

News

Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar petitions the Kerala High Court to have the CBI look into the gold heist in Sabarimala.



The BJP leader accused political meddling in the management of the Travancore Devaswom Board and widespread theft and transportation of pilfered temple gold between states.

Rajeev Chandrasekhar, a BJP politician and union minister, petitioned the Kerala High Court on Monday to have the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) look into the alleged theft of gold from the Dwarapalaka statues at the Sabarimala shrine. [Rajeev Chandrasekhar & ors v State of Kerala & ors]

A Division Bench of Justices Raja Vijayaraghavan V and KV Jayakumar after considering the objections expressed by the registrar regarding filing faults, decided to post the matter for hearing on December 9. The Bench asked Chandrasekhar and his co-petitioners, Dr. PS Mahendra Kumar and C Devidas, to fix the faults by then.

The same Bench is seized with a suo motu case brought regarding the subject of lost gold at Sabarimala. The Bench had recently tasked a retired judge to undertake an internal inquiry and created a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to carry out a detailed probe into the allegations of theft of gold.

The petitioners in the present case have claimed to be devotees of Lord Ayyappa.

According to their petition, they are concerned about the serious and systemic failure of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) in handling the Sabarimala temple assets, particularly the gold cladded plates of the 'Dwarapalakas idols'.

According to the appeal, a devotee donated the gold coverings over the ***Dwarapalakas*** in 1999, together with the gold coverings over the roof and sides of the "***Sreekovil***." The gold coatings were removed in 2019 and transferred to Chennai for restoration procedures. The mahazars prepared at the time of the removal described the plates as copper sheets and not gold-plated copper plates, the petition alleged.

Again in 2025, when the gold cladded plates were taken for repair works, the Special Commissioner alerted the Court that the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) removed the gold plated copper plates and handed it over to a devotee named Unnikrishnan Potti, without prior intimation or approval from the Special Commissioner or the Court for repair and electroplating.

The petitioners claim that Potti trusted Smart Creations, a Chennai-based company, to fix the items. However, only about 38 kg of the 42.8 kg of things that were turned over were returned to the company, indicating a stark disparity of roughly 4.54 kg.

The petition stated out that when the Bench studied the SIT findings as part of the suo motu case, it discovered prima facie evidence of severe failures by TDB personnel and possibly criminal crimes under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

As per the suit, the TDB, its president, members and officers failed to respect their statutory obligation to protect temple assets under the Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950.

The SIT headed by Kerala Police might not be able to undertake a totally independent probe because the problem allegedly includes personnel and former Board members connected to the current ruling party, the petitioners said.

According to the petitioners, the probe necessitates coordination across States because missing gold might have even been smuggled outside Kerala.

"The individuals who were selected to the Travancore Devaswom Board were affiliated with the ruling political party, which governs the government. The current investigation cannot give people like the petitioners, who are followers of Lord Ayyappa, confidence because the State Government directly controls the police forces, and it is impossible to rule out the possibility that the investigation will lead to political leaders and the government itself, according to the petition.

As a result, the petitioners have asked the Court to hand over the whole probe to the CBI. Additionally, they have requested that the Comptroller and Auditor General conduct a ten-year audit of the TDB board and publish the audit reports that are produced.

Advocate Gokul Krishna appeared for the petitioners