

## [Kanchi Shankaracharya Blasts Tamil Nadu Government's "God Lockers"](#)

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# Kanchi Shankaracharya Blasts Tamil Nadu Government's "God Lockers"

The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department of Tamil Nadu, India, has commenced a unique scheme to assure the safety of temple Utsava Murthis (small portable deities used for parades) by keeping them in central storage vaults at selected temples. Mr. R.M. Veerappan, State Minister for Information and Tourism, declared open the first such "idol safety deposit complex," designed to hold 2,000 deities, at the Thyagaraja Temple at Tiruvarur on October 10th. The action is in response to thefts and disfigurement of murthis under the wrong assumption they are made of gold. The Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, Sri Jayendra Saraswati, reacted strongly to the "idol lockers," saying he was "deeply pained," and called the move part of "a systematic plan to destroy Hinduism." His stand was supported by the head of Madurai Aadheenam, Srilasri Arunagirinatha Gnanasambanda Swamigal.

In response to criticisms, Minister Veerappan sought to clarify that, "the idols in temples for which daily pooja is performed according to Agama Sastras and those used for regular worship would not be removed to the proposed safe deposit complexes."

In addition to the idol lockers, the Minister announced the formation of a staff of security men at important temples to protect their deities and jewels. Two more idol lockers are proposed for Tiruchi and Tirunelveli districts.

The temples concerned can receive back their murthis at any time for special festivals. While at the locker, the murthis receive proper daily worship and there is some arrangement for public display - which the Shankaracharya referred to derisively as keeping idols "like exhibition dolls" and said this would affect the sanctity of the temples.

In a broadside to the government, His Holiness said, "Let the Government protect the people. Gods can take care of themselves." He also stated that government's authority over temples was intended to prevent corruption, but is being used to interfere even in day-to-day administration of temples and worship. There were many curbs of religious processions and other forms of worship, he said, and this new program will also be a hindrance.