

# Kerala to blacklist SNC Lavalin

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The State Government has decided to blacklist SNC Lavalin, a Canada-based firm involved in a graft case stemming from implementation of the contract for repair and revival of the Pallivasal, Sengulam and Panniyar hydroelectric projects during 1995-97, the Government told the Kerala High Court.

In an affidavit, the State Government said that it had already initiated steps to blacklist the firm in view of the remarks made by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India with respect to the works it had undertaken for the hydroelectric project and also the Kuttiyadi extension scheme.

The Government also submitted that the SNC Lavalin would not be allowed to participate in any tendering process of the KSEB in future.

The Government pointed out that no order had been issued by the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) for black listing or debaring or suspending the Canada-based firm from entering into agreement with the KSEB.

SNC Lavalin was one among the firm empanelled by the Power Finance Corporation, a nodal agency for restructured accelerated power development and reform programme (R-APDRP) under SCADA/DMS (supervisory control and data acquisition and distribution management system) consultants for the distribution utilities for the services under the Government. The Rs 50,000-crore R-APDRP programmes sought to enhance electricity distribution efficiency and loss reduction. In fact, the State Government had no role to play in these projects, the affidavit said.

The affidavit was filed in response to a writ petition seeking a directive to the State Government to black list SNC Lavalin as it had been involved in a corruption case. The petitioner K.R. Unnithan also sought a declaration that the empanelling of the firm for R-APDRP was illegal.

Meanwhile, Justice Thomas P. Joseph recused himself from hearing a petition challenging the verdict of the Thiruvananthapuram CBI Special Court discharging CPI (M) State secretary Pinarayi Vijayan and other accused from the SNC-Lavalin corruption case. Thomas P. Joseph is the second judge to recuse from the case after Justice K. Harilal.

The petition was filed by Editor of Crime, a fortnightly, and one of the witnesses in the case, T.P. Nandakumar. According to him, the Special Court should have framed charges and conducted a trial before discharging Vijayan and others.

According to the CBI charge-sheet, Vijayan, while serving as Electricity Minister from May 1996 to October 998, along with the other accused, had hatched a criminal conspiracy to award the supply contract for the renovation and modernisation of the Pallivasal, Sengulam, and Panniar hydroelectric projects to SNC-Lavalin at an exorbitant cost.