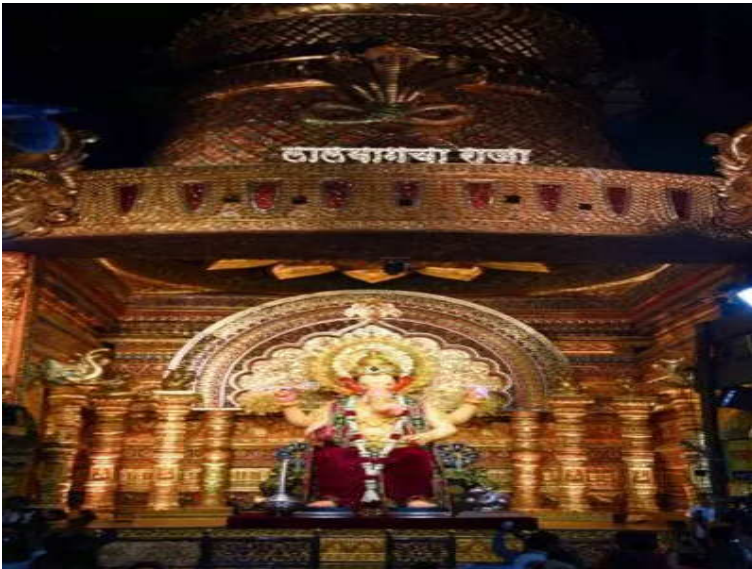


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Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission issues notice to Lalbaugcha Raja mandal, chief secy, BMC chief, Mumbai police commissioner over VIP darshan complaint

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Mumbai: Taking cognisance of a complaint alleging special treatment given to VIPs visiting the famous Lalbaugcha Raja pandal and non-VIP devotees being subjected to ill-treatment, the Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission (MSHRC) on Monday issued notices to the mandal's secretary, Maharashtra chief secretary, BMC commissioner, and Mumbai police commissioner asking them to explore alternative arrangements to avoid human rights violations.

"Discrimination due to VIP darshan is also raised in the complaint with allegation of breach of fundamental rights of persons. Hence the complaint deserves consideration," said the MSHRC.

The complaint filed by Ashish Rai and Pankajkumar Mishra alleged that devotees, including pregnant women, children, and senior citizens, were subjected to "malicious behaviour" by Lalbaugcha Raja Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav Mandal's volunteers, thus violating their human rights. They said the state administration and police had not taken any action on the complaint, hence they approached MSHRC. The complaint alleged that that crowd management in the narrow lane leading to the pandal was unsatisfactory and could pose a risk of fatal

stampede. It also highlighted the problem of providing basic civic amenities and security to devotees who stand in queues for hours.

The MSHRC order stated that numerous footage of blatant human rights violations against women, senior citizens, children, and the general public by private guards and karyakartas of Lalbaugcha Raja mandal surface on social media annually during Ganeshotsav.

"Unmanageable crowds are a routine issue, and incidents of devotees fainting, being manhandled, and having their clothes torn by mandal volunteers are circulating on social media, raising questions as to why state authorities are not considering replacing the overenthusiastic karyakartas and guards with suitably trained staff who respect the human rights of devotees," said the commission.