

News

AI traffic cameras: Congress leaders' request for an investigation into the Safe Kerala project is denied by the Kerala High Court



VD **Satheesan** and Ramesh **Chennithala** argued that the State had infringed on citizens' right to privacy by entrusting their information to commercial organizations.

On Wednesday, the Kerala High Court denied a petition filed by Congressman VD **Satheesan**, the leader of the opposition in the Kerala assembly, and Congressman Ramesh Chennithala, the member of the Legislative Assembly. The petition sought a court-monitored investigation into the Safe Kerala Project, which aims to reduce traffic accidents by installing Artificial Intelligence (AI) cameras throughout the state [**VD Satheesan MLA & Anr. v State**

of Kerala & Ors.].

Chief Justice Nitin Jamdar and Justice Basant Balaji, who made up the Division Bench, noted that the petitioners had not presented any evidence of malfeasance in the project or its implementation.

The Transport Department envisioned the "Automated Traffic Enforcement System for Safe Kerala" project, which would deploy AI (artificial intelligence) cameras around the state to record traffic infractions and notify those who violate them.

According to the petition, the awarding of tenders for the installation of AI cameras led to corruption, nepotism, and favoritism, as well as a breach of the **Puttaswamy** case's recognized right to privacy.

It was argued that the State government had breached the right to privacy and the Motor Vehicle Act and Rules by assigning private organizations control over people's information.

"Private operators that are just interested in their profit margin are left in charge of the people's private and sensitive information, such as their driver's license and other Vahan data. Therefore, the Exhibit-P27 ruling, which permits private firms to violate the privacy of the State's citizens without consequence, is a violation of the right to privacy, which was deemed a basic right by the Hon'ble Apex Court in the **Puttuswamy** case. According to the Motor Vehicle Act and Rules, the only person with the authority to fine violators of traffic laws is the concerned officer in the Motor Vehicle Department with the rank of MVI or AMVI. However, the responsibility is now placed on private companies that will access citizens' private information, impose fines, and also offer payment facilities," the PIL said.

The plea also stated that it is argued that this transfer of power from statutory authorities to private enterprises is unconstitutional in and of itself, rendering the fines imposed legally unenforceable.

The project was also accused of involving pyramid-style corruption from the beginning, when KELTRON, a State government firm, was given the work order despite the finance department's strong concerns to their ability to carry it out.

The opposition leaders further asserted that there was significant corruption in the awarding of following tenders and the subleasing of the service-level agreement (SLA) to SRIT India Pvt. Ltd. and **Presadio** Technologies Pvt. Ltd., respectively.

As a result, they argued that a court-monitored investigation was required because both the State and federal investigating agencies appeared to be ignoring the situation.

Regretfully, those who stand to gain from the deal have command and authority over the State's investigative agency. The State Police is fully involved in the corruption since it occurs at the highest levels of authority. The petition said, "The Central agencies, which would have been the obvious choice, have shown that they will not conduct any investigation in a way that would harm the current State Government."

The petitioners also claimed that the administration wasted public funds by acting too quickly and used antiquated technologies.

The congress leaders demanded a court-monitored investigation of the project for these and other reasons in order to safeguard public funds.