

# Can't 'bank' on bank lockers? Try these alternatives

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With banks washing their hands off from liability in case of locker theft, the search is on for safer places for keeping valuables given the high crime rates. Industry experts and personal finance gurus tell **DNA Money** that customers can opt for solutions like jewellery and home insurance, safes at home and outside. Of course, this will require a change in mindset, and detailed study including of fine-print.

**To stay or not to stay:** There are no official rules but often one is forced to open a new bank fixed deposit (FD) and/or insurance policy to 'qualify' for a bank locker, with annual charges of Rs 1,500-7,000. So, the actual cost of keeping valuables in bank lockers is high.

Consumers also hardly exercise their right and ask a bank which type of locker and what security infrastructure has been put in place, points out Mehernosh Pithawalla, AVP, Godrej Security Solutions.

But banks are reliable institutions. "They enjoy great trust. Most of us are wary of keeping valuables in homes due to high chance of theft by maids and others. So, now to go beyond banks will require a mindset change," says Anil Rego is CEO and founder, Right Horizons. In case you are sticking to bank lockers, insure all valuables.

Outside banks, Archit Gupta, founder and CEO, ClearTax.com said, "There are many paid locker services like Kothari Safe Vaults, Sakthi Safe Vaults, India Safety Vaults and Navkettan Safe Locker, offering safety vault service for a price range of Rs 1,000-6,000. This seems to be a good alterna-



tive for bank lockers." Apart from being safe and secure, some are accessible even on Sundays and public holidays.

But some private lockers can be expensive as well. "Also, like bank lockers, in most cases, they too are not responsible for damage to property," argues Atrey Bhardwaj, head-general insurance Bankbazaar.

**Cover for valuables:** Alternatively, you can go the insurance way. "A person can also insure jewellery. Some companies which offer jewellery insurance are HDFC Ergo, Tata AIG and The New India Assurance Co. Ltd. A valuation of the jewellery is required for purchasing this insurance," said Gupta of ClearTax.com.

Jewellery is covered in household items in case of certain household covers. Rakesh Jain, CEO, Reliance General Insurance said the safety of jewellery can be assured by opting for all risk cover under householder

package policy.

"The insurance cover is valid both for jewellery kept at home, and also when it is worn while travelling anywhere in India. The sum insured at which jewellery can be insured is the price of the item covered as on inception date of policy plus an additional 10%," Jain added. In case of a claim, a surveyor would be appointed to assess the loss. The valuation report or invoice provided to insurer and FIR report would help.

Bhardwaj of Bankbazaar says jewellery is usually only a percentage of the total insured home contents. For instance, the maximum cover for jewellery may be 25% of the total sum insured for contents. So, standalone jewellery insurance products may be better.

**Buy a safe:** The last option is to opt for a safety locker at home along with an insurance cover for your valuables. This ensures that your valuables are safe as well as accessible to you whenever you want them.

## STAY SECURE

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Pithawalla of Godrej Security Solutions said, "The home safes range starts from Rs 5,000 and above. Home safes have evolved in technology over a period of time and come with different specifications depending on the security need of the consumer."

Advanced safes offer you protection from torch and tools for a prolonged period of time.

There are also safes which are technologically advanced and send you an SMS when someone tries to break in, raise an alarm making it even more difficult to break open the safe, according to him.

Yet, ironically, India has a very low home safes adoption rate - only 2.1% of the population use home safes. "Many consumers also feel that the heavier the safe, the stronger it is.

This is a myth. It's not the weight but the technology and the material used to manufacture the safe that determines its strength," he added.