

LORD'S LEELA | Experts examine depth, soil and underground structure after JCB, crane fail to move centuries-old idol; administration to await report before deciding relocation

IIT-Indore steps in as Khade Hanuman idol refuses to budge

FP News Service

UJJAIN

The centuries-old Khade Hanuman idol has become the centre of a growing relocation dispute in Ujjain, after repeated attempts to shift it for the Simhashta road-widening project failed. Even after nearly 10 days of efforts using a JCB and crane, the idol did not move even slightly.

With the issue escalating, the administration has now turned to experts. An IIT-Indore team conducted a two-hour inspection of the idol on Tuesday, using specialised equipment to determine how deep it extends beneath the ground and to study the surrounding soil and structure. The team also examined what lies beneath the idol and how deeply it is embedded. Its re-

port will guide the administration's decision on whether, and by what method, the idol can be safely shifted.

Road-widening work is underway between Kanthal Chauraha and Gopal Mandir as part of preparations for Simhashta. The road is being widened to around 15 metres, bringing the Khade Hanuman Temple within the proposed alignment.

The municipal team had earlier arrived with cutting equipment to remove the idol, but devotees strongly objected, fearing that excessive force or cutters could damage it. Barricades were erected around the temple two days ago. Devotees also submitted a memorandum to Municipal Commissioner Abhilash Mishra, demanding an expert assessment before any further attempt to shift the idol.



Mishra said the IIT-Indore team was called following a request from temple priest Mahesh Bairagi. The process and date for shifting the idol will be decided only after the expert report is received. The administration is examining whether the idol can be relocated without causing any damage.

After the temple structure

was demolished, the administration installed a canopy over the idol for protection. Devotees have drawn a parallel with the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, pointing out that Lord Ram was once worshipped under a tent and the Khade Hanuman idol is now similarly situated beneath one.

Priest Mahesh Bairagi fell ill after the temple dome was demolished as part of the proposed relocation and was admitted to hospital. He was discharged on Tuesday after his condition improved. Bairagi said there had been no confrontation with the administration and that his only demand was for the idol to be examined using modern technology and expert assistance. He said it should be shifted only through a method certified as safe by specialists.

While some traders and residents in Sarafa have reportedly expressed willingness to cooperate with the relocation, opposition remains strong on the ground. Hindu organisation leaders remained engaged in discussions with residents throughout Tuesday.

A Hindu organisation has been coordinating activities in Bada Sarafa under the leadership of Shailu Yadav, Santosh Vyas, Rupesh Thakur and Shivendra Tiwari, with a nine-member committee overseeing arrangements. By evening, the number of devotees had risen significantly. During the Mahaarati, the stretch from Sati Gate to Chhatra Chowk was packed with worshippers. The Mahaarati began at around 7.45 pm and continued for nearly an hour. Devotional songs and a Sundarkand recitation followed later in the night.

ADMIN'S TAKE

The administration said the Khade Hanuman idol is deeply linked to the faith of Ujjain residents and devotees. It stressed that devotees' sentiments, the idol's safety and preservation of the city's religious and cultural heritage remain paramount. No decision will be taken without considering all stakeholders. Accordingly, no further action on relocation will be taken until scientific and technical opinions are obtained from experts. While Simhashta Mahaparv-2028 development is important, protecting Ujjain's faith and heritage is equally vital. The administration said it would seek a consensus-based solution through dialogue with devotees and experts.