

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
CIRCUIT BENCH AT KOLHAPUR
CRIMINAL APPELLATE JURISDICTION

SUO MOTO CONTEMPT PETITION NO. 1 OF 2026

High Court on its own Motion. ...Petitioner.
Versus
Ashiwani Nikhil Patil. ...Respondent.

AND
CIVIL PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION [ST.] NO. 1956 OF 2026

Kolhapur District Bar Association and Others. ...Petitioners.
Versus
The State of Maharashtra and Others. ...Respondents.

Mr. Shrikrishna Ganbavale and Mr. V. R. Patil, Amicus Curiae in SMCP No. 1 of 2026.

Mr. Shrikrishna Ganbavale, Mr. V. R. Patil and Mr. Amit Sale i/b Mr. Swaroop Karade for the Petitioner in PIL (st) No. 1956/2026.

Ms. Neha Bhide, GP along with Ms. Tejas J. Kapre, AGP for the Respondent-State.

Ms. Priyanka Rane, APP for the Respondent-State.

Dr. Uday Warunjikar (thr. V.C.), Mr. N.G. Kamble and Ms. Neha Deshpande for the Respondent-Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa.

Mr. Shekhar Jagtap (thr. V.C.) and Mr. Sanket Khandagale for the Respondent-Bar Council of India.

**Coram : Madhav J. Jamdar &
Pravin S. Patil, JJ.**

Date : March 26, 2026.

P. C. :

1. Mr. Amit Sale, learned Counsel appearing for the PIL Petitioners seeks leave to amend the cause title of PIL. Leave as sought for is

granted. Amendment be carried out forthwith. Re-verification is dispensed with.

2. Heard Mr. V. R. Patil, Mr. Ganbavale and Mr. Sale learned Counsel appearing for the PIL Petitioners, Ms. Neha Bhide, learned Government Pleader appearing for the Respondent-State, Dr. Uday Warunjikar, learned Counsel appearing for the Respondent-Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa, Mr. Shekhar Jagtap, learned Counsel appearing for the Respondent-Bar Council of India and Ms. Priyanka Rane, learned APP appearing for the Respondent-State.

3. As a serious incident had taken place in the Kolhapur District Court Complex wherein a lady advocate was assaulted by a litigant on 7th March 2026, this Court has initiated *suo motu* contempt action. At the same time, the Kolhapur District Bar Association, the Kolhapur High Court Bench Action Committee, the High Court Bar Association Kolhapur Circuit Bench and the Advocates' Association of Western India, Kolhapur Bench have filed the aforesaid PIL concerning the very same incident as also the security of advocates in the Court premises.

4. By order dated 11th March 2026, this Court has appointed a committee of Advocates practicing in the District Court, Kolhapur for making suggestions for upgradation of security at District Court Complex, Kolhapur. The said committee invited suggestions from the advocates practicing in Kolhapur District Court and based on such

suggestions, has submitted a report dated 26th March 2026 to this Court. We find that said report makes very valuable suggestions. The relevant portion of the said report reads as under :

3. The Committee finds that, there is foot fall of over 800 to 1200 advocates, around 400 court staff and approximately 2000 daily visitors. In view of that the footfall the existing security arrangements are not sufficient. The Committee humbly submits, this comprehensive report for security infrastructure and safety protocols at the District Court Complex, Kolhapur on the following points -

A. ASSESSMENT OF THE PRESENT SITUATION :

At the outset the committee humbly submits that the majority of Police personnel in said building are Court Duty Constables (CDCs) whose primary role is case facilitation and they are not specifically assigned with duty of security at District Court Complex, Kolhapur. On this background we submit the scenario through the following points.

1. **Main Entry And exit Gates of Court Premises:** The complex currently operates with two main gates on the Eastern side (South-East Entry, North-East Exit). While these are the primary gates. There is also a small entry on the backside of the Court Complex compound (Western Side), which features a dedicated entry for the Honorable Judges to and from the Judicial Quarters.

Current Security Deployment :

- i. The front two gates i.e. entry from the main road proceeding towards KasbaBawada, has two security posts. Two Security guards at each gate (shift wise) are deployed from Maharashtra Surksha Rakshak Mandal on these gates.
 - ii. But there are no security guards on the backside entry on the Western Side of the Court Complex Compound.
 - iii. No Police personnel is deployed at Main gates.
2. **Open Space around the building :** The Court complex building have huge open space around the main building.

Current Security Deployment :

Currently there is no arrangement of deployment of security personnel in the open space around Court Complex Building.

3. **The District Courts building has Four (4) distinct entries -**

1. Two Entry Doors facing eastern side of the building. (Main Entry Doors) –

Current Security Arrangement by Police Department –

Initially only one Police Constable used to be deployed at one of the entry doors out of these two entries. But after the untoward incidence of assault on lady advocate on _____ March, 2026, two Police Constables are deployed at entry doors with handheld metal detector .

2. The another entry from the north east side stair case from the stilt two wheeler parking. (Northern Side of the Building).
3. The another Entry on the North West side of the building which is situated near the Canteen. (Backside of the Building)

Current Security Arrangement

At above mentioned entries at serial number 2 and 3 there is No Security Police or Security Personnel is deployed. As well as there are no other measures for security arrangements are made.

4. **Floor-wise Security** –The District Court, Kolhapur Complex consists of Basement, Stilt Parking , Ground floor plus 4 Floors.
 - On basement there are record rooms.
 - On the stilt floor there is parking of two wheelers for Advocates/staff/general public, dry canteen also at other side there is Canteen.
 - On the ground floor there are administrative offices like Assistant superintendent's office, record rooms, Muddemal rooms, VC Rooms, Advocates Bar Rooms, Public Prosecutors Offices.
 - From First Floor to Fourth Floor, there are Various Court Halls, Family Court, DLSA Offices, administrative offices etc.

(Each floor of the District Court Complex can be divided into three zones,

- Middle Area Comprising of Stair Cases and Elevator Entry and corridors around it.
- Northern Side Comprising of Court Halls and Offices and corridor.
- Southern Side Comprising of Court Halls and Offices and corridor.

Current Security Arrangement

Presently There is no floor-wise dedicated deployment of Security Personnel. Only few Police Guards of the Judicial Officers are stationed out said the concerned court halls only.

5. **Security for Parking** –The parking facility of the District Court Complex is situated within limits of the compound wall i(Open RCC Four Wheeler Parking) and on the stilt floor of the building (For two wheelers of advocates, staff & general public).

Current Security Arrangement

Presently, there is no Parking wise dedicated deployment of Security

Personnel.

B. SUGGESTIONS FOR UP-GRADATION OF SECURITY & OPERATIONAL VIGILANCE AT DISTRICT COURT COMPLEX , KOLHAPUR. -

1. Deployment of security at entry Gate, at Entry Doors, on Floor wise as well as at parking :

- i. **Deployment at Entry and exit gate:** There is necessity of Deployment of police security at Main entry Gate (South-East Entry), Main exit gate (North-East Exit), and at a small entry on the backside of the Court Complex the compound (Western Side).
- ii. **Deployment at Open Space around the building :**There is necessity of deployment of at least two to three armed police personnel at the open space around the main building.
- iii. **Deployment of Police Personnel at TWO main entry Doors–**On each entry doors as mentioned above, There is necessity of deployment more armed constable with the hand held metal detector to ensure no point of access remains unmonitored.
- iv. **Deployment of Police Personnel Other entries to building :**There is necessity of deployment of at least one armed constable with the hand held metal detector at the entry from the north east side stair case from the stilt two wheeler parking and the another entry door on the North West side of the building which is situated near the Canteen.
- v. **Floor Wise Security Deployment**
 - Considering the large area and other factors there is necessity of deployment of at least 5 to 6 police personal at ground floor for patrolling and monitoring the ground floor other than the security deployed at entry doors.
 - For the 1st to 4th floor at least three Police Constables should be deployed on each floor.
 - The above deployed police personnel should be directed to carry out patrolling in common areas, bar rooms and corridors, particularly during Court hours by monitor the situation on the floor on which they are deployed.
- vi. **Deployment security at parking :**
Considering the large area of parking and other factors there is necessity of deployment of at least 2 to 3 police personal as well as Traffic Police at both the parking areas.

2. Permanent Police Outpost: A permanent Police Chowki/Out Post with Women's Security Desk should be established within the complex as a centralized command

center for all security operations. The head of that out post must be the PSI or above ranked police officer. The Working hours of the said out post must be since 10.30 am to 7. 00 Pm.

3. **Restricted Entry:** Considering the fact that, the infrastructure and the security tends to burden with the number of entrants, the following suggestions are made.
 - i. In case of sensitive matters, the entry of the persons, not directly connected and concerned with the cases posted in the Court Complex, be prohibited.
 - ii. The entry of the litigants, witnesses, etc. should be allowed only after proper inspection of the valid identity cards and proofs.
 - iii. The regular entrants such as advocates, staff should be provided with the RFID/Smart Identity Cards in order to avoid the delay in entry.
4. **Baggage & Metal Detection:** Provision for industrial-grade baggage scanners and Door Frame Metal Detectors (DFMD) must be made at all entries.
5. **Repairing of Current CCTV System as well as installation of more CCTV with monitor room :**
 1. The presently installed all CCTV should be repaired and made operational forth-with.
 2. **Establishment of Monitor Room:**
There is necessity of establishment of live monitor room at the ground floor so which can track and keep eye on the all activities in District Court Complex, Kolhapur through CCTV cameras by monitoring at least since 9 am to 7pm.
 3. **High-Resolution CCTV System:** There is an urgent necessity for installation of 4K IP-based 360 degree rotating cameras with audio-recording facilities at each of the entry gate, entry doors as well as crucial points at floors of District court Complex for motion detections.
 4. There is necessity of Installation of CCTV cameras in Lifts.
 5. The servicing and maintenance of All CCTV cameras be done regularly without fail.
 6. **Storage Back up and Access:**
 1. The system must have a storage capacity to retain footage for at least **120 days** for investigative utility.
 2. The access of the CCTV System should also be given to the Kolhapur District Bar Association.

6. **Hardwired Panic Alarm System:** Due to the poor and weak cellular network inside the complex communication in case of emergency becomes difficult, therefore, for quick action and response, a hardwired alarm system must be installed on each floor at appropriate places. This will ensure instant communication during emergencies without relying on mobile signals.
7. **Public Address System** –For the purpose of addressing the public, there should be provision for public address system of good audio quality for the purpose of imparting the instructions, directions in case of emergency and disaster situations, etc.
8. **Assessment and Checking of Security by in charge of Police Stations:** There are 5 police stations situated within Kolhapur city. For Assessment and proper function of the security the same should be inspected one of the in charge of said police Station by rotation for week by visiting at least once in day at Court Complex Kolhapur. The proper documentation of the said visit be maintained through registers.
9. **Meeting Between Court Administration, Police, Collector and Kolhapur District Bar Association:**
For security checks as well as proper co-ordination of the security at District Court complex, Kolhapur there must be joint meeting between Ld. Principal District Judge Kolhapur, The Superintendent of Police, Kolhapur, The Collector, Kolhapur and elected body of Kolhapur District Bar Association for every three months. The minutes of said meeting must be recorded and proper documentation of it should be maintained by Court administration, Police Machinery, Collector of Kolhapur as well as the Kolhapur Bar Association.
10. **Deployment of Police Personnel on Holiday Criminal Court Remand Work:**
There is no dedicated security during holiday remand work of the criminal courts. Hence, there is necessity of deployment of at least two police personnel exclusively for security during holiday remand.
11. **Other factors be consider while deployment:**
 1. **Quality of Police Staff:** Only fit, active, and alert police personnel should be deployed.
 2. To maintain vigilance, security staff must be strictly prohibited from using **personal mobile phones** while on active duty.
 3. **Wireless Communication:** All security staff should be provided with **Wireless Communication System (Walkie-Talkie) sets** to coordinate in signal "dead zones."
 4. **Periodic Rotation:** Security Staff should be rotated periodically to prevent **over-familiarity** with regular entrants, ensuring objective and strict screening for everyone.
12. **Additional Security measures for Parking areas:**
 1. Restricted Parking Stickers should be provided for the parking of advocates

and staff.

2. Stilt parking on the ground floor is ill-lit, therefore, there should be proper provision for sufficient lights on the stilt parking floor.
3. **Comprehensive Vehicle Screening**: All vehicles, including cars, motorcycles, and scooters, must be scanned with **Handheld Metal Detectors** and under-vehicle mirrors.
4. The stilt parking flooring, currently made of **loosened paving blocks**, poses a risk of **fatal accidents**. It must be repaired with stable flooring and fitted with high-intensity LED lighting to eliminate dark spots.
5. **EV Safety**: It has been noted in the past that Electric Vehicles (EVs) carry specific fire risks. Recently an electric vehicle caught fire in District Court Complex at Sangli. Therefore, a **separate parking area for EVs** must be established, equipped with specialized fire-suppression equipment.
6. **Fire Extinguishers in Stilt Parking Areas** – Provisions for proper fire extinguishers should be made at the Stilt Parking Area.

13. **EMERGENCY & MEDICAL SERVICES** :

On-Site Medical Unit: On 22/03/2026 dedicated First Aid and Emergency Medical center is established at District Court Complex, Kolhapur. But presently it is having only basic equipment's it should be continue with proper equipment's as well as medicines which are necessary for emergency situations and treatments.

14. **Complaint & Suggestion Boxes**: Complaint and Suggestion Boxes should be placed by both the Bar Association and the Court to identify and report ongoing security issues.

5. Ms. Neha Bhide, learned GP tendered across the bar affidavit dated 26th March 2026 of Mr. Yogeshkumar Gupta, the Superintendent of Police, Kolhapur. In the said affidavit, various steps taken by the Superintendent of Police for enhancement of security at District Court Complex have been set out. The important measures taken by the Superintendent of Police are contained in paragraph No.11, which reads as under :

“11. With respect to contents of Para 15, I say that immediately upon happening of this incident and as per the directions of Hon'ble Court dtd 09.03.2026 the undersigned has undertaken a rigorous exercise of reviewing the existing Court Premises Security and taken immediate steps as under:

a.) On 09.03.2026 Police Sub-inspector, Shahupuri Police Station, Kolhapur made a written request to Hon'ble Principal District Judge for obtaining a CCTV Footage on the evening of 07.03.2026 between 3.30 to 4.30 pm. Annexed herewith at "Exhibit-R2" is a copy of the said letter.

b) On 10.03.2026, Police Inspector, Shahupuri Police Station sent additional request letter for obtaining custody of CCTV Footage of 7.03.2026 between 4 pm to 8 pm so that oral directions of Hon'ble Court can be complied with. Annexed herewith at "Exhibit-R3" is a copy of the said letter.

c) On 11.03.2026, a letter was addressed by the office of Hon'ble Principal District Judge that as per the letter of Bombay High Court dated 21.11.2025, it is necessary to take prior permission before giving CCTV footage of Court premises and as such a letter is sent to Circuit Bench, Kolhapur. Hereto annexed and marked as "Exhibit-R4" is the copy of the said letter.

d) I further say that earlier the total strength of Police Personnel deputed at District Court premises at Bavda, Kolhapur was 42 Police officers. However, after meeting Hon'ble Principle District Judge a safety audit was undertaken and additional 16 Police officers are now deputed at District Court Premises. I say that therefore now total strength of Police officers deputed is 58 Police officers. In addition, one (1) Police Sub-Inspector and one (1) Police Constable are deputed. As such total strength has now become 60.

e) I further say that as per the requisition letter of Hon'ble Principal District Judge, Hand Held Metal Detectors are provided for the safety of District Court premises as the same were immediately available Also a request letter was given to the Hon'ble Principal District Judge, thereby requesting to providing Doorframe Metal Detector (DMFD) and bag scanner machine, since the same are not available with the undersigned. Once the said machinery is made available; necessary additional Human resources can be provided for handling and operating the said machine within district court premises.

f) I further say that strict attendance of Police officers is being ensured at District Court premises and they have been briefed carefully and thoroughly about the sensitivity of the safety of Hon'ble District Court Judges, their officers, Government Pleaders and entire Lawyers fraternity. I say that all the Police Officers are placed on high alert mode when it comes to safety of District Court premises.

g) I further say that, in the building of District Court on 1st and 4th Floor QR codes have been pasted and the same are under continuous scanning and supervision by Charlie/ beat Marshal, Police Patrolling Parties, Police officer appointed on 112 help line of Shahupuri Police Station who are undertaking continuous scanning and patrolling of the premises. Police Patrolling parties are regularly visiting court premises and scanning QR codes to ensure proper supervision. In addition, Police officers in city area who are deputed on Court duty are directed to ensure presenty of security Police officers deputed on Court Security duty and record their attendance in the register. In

addition to handle any untoward and unforeseen incident immediate contact number of Police Sub Inspector Mr. Krishna Kamble 0231 2651911 is made available for immediate help. The said attendance register is kept at entrance gate.

h) With reference to incident dtd 07.03.2026, the undersigned has convened meeting of all pairvi's on court duty and they have been properly and personally briefed by the undersigned with respect to safety of Government Pleaders and Lawyers in the Court premises. Even before this incident had taken place, the undersigned i.e Police Superintendent, Additional superintendent, Police Inspector, Crime Investigation Branch, Police Inspector District Special Branch and Deputy Superintendent of Police all had conducted briefing session and given due instructions to all Pairvis.

i) I further say that, considering the gravity of the situation Police Force even in the premises of Hon'ble Bombay High Court Circuit Bench at Kolhapur has been increased. As on today at circuit bench premises 2 Sub-Inspectors, 16 Police Constables and 50 Home guards are deputed at circuit bench. All these security Police officers are under direct supervision and control of Lakshmipuri Police station. They are briefed from time to time.

j) I further say that, already on 21.08.2025 vide a letter bearing outward No. Pa Sha-4/Uccha Nyayalaya Circuit Bench Kolhapur a correspondence has been made and a proposal has been forwarded for additional work force/ human resource to the Home Department. Likewise on 12.09.2025 a correspondence has been made with respect to internal as well as external safety and security of premises of Circuit Bench Kolhapur has been made with office of Director General of Police and additional chief Secretary, Home Department. Hereto annexed and marked as **"Exhibit-R5"** is the copy of the said letter.

k) I say that this office has under taken audit of Court premises of Hon'ble Circuit Bench at Kolhapur and audit of their residential complex is also under taken. I say that the said fact is informed to Hon'ble Director General of Police State of Maharashtra Mumbai vide letter dated 04.03.2026. Hereto annexed and marked as **"Exhibit-R6"** is a copy of the said letter.

l) I say that likewise security audit for the court premises of Hon'ble District and Sessions Court and Kasaba Bawada Kolhapur as also being done. Hereto annexed and marked as **"Exhibit-R7"** is a copy of the Performa of security audit."

6. Thus, it is clear that the Superintendent of Police has taken various measures in the matter to improve the security at District Court Complex, Kolhapur.

7. However, perusal of the report submitted by the Committee of Advocates practicing in Kolhapur District Court appointed by this Court shows that still it is further necessary to strengthen the security arrangement at the Kolhapur District Court Complex and important and significant measures are suggested by the said Committee. One of the important aspects pointed by the Committee is that the door-frame metal detectors are not installed although police personnel are provided with hand-held metal detectors. Ms. Neha Bhide, learned GP states that immediate further steps will be taken for strengthening the security at Kolhapur District Court Complex including installation of door-frame metal detectors.

8. In the facts and circumstances, we direct a joint meeting of the Collector, Kolhapur, the Superintendent of Police, Kolhapur, the Superintending Executive Engineer, PWD, Kolhapur, 3 representatives of the Kolhapur District Advocates' Bar Association and Registrar, District Court Kolhapur be convened by the Superintendent of Police, Kolhapur to take further necessary steps for strengthening the security arrangement at Kolhapur District Court Complex.

9. During the pendency of this *suo motu* contempt petition and PIL, the Registrar (Administration) of this Court has received a letter through post sent by Ms. Ashwini Nikhil Patil, the Respondent in contempt petition. Registry to furnish a photocopy of the said letter to

Ms. Priyanka Rane, learned APP. Let the police authorities take appropriate action on the said letter in accordance with law.

10. Mr. Shekhar Jagtap, learned Counsel appearing for the Respondent-Bar Council of India tenders affidavit-in-reply on behalf of Bar Council of India. In the said affidavit, issue is raised regarding the Advocates' Protection Bill. Ms. Bhide, learned GP submits that on the next date, learned Advocate General will appear in the matter and inform the Court about the progress regarding the Advocates' Protection Bill.

11. Record of the Contempt Petition indicates that in terms of order dated 9th March 2026, Registry has not issued notice to the Respondent in Contempt Petition. Registry is, therefore, directed to issue fresh notice to the contemnor-Ms. Ashwini Nikhil Patil, returnable on 17th April 2026.

12. List the matters on 17th April 2026 at 2.30 p.m.

[Pravin S. Patil, J.]

[Madhav J. Jamdar, J.]