

News

In a case involving vote violence, the Bombay High Court chastises the State for failing to detain the son of cabinet minister Bharat Gogawale.



The judge said, ***"He is a cabinet minister and his son is running away, and police are unable to apprehend him."***

In relation to cross-FIRs resulting from an altercation during the Mahad municipal elections, the Bombay High Court harshly criticized the Maharashtra government on Thursday for failing to detain Vikas Gogawale, son of State cabinet minister and Shiv Sena MLA Bharat Gogawale [Shreeyash Jagtap v. State of Maharashtra and connected matters].

Despite non-bailable warrants, magistrate proclamations, and reports of extensive efforts to find Vikas, Justice Madhav Jamdar repeatedly questioned why the police had not taken him into custody. The

He also expressed worries about the minister's ongoing membership in the cabinet despite the fact that his son is still at large and out of the police's jurisdiction.

He cannot be taken into custody by the police. Why? Orally, the judge said, **"He (Vikas) is not an ordinary person and the minister is still in the cabinet."**

"Everyone is a citizen. The judge said, **"There are no special citizens."**

The Court added that police inaction had a negative impact on the State's rule of law.

The judge stated, **"The position on record clearly shows that the rule of law in the state of Maharashtra is adversely affected."**

The lawsuit began with claimed altercations between competing factions of the Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) and the NCP (Ajit Pawar faction) on December 2, 2025, the day of the Mahad Municipal Council election in Raigad district, despite the existence of prohibitory orders.

On the same day, two cross-FIRs were filed: one named NCP leader Shreeyash Jagtap, son of former MLA Manik Jagtap, and his supporters, while the other named Vikas and his cousin Mahesh Gogawale and others. Both parties claimed to have threatened, assaulted, and used a handgun. The

The High Court granted Jagtap temporary protection last month, which was extended until January 23, but denied anticipatory bail to Vikas, Mahesh, and others because to their political clout.

The attention abruptly moved to the State's refusal to carry out warrants against the minister's son on January 22 while the Court was considering anticipatory bail requests made by other accused. The

One of the accused's attorney, Saurav Dhar, cited a TV9 Marathi news story in which minister

Bharat Gogawale stated that his son was in communication with him and was not running away.

Despite making such a public declaration, Justice Jamdar pointed out that the police had not documented the minister's version.

Why is the minister's statement conveniently unrecorded? The judge questioned, ***"The honorable chief minister is so powerless that he can't do anything about that."***

Vikas was ***"not an ordinary person,"*** according to Justice Jamdar, who also noted that he was the son of a cabinet minister who was still serving in the Council of Ministers. Jamdar questioned how Vikas could continue to elude capture in spite of the State's resources.

"Anyone can be arrested within a day if the government so chooses." The government will submit an affidavit if it chooses not to make an arrest, the judge said.

The judge cited a newspaper article stating that on January 26, a cabinet minister was granted the privilege of raising the national flag despite his son's escape and the police's inability to apprehend him. The

According to an affidavit filed in accordance with a previous ruling dated January 17, Advocate General Milind Sathe told the court that despite their best efforts, police had been unable to apprehend Vikas and other accused individuals identified in the FIRs.

He said that 17 people had non-bailable warrants issued against them and that a proclamation will be made in accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure.

He added that teams had been sent to different places and that the Superintendent of Police was personally overseeing the investigation, which included the execution of warrants and the attachment of properties.The

Unsatisfied, the Bench demanded that the State take specific, practical action. The fact that co-accused Mahesh Gogawale was able to submit his nomination for the next Zilla Parishad elections infuriated him.

The judge emphasized that even though the police stated they were unable to locate

the accused, the fact that the nominations had been submitted through a proposer only served to confirm that they were clearly working from somewhere.

The judge further emphasized that an accused person who was "absconding" may not simultaneously submit applications for intervention.

The judge stated, ***"Ask your client to surrender first, and then make submissions."***

The Bench was told when the session came to a conclusion that Vikas will turn himself up by Friday morning and that the minister would speak with his son.

After then, the court ordered Vikas to turn himself in before to the hearing and postponed the case to Friday.