

Historic Ambedkar Bhavan demolished, grandson files FIR against Trust

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Mumbai Local

Special Correspondent

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The Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Bhawan after demolition—Photo: Vijay Bate

Prakash Ambedkar, the grandson of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, filed an FIR against former IAS officer and State Information Commissioner Ratnakar Gaikwad and Madhukar Kamble, trustee of the People's Improvement Trust, in connection with the demolition of the historic Ambedkar Bhavan in central Mumbai in the early hours of Saturday.

The FIR was lodged at Bhoiwada police station after a dispute erupted between the PIT founded by Dr. Ambedkar and his family. As news spread about the demolition of the building located behind Chitra Cinema in Dadar

(E), Ambedkarite activists along with Dr. Ambedkar's grandsons Prakash and Anandraj Ambedkar reached the police station, leading to some amount of tension regarding law and order.

Anandraj Ambedkar alleged that Mr. Gaikwad was behind the demolition. "I am told that a 200-strong demolition squad descended here, and demolished the building at 3 a.m. Ambedkar Bhavan is where Dr. Ambedkar founded the Buddhist Society of India, and all its records were inside. The printing press which he set up in 1947 and where several of his books were printed has also been destroyed. Several handwritten manuscripts were inside," a visibly upset Anandraj told reporters.

Prakash said, "I was expecting some action of this kind, and I had spoken to the Mumbai Police Commissioner and the Chief Minister warning them that some people claiming to be trustees could do this kind of a thing. They assured me that records will be checked before drastic action of this kind is ordered."

He added, "I have checked with the BMC, and they said no such action was ordered by them. The MHADA officials said they weren't responsible either. So, who then has given the orders for demolition?"

Mr. Gaikwad denied he was with the PIT. In a statement, Madhukar Kamble, a trustee, said, "Ambedkar Bhavan has been demolished as it had become dilapidated and BMC had given notice to the Trust under section 354. Construction of a new, grand building of 17 floors will start soon. This will be the central headquarters for weaker sections as desired by Babasaheb. Most of the funding is from the government. BMC has approved plans for a new building recently. The Chief Minister performed the *bhoomipujan* on April 14 and called upon the Trust to complete construction within two years."

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