

*MPBalekar*

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY  
CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION**

**CONTEMPT PETITION NO. 40 OF 2026**

Popat Arjun Dhondge and Ors. ... Petitioners  
**V/s.**  
Shri Umesh Wavre,  
Dy. Conservator of Forest and Ors. ... Respondents

**AND  
CONTEMPT PETITION NO. 41 OF 2026**

Ms. Suchita P. a/w Arman Ansarin and Sanjeev B.  
Deore for the petitioners in both contempt petitions.  
Mr. P.G. Sawant, AGP, for the State in both contempt  
petitions.

**CORAM : AMIT BORKAR, J.**

**DATED : MARCH 26, 2026**

**P.C.:**

1. This Court had earlier, by its detailed judgment and order dated 6 November 2023, issued a clear and specific direction to the respondents. The direction required the respondents to undertake an actual exercise of computation and calculation of wages payable to those workers who had already been conferred the status and benefits of permanency by virtue of the earlier judgment dated 6 March 2002. Thus, the obligation cast upon the respondents was time-bound. The Court had further granted a period of four months for completing this exercise, and such period was to commence from the date on which the order was uploaded. The material placed on record indicates that the said

order came to be uploaded on 18 November 2023. Therefore, the respondents were expected to act within a fixed timeline, and there was no ambiguity either about the starting point or about the nature of compliance required. Despite such clarity, the record does not show any compliance within the stipulated period.

2. It is further seen that instead of complying with the directions within the prescribed time, the respondents chose to file Review Application (ST) No. 7314 of 2025. The review application came to be dismissed by order dated 19 June 2025. While dismissing the review, this Court still showed indulgence by granting an additional period of twelve weeks to the respondents to comply with the original directions. This reflects that the Court afforded more than sufficient opportunity to the respondents to fulfill their obligations.

3. However, the averments made on oath by the petitioners indicate that even this extended period has not been utilized for compliance. This continued inaction assumes significance because it shows not merely delay, but a failure to act even after repeated opportunities.

4. It is also brought on record that the challenge carried further by the respondents before the Supreme Court by way of Special Leave Petition No. 9832 of 2026 has been dismissed on 13 March 2026. Once the Supreme Court has declined to interfere, the orders passed earlier attain finality and binding force. There remains no legal justification for withholding compliance thereafter. In such a situation, the continued non-compliance on

the part of the respondents cannot be viewed as a procedural delay. It assumes the character of disobedience of the orders of this Court. The sequence of events clearly shows that despite lapse of the original period, despite grant of additional time, and despite dismissal of proceedings before the higher Court, the respondents have not complied with the directions. This conduct, on the face of the record, makes out a prima facie case for invoking the provisions of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971.

5. Hence, it becomes necessary to issue notice under Rule 9 to respondent Nos. 1 and 2, returnable on 16 April 2026, so that they may explain their conduct.

6. Considering the nature of the allegations and the continued failure to comply with judicial directions, it is also necessary to secure the presence of the concerned respondents. Accordingly, respondent Nos. 1 and 2 are directed to remain personally present before this Court on the returnable date, unless specifically exempted by an order of this Court.

**(AMIT BORKAR, J.)**