

Food Delivery or Drug Delivery? Goa's Newest Crisis Unwrapped"

By Suraj Nandrekar

VASCO: Hundreds of parcels arrive daily at BITS Pilani's South Goa campus — from food deliveries to online shopping orders. But who is keeping track of what's inside?

Traces of drugs were found in the system of the 20-year-old student who died in his hostel room on the campus of BITS Pilani in South Goa last week, police said on Friday.

What raises eyebrows that sources reveal that the needle of suspicion is on food delivery agents for delivery of drugs. The development comes close on the heels of recent arrest of a food delivery agent for allegedly peddling narcotics under the guise of food deliveries has raised serious questions about the safety and oversight of such services.

The Arrest That Shocked a Campus

On August 24, Goa's Anti-Narcotic Cell (ANC) arrested 33-year-old Rahul Uppaldinni, a Swiggy delivery agent from

Vasco, during a late-night raid in Sancoale. He was found in possession of 226 grams of ganja, worth approximately ₹22,600. Authorities allege that Uppaldinni was using his position to distribute drugs to youth, particularly targeting students.

"This is a wake-up call," said Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai. "When drugs get delivered faster than justice, what does it say about Goa's Home Department?" Sardesai had previously raised concerns in the legislative assembly about unregulated food delivery operations and their potential misuse.

A Pattern of Concern

Uppaldinni's arrest is part of a troubling pattern. Since December 2024, five student deaths have been reported at the BITS Pilani Goa campus. While the causes vary, the recent death of 20-year-old Rishi Nair, found dead in his hostel room on September 4, has drawn particular attention. Autopsy reports confirmed



Investigators face several urgent questions:

- ▶ Are students aware of the risks of ordering from delivery personnel, and are there preventive awareness campaigns?
- ▶ Could a campus-wide audit of all incoming parcels prevent further incidents?
- ▶ How many delivery agents routinely access hostels, and are their identities verified beyond employment documentation?
- ▶ Are maintenance staff and suppliers being monitored for suspicious activity?

traces of drugs in his system, marking the fifth such incident on the campus. Goa Police are now exploring potential links between these

deaths and the distribution of narcotics through food delivery services. "We are investigating all angles," said Superintendent of Police Tikam Singh Verma.

"Strict vigilance is being maintained around educational institutions, including BITS Pilani, about possible use of drugs."

Goa Tiger Conservation Timeline

- 1983:** The wildlife census recorded the presence of three tigers in Goa.
- 1997:** Census data indicated five tigers in the state.
- 2002:** The tiger population was found to be four.
- 2009:** A tiger was killed and burnt in the Keri forest. In the same year, environmentalist Rajendra Kerkar wrote to the Chief Wildlife Warden, urging action for the protection and conservation of tigers in Goa.
- 2011:** Then Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Jayram Ramesh, wrote to Goa Chief Minister Digambar Kamat, recommending the notification of the Mhadei Tiger Reserve.
- 2013:** The proposal for a Goa Tiger Reserve was presented at a Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel meeting, chaired by Dr. Madhav Gadgil, at the National Institute of Oceanography, Dona Paula.
- 2017:** The Goa State Wildlife Advisory Board proposed declaring a tiger reserve under Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar.
- 2018:** Plans were discussed to designate 587 sq. km as the core zone and 167 sq. km as the buffer zone for the Goa Tiger Reserve.
- 2019-2020:** Carcasses of four tigers were discovered in the forests of Golaulim, Sattari.
- 2020:** The National Tiger Conservation Authority urged the Goa government to declare the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary as a tiger reserve.
- 2023:** The Bombay High Court directed the Goa government to notify the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary and surrounding protected areas as a tiger reserve within three months.
- September 2025:** The Supreme Court granted an interim stay on eco-tourism development activities in the proposed tiger reserve.

The Supreme Court Finally Bells the Big Cat

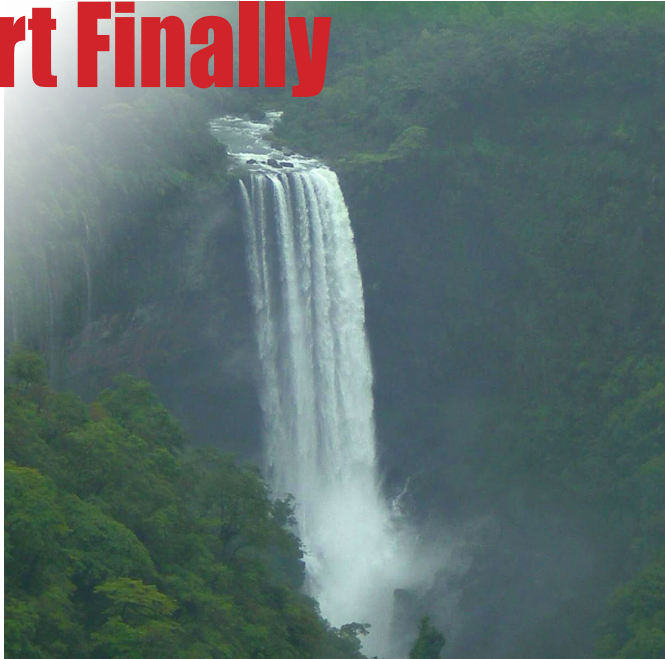
By Satyavatinandan Satrekar

The Supreme Court of India has recently put a hold on tourism projects within the proposed Mhadei Tiger Reserve in Goa, sending a clear signal that conservation must take priority over commercial interests.

This comes after the Goa Forest Development Corporation, with approval from the National Board for Wildlife, had begun developing a tourism camping site on the Surla plateau in Sattari, a critical habitat for tigers, sloth bears, Malabar pit vipers, and bamboo pit vipers. The plateau, rising more than 800 meters above sea level, forms part of one of Goa's most sensitive ecological zones.

Despite the absence of concrete conservation measures by the state government, tigers have continued to assert their presence, evidenced by increased sightings. Yet, the population has faced significant threats. In 2009, a tiger was killed and burned in Keri, Sattari. A decade later, the carcasses of four tigers were discovered in Golaulim, highlighting the ongoing risk to the species.

In response to these deaths, Rajendra Garawad, then Additional Inspector General of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), conducted an investigation and identified poisoning as the cause. He submitted recommendations for urgent conservation measures. However, under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, it has been



"Tiger Territory on Hold: Supreme Court Steps In"

- ▶ Supreme Court stays tourism in Goa's proposed Mhadei Tiger Reserve.
- ▶ Surla plateau, a key tiger habitat, was being developed for eco-tourism.
- ▶ Tiger population threatened: killings in 2009 and 2019-20.
- ▶ NTCA recommendations for protection were not implemented.
- ▶ Wildlife threats include habitat loss, poaching, and illegal activities.
- ▶ Court emphasizes tiger conservation and biodiversity protection.

revealed that the Goa Forest Department has

not implemented these recommendations.

Sunday Thought



Goa's Reputation Held Hostage by Outsiders

By Suraj Nandrekar

The shocking case of a doctor from Maharashtra accused of raping a Moroccan woman in the ICU of a hospital in Goa has once again placed the state in an unflattering spotlight. What should have been remembered as a crime committed by an individual is instead being carried in headlines as a stain on Goa's name. This is not new. Time and again, crimes by people who come from outside are associated with Goa as if the state itself is to blame. The result is that a place known for its hospitality, peace and openness is reduced to a backdrop for sordid stories that are imported from elsewhere. The issue goes deeper than one case. Goa is a small state, with a unique identity and culture. Its people have traditionally been welcoming, allowing visitors and migrants to become part of the fabric of daily life. But the openness that is a strength has also left Goa vulnerable to the actions of those who do not carry the same attachment or respect for the land. From drug-related crimes to assaults and now this horrific incident in a hospital, too many headlines have been written that begin with the word "Goa" but the accused has nothing to do with Goa at all. Chief Minister Pramod

Sawant himself has pointed out in the past that many serious crimes in the state are committed by non-Goans. He has said that Goans by nature are peaceful and that outsiders are often behind incidents that shake public confidence. His words may sound harsh to some, but the pattern is undeniable. Goa's small size makes it easy for outsiders to dominate its news cycle. A single brutal crime carried out by someone from outside ends up overshadowing the thousands of honest Goans who live by the law and uphold the state's reputation for warmth and civility. There is also the matter of fairness. Why should an entire state have its image blackened because of the actions of those who are not its sons and daughters? When a crime is committed in another state, it is the individual who is named, not the land itself. Yet in Goa, the location is what makes the news. It is "Goa" that is blamed, as if the land itself is guilty. The reality is that many of these cases are not rooted in Goan society but are carried into it by people with no roots in the state. That does not mean non-Goans should be demonised as a group. Migrant workers, professionals, and visitors form an important part of Goa's economy and social life. Many live and work here peacefully, respecting the culture and

contributing to its growth. But it is equally important to recognise the damage caused when individuals from outside misuse that openness. It is a betrayal of the trust that Goans extend to strangers, and it has consequences not just for the victims but for the reputation of the entire state. What Goa needs now is a stronger balance between its tradition of hospitality and the demand for accountability. Law enforcement must act swiftly and firmly so that crimes by outsiders are seen as the responsibility of individuals, not as a reflection on Goa. At the same time, political leaders and civil society must speak up to remind the wider world that Goa's character is not defined by these isolated acts. The doctor accused in the ICU case does not represent Goa. Neither did those involved in earlier crimes that grabbed national headlines. They represent only themselves and their own failures. Goa's image should not be left at the mercy of outsiders who come here and tarnish it with their actions. The responsibility lies with authorities to protect that image, with residents to uphold their values, and with visitors to respect the land they step into. Goa deserves to be known for its beauty, its culture and its people, not for crimes imported by those who have no stake in its soul.

Masterstroke



A Birthday Gift for Honourable PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji

By Irfan Iqbal Gheta

This Wednesday, September 17, 2025, the nation will come together to celebrate the birthday of Shri Narendra Modi Ji, one of the most popular and influential Prime Ministers in India's history.

This year, however, the celebrations take on a deeper significance, marked by events that tested the mettle of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by Shri Modi Ji. Two developments in particular had captured national and international attention.

First, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar Ji, India's former Vice President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, tendered his resignation midway through his term, citing health reasons. While this took everyone by surprise, the opposition, led by the grand old party, attempted to spin the resignation as a sign of instability under the Modi-Shah leadership. The NDA, however, maintained strategic silence, proceeding with the selection of the next Vice President with precision and composure.

Second, US President Donald Trump imposed a sudden 50% tariff on Indian imports, demonstrating that even personal rapport with PM Modi could not shield India from global economic pressures.

Against this backdrop, the election for the 15th Vice

President of India became a closely watched political event. The NDA nominated Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan Ji, former Governor of Maharashtra, while the I.N.D.I. Alliance backed former Supreme Court Judge Shri Sudarshan Reddy Ji.

On the night of Tuesday, September 9, 2025, the results were announced: Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan Ji won decisively, securing 452 votes against 300 for Shri Sudarshan Reddy Ji. The numbers reflected more than just victory—they revealed cracks within the I.N.D.I. Alliance, with reports of cross-voting by opposition MPs defying party whips.

Ruling party spokespersons, however, handled the outcome with grace, welcoming cross-voting as a "call of conscience" and a reaffirmation of faith in PM Modi's leadership, which continues to steer India toward new heights.

Media reports suggest that NDA conducted extensive workshops for MPs ahead of the election to prevent poaching and cross-voting, a demonstration of meticulous planning and strategic foresight.

All said and done, the successful election of Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan Ji serves as a symbolic and significant birthday gift for PM Narendra Modi Ji, underscoring his leadership and the NDA's continued ability to navigate complex political waters while guiding the nation forward.



TMC WAS IN GOA ONLY TO SPLIT VOTES: KIRAN KANDOLKAR

“It Was a Mistake Not Contesting from Thivim” : Kiran Kandolkar Says His Focus is on the People, Not the Party

In the complex and shifting landscape of Goan politics, Kiran Kandolkar, former MLA of Thivim, remains a figure of interest. In this exclusive interview with Goemkarponn, editor Suraj Nandrekar speaks with Kandolkar about his political journey, his experiences with different parties, and his perspective on the current political scenario in Goa.

Kandolkar has spent significant time with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), later joined Goa Forward, and contested the 2022 elections on a Trinamool Congress (TMC) ticket. In this interview, he reflects candidly on the choices he has made, lessons learned, and why his focus remains on serving the people of Thivim.

Suraj Nandrekar: *Namaskar, Kiran Bab. Welcome to our program. Today, our audience wants to know: What is your current political situation? Are you planning to join any party, or do you intend to continue independently in the future?*

Kiran Kandolkar: Thank you, Suraj. First, let me clarify something fundamental. My approach to politics has always been about serving the people rather than personal gains. Even during my tenure as an MLA, my primary focus was delivering development and tangible benefits to my constituency. I have had associations with BJP, then Goa Forward, and later contested the 2022 elections on a TMC ticket. Looking back, I realize that contesting from Thivim at that time was a mistake. That experience was an important lesson. My focus remains on the real issues affecting my constituency, regardless of party affiliations.

Suraj Nandrekar: *You were with the BJP for a long time. How do you view the current BJP, and why did you leave?*

Kiran Kandolkar: BJP, especially under leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manohar Parrikar, was built on clear principles. I joined the party because its ideology aligned with serving people and delivering development. Working closely with Manohar Parrikar was invaluable. He was committed, transparent, and truly people-oriented. After his passing, some

of the commitments and principles that I valued were no longer upheld. It wasn't merely about disagreements; it was about the promises made to the people. That is why I decided to step away.

Suraj Nandrekar: *After leaving the BJP, you joined Goa Forward and later contested the 2022 elections on a TMC ticket. Can you explain those decisions?*

Kiran Kandolkar: Initially, joining Goa Forward was about focusing on development and providing a platform to contest elections. But as the elections approached, it became clear that differences in priorities and approach could not be bridged. I realized that my constituency's interests should not be compromised by party conflicts. Later, I contested on a TMC ticket in 2022. To be candid, TMC's entry into Goa was largely about splitting votes rather than building a sustainable political base. While I was associated with them during the election, it became clear that their primary objective was political positioning, not long-term development. My focus has always been on serving the people, not on facilitating vote fragmentation or party agendas.

Suraj Nandrekar: *You have often spoken about your close association with Manohar Parrikar. How has he influenced your political approach today?*

Kiran Kandolkar: Working with Parrikar shaped how I view

governance and leadership. He was transparent, dedicated, and always prioritized the people. Even in challenging situations, he delivered results without compromising principles. His example taught me that politics should not be about personal power or party position but about meaningful service. That is why I now focus on constituency issues and remain cautious about party affiliations.

Suraj Nandrekar: *Have any parties approached you recently, such as Congress or others, to bring you into their fold?*

Kiran Kandolkar: Yes, there have been approaches. Political discussions are always ongoing, especially in a state as dynamic as Goa. But I haven't committed to any party. Decisions like this cannot be rushed. My workers and the people's expectations come first. Being independent, for now, allows me to concentrate on my constituency without external pressures. Any future party alignment must genuinely serve the people.

Suraj Nandrekar: *You also maintain personal friendships with other political leaders, like Vijai Sardesai. Do such relationships influence your decisions?*

Kiran Kandolkar: Vijai is a personal friend. Friendships in politics are important, but they do not dictate decisions. Political alignments can shift, yet personal bonds remain. Relationships like these allow dialogue

and discussion, but my choices are based on principles, performance, and the constituency's best interests. When necessary, we collaborate on specific issues, but my independent status ensures impartiality and focus on public service.

Suraj Nandrekar: *Reflecting on your political career, what key lessons have you learned?*

Kiran Kandolkar: Politics is not just about parties or positions; it is about the people. One must listen, understand, and adapt. I have made mistakes, and I acknowledge them openly. For example, earlier decisions regarding constituency positions did not fully reflect everyone's wishes. I have learned to balance worker preferences, public needs, and personal judgment. Support from my team and constituency is invaluable. Politics is a continuous learning process, and one must prioritize service over personal or party gain.

Suraj Nandrekar: *Can you summarize your current position for our readers?*

Kiran Kandolkar: Currently, I am focused on development, public service, and addressing the real issues of Thivim. Even if political parties approach me in the future, my priority remains the same. Any affiliation must respect the aspirations of the people and uphold my principles.

Suraj Nandrekar: *How do you view the role of opposition parties in Goa's politics?*

Kiran Kandolkar: The opposition is vital in a democracy. They hold the government accountable and offer alternative voices. Over the years, Goa has seen shifts from Congress dominance to coalition politics, and from BJP-led governments to regional alliances. Each change teaches lessons about governance, voter expectations, and accountability. While opposition parties highlight public concerns, fragmented votes often reduce their impact. Independent leaders like me try to bridge gaps by focusing on results rather than partisan agendas.

Suraj Nandrekar: *How would you assess the performance of past governments, including those led by Parrikar?*

Kiran Kandolkar: Parrikar's tenure stands out. He showed how a government could be efficient while staying connected to the people. Other governments contributed in various ways, but what matters most is consistency, transparency, and delivering results. For voters, it's less about party names and more about tangible outcomes. Goa has experienced political fluctuations, but leaders focused on development and public welfare always leave an impression.

Suraj Nandrekar: *In hindsight, have you regretted any political decisions?*

Kiran Kandolkar: Regret is part of political life. I acknowledge mistakes openly—whether about

candidate selections or strategic alliances. The important thing is to learn, correct errors, and ensure future decisions benefit the people. My workers and constituents have supported me through these decisions, allowing me to focus on service rather than politics alone.

Suraj Nandrekar: *Considering the current scenario in Goa, what are your thoughts on the upcoming elections?*

Kiran Kandolkar: Elections in Goa are dynamic, with multiple parties, alliances, and independent candidates. Fragmented votes often create unpredictable outcomes. My approach is to engage with people, understand their concerns, and offer practical solutions. Being independent allows me to contest based on my record and credibility rather than party identity. Voters today expect leaders who deliver results, and that guides my political path.

Suraj Nandrekar: *Finally, what message would you like to convey to the people of Thivim and Goa?*

Kiran Kandolkar: My commitment remains to development and public service. Politics is a means to serve, not an end. I am grateful to my workers, friends, and the people of Thivim for their support. I will continue to act with integrity, prioritize constituency welfare, and ensure that every decision is transparent and accountable. My focus is solely on the people, and that will never change.

Team Goemkrponn

The Goa Cricket Association has once again found itself under scrutiny, this time for failing to nominate a representative for the upcoming annual general meeting of the Board of Control for Cricket in India. With elections for the top posts on the horizon, the absence of a nomination from Goa has triggered questions about leadership, governance and internal unity.

A House Divided

Within the GCA, the managing committee is deeply split. A majority of members backed Rohan Gauns Desai, the current joint secretary of the BCCI, to continue as Goa's nominee. Yet president Vipul Phadke and secretary Shamba Desai blocked his name from being sent forward.

Phadke defended his stance by pointing to the rules. "The constitution is clear. Only one managing committee member can be proposed, not two. We cannot send resolutions that go against our own framework," he said.

Shamba Desai, who refused to sign the minutes that included both Rohan and Phadke's names, stood firm on the matter. "I will not endorse something that is procedurally wrong. Our association has to function by rules, not by pressure," he said.

That deadlock meant the GCA missed the deadline, leaving Goa without a representative in one of Indian cricket's most influential forums.

Courtroom Drama

The impasse soon moved into the courts, with five managing committee members accusing the leadership of deliberately stalling despite early

GCA in the Eye of the Storm Again

It's Rohan Gauns Desai vs Chetan Desai / Balu Phadke



Rohan Gauns Desai

communication from the BCCI. Their argument was that Rohan had both the numbers and the qualifications, but was being held back by internal politics.

On the other side, lawyers for the leadership countered that not all suggested names had valid voting rights, making them ineligible. The court declined to impose a nomination but asked the GCA to convene its managing committee and take a proper decision.

Rohan's Uncertain Future



Chetan Desai

For Rohan Gauns Desai, the fallout is significant. With strong support within the GCA and from representatives of the Indian Cricketers' Association, he appeared well placed to retain his position. Now, his fate rests on whether the association can resolve its standoff in time.

A Larger Pattern

This latest controversy reinforces a pattern. Over the years, the GCA has repeatedly found itself mired in disputes that raise uncomfortable



Balu Phadke

questions about its internal functioning. Issues of transparency, adherence to rules, and the clash between personalities have often overshadowed the cricket itself.

Goa may be a small cricketing state, but its internal politics mirror larger questions about governance in Indian sport. As the BCCI elections approach, what should have been a routine nomination has instead become another reminder of the storms that seem to follow the GCA.



"This is not about personalities or factions. The constitution of the GCA is clear that only one managing committee member can be nominated. When proposals were pushed to include two names, it went against our rules. As president, I have a responsibility to ensure that resolutions we send out are legally and procedurally sound. If we compromise on that, we set a dangerous precedent."

- Vipul Phadke, GCA President



"There was pressure to approve minutes that included both names, but I could not endorse something that was unconstitutional. We cannot run this association on the basis of expediency. Rules exist to protect fairness and consistency. If we ignore them now, tomorrow anyone can bend the framework for convenience. My stand is not personal; it is about ensuring that the GCA functions with integrity."

- Shamba Desai, GCA Secretary

Beyond lifestyle changes: Role of anti-obesity drugs in obesity management

Article by: Dr Manish Kushe, Dr M S KUSHE'S DIABENDOCARE, (Super Speciality Centre) Margao

For decades, obesity was seen as a lifestyle issue rather than a life-threatening disease. Today, it is a growing healthcare crisis that has resulted in children being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes (T2D) and adolescents struggling with abdominal fat. Globally, 8.5% of children and

adolescents (between five and 19 years of age) or one in five suffer from obesity. By 2030, it is estimated that 254 million children and adolescents will suffer from obesity.



In India, almost 33 million children suffer from overweight and obesity, and this number is estimated to increase to 83 million by 2035.

Ongoing studies are demystifying the science behind obesity, leading to a better understanding of the condition and the development of innovative weight-loss

medications, such as glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists, like semaglutide. While these medications are changing the scenario, it is essential to recognise when they are needed and adopt a balanced approach by including lifestyle modifications to manage the condition.

Obesity is a disease

From the early 1970s to the mid-2000s, the prevalence of obesity has more than tripled among children. The prevalence in school-going children has been increasing, with those as young as 16 being diagnosed with T2D. Despite looking lean, many children and adolescents have a high waist circumference, indicating abdominal obesity, which is a risk factor for metabolic diseases.

Obesity is a complex adiposity-based chronic

disease (ABCD), wherein abnormal or excess body fat (adiposity) impairs health, increases the risk of long-term medical complications, and reduces lifespan. It is caused by a combination of lifestyle and environmental factors, along with substances that interfere with hormones (obesogens). Obesity is a medical condition and not something caused by laziness or the lack of willpower, and requires long-term management like hypertension or diabetes.

Role of anti-obesity medications

A crucial component of obesity management is lifestyle modification, consisting of a healthy diet, regular physical activity, and behavioural therapy. Modest weight loss of 5-10% can also lead to significant health benefits.