

Govt steps up to reclaim Wakf plots in Maharashtra

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The process of restoring Wakf board properties that were illegally handed over to institutions under the patronage of political leaders has been initiated, revenue minister Eknath Khadse, who heads the minority development and Wakf department, told the state Assembly on Wednesday.

The Wakf land is an inalienable religious endowment in Islamic law and donated for religious or charitable purposes with no intention to reclaim it.

The minister said, if need be, criminal cases, too, will be filed against Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leaders Tariq Anwar and Rajendra Shigane and other officers on charges of alleged misappropriation and mismanagement of Wakf properties, based on the findings of the Atak Shaikh committee report submitted last year.

The committee, appointed in 2007, had found large-scale violations in transactions related to Wakf land. Of the total 1 lakh acres belonging to the board, 70,000 acres were either sold, transferred or encroached upon, the report stated. The report mentions the names of many politicians and the then board members and officers like MY Patel, AU Pathan and the late MA Aziz.

Anwar was held guilty in the report for renewal of lease for a property in Aurangabad, Shingane for deletion of land from a certain category. The late MA Aziz, who was the chief of the Wakf board and ex-Congress MLA, too, was held responsible for illegal transfer of lands. Patel and Pathan were members of the board.

“We have already taken a decision to prohibit any more transfer of Wakf properties to any person or institution. The properties have been registered in the government’s name, which bans their sale or transfer. This will help us protect Wakf properties from misappropriation,” said Khadse, replying to the debate on budgetary grants to the minority development department.

Minister of state for minority welfare development Dilip Kamble said the government was ready to hand over the probe to the Central Bureau of Investigation.