BLOGS

Justice BR Gavai Sworn In as the 52nd Chief Justice of India

Ruchika Mohapatra · 14 May 2025

Justice BR Gavai has been sworn in as the 52nd Chief Justice of India!

Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai is all set to take charge as the 52nd Chief Justice of India on May 14, 2025. He will succeed Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, whose term ends on May 13. Justice Gavai's elevation marks a significant moment in the country's judicial history, because he will be the second Chief Justice from the Scheduled Caste community.

Born on November 24, 1960, in Amravati, Maharashtra, Justice Gavai began his legal practice in 1985. He worked extensively at the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court.

Justice BR Gavai previously also served as a judge of the Bombay High Court and currently holds the position of Chancellor at Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur. In addition, he serves as the ex officio Executive Chairman of the National Legal Services Authority, where he oversees efforts to expand legal aid and access to justice across the country. In 2019, he was elevated to the Supreme Court.

Justice BR Gavai has been a part of several major decisions. Here are some of the most important ones:

1. Demonetization Case

Justice Gavai authored the majority judgment that upheld the central government's 2016 decision to demonetize ₹500 and ₹1000 currency notes. The bench ruled that the decision was taken legally and after proper consultation with the Reserve Bank of India.

He said that the court's role is not to decide on the wisdom of an economic policy but only to check whether the process followed was legal and fair. This case showed his respect for institutional boundaries and lawful government decisions.

2. Electoral Bond Scheme Case

In one of the most impactful rulings related to transparency in political funding, Justice BR Gavai was part of the five-judge bench that struck down the electoral bonds scheme.

The court said that the scheme violated the right of voters to know who was funding political parties. This verdict was widely praised for protecting the values of democracy and holding political funding to higher standards of accountability.

3. Same-Sex Marriage Case

Justice Gavai was part of the Constitution Bench that heard petitions for legal recognition of same-sex marriage. While the court, in a majority verdict, chose not to legalize such marriages, Justice Gavai showed sensitivity to the issue, acknowledging the rights and dignity of the LGBTQ+ community. His opinion reflected the court's awareness of changing social values and the need for Parliament to address complex personal law matters.

4. Manipur Violence Monitoring

Justice Gavai was part of a group of judges involved in overseeing relief efforts in the wake of the Manipur ethnic violence. He, along with others, visited relief camps and engaged with local officials to ensure that the fundamental rights of displaced persons were protected.

5. Demotion Case

In November 2024, Justice B.R. Gavai was part of the Supreme Court bench that declared the practice of demolishing homes of accused individuals without due legal process as unconstitutional. Popularly known as "bulldozer justice," the court ruled that such demolitions violate the rule of law and the right to shelter.

Justice Gavai stressed that punishment cannot be imposed without a fair hearing and proper legal procedure. The judgment laid down guidelines mandating advance notice and legal accountability. This ruling was seen as a major step in protecting citizens' rights against arbitrary state action and reinforcing due process in governance.

6. Article 370 Abrogation Case

Justice B.R. Gavai was also part of the Constitution Bench that upheld the abrogation of Article 370 in December 2023. The court ruled that the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir was a temporary provision and that the President had the constitutional authority to revoke it. Justice Gavai supported the view that the reorganization of the state and its full integration into India was

legally valid. He emphasized that the decision followed proper constitutional procedure and did not violate federal principles.

Justice Gavai has also been vocal about the growing use of Artificial Intelligence in the legal profession. He has warned that while AI can be helpful in speeding up research and managing documents, it can never replace human judges who understand context, emotions, and ethics. He has asked legal education institutions to update their syllabi so that young lawyers can learn how to use AI tools carefully and responsibly.

Justice Gavai has always emphasized the importance of inclusion and equality. His own rise in the judiciary stands as an example of what can be achieved through hard work and the support of policies that ensure representation of marginalized communities. He has often spoken about the importance of access to justice for all citizens, especially those who cannot afford legal services.

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