

2025 LiveLaw (SC) 623

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
B.R. GAVAI; CJI., AUGUSTINE GEORGE MASIH; J.
WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) DIARY NO. 28817/2025; 23-05-2025
SHAILENDRA MANI TRIPATHI *versus* UNION OF INDIA AND OTHERS

Public Interest Litigation – Publicity – Dignity of CJI’s Office – Protocol Lapse – Dismissal – Nominal Costs Imposed – The Supreme Court dismissed a PIL filed by a lawyer seeking action against Maharashtra officials for protocol lapses during the Chief Justice of India’s visit to Mumbai on May 18, 2025. The Court labeled the petition as “publicity interest litigation” filed for “cheap publicity” and criticized the exaggeration of trivial issues. Noting the officials’ apology and the CJI’s request to close the matter, the Court deemed the petition unnecessary. Considering the petitioner’s status as a young lawyer with seven years of practice, the Court imposed a nominal cost of Rs. 7,000 instead of heavier costs. The Court underscored the need to uphold the dignity of the CJI’s office and cautioned against filing frivolous petitions that invite controversy to the institution. (Paras 6–10)

For Petitioner(s): Mr. Pradeep Kumar Yadav, Adv. Mr. Shailendra Mani Tripathi, Adv. Mr. Deepak Yadav, Adv. Ms. Pooja Shilpkar, Adv. Ms. Anjali Kumari, Adv. Mr. Chand Qureshi, AOR

ORDER

1. This petition has been filed seeking a direction to the respondent no.1-union of India and respondent no.2State of Maharashtra to initiate a preliminary inquiry against the respondents no. 3, 4 and 5 under the All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969, for protocol violation and misconduct during the visit of Hon’ble The Chief Justice of India¹ on 18th May, 2025.
2. The petition has been filed on the basis of CJI’s visit to Mumbai on 17 - 18th May, 2025.
3. In a speech given in a function held on 18th May, 2025, the CJI had referred to a breach of protocol by the officers of the State of Maharashtra. However, the CJI in his speech had specifically mentioned that these were small issues and that he was not concerned with the same. He had categorically stated that it was for the Senior Officers of the State Government, i.e. the Chief Secretary, the Director General of Police and the Commissioner of Police to reflect as to whether their absence to receive the head of one of the organs of Democracy; the CJI, was visiting the State of Maharashtra for the first time after his elevation was correct or not?
4. Immediately after the said speech became viral, all the three officers rushed to the Chaitya Bhoomi, where the CJI had gone to pay respect to the memory of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar. The aforesaid three officers had thereafter accompanied the CJI to the airport and were present till the CJI had boarded the flight. All the three officers tendered their apology on the first opportunity and rectified the error committed by them. Not only this, all the aforementioned three officers and all other concerned tendered their apology, some of them did so publicly.
5. Still the news items and videos were being published discussing the aforesaid issue.

¹ For short ‘the CJI’

6. Noticing that the said issue had been blown out of proportion, the CJI directed the Registry to issue a Press Note stating thus:

20.05.2025

Press Note

News items are being published in the media regarding protocol issues during the visit of Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India to Maharashtra. All concerned have already expressed regrets. Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India has expressed that a trivial issue should not be blown out of proportion. CJI has requested everyone that the matter be given a quietus.

* * * * *

7. It is thus clear that the CJI had specifically expressed that the trivial issues should not be blown out of proportion and requested everyone to give a quietus to the issue.

8. We make it clear that the CJI was not concerned about the treatment given to him as an individual, but he was only concerned with the dignity of the office of the CJI as a head of one of the organs of the Democracy.

9. After the CJI had publicly requested everyone to give a quietus to the matter, we do not appreciate the issue being unnecessarily continued and this Public Interest Litigation being filed for the said purpose.

10. Therefore, we are of the considered view that the present Public Interest Litigation is nothing else but a 'Publicity Interest Litigation' in order to gain cheap publicity. We strongly deprecate such practices. We are of the considered view that nobody should make a mountain out of a molehill.

11. We, therefore, dismiss this petition with costs. Since the petitioner is a lawyer with seven years of practice, we are only awarding the cost quantified as Rs.7,000/-to be deposited with the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee.

12. Pending application(s), if any, shall stand disposed of.

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