Press Release
21.01.2026

Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Kochi Zonal Office, conducted search operations on 20.01.2026 at 21 premises across Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, in connection with the misappropriation of gold and other temple assets relating to Sabarimala Temple.

ED initiated investigation on the basis of two FIRs registered by the Kerala Police Crime Branch, which revealed a well-planned criminal conspiracy involving senior officials of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), former temple administrators, private sponsors and jewellers.

Preliminary investigation has revealed that sacred gold-clad artefacts of the temple, including Dwarapalaka idol components, peedams (pedestals) and sanctum sanctorum door frame panels, were deliberately misrepresented in official records as mere “copper plates” and unauthorisedly removed from the temple premises during the period 2019–2025. These artefacts were subsequently transported to private facilities in Chennai and Karnataka, including Smart Creations and Roddam Jewellers, where gold was extracted through chemical processes under the guise of repair and replating work. The extracted gold and related assets constitute Proceeds of Crime, which were retained, transferred and concealed by the accused persons.

The investigation has also brought to light indications of other financial irregularities and scams at Sabarimala Temple, including misappropriation related to temple offerings and rituals, which are also being examined under the PMLA framework.

Accordingly, searches were conducted to trace the Proceeds of Crime, identify beneficiaries, recover incriminating records and digital evidence, and ascertain the full extent of money laundering. During the search operations, a large volume of incriminating documents and digital evidence was recovered from various locations. These include mahazars and official records prepared by Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) officials which deliberately misrepresented gold-clad sacred artefacts as “copper plates”, enabling their unauthorised removal and gold extraction. Records comprising official recommendations, orders and correspondence issued between 2019 and 2024, invoices and payment documents of private jewellers, and warranty certificates relating to chemical extraction and replating were also seized. Further, documents revealed systemic irregularities in temple offerings and rituals, including diversion of proceeds, quality-related losses and unexplained accumulation of assets and suspicious financial transactions by certain officials. Further, eight immovable properties of the prime accused, valued at approximately Rs. 1.3 Crore, were frozen under Section 17 (1A) of the PMLA, 2002, to prevent dissipation of Proceeds of Crime. Additionally, a 100-gram gold bar was also seized from the premises of Smart Creations, Chennai.

All seized materials and evidence are being examined to quantify the exact Proceeds of Crime, establish the money-laundering trail and identify further beneficiaries.

Further investigation is under progress.