.

The State Police Chief was then brought into the case by the court. The Police Chief, who also leads the Court-appointed SIT, has been instructed to file a criminal report and conduct a comprehensive investigation.

The Court mandated that the SIT submit reports to it in sealed covers every two weeks. Additionally, the Court restated a previous order to the SIT to keep its investigation from being discussed with the media.

In ten days, the case will be reopened.

S Rajmohan, a senior government pleader, represented the State.

The Travancore Devaswom Board was represented by G Biju, the standing counsel.

Advocate Sayujya Radhakrishnan represented the Sabarimala Special Commissioner as an amicus curiae.

Unnikrishnan Potti was represented by attorneys R Sudhish and M Manju.