

Two Bombay
HC judges
elevated as
chief justices



Revati Mohite-Dere and
MS Sonak

Urvi Mahajani
MUMBAI

The Supreme Court Collegium on Thursday recommended the elevation of five High Court judges as Chief Justices of different High Courts, including two judges from the Bombay High Court.

Justices Revati Mohite-Dere and MS Sonak of the Bombay High Court have been recommended for appointment as Chief Justices of the Meghalaya and Jharkhand High Courts, respectively. The recommendations were made at a Collegium meeting held on December 18, headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant along with senior judges of the apex court. The appointments are subject to approval by the Union government.

As a judge, Justice Mohite-Dere has delivered several notable rulings, particularly in PILs, often directing the state to ensure compliance with court orders. She has led benches monitoring issues such as pothole-related civic failures, illegal hoardings, and contempt proceedings against officials. She also initiated a suo motu PIL in the 2024 sexual assault of two minor girls at a school in Badlapur and directed registration of FIRs against policemen allegedly involved in a fake encounter of the accused. A bench led by her convicted encounter specialist Pradeep Sharma in the 2006 fake encounter of Ramnarayan Gupta alias Lakkhan Bhaiyya, sentencing him to life imprisonment after reversing his acquittal by the sessions court. She also constituted an eight-member committee to conduct a social audit of BMC-run maternity homes following deaths linked to alleged medical negligence.

Justice Sonak was appointed an additional judge of the Bombay High Court on June 21, 2013. He has authored several significant judgments, including rulings on taxation, intellectual property and personal liberty. His bench upheld regulatory action by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board against Growel Mall in Kandivali operating without environmental clearance.

PA wife suicide
case: SIT probes

Mumbai: In the suicide case of Gauri Palve, wife of Anant Garje, PA to Pankaja Munde, a SIT is probing. Post-mortem confirms death by hanging. Crime scene recreated; Garje remanded to judicial custody after police remand ended. Investigation ongoing.

Poonam Apraj

WINGS OVER INDIA | The survey will be carried out between the 1st & 3rd week of Jan; bird counts will be accepted from Dec '25 onwards to the end of Feb '26

Count wings, conserve wetlands:
BNHS calls for waterbird survey

Manoj Ramakrishnan
MUMBAI

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has invited birders to join the country-wide Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) in India in January 2026.

The survey will be carried out between the first and third week of January, and bird counts will be accepted from December 2025 onwards to the end of February 2026, BNHS said. The nationwide citizen science exercise will help collect data on birds that migrate to India in summer and understand migration trends and the status of the wetlands, the organisation said.

The AWC, initiated in 1987, is recognised as the longest-running citizen-science programme dedicated to the conservation of waterbirds and wetlands in the region. Wetlands International South Asia (WISA), BNHS, Birdcount India, and National Biodiversity Authority are among the organisations participating in the survey.

"Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems on earth, supporting rich biodiversity and providing essential ecological services that are vital for both nature and humans," said Kishor Rithe, director of BNHS.

Rithe said that the field implementation of the AWC is made possible through a



1987
Year the
AWC was
initiated

2018-2023
Period of India's National Action Plan for
Conservation of Migratory Birds and their
Habitats along the CAF mentioned

Component 5
Position of AWC in the
National Action Plan

strong collaborative network. "AWC's state coordinators will head the programme, but we need the support of local birders, researchers, university students, and other dedicated contributors," said Rithe.

BNHS stated that they have written a letter to the chief wildlife wardens and the heads of forest protection forces of state forest departments to facilitate participation of their staff in data collection as well as in conducting the census. The National

Biodiversity Authority has instructed all the state and union territory Biodiversity Boards to provide support to the census by involving village-level Biodiversity Management Committees.

Dr P Sathiyaselvam, senior scientist heading the Central Asian Flyway programme in India, deputy director of BNHS, stated that several wetlands have recorded changes in waterbird populations due to degradation of aquatic habitat. "This exercise will help to understand the pres-

ent status of our wetland ecosystems, and hence monitoring waterbird populations will be crucial for their conservation and restoration," said Sathiyaselvam. Data from the census will be used to prepare the national action plans and concerted action plans at the global level, he stated further.

Dhruv Varma, senior technical officer at WISA, explained that the BNHS, Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN) coordinators, and AWC state coordinators will train and sensitise local

birders and conduct systematic waterbird counts and wetland assessments.

The AWC's scientific and conservation value is widely recognised at the national and international levels. The programme has been identified as an important waterbird monitoring initiative under Component 5 of India's National Action Plan for the Conservation of Migratory Birds and their Habitats along the Central Asian Flyway (CAF), an important international migratory route for birds, which aims to strengthen the management of sites of ornithological importance.

BNHS said that AWC data has made significant contributions to conservation planning and policy formulation. The results have supported the development of national action plans, including India's National Action Plan for Conservation of Migratory Birds and their Habitats along the CAF (2018-2023), informed the designation of Ramsar Sites (wetlands of international importance), and guided wetland management programmes.

Additionally, the findings have contributed to several multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on Migratory Species, the organisation added.

Duo gets 20-year jail in drug case

Charul Shah Joshi
MUMBAI

The special NDPS court has sentenced two pharmacists, Pravin Waghela, 34, from Bandra and Ramdas Nayak, 40, from Hubli, Karnataka, to 20 years of imprisonment for manufacturing banned narcotic substance Mephedrone (MD) in 2017, intending to export it abroad. The ANC officials seized a total of 17 kg of MD.

Firdos Nathani alias Firoz alias Mahesh Patel alias Mukeshbhai Patel from Navsari was acquitted. The court imposed a fine of Rs1 lakh on each convict.

Observing that the duo "utilized their knowledge for illegal activities rather than its use for the benefit of society," the court refused leniency, stating it was "a fit case to impose maximum punishment" for its deterrent effect.

On January 9, 2017, ANC

trapped Waghela at Chheda Nagar Bus Stop, recovering 200 grams from him and 10 kg from his car. A raid on their Karnataka plant yielded 7 kg more. Investigation linked Waghela to absconding UK resident Minal Chamneri via FIRs for export. Prosecutor BD Rajput examined 23 witnesses. Firdos was acquitted as mere call records without transcripts or further evidence were insufficient to prove conspiracy.



Weave into heritage

Discover the beauty of handcrafted textiles and rich traditions at the Antaran Artisan Exhibit – a Tata Antaran initiative – at the World Trade Center, Cuffe Parade, Mumbai, on 18th and 19th December Mumbai on 18th and 19th December. – Vijay Gohil

‘After full 4G coverage,
Maha moves to 5G’

FPJ News Service
MUMBAI

Union Minister for Communications and Development of the North Eastern Region, Jyotiraditya Scindia, stated in Parliament on Thursday that Maharashtra has achieved 100% 4G saturation and is now rapidly progressing towards comprehensive 5G connectivity. He noted that, to strengthen digital connectivity across the state, around 1,64,000 4G and 40,000 5G Base Transceiver Stations (BTS) have been installed so far, resulting in significant improvement in telecom services in both urban and rural areas.

The Minister specifically highlighted the expansion of digital infrastructure in the Konkan region, stating that extensive 4G and 5G network

deployment has been carried out across various districts. He shared that Palghar district has 5,463 4G and 1,609 5G BTS, Thane has 6,710 4G and 1,989 5G BTS, Raigad has 2,940 4G and 791 5G BTS, Ratnagiri has 2,292 4G and 465 5G BTS, and Sindhudurg has 975 4G and 256 5G BTS installed. This was stated by the Press Information Bureau in a press release.

Scindia stated that, in line with Prime Minister Modi's Digital India vision, the Government of India is committed to providing accessible, fast, and reliable digital connectivity to every citizen of the country. With the further expansion of the 5G network in the coming period, digital empowerment across Maharashtra and the entire country will be taken to new heights, he added.

Global Cancer Care
begins patient-first
support in Mumbai

FPJ News Service
MUMBAI

Global Cancer Care (GCC), a patient-first cancer awareness, early detection and care navigation platform, has announced the launch and strengthening of its on-ground services in Mumbai. Operating from DN Nagar in Andheri, the initiative aims to address the emotional, informational and diagnostic gaps that patients often experience at the earliest stage of a possible cancer diagnosis, well before they enter a hospital system.

Founded in 2025 by media professional Nivedita Basu and oncologist Dr Shivam Shingla, Global Cancer Care responds to a growing national concern—delayed cancer diagnosis despite the availability of treatment facilities. In many cases, fear, uncertainty, lack of guidance and anxiety around screening or medical tests prevent individuals from seeking timely medical attention, leading to advanced-stage detection.

Unlike conventional models that primarily engage patients during treatment, GCC focuses on early intervention. It supports individuals at the point of suspicion, when doubts, unanswered questions and emotional distress often dominate decision-making. Guided by its philosophy, "Because I Care," the platform emphasises emotional reassurance and medical clarity as essential elements of effective cancer care. Sharing the vision behind the initiative, Nivedita Basu said her own recent health scare underscored the need for such support. "The early phase

of a possible cancer diagnosis can be deeply isolating. You face complex medical terms, conflicting advice and overwhelming fear, often without knowing where to turn. Global Cancer Care was created to ensure that no one has to navigate those first steps alone," she said.

Dr Shivam Shingla, clinical director, noted that many patients in India reach oncologists too late, not due to lack of care options but because of delayed action. "Our aim is to normalise screening, promote early diagnosis and guide patients through ethical, transparent and affordable treatment pathways. When patients are supported emotionally and guided clearly from the start, outcomes improve significantly," he said.

Backed by a multidisciplinary team and a trusted network of oncologists across Mumbai, GCC assists patients with symptom awareness, screening pathways, interpretation of diagnostic reports and access to credible specialists. For those undergoing chemotherapy, the platform also provides structured treatment guidance and access to cooling cap therapy.

To ensure continuity of care, Global Cancer Care has announced a phased expansion plan. It currently operates 10 inpatient beds and plans to expand to 100 beds within a year, with a long-term goal of 400 beds over the next five years. The organisation is also exploring partnerships for pan-India expansion, with a continued focus on affordability, transparency and patient-centric care.

2 college students killed
in scooter-truck collision

Megha Kuchik
MUMBAI

An 18-year-old girl and a 20-year-old boy were killed in a road accident in Malad West on Wednesday night. The two were travelling on a scooter when it collided with a trailer truck that was allegedly parked dangerously by the roadside. The boy, who was riding the scooter, rammed into the rear of the truck, resulting in the death of both riders.

The deceased have been identified as Ridaj D'Souza and Kelyan Fernandes, both college students. On Thursday, the Bangur Nagar police registered an FIR against the truck driver, how-

ever, the accused has not been arrested yet.

This was the third such fatal incident this week in which two people riding a two-wheeler lost their lives.

According to the Bangur Nagar police, the Malad accident occurred around 10pm on Wednesday at Evershine Nagar, Malad West. The scooter was travelling from Rivan International School towards Dheeraj Kirti building when it collided with the rear of the parked truck. With the assistance of bystanders, the police rushed both victims to Trauma Care Hospital in Jogeshwari East, where doctors declared them dead.

A case has been registered against the truck driver.

Supreme Court appeals to all
women to make their will

T. S. Tijoriwala

Amongst the various steps of estate planning, one of the vital steps to be taken is to prepare one's Will.

Usually, it is the male of the house who works hard, acquires assets and is required to plan his estate so that after his demise, his estate is distributed to his loved ones including his wife and children.

The Female of the house, in the earlier days looked after the house, was not a working woman and did not have many assets in her own individual name.

However, things have changed and women are playing a vital role in acquisition, retention and growth of the family's wealth. This article emphasises why a woman should make her will bestowing her assets as per her

wishes, more so in the light of a recent Supreme Court Judgement.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court, noted that Education, employment and entrepreneurship of women in India, including Hindu women has led to their acquiring self-acquired properties. The Supreme Court underscored the importance of Hindu women executing wills for their property, particularly their self-acquired assets. The Court observed that a written will is essential to ensure that a woman's intentions are respected after her death and to prevent the kind of property disputes that frequently arise in her marital and natal families. The Supreme Court in no uncertain terms stated,

"However, through this order we appeal to all women and particularly Hindu women who are likely to be in

the position of Section 15(1)(b), at the time of their death, to take immediate steps to make a testament or Will, preferably a registered Will, well in advance, bequeathing their properties, including their self-acquired properties in accordance with Section 30 of the Hindu Succession Act read with the provisions of the Indian Succession Act, 1925. We say so in order to safeguard the interests of not only Hindu women in this country, but all women in general so as to avoid any further litigation in this regard."

This observation was made while the Court was hearing a Public Interest Litigation challenging Section 15(1)(b) of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, a provision that determines how the property of a Hindu woman devolves if she dies intestate, that is, without a will.

While the Court stopped short of striking down the provision, its observations serve as a clear advisory to women: until the law is revisited by Parliament or re-examined through an appropriate constitutional challenge, it is prudent for every Hindu woman to make their will. A properly drafted will allows her to decide how her assets—whether self-acquired or inherited—should be distributed, and it ensures that her family members are not drawn into avoidable disputes after her death. The judgment also highlights the pressing need for greater awareness among women about estate planning and the importance of documenting the succession of their hard-earned property.

The writer is a practising Advocate in the Bombay High Court

HC bars Nashik
trees felling

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court has barred felling any trees in Nashik's Tapovan area for the 2027 Simhashta Kumbh Mela without its prior permission. The state plans to cut around 1,800 trees for Sadhugram, a residential facility for sadhus. Petitions challenge this, citing biodiversity loss and Godavari river impact, with residents staging Chipko-style protests. The government is vetting public objections. The National Green Tribunal had earlier stayed cutting till January 2025.

Urvi Mahajan

SC upholds HC's
Kolhapur bench

Mumbai: The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed a petition challenging the notification that led to the establishment of a circuit bench of the Bombay High Court at Kolhapur, reports Bar and Bench. The plea, filed by lawyer Ranjeet Baburao Nimbalkar, was rejected by a Bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N.V. Anjaria. The Kolhapur circuit bench was inaugurated in August by then Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai. It exercises jurisdiction over six districts—Satara, Sangli, Solapur, Kolhapur, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg.