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Justice B.R. Gavai

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Justice B.R. Gavai

His biggest judgments came before he became Chief Justice. Justice B.R. Gavai helped strike down electoral bonds and uphold the end of Article 370, years before his own six-month term at the top. He is India's first Chief Justice from the Buddhist community.

> **Born** 24 November 1960, Amravati.
> **52nd CJI** 14 May 2025 to 23 November 2025.
> **First** Buddhist CJI; second Dalit CJI.
> **Successor** Justice Surya Kant.

CJI: Chief Justice of India.

Bulldozer ruling: 13 November 2024.

Davinder Singh: Allowed SC sub-classification.

Electoral bonds: Struck down, February 2024.

1 Chapter 1: The Career

Must Know

Early life and rise

- Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai was born on 24 November 1960 in Amravati, Maharashtra.
- He was a judge of the Bombay High Court from 2003 to 2019.
- He then served on the Supreme Court from 24 May 2019 to 13 May 2025.

Chief Justice of India

- He was sworn in as the 52nd Chief Justice on 14 May 2025.
- He was the first CJI from the Buddhist community.
- He was only the second Dalit (Scheduled Caste) CJI, after K.G. Balakrishnan.
- He retired on 23 November 2025 and was succeeded by Justice Surya Kant.
- So as of 2026, he is a former Chief Justice, not the sitting one.

Landmark Benches before CJI

- December 2023: he sat on the five-judge Constitution Bench that upheld the abrogation of Article 370.
- February 2024: he sat on the Constitution Bench that struck down the Electoral Bonds Scheme.
- The Court held the scheme violated citizens' right to information.
- His landmark judgments came before his brief six-month term as CJI.

Remember: 52nd CJI: 14 May – 23 Nov 2025. First Buddhist CJI. Second Dalit CJI after K.G. Balakrishnan.

> **Quick check 1.** Justice Gavai was the first Chief Justice of India from the Buddhist community. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 Chapter 2: Key Judgments

Good to Know

The bulldozer ruling

- On 13 November 2024, he co-authored a ruling that condemned “bulldozer” demolitions of accused persons’ homes without due process.
- The Court rejected demolition as a punishment, whether for an accused person or a convicted one.
- Action against a truly unauthorised structure is different. It is lawful if done by following the law.
- The ruling set rules for such lawful action.
- A show-cause notice is needed. The reply time is the period in the local municipal law, or 15 days after the notice is served, whichever is later.
- The owner gets a personal hearing. After the final order, there is a separate 15-day period before demolition.
- The notice rules do not cover unauthorised structures in public places or demolitions ordered by a court.
- An official who skips this process can be held personally responsible for rebuilding the property and paying damages.

Sub-classification within Scheduled Castes

- He was part of the seven-judge Bench in *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh*.
- That ruling allowed sub-classification within Scheduled Castes, for more targeted affirmative action.

Rahul Gandhi and family background

- In 2023, he was part of the Bench that stayed Rahul Gandhi’s conviction in a criminal defamation case.

- His father, R.S. Gavai, was a prominent Dalit-rights leader and politician.

Representation milestones

- January 2025: three sitting Supreme Court judges came from Scheduled Castes, the highest such number in the Court's history. Justice Gavai was among them.
- He and fellow judge Prasanna Varale were both Buddhist, the first time two Buddhist judges sat on the Supreme Court together.

Read more

- The Supreme Court and Judicial Activism in India explain the Court's constitutional role.
- Electoral Bonds Scheme Struck Down covers the 2024 ruling.
- Judges of the Supreme Court of India lists the roster he served among.

> **Quick check 2.** The bulldozer ruling allowed demolitions on mere accusation. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

> **Think it through: why a notice period?**
>
> A house is a home, not just a building. A fixed notice period lets a family reply or approach a court before it is lost. And an official who skips this can pay from their own pocket.

3 Chapter 3: Current Affairs

Current Affairs

A book of his speeches

- On 14 July 2026, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan released “The Voice of Justice: Justice Gavai Speaks” at Upa-Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- The book gathers Justice Gavai’s speeches, lectures and reflections.
- It was edited by Prof. S. Sivakumar and published by Thomson Reuters with the Commonwealth Legal Education Association.
- The sitting CJI, Justice Surya Kant, attended, alongside Justice Gavai himself. (Source: PIB, 14 Jul 2026.)

The Vice President’s remarks

- The Vice President called the Constitution “a living and evolving document”.
- He said restraint is as important as authority in a constitutional democracy.
- He appealed to lawyers to offer free legal aid to the poorest from time to time. (Source: PIB, 14 Jul 2026.)

> **Quick check 3.** Justice Gavai's book of speeches was released on 14 July 2026. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick Q&A

- **Gavai born?** 24 November 1960.
- **CJI term?** 14 May – 23 Nov 2025.
- **Successor?** Surya Kant.
- **Bulldozer ruling date?** 13 Nov 2024.
- **Notice before demolition?** The local-law period or 15 days after service, whichever is later.

Practice MCQs

1. As of 2026, what is Justice B.R. Gavai's status regarding the office of Chief Justice of India?

A. He is a former CJI, having retired in November 2025

B. He is the sitting CJI

C. He was never appointed CJI

D. He is CJI-designate, awaiting appointment

See answer ↓

2. Justice B.R. Gavai holds two 'firsts' in the history of the office of Chief Justice of India. What are they?

A. First CJI without a law degree, and first from the Bar directly

B. First CJI from Maharashtra, and longest-serving CJI

C. First woman CJI, and youngest-ever CJI

D. First CJI from the Buddhist community, and second Dalit CJI

See answer ↓

3. Justice Gavai was part of the five-judge Constitution Bench on a major 2023 ruling. What did it decide?

A. It struck down the CAA

B. It legalised same-sex marriage

C. It banned the use of EVMs

D. It upheld the abrogation of Article 370

See answer ↓

4. In February 2024, Justice Gavai was part of the Bench that struck down which scheme, ruling it violated the right to information?

A. The Electoral Bonds Scheme

B. The Aadhaar linkage mandate

C. The Sedition Law

D. The National Register of Citizens (NRC)

See answer ↓

5. On 14 July 2026, the Vice President released a book on Justice Gavai's life and speeches. What was it titled?

A. 'Constitutional Conscience: A Judge's Journey'

B. 'From Nagpur to the Bench'

C. 'Justice for All: My Years at the Bar'

D. 'The Voice of Justice: Justice Gavai Speaks'

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** Gavai retired as CJI on 23 November 2025, succeeded by Justice Surya Kant; he is not the sitting CJI as of 2026. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** He was the first Buddhist CJI, and the second Dalit CJI, after K.G. Balakrishnan. ↑ Q2
3. **D.** The Bench unanimously upheld the abrogation of Article 370's special status for J&K. ↑ Q3
4. **A.** The Constitution Bench struck down Electoral Bonds under Article 19(1)(a). ↑ Q4
5. **D.** VP C.P. Radhakrishnan released 'The Voice of Justice: Justice Gavai Speaks.' ↑ Q5

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3

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