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Chennithala raises corruption charges against Kerala Speaker

Opposition leader to approach Governor for probe; Speaker says he is willing to face any investigation agency

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala on Thursday levelled serious allegations against Kerala Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan in the financial handling of the Assembly and said he would approach Governor Arif Mohammad Khan for a probe into the charges.

Addressing a news conference here, Mr. Chennithala alleged that Mr. Sreeramakrishnan had indulged in largescale extravagance in the conduct of the Loka Kerala Sabha, hosted by the State government to bring Keralites living around the globe under one platform. A sum of ₹1.84 crore had been spent just for the seating arrange-



Ramesh Chennithala and, right, P. Sreeramakrishnan

ments in Sankaranarayanan Thampi Hall in the Assembly Complex in 2018.

He alleged that the profligacy had been led by Vadakara-based Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society (ULCCS). The renovation included replacing new seats and erecting imported lan-

terns costing ₹16.65 crore in January 2020. All this for hosting a programme for one-and-a-half days.

He alleged that ₹52.31 crore was spent for the software e-Niyamasabha (e-Assembly). For this, ₹13.59 crore had been offered as advance to the ULCCS. It was

mysterious that the ULCCS had been awarded the contract without inviting tenders for the project.

He said the appointment of the consultants of the Sabha TV and the organisation of Festival of Democracy, both initiatives of the Assembly, were steeped in corruption.

Mr. Chennithala said the Speaker, who was a State committee member of the CPI (M), had behaved in a manner unbecoming of his position, he said.

Mr. Sreeramakrishnan attempted to mount a strong defence against the imputation that gold smuggling case suspect Swapna Suresh had implicated him in

the racket. The Opposition parties had seized on the allegation to disadvantage the ruling front during the local body polls.

Mr. Sreeramakrishnan said he was willing to face any investigation agency as an 'ordinary citizen' and without the 'insulation' of his constitutional office to clarify the 'vile lie.' He had not accused any agency of bias and had no cause to mistrust them.

The Speaker challenged BJP State president K. Surendran to furnish evidence that he had abetted smugglers. He was considering legal action against the BJP leader. The Speaker said he had interacted with Swapna as exec-

utive secretary to the UAI Consulate General.

The Speaker slammed Mr. Chennithala for raising baseless allegations of corruption and extravagance against the Legislative Secretariat.

He denied there was any fraud in contracting the Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society for carrying out works in the Assembly complex. The Sabha TV was a new concept for bringing the Assembly closer to the public.

The well-appointed Assembly lounge, which Mr. Chennithala had highlighted as wasteful expenditure, was widely appreciated for its aesthetics, he said.

(With inputs from Thiruvananthapuram bureau)



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