

Temple chief digs in heels despite damning report

Calls grow louder for temple committee president Dinanath Gaonkar to step down after probe report exposes planning flaws that led to stampede

Team Herald

BICHOLIM: A day after the government released the fact-finding report into the tragic May 3 stampede at the Shree Lairai Devi temple in Shirgao — which left six dead and over 70 injured — the temple's managing committee president, Dinanath 'Dina' Gaonkar, claimed he had not received the report and denied any lapse in cooperation with the district administration. The damning report, prepared by a four-member committee, squarely blamed the temple committee, along with the district administration, police and Shirgao panchayat for serious lapses in planning and crowd management. It concluded that the stampede during the annual zatra could have been avoided with adequate preparation.

"I am yet to receive the fact-finding committee report from the government. I don't know when we will receive the report. But once I get it, I will examine it and respond," Gaonkar told **O Herald** when contacted for his reaction.



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— Dinanath Gaonkar, temple's managing committee president



"With the fact-finding committee holding the current temple managing committee responsible, the committee has no right to continue and they should resign from their posts owing moral responsibility"
— Ganesh Gaonkar, former temple managing committee president



When asked about the report's criticism of the temple committee, Gaonkar dismissed suggestions that it had failed to cooperate. "We never fell short and we cooperated with the district administration," he said, adding that the report would be discussed with

the mahazans before taking any further steps. However, former temple managing committee president Ganesh Gaonkar took a harder stance, demanding the resignation of the current committee on moral grounds. "With the fact-finding committee

holding the current temple managing committee responsible, the committee has no right to continue and they should resign from their posts owing moral responsibility," he said. He also claimed to have submitted documentation regard-

ing the functioning of the current committee.

The report exposes multiple administrative and logistical failures, particularly the inability to address recurring issues such as the unruly behaviour of a section of dhonds (devotees). Despite previous warnings and known crowd risks, neither the temple committee nor the authorities acted decisively to prevent the tragedy. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, while making the report public on Tuesday, said that show-cause notices had been issued to eight government officials for their role in the lapses. However, whether the recommendation to dissolve the temple committee and appoint an administrator will be acted upon remains uncertain.

Among the major lapses highlighted was the failure to implement a multi-route crowd circulation plan, even though alternate routes were available. Instead, all movement was funnelled through a single, heavily congested pathway.

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JOB SCAM ALERT: Youth claims fraud, intimidation by agency

Alleges Panjim consultancy forcefully kept his passport and did not return lakhs he paid for overseas employment, blames cops for inaction

BASURI DESAI

PANJIM: A 27-year-old job-seeker from Verna, has accused a Panjim-based job consultancy of cheating, intimidation and forceful retention of his passport for three years, destroying his chance of securing overseas employment and wrecking his career.

Sahil Sandeep Vernekar, the complainant, has submitted a detailed letter to the Director General of Goa Police, claiming that despite repeated assurances and intervention from senior police officials, neither has his passport been returned nor the balance of Rs 3 lakh given back. His complaint also claims alleged inaction on the part of officers from Panjim Police Station.

"They (Job Consultancy) promised me a job in Canada within six months and took Rs 13 lakh along with my passport. Three years passed with no progress. When I demanded my money and passport back, they used threats, lies, and even uniformed police officers to silence me," Vernekar alleged in his complaint.

"They (job consultancy) promised me a job in Canada within six months and took Rs 13 lakh along with my passport. Three years passed with no progress. When I demanded my money and passport back, they used threats, lies, and even uniformed police officers to silence me"

— Sahil Sandeep Vernekar, in complaint letter to DGP

"I will check the status of the matter, and whether the passport has not been released by the agency"

— Sudesh Naik, Panjim SDPO



According to Vernekar, the agency later diverted him to apply for a UK visa, citing diplomatic tensions between India and Canada. However, when he resisted, he claims he was subjected to coercion, including being forced to sign a "full and final settlement" affidavit, allegedly in front of a notary and a uniformed policeman, after which only Rs 10 lakh was refunded.

Vernekar alleged that despite assurances from Panjim SDPO Sudesh Naik that his passport was returned, no action has been taken despite months having passed. "Till date, neither has my passport been returned nor the balance amount. Instead, a false harassment case was filed against my father by a staffer from the consultancy pretending to be a lawyer," he wrote in his complaint.

When contacted, Naik said that the complainant had met him once and he was referred to the PI of Panjim Police Station.

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Justice B R Gavai sworn in as Chief Justice of India

PTI, NEW DELHI: Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai, who has been part of several benches that delivered landmark rulings including the one upholding the Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370 bestowing special status to Jammu and Kashmir, was on Wednesday sworn in as the 52nd Chief Justice of India.

The 64-year-old was administered oath by President Droupadi Murmu at a brief ceremony at the Ganatri Mandap in the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

He succeeds Justice Sanjiv Khanna, who demitted office on Tuesday on attaining the age of 65.

CJI Gavai, who was elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court on May 24, 2019, will have a tenure of over six months and would demit office on November 23. He took the oath of affirmation in Hindi.

Soon after he took oath, CJI Gavai sought blessings of his mother Kamal



President Droupadi Murmu looks on as Justice Bhushan Gavai greets the audience in New Delhi, on Wednesday

Tai Gavai by touching her feet. He was greeted by Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers and former judges.

Born on November 24, 1960, in Amravati, Justice Gavai was elevated as an additional judge of the Bombay High Court on November 14, 2003. He became a permanent judge of the high court on November 12, 2005.

Justice Gavai has been

a part of several Constitution benches in the apex court which delivered path-breaking verdicts.

Apart from being a part of a five-judge Constitution bench which upheld the Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370, Gavai was also part of a five-judge Constitution bench which annulled the electoral bonds scheme for political funding.

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Pak hands over BSF jawan after 21 days

PTI, AMRITSAR: India and Pakistan on Wednesday exchanged each other's border force personnel who had been apprehended along the International Borders (IB) during the recent tensions between the two countries, officials said.

Border Security Force (BSF) jawan Purnam Kumar Shaw was handed over to Indian authorities at the Attari-Wagah border point in Amritsar, 21 days after he was apprehended by the Pakistan Rangers along the IB in Punjab.

"With the consistent efforts of the BSF through regular flag meetings with the Pakistan Rangers and through other communication channels, the repatriation of the BSF constable has become possible," a BSF spokesperson said.

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MAX. TEMP 35.5 °C
MIN. TEMP 26.9 °C

idharudhar



This loan should cover an EMI on the previous one!

Extended IPL clashes with international calendar

Foreign players caught between franchise, national duties after IPL schedule spills over

AFP, NEW DELHI: The IPL resumes Saturday after its suspension because of the India-Pakistan conflict, but there are doubts over foreign players and the extended schedule has sparked a showdown with international cricket.

The IPL will now end on June 3, nine days later than planned, putting it on a collision course with the English summer of cricket and preparations for the World Test Championship (WTC) final at Lord's on June 11.



An England ODI series against the West Indies starts on May 29 while the South Africa and Australia squads are due to begin build-up for their WTC final before the end of May. South Africa says its Test players must leave India by an originally agreed date of May 26. "Our initial agree-

ment with the IPL and the Indian board was that our players would return (for national duty) on the 26th," said South Africa coach Shukri Conrad, who has eight members of his Test squad contracted to IPL teams.

"As it stands, we're not budging on this." The IPL was scheduled to finish May 25, but then the Indo-Pak conflict caused the competition to be suspended last week.

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