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CJI Seeks Justice Varma’s Removal Over Alleged Cash Row

Ruchika Mohapatra · 12 May 2025

Justice Varma has refused to resign, and in line with procedure, the CJI has recommended Justice Varma’s impeachment. Read this post for more details!

Justice Yashwant Varma is at the center of a major controversy after a large quantity of cash was allegedly found at his official residence in Delhi in March. The incident, which followed a minor fire in the judge’s home, has triggered demands for his impeachment from sections of the legal and political community.

The controversy began when a fire reportedly broke out in Justice Varma’s government-allotted bungalow in central Delhi. While no injuries were reported, the firefighting personnel allegedly discovered several gunny sacks filled with currency notes, some partially burnt, while extinguishing the flames. Initial, unverified estimates suggest the amount may run into crores of rupees.

Justice Varma has strongly denied any wrongdoing and maintained that he has “no knowledge” of how the cash came to be stored in his home. However, in response to the growing public concern over the incident, a three-judge in-house inquiry committee was constituted to investigate the matter.

The committee includes Chief Justice Sheel Nagu of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Chief Justice G.S. Sandhawalia of the Himachal Pradesh High Court, and Justice Anu Sivaraman of the Karnataka High Court.

The judicial inquiry confirmed the presence of a significant quantity of cash at Justice Varma’s official residence in Delhi. The inquiry found sufficient grounds to hold Justice Varma accountable for misconduct, following which the CJI offered him the option to resign or take voluntary retirement. However, Justice Varma declined both options.

In line with established procedure, the Chief Justice has now written to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, attaching the committee’s findings and Varma’s

response, sent on May 6. This move formally sets in motion the constitutional process for judicial removal under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968.

Under the judiciary's internal code, when a judge is found guilty of impropriety or corruption by an internal probe, the CJI is expected to give the judge an opportunity to step down voluntarily. If the judge does not comply, the next step is for the CJI to alert the executive branch, the President and the Prime Minister about the findings.

Once the matter reaches this stage, the government can begin the formal impeachment process.

Justice Varma, who was recently transferred from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court, has come under fire from multiple quarters, including members of the Bar. Several organizations have called for a review of his past judgments and a more transparent judicial accountability system.

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